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Gwendolyn Brooks' *A Street in Bronzeville*: An Analysis Through the Dialogical Self Theory

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A chi non si arrende mai,nemmeno quando andare avanti sembra impossibile. A chi, nonostante la sofferenza, fisica o emotiva,trova ancora la forza di sorridere. A chi trova il raggio di chiedere aiuto e la determinazione di lavorare su se stesso. Che questa resilienza possa ricordare a coloro che affrontano momenti difficili che non è mai troppo tardi per rinascere.

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Introduction

Gwendolyn Brooks' *A Street in Bronzeville* is a seminal work in American poetry, that offers an insightful exploration of the lives of African Americans in Chicago. This collection of poems is not only a vivid description of the Black experience but also a nuanced reflection of the different identities that define Brooks. This thesis aims to analyze Brooks' work through the Dialogical Self Theory (DST), which provides a framework for understanding how different parts of the self interact and influence one another.

DST defines the self as a "position repertoire", it incorporates various internal and external voices that shapes an individual's identity. In applying DST to Brooks' poetry, the purpose is discovering how the three *I*-positions - Blackness, Whiteness, and Womanhood - are represented and negotiated within her work. All of the positions will be examined for content, formality, and poetic style.

The first *I*-position, Blackness, is a central theme in *A Street in Bronzeville*. Brooks' depiction of Black life is both a reflection of her own identity and a commentary on the African American experience in general.

The second *I*-position, Whiteness, is less overt but nonetheless significant in Brooks' poetry. While not always directly addressed, the influence of Whiteness is palpable through the formal and aesthetic choices Brooks makes.

The third *I*-position, Womanhood, adds another layer of complexity to the analysis. Brooks' exploration of gender and the female experience in her poetry provides a critical view on the roles and challenges faced by women, particularly within the African American community.

By analyzing these three *I*-positions the aim is to offer a extensive analysis of how Gwendolyn Brooks' *A Street in Bronzeville* reflects and negotiates multiple aspects of

identity. Through the lens of Dialogical Self Theory, we will reveal the dynamic interplay between these positions and their influence on Brooks' poetic vision, providing deeper insights into both her work and the broader socio-cultural context of her time.

1. The Dialogical Self Theory

Since the 1990s, Dutch psychologist Hubert Hermans has developed the Dialogical Self Theory (DST), drawing from the ideas of William James and Mikhail Bakhtin. This theory presents the self as a dynamic, multivoiced entity engaged in continuous dialogue.

1.1 Theoretical Background: William James and Michail Bakhtin

William James exploration of the self distinguishes between the *I* and the *Me.* The *I* represents the self-as-knower, characterized by three features:

i. Continuity: a sense of personal identity and sameness over time.

ii. Distinctness: a sense of being a distinct individual, separate from others.

iii. Volition: the active process of appropriating or rejecting thoughts and experiences.

The *Me* consists of the empirical elements considered part of oneself, including his "body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank-account" (James, 291), even "his enemy". James's expansion of the self concept paved the way for later developments, such as Bakhtin's theory of the Polyphonic Novel, where the self is understood as multivoiced.

Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the multivoiced self is detailed in "Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics" (1929/1973). Bakhtin argues that Dostoevsky's novels do not reflect a singular

authorial voice but a range of voices. Each character is an independent thinker with their own ideology, not merely an object of the author's vision. As Hermans explains, "In a polyphonic musical work, multiple voices accompany and oppose one another in dialogical ways. As part of this polyphonic construction, Dostoevsky creates a multiplicity of perspectives, portraying characters conversing with the Devil (Ivan and the Devil), with their alter egos (Ivan and Smerdyakov), and even with caricatures of themselves (Raskolnikov and Svidrigailov)." (Hermans, "The Dialogical Self: Toward a Theory", 245)

1.2 Hermans's Dialogical Self Theory

Building on the works of James and Bakhtin, DST explores the complex nature of the self. Hermans argues that the self is not a fixed, singular entity but a multitude of voices and perspectives engaged in continuous dialogues. These relatively autonomous *I*-positions shift among different spatial positions according to changes in situation and time. Each *I*-positions has an independent voice, allowing for dialogue between different positions, akin to the interactions found in Bakhtin's polyphonic novel theory (process of question and answer, agreement and disagreement).

The dialogical self is conceptualized as an extended "positions repertoire", which includes:

- Internal position (e.g. *I* as a sportsman, *I* as a pessimist)
- External positions (e.g. the imagined voice of my mother)
- Outside positions (e.g. significant others, interlocutors, family).

This "dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous *I*-positions" (Hermans, "The Dialogical Self: Toward a Theory", 248) operates across different levels: our personal relationships, social structures we belong to, internal dialogues, and through our cultural engagements.

Hermans notes that “the brain is a community of agents or voices that, at its higher levels, may entertain mutual dialogical relationships, with one voice being more dominant or active than the other voice” (Hermans, “The Dialogical Self: Toward a Theory”, 251). These *I*-positions are not static; they can grow in number, shift or be redefined over time. This “society” of voices helps individuals form their sense of self through micro-dialogues involving negotiation, conflict, and integration of various *I*-positions.

DST emphasizes the importance of both time and space. Time shapes the narrative structure of the self, while "the spatial nature of the self is expressed in the words, ‘position’ and ‘positioning,’ terms that suggest ... more dynamic and flexible referents than the traditional term ‘role’" (Hermans, “The Dialogical Self: Toward a Theory”, 249). Although the spatial dimension has been extensively explored, the temporal dimension has received less attention.

1.3 Peter Raggatt’s Contributions

Peter Raggatt extends DST by distinguishing between two types of *I*-positions: social and reflexive. Moving from Hermans’ work, Raggatt asserts that reflexive/personal positioning “reflects how people construct and narrate their own lives in a moral framework” (“Forms of Positioning”, 359), while social positioning “reflects the force of cultural and institutional prescriptions that define and limit the boundaries of the self” (“Forms of Positioning”, 359). Raggatt emphasizes that positioning is both a personal dynamic and a social-discursive process, where social and reflexive positions often “share an uneasy co-existence across the literature” (“Forms of Positioning”, 359). The dialogical self is understood not as a central omniscient author but as an extended “position repertoire”. When the *I* takes up a position in the word, it enables a range of potential internal or external counter-positions.

Raggatt introduces the concept of positioning as a three-way relationship rather than a simple "dialogical dyad". Alongside the *I*-position and the counter-position, he adds the concept of the "ambiguous signifier". This "dialogical triad" involves:

a. Establishing connections to the social, external world.

b. Mediating movement between positions.

c. Possessing ambiguous or multi-stable meanings.

For instance, an ambiguous signifier might be a term or concept that holds different meanings for different people, depending on context. This helps facilitate dialogue and movement between various positions. In his article "Forms of Positioning", Raggatt adds that forms of positioning: "(i) happen in conversation, (ii) form in relationship, (iii) emerge in the stories we tell, and (iv) get imposed by the political and social order" (361).

Additionally, Raggatt employs Bakhtin's concept of "chronotopes" to further explore the temporal dimension of DST. Chronotopes describe a "space-time matrix" within the triadic structure of positioning processes. Individuals manage and adjust their *I*-positions in relation "to others, cultural norms, and "unfolding storylines" through micro-dialogues." ("Personal Chronotopes" 250). This triadic structure of positioning – comprising the *I*-position, counter *I*-position, and an "interpretant" – enables the creation and transformation of personal chronotopes, resulting in a dynamic interplay of positions. This process creates a "mini-society" where ambiguous thirds provide one of the keys to understanding our multiplicity. Bakhtin explains, "within the limits of a single work and within the total output of a single author we may notice a number of different chronotopes and complex interactions among them, specific to the given work or author." (Bakhtin, "The Dialogic Imagination", p. 252)

This first theoretical chapter is essential for establishing the framework through which Gwendolyn Brooks' A Street in Bronzeville will be analyzed, as it underscores the interplay between individual identity and the socio-cultural context in which the poet operated. Raggatt's distinctions between social and reflexive *I*-positions highlight the dual influences on Brooks' work: her personal narrative as an African American woman navigating a predominantly white literary landscape, and the societal expectations and constraints imposed upon her by a complex social order. The Dialogical Self Theory thus serves as an effective lens for understanding how Brooks constructs her poetic identity and the multifaceted nature of her characters' experiences. This theoretical foundation not only enhances our comprehension of Brooks' literary artistry but also emphasizes the significance of her contributions to the broader dialogues surrounding race, identity, and community within American literature.

2. Gwendolyn Brooks

2.1 Biography

Gwendolyn Elizabeth Brooks was born on June 7th, 1917, in Topeka, Kansas, as the first child of David and Keziah Brooks. Shortly after her birth, her family moved to Chicago, where she would live for the rest of her life, strongly identifying as a Chicagoan and forming a strong bond with the city, especially with its South Side.

Brooks' parents played a significant role in nurturing her love for the arts. Her father was a janitor who had hoped to become a doctor, and her mother was a school teacher and a concert pianist. Both of them, as Brooks herself stated, provided her with all the support and resources she needed to pursue her dream. When Gwendolyn was seven, her mother discovered her love for poetry and promptly encouraged her to follow her passion by exposing her to various

forms of literature and accompanying her to meet famous Black poets, such as James Weldon Johnson and Langston Hughes.

Brooks published her first poem in the *Chicago Defender* at the age of 13, and by 1934, she had become an adjunct member of the newspaper's staff, regularly contributing in its poetry column.

Brooks grew up during a period of social and racial upheaval. As Black Americans increasingly fought against segregation, Brooks' mother taught at the school later involved in the landmark "Brown v. Board of Education" case, which played a crucial role in the desegregation of American schools. The racial injustice Brooks experienced during her school years, coupled with her shyness, led to a sense of isolation. However, these challenges became the foundation of her poetic exploration of race, class, and social dynamics within Chicago, and by extension, within the US as a whole.

In 1938, Brooks married poet Henry Blakely, and moved to a kitchenette apartment on Chicago's South Side, where they started their family. They had two children: Henry Jr., born in 1940, and Nora, born in 1951.

In 1941, Brooks seized an opportunity to deepen her literary skills by joining a poetry workshop organized by Inez Cunningham Stark, a wealthy white woman with a strong literary background. This workshop, which focused on Modernists poets and peer critiques, helped Brooks gain a better knowledge of her predecessors, refine her craft and better to express her unique voice.

Brooks' first poetry collection, *A Street In Bronzeville*, was published in 1945 and received immediate critical acclaim. Her second poetry book, *Annie Allen*, was published in 1949 and centered on the life of a young Black girl growing up in Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood.

The following year, Brooks became the first African American poet to win a Pulitzer Prize for poetry for this work.

In 1953, Brooks published her only novel, *Maud Martha*, which follows the life of a Black woman, Maud Martha Brown, from childhood to adulthood. The novel addresses themes of prejudice and discrimination, both from white individuals and Black individuals with lighter skin tones – a reflection of Brooks' own experiences.

Brooks' literary success led to her being invited by President J.F. Kennedy to read at the Library of Congress poetry festival in 1962. In 1985, she was appointed Poetry Consultant to the Library of Congress.

Brooks' third poetry collection, *The Bean Eaters*, was published in 1960 and included many of her most famous poems, which were explicitly tied to social issues. In 1963, she began teaching poetry workshops, a role she continued throughout her life.

According to Brooks and many critics such as H.L.Gates Jr, R.L.Root Jr, Margaret Dickie and R.A.G. Carson, the Fisk University Second Black Writers' Conference in 1967 marked a significant turning point in her artistic life. Here, her interaction with younger Black writers inspired her to engage more deeply with the Black Arts Movement. In her autobiography, she reflects: "It frightens me to realize that if I had died before the age of fifty I would have died a "negro" fraction". Following this realization, she adopted a more overtly African American identity, symbolized by her choice to wear hair in what she called a "natural" way (afro) and her writing style evolved to become less traditional in form and more accessible. One thing remained the same: her main interest was telling the story of Black people.

Brooks continued to explore the complexities of African American identity in her later works, such as *In the Mecca* (1968), which depicted a community now in crisis. She increasingly chose to publish with Black presses and focused on nurturing young Black poets. After this

third collection, Brooks started to publish only with Black presses. As continuing to explore form and its challenges, she also tried to understand what it meant for her to be an African American poet.

Her autobiography, *Report From Part One* (1972), was followed by *Report From Part Two* (1995). These volumes offer a collection of personal memories, interviews, and letters that provide insight into her life and work. Her later works include *Primer for Blacks* (1980) and *Blacks* (1987).

Brooks remained active in writing, teaching and supporting young poets until she died from cancer at the age of 83 on December 3, 2000.

2.2 The Historical Context

To fully appreciate Gwendolyn Brooks' *A Street in Bronzeville*, it is crucial to understand the historical and socio-economic context of Chicago's South Side during the first half of the 20th century. The South Side, the largest of Chicago's three sections, is home to the Bronzeville neighborhood, the setting for Brooks' collection. Bronzeville's name, chosen through a contest sponsored by the *Chicago Bee*, reflects the brown skin color of its predominantly Black residents.

Like much of the rest of the United States, the South Side was racially segregated for many decades, with Black residents concentrated in the Bronzeville District, placed within an area known as "the Black Belt". This area emerged due to discriminatory real estate practices that confined Black residents to certain neighborhoods, limiting their opportunities to improve their conditions and perpetuating systemic inequality. Despite these difficulties, Bronzeville became a vibrant cultural hub, where art, music, and literature flourished in response to the challenges of urban life.

Economically, the South Side was significant due to its factories, steel mills and meat-packing plants, which attracted many immigrants, including a large number of African Americans during the Great Migration. This movement, that began in the 1840s and continued through World War II, saw thousands of Black individuals move from the South to the North in search of better opportunities. This migration not only transformed the demographic landscape of cities like Chicago as in Figure 1[1] but also contributed to the emergence of a distinctive cultural identity within the Black community.

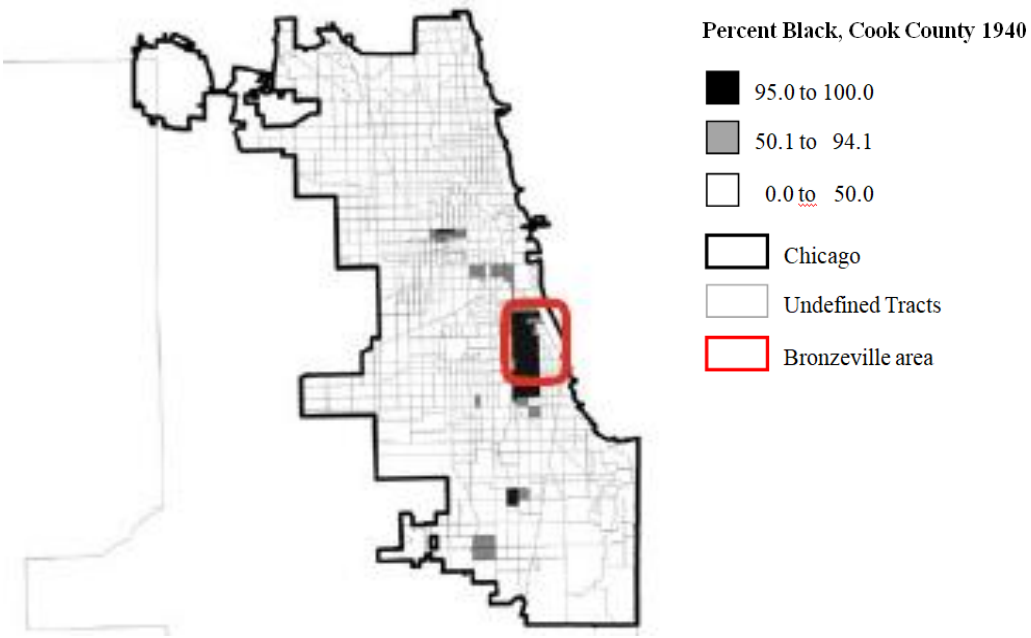


Figure 1

Percentage of Blacks in the Bronzeville area.

[1] Figure 1 has been taken from *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* and *National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0*. For additional information about the sources see the Works Cited section.

I made a small change by adding the Bronzeville area in red as seen in the Legend.

The Bronzeville neighborhood was a place of contrasts. On one hand, it was vibrant and culturally rich, known for its lively nightlife, jazz, blues, and gospel, as well as landmarks like the Regal Theatre. Its center was placed around the crowded corners of 35th/State Street and 47th Street/South Parkway Boulevard (later renamed Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive). At these intersections, people came to see and be seen, shop, conduct business, dine and dance, and experience this black metropolis, exactly as described by Brooks. The crowds reflected the diverse mix of people living in the Black Belt: young and old, poor and prosperous, professionals and laborers, professionals and laborers, each contributing to the neighborhood's unique tapestry.

On the other, the neighborhood was a place plagued by poverty, social challenges, and racial injustice, worsened by the crowded and often substandard housing in the "Black Belt." Table 1[2] shows the increasing in population between the 1910s and 1950s:

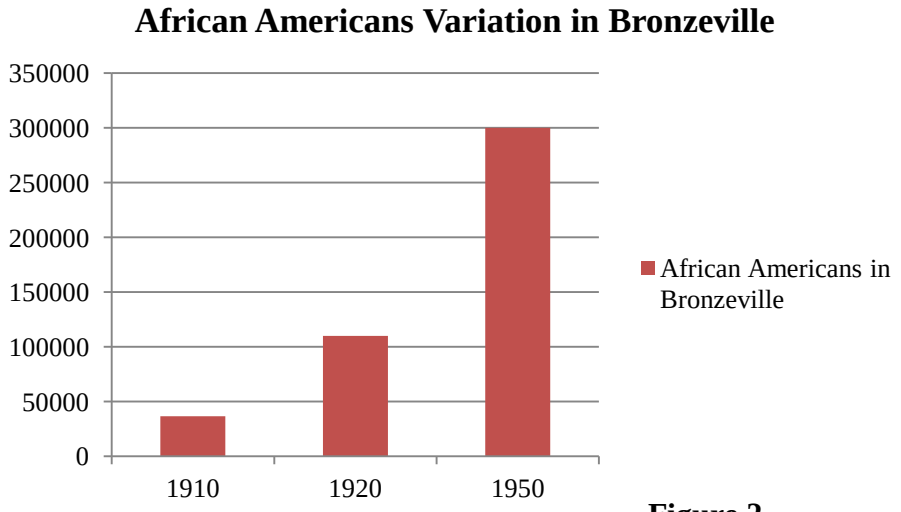


Figure 2

African Americans Variation in Population in Bronzeville.

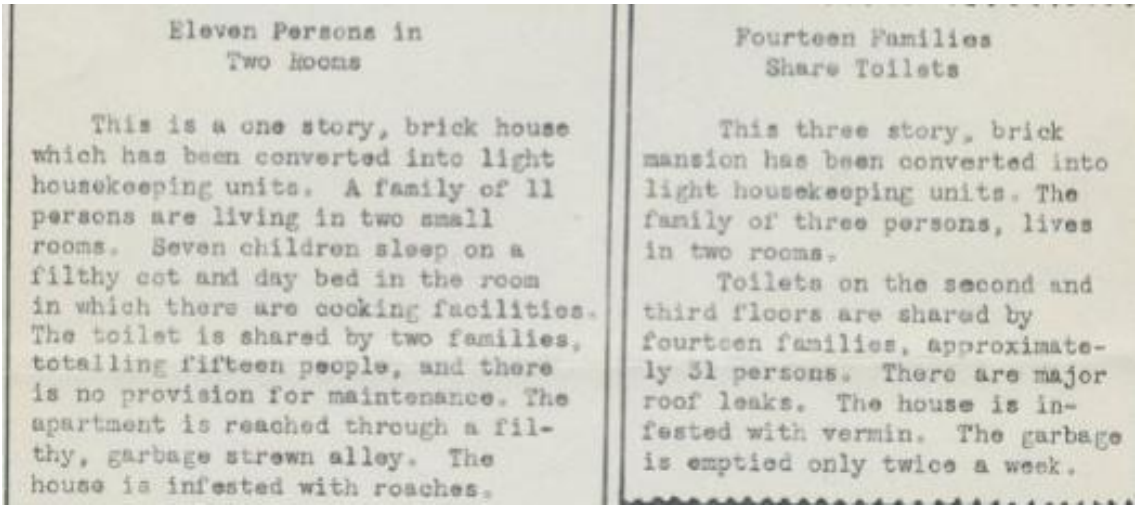
[2] Table 1 was created by esteeming the data from *From Riots to Renaissance: Bronzeville: The Black Metropoli* and *The "Black Metropolis": The Center of Black - and American - History on Chicago's South Side.* For additional information about the sources see the Works Cited section.

The “housing phenomenon” described by Brooks was originally caused by the increasing social demand for new residence in the city, with studio apartments and kitchenette buildings comprising a large part of the housing supply. The term "kitchenette" originally referred to a newly constructed small apartment in Chicago, first emerging around 1916 in Uptown during a period of dramatic increase in apartment construction. These kitchenettes featured "Pullman kitchens" and "Murphy in-a-door beds" designed to conserve space, symbolizing efficiency and modernity.

By the 1920s, particularly during the Great Depression, World War II, and the early post-war era, the term evolved to describe the conversions of existing housing into smaller units by both white and African American landlords. Single-family houses and multi-family homes were transformed for more intensive use, with medium and large brick buildings being divided into one-room units using beaver-board partitions. Entire families frequently occupied single rooms, sharing a limited number of bathrooms and kitchens, which exceeded plumbing capacity and led to significant deterioration in sanitary conditions.

During the 1940s, more than 80,000 conversions of this nature occurred in Chicago, resulting in a 52% increase in units lacking private bath facilities. Although kitchenettes of varying quality were rented by people of all races, including white World War II veterans and young families on the Near North Side, their rapid proliferation and clustering in the Black Belt made them particularly prominent in African American housing. A federal study conducted in the 1930s found that conditions in kitchenettes occupied by Blacks in one South Side area were significantly worse than those occupied by white residents.

The following report from the Chicago Housing Authority describes the condition of a Chicago South Side kitchenette:



Eleven Persons in
Two Rooms

This is a one story, brick house which has been converted into light housekeeping units. A family of 11 persons are living in two small rooms. Seven children sleep on a filthy cot and day bed in the room in which there are cooking facilities. The toilet is shared by two families, totalling fifteen people, and there is no provision for maintenance. The apartment is reached through a filthy, garbage strewn alley. The house is infested with roaches.

Fourteen Families
Share Toilets

This three story, brick mansion has been converted into light housekeeping units. The family of three persons, lives in two rooms.

Toilets on the second and third floors are shared by fourteen families, approximately 31 persons. There are major roof leaks. The house is infested with vermin. The garbage is emptied only twice a week.

Figure 3

CHA Bulletin, March 1941.

The trend was farther fueled by the Housing Act of 1949, which aimed to establish and improve public housing but often resulted in poor living conditions for Black people. These habitations continued to be built in the working-class South Side into the 1960s.

Brooks captures these dualities in *A Street in Bronzeville*, presenting a landscape that ranges from vibrant depictions of Black nightlife to the harsh realities of life in kitchenette buildings. Her poetry delves into the complex and often ambiguous relationship between Black residents and the broader American society, reflecting both the cultural richness and the systemic challenges inherent in their lives. By weaving together these elements, Brooks not only highlights the struggles of her community but also celebrates their resilience and creativity, positioning Bronzeville as a critical site within the African American literary tradition.

2.3 Black Arts: A Research of Identity

Black people have historically sought to affirm their identity through art. After 1918, during the Great Migration, African Americans moved from the South to the northern states of the US - especially to large cities like Chicago, Detroit, and New York - to escape discrimination, segregation, and poverty.

In Harlem, New York, African Americans gradually began to reshape art and challenge the prevailing stereotypes of the Black manual laborer, thus giving life to a vibrant artistic and cultural movement. The Harlem Renaissance was guided by figures like William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, a prominent civil rights activist and editor of *The Crisis*. Du Bois used his publications as a platform to promote this emerging Black art movement, advocating for a new Black theatre known as the Krigwa Players Little Negro Theatre, which had to be "About us. By us. For us, and Near us." (Du Bois, 1926) As part of his initiative, Du Bois sponsored a contest for plays focused on the Black experience, aiming to broaden the range of stories told about African Americans.

Following the success of the Krigwa Players, more all-Black theater companies were formed, and other literary organizations began supporting Black artistic endeavors, including poetry and visual arts. Influential figures such as Zora Neal Hurston and Langston Hughes, whose works were featured in *The Crisis*, were later included in *The New Negro*, anthology curated by Alain Locke. This collection explored the artistic, social, and political changes began by the Harlem movement and encouraged Black people to seek their identity despite of the stereotypes imposed by white society.

The Harlem Renaissance set the foundation for Black artists in the 1950s to their exploration of identity through art. Art became a powerful tool for cultural preservation, self-expression, and resistance to oppression, as African Americans sought to reconnect to their roots despite

the cultural erasure caused by slavery and colonization. Forms of cultural expression like jazz, gospel, and blues were especially impactful, as they allowed Black artists to express their emotions and share their stories, ultimately shaping a collective Black identity. These musical traditions, in particular, are deeply integrated into Gwendolyn Brooks' work - not only in the content of her poems but also in her use of rhythm and form.

2.4 *A Street in Bronzeville*

This essay focuses on Gwendolyn Brooks' first collection of poems, *A Street in Bronzeville*, published with Harper & Brothers in 1945. In this collection, Brooks offers a vivid portrayal of Black life in Chicago's southern neighborhoods. Her poems depict everyday scenes of urban Black life, shedding light on the experiences of people often ignored by mainstream literature. As Brooks herself remarked, "if you wanted a poem, you had only to look out of a window. There was material always, walking or running, fighting or screaming or singing." (Brooks, "Report from Part One", p. 69).

Between 1910 and 1920, the population of Bronzeville drastically increased as thousands of African Americans migrated to Chicago to escape the segregation and violence of the South. This migration shaped Bronzeville's dual nature: it was a place of both prosperity and hardship, with successful businesses alongside poorer areas like back alleys, street corners, vacant lots, and kitchenette buildings.

In *A Street in Bronzeville*, Brooks skillfully celebrates the resilience of ordinary people without idealizing them. Despite their despair and unfortunate conditions, her characters are not depicted as mere victims of circumstances over which they have little control. Instead, they are portrayed as individuals who, while constrained by their environment, still exercise a degree of agency. Brooks often employs irony and subtle protest in her work, giving voice and dignity to those who might otherwise remain invisible. The characters range from

workers in service-oriented jobs such as maids and beauty-shop operators to professional classes, often preachers. Among them there are gamblers, “bad girls” and those who seemingly lack means of support, all integral parts of the Bronzeville population. In his essay for the CLA Journal, A.P. Davis described Gwendolyn Brooks as the “Poet of the Unheroic”, as she gives voices and dignity to these invisible characters. Their dignity stems from the simple fact of being human and from their refusal to surrender completely, as they continue to hold onto an almost non-existent hope.

The collection is divided into several sections as in Table 1, each exploring different aspects of life in Bronzeville.

The first section, which shares the collection’s title, consists of 20 poems that captures fragments of everyday life, revealing the socio-economic struggles of Chicago’s South Side with its crushed dreams, vivid imagery, odors, and bleakness.

The second section, *The Sundays of Satin-Legs Smith*, is a 1,590-line ballad that bitterly reflects on the longing for love and justice. The protagonist, Satin-Legs Smith, escapes into a daydream world and adopts a persona to cope with his harsh reality. By doing this, he tries to endure until the next Sunday, when he can once again dress up and strut through the streets.

The third section, *Negro Hero,* commemorates Dorie Miller, a black sailor whose heroism during the attack on Pearl Harbor saved many lives. Here, Brooks explores the bitter irony of Black serviceman fighting for a democracy that continued to deny them basic human rights.

The fourth section, *Hattie Scott*, recounts the domestic lives of Black women, from obedient housewives to those struggling for liberation. The title may refer to Hattie T. Scott Peterson, the first African-American woman to earn a bachelor's degree in civil engineering.

The fifth section, *Queen of the Blues*, delves into the life of Mame, exploring her family history and inner thoughts. Her story is one of melancholy, pain, and injustice, reflecting the treatment of women in a male-dominated society even in that place she considered her kingdom: music.

The sixth section, *Ballad of Pearl May Lee*, addresses themes of racial violence and sexual exploitation, connecting the brutal act of lynching with the broader context of racial hatred. This section powerfully captures the intersection of race and gender, highlighting the specific vulnerabilities of Black women in a society rife with racial prejudice.

The seventh section, *Gay Chaps at the Bar*, is a series of off-rhyme sonnets that illustrate the tragic irony faced by Black soldiers during WWII. These poems explore the experiences of Black men who fought for freedom abroad while being denied basic rights at home. The sonnets utilize a traditional lyric form, often associated with beauty and love, as a means for protest and a sharp critique of racial hypocrisy. As in the poem "Negro Hero," Brooks addresses the disconnect between the noble cause for which these soldiers fought and the discrimination they faced, even within the military ranks.

In *A Street in Bronzeville*, Gwendolyn Brooks not only captured the essence of urban Black life in mid-20th century Chicago but also redefined the literary landscape by bringing the experiences of marginalized communities to the forefront. Through her nuanced portrayal of ordinary people and their struggles, Brooks demonstrated the power of poetry to challenge societal norms and give voice to the voiceless. The collection stands as a testament to the resilience of the Black community, illustrating how art can both reflect and resist the harsh realities of the world. As we move forward we should keep in mind the themes and techniques discussed in this chapter.

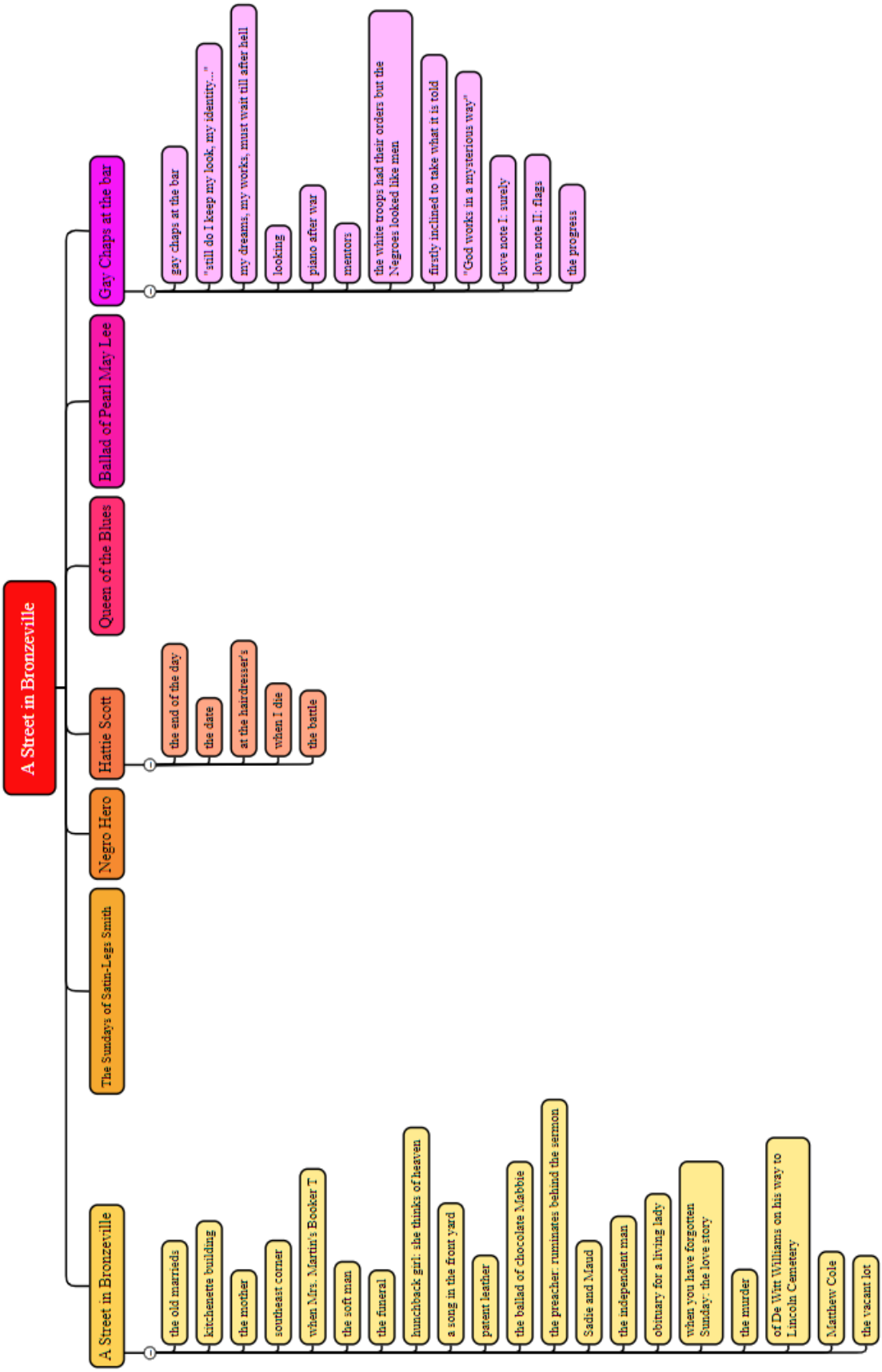


Figure 4

A Street in Bronzeville: Structure of the Collection.

3. Formality as a Mirror of Identity

The way individuals speak is substantially shaped by the context in which they are born and raised, and the level of formality in language is no exception. Before diving into the analysis of formality in Brooks' collection, it is essential to clarify how I measured the formality of each poem by applying F. Heylighen and J.M. Dewaele's methodology as described in their work *Formality of Language: Definition, Measurement and Behavioral Determinants*.

In their study, Heylighen and Dewaele critically examine the ambiguity surrounding the definition of formality in language noting that the lack of a precise definition has significantly hindered previous research on stylistic variation, making it difficult to establish reliable measures and analyses. Traditional definitions often rely heavily on non-linguistic factors - what they term "surface formality" - such as contextual or social situational cues. This approach tends to overlook the intrinsic linguistic characteristics that can distinguish formal from informal language.

To address this gap, the authors propose a more concrete and measurable concept of formality grounded in what they call "deep formality." This is defined as the reduction of ambiguity through the minimization of context-dependence, emphasizing the importance of precision in communication. Formal language is characterized by adherence to established grammatical rules, a lack of colloquialisms, and a more elaborate vocabulary. It is typically used in professional, academic, or ceremonial contexts where precision and clarity are essential. Conversely, informal language exhibits flexibility, using everyday speech patterns, slang, and colloquialisms. This form of language is prevalent in casual conversations and personal interactions, where the emphasis is on relatability and ease of communication.

By focusing on the linguistic elements that contribute to formality, Heylighen and Dewaele aim to provide a framework that allows for a more systematic analysis of language use across

different contexts. To quantify language formality, they explore several methodological approaches such as syntactic complexity, grammatical structures, statistical analyses, and lexical choices, with a particular focus on this last element.

The authors assert that by analyzing the vocabulary used in texts, one can differentiate between formal and informal expressions, using the frequency of specific word classes as an indicator. They note that formal language tends to utilize a higher frequency of nouns, adjectives, articles, and prepositions (adpositions)[3], while informal language shows an increased presence of pronouns, verbs, adverbs, and interjections.

Heylighen and Dewaele introduce the F-score as a quantitative measure of formality based on word class frequencies. The formula for calculating the F-score is as follows:

$$F = \frac{\text{noun freq.} + \text{adj. freq.} + \text{adp. freq.} + \text{art. freq} - \text{pron. freq.} - \text{verb freq.} - \text{interj. freq.} + 100}{2}$$

This formula provides a systematic way to quantify the level of formality in a given text, with higher scores indicating a more formal style.

Furthermore, the authors emphasize that formality is context-dependent and can shift based on various situational factors including:

---

[3] "Adposition" is a broader category that includes both prepositions and postpositions. It is a member of a closed set of items that occur before or after a complement composed of a noun phrase, noun, pronoun, or clause that functions as a noun phrase, and form a single structure with the complement to express its grammatical and semantic relation to another unit within a clause.

I changed the tag from preposition to adposition to be thorough. Source: SIL Glossary of Linguistic Terms. For additional information on the source see Works Cited.

- Social factors → Status and Power Dynamics

  → Group Identity
- Cultural Context
- Personal Factors → Personality Traits

  → Communication Style
- Situational Context

Heylighen and Dewaele encapsulate their argument by asserting that "we could expect that the higher the academic level a person has reached, the richer his or her vocabulary and the wider his or her outlook" (Heylighen & Dewaele, 32). This statement underlines their belief in the direct relationship between language formality and an individual's educational and experiential background - further reinforcing the need for a more structured understanding of language formality in both academic and practical contexts.

In this thesis, I applied Heylighen and Dewaele's formality formula to measure the degree of formality in Brooks' work. According to their framework, a higher degree of formality in the language of the text correlates with a higher resulting F value. Regarding the categories Heylighen and Dewaele outlined, they clarify that:

> Although the subcategories (nouns, verbs, etc.) are here listed explicitly, the formula can be made more general by just adding whichever words seem the more formal and subtracting whichever words seem the more deictic. This is useful in situations where the above grammatical categorizations are ambiguous or where data are lacking.
>
> ("Formality of Language", 13)

Taking into account the unique linguistic context of Bronzeville, I refined the categories used in the formula, which are outlined in Table 1 below:

TABLE 1
FORMAL AND INFORMAL CATOEGORIES

Formal/Non-deictic	**Informal/Deictic category**
Noun	Pronoun
Adjective	Verb
Adposition (preposition)	Adverb
Article	Interjection
Poetic word	Slang
	Abbreviation

Table 1

Categories Relevant for Formality Calculation.

Once all the theoretical components were aligned, I proceeded with the practical work, which involved the following steps:

1. *Word Tagging*: I used UAMCorpus[4] analysis software to tag each word in every poem. The software automatically identifies the following categories: noun, verb, pronoun, adjective, adverb, interjection, adposition, and determiner[5]. Additional categories were not included in the analysis as they fell outside the scope of the formula.
2. *Manual Tagging*: while the software allows for automatic tags, they were not always accurate. I corrected or changed existing tags as necessary and added specific tags for "abbreviation," "poetic word," and "slang." For the "poetic word" category I referred to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which provides a specific tool that categorizes

[4] UAM CorpusTool. Versione 6, Software, Mick O'Donnell, 2022.

[5] A determiner is a word or affix that belongs to a class of noun modifiers that expresses the reference, including quantity, of a noun. Determiners were not included in the formula but were tagged for convenience since it was easier to distinguish them from other elements.

words based on their formality according to frequency. For tagging "slang", I consulted, three different slang dictionaries[6] to ensure the accuracy of the classification, keeping in mind that the poems were written in the 1950s.

3. *Data Compilation*: the software generated tables with the count of words for each category, providing a comprehensive overview of the language used in the poems.
4. *Formality Calculation*: Using Excel, I created a table to calculate the level of formality in the poems according to Heylighen and Dewaele's formula.

To illustrate this process, I will use *The Old-Marrieds* as an example..

1. & 2. Word Tagging & Manual Tagging (Figure 5)

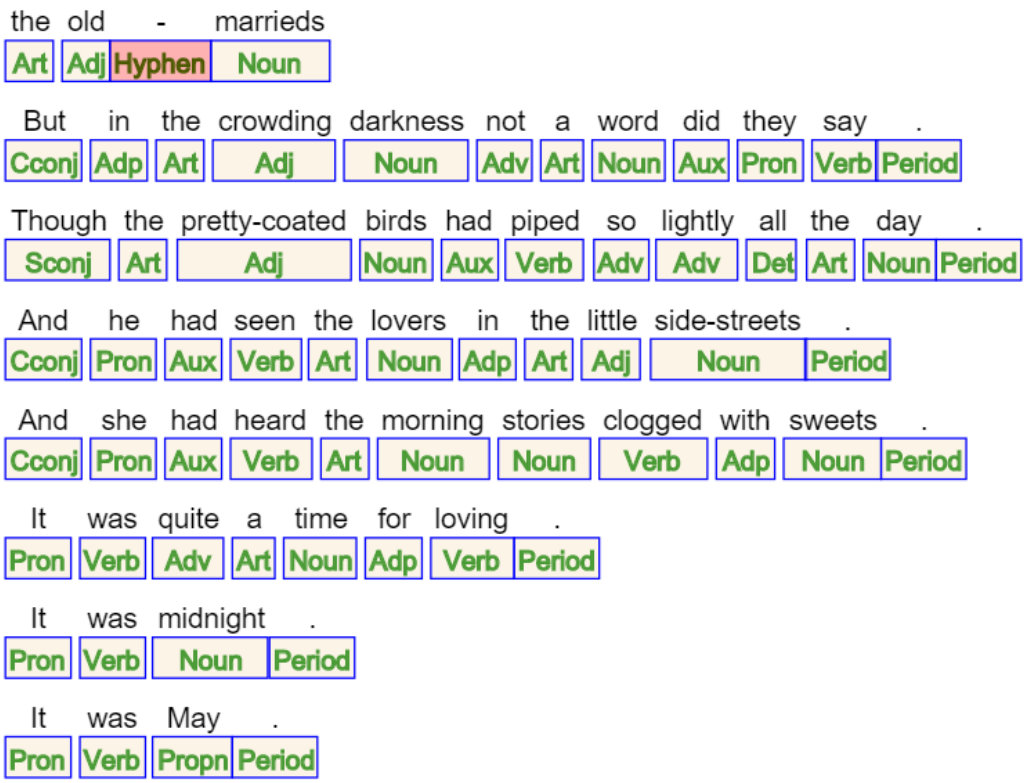


Figure 5

The Old-Marrieds tagged.

[6] The three slang dictionaries I used are: *Dictionary of American Slang, Juba to Jive: A Dictionary of African-American Slang*, and *McGraw-Hill's Dictionary of American Slang and Colloquial Expressions*. For additional information about the sources see the Works Cited section.

While nouns, verbs, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, interjections, adpositions and determiners were automatically tagged, abbreviations, poetic words, and slang were manually tagged. Some corrections were made to the automatic tagging using *La Sintassi: Regole e Strutture*[7] as reference. The tag "aux" was leaved in order to avoid counting the verb twice since they are part of the same verb phrase (VP)[8].

3. Data Compilation (Table 2)

WORD-CLASS	N	%
- noun	14	17.9
- verb	10	12.8
- pron	7	9.0
- adj	5	6.4
- adv	5	6.4
- det	1	1.3
- cconj	4	5.1
- sconj	1	1.3
- aux	5	6.4
- intj	0	0.0
- adp	5	6.4
- art	11	14.1
- slang	0	0.0
- elev	0	0.0
TOTAL:	**68**	**87.2%**

Table 2

Word-Class Count.

[7] Donati, Caterina. *La sintassi: Regole e strutture*. Il Mulino, 2008.

[8] In generative grammar, a verb phrase is a syntactic unit that corresponds to the predicate. In addition to the verb, this includes auxiliaries, objects, object complements, and other constituents apart from the subject. Source: SIL Glossary of Linguistic Terms. For additional information on the source see Cited Works.

Of all the categories listed, only the following were meaningful for our study: noun, verb, pronoun, adjective, adverb, interjection, adposition, abbreviation, poetic word, and slang.

4. Formality Calculation (Table 3)

THE OLD-MARRIEDS												
POS					**NEG**						**TOT.**	**FORMALITY**
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
15	5	5	11	0	0	7	10	0	5	0	58	
25,86	8,62	8,62	18,97	0	0	12,07	17,24	0	8,62	0	62,07	**62,1%**

Table 3

Formality Calculation.

The first row of data in Table 5 is a direct transcription of the data from Table 4, where the "Tot." column represents the total number of words considered in the analysis. The second row displays the percentage of each specific word class in the poem. The percentage in bold represents the overall formality score calculated using Heylighen and Dewaele's formula.

In conclusion, having compiled all the necessary data, I proceeded to calculate the average formality of each section of *A Street in Bronzeville*, which is visually represented in Figure 6.

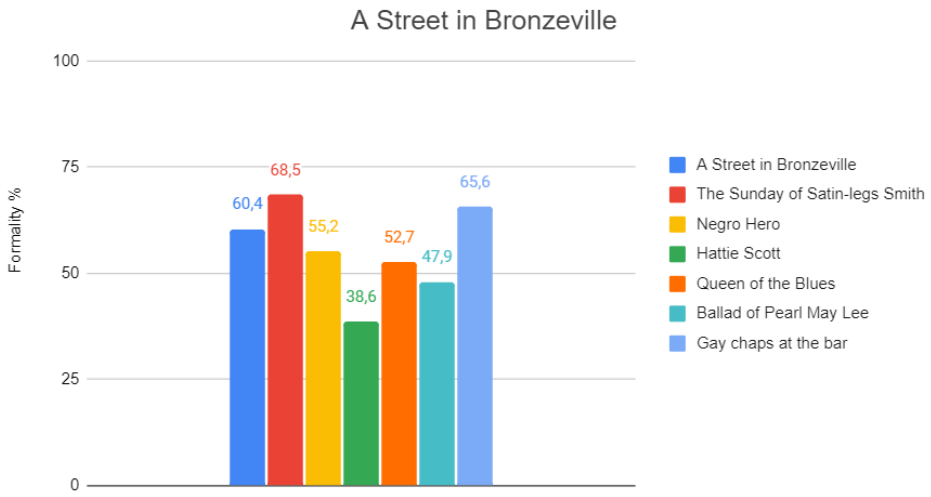


Figure 6

Formality per Section.

Now that the theoretical framework has been clarified, I will move on to discuss how this analysis of formality reflects the identity quest observable in Gwendolyn Brooks' collection.

4. Gwendolyn Brooks: An Identity Quest

African Americans have long used the arts as a means of exploring their identity, its formation, and its place within American society. From the earliest slave narratives to contemporary works, art has been employed to depict the uniqueness, complexities, triumphs and contradictions inherent in this search for identity.

Each artist presents diverse themes and perspectives, each with its own literary voice. Brooks herself highlights the diversity within African American literature, remarking that the black writer "has the American experience and he also has the black experience; so, he's very rich". (Brooks, "Report from Part One", p. 169).

It is within this landscape that Gwendolyn Brooks contributes her unique voice. As mentioned earlier, her works are a continuous reflection on her identity as an African American, a woman, and a poet, exploring how these characteristics interact and coexist. These reflections span her entire career: on one hand, she captures the everyday lives of African Americans in the 1950s, while on the other, she mirrors the journey of an entire population through her own experience. The struggles of this journey are encapsulated in a statement she made: "Until 1967 my own blackness did not confront me with a shrill spelling of itself . . . Yet, although almost secretly, I had always felt that to be black was good" ("Report From Part One", 83-84).

Poet, novelist, and editor H. D. Melhem observes: "Brooks's poetry partakes in a dynamic continuum. Cultural cross-fertilization and (...) its resulting "hybrid vigor" have fostered greatness in British and American literature". ("Poetry and the Heroic Voice, 238). The

richness which Brooks referred to in the earlier statement is addressed by Melhem as a "dynamic continuum" - a spectrum that stretches between two cultures. All African Americans, and indeed all individuals within such a cultural context, find themselves somewhere along this continuum, each in a unique way. In Brooks' works, the author's *I* and the third person often blend, making it difficult to distinguish her personal experience from those of the characters she portrays. As Raynaud asserts, Brooks' autobiography, *"*is not a text where the narrator's *I* takes control of the narrative from start to finish; on the contrary, it could be said that it is an autobiography intermittently written in the third person, for Gwendolyn Brooks often uses the identity she has for the others" (141).

Contemporary psychology has tried to address the "dynamic continuum" in multicultural societies, leading to the development of the Dialogical Self Theory (DST). This theory offers a way to interpret identity in the age of globalization, challenging the idea of a fixed and singular identity. It provides a useful framework for examining self-structure, interpersonal communication, identity development, and the influence of socio-cultural factors on the formation of the self.

4.1 Blackness

As previously mentioned, Gwendolyn Brooks captures the diverse experiences of African American society, portraying women, men, children, and a variety of Black individuals. Her poetry sheds light on the multifaceted challenges faced by the African American community. Brooks herself acknowledges the connection between her poetry and her personal experience: "You speak of things you know, things you feel, things you have personally observed. (Observation I feel is an aspect of experience). You'll find my personal interpretation of hundreds of things that are life things" ("Update on Part One", 95).

In her work, Brooks does not separate the *I* from the *other*; everything she experiences and observes contributes to the rich self-repertoire that she portrays in her poetry.

The first significant *I*-position found in Brooks' *A Street in Bronzeville* is that of *"*Blackness*"*. Brooks consistently asserts that blackness is an unchanging and essential aspect of her personal identity and the identity of African Americans. Although when she wrote *A Street in Bronzeville*, she was still "a Negro fraction", (Brooks, "Report from Part One", 45) and had not yet fully begun her later journey of discovering African identity, it is undeniable that the concept of Blackness is already present in her early work.

To demonstrate that the *I* as a Black is indeed already central in her first collection of poetry, three different aspects will be analyzed: content, formality, and poetic style. It is important to note that we are not suggesting that there are distinct poems about Black and white people and that the poetic form and formality strictly reflect the content. rather, in many of Brooks' poems, multiple *I*-positions are present, and these could be expressed through content, form or formality.

4.1.1 Content

As Brooks herself declares, all of the poems in *A Street in Bronzeville* feature African American protagonists. When discussing the *I*-position of "Blackness", it is crucial to clarify that this refers to the exploration of Black identity - what does it mean to be Black. While not every poem in the collection addresses the specific experience of being Black, a significant portion of the collection, approximately 41.5%, focuses on this theme. Brooks affirms early on that Blackness is an unchanging and essential aspect of her identity, a concept that becomes even more prominent later in her life. Black identity encompasses many different facets, ranging from physical appearance and to the struggle for basic human rights.

In her poem S*till do I Keep My Look, My Identity…*, Brooks emphasizes the significance of physical appearance and its role in shaping one's sense of self:

> Each body has its art, its precious prescribed
> Pose, that even in passion's droll contortions
> (…)
> is its, and nothing else's.
> Each body has its pose. No other stock
> That is irrevocable, perpetual,
> And it keep. (lines 1-7)

Brooks firmly establishes Blackness – being dark-skinned - as an integral part of the African American identity, one that remains constant and unchanging. This identity begins with physical appearance and then extends beyond it, accompanying Black individuals in their everyday lives. Being Black means belonging to a culture that both intersects with and transcends the broader American culture, and this duality is reflected in the complexities Brooks navigates throughout her work.

Furthermore, Brooks employs vivid imagery to highlight the internal and external conflicts faced by her characters, demonstrating the societal pressures that seek to define and limit their identities. This struggle between self-identity and societal perception is central to the Black experience, as individuals navigate a world that often imposes rigid stereotypes and expectations upon them. Brooks' nuanced portrayal invites readers to consider not only the challenges of being Black but also the resilience and strength that emerge from this lived reality.

This cultural influence permeates the poems in the collection, but it is particularly evident in certain works, such as *Queen of the Blues*, where the music culture of the blues plays a central role:

> Mame was singing
> At the Midnight Club.
> And the place was red
> With blues.
> She could shake her body
> Across the floor.
> For what did she have
> To lose? (lines 1-8)

Here, Brooks not only showcases the richness of African American musical heritage but also delves into Mame's emotional and psychological dimensions. The act of singing becomes a form of resistance and a means of self-expression, allowing the characters to navigate their pain and joy. This duality captures the essence of Black life, where art serves as both a refuge and a powerful vehicle for social commentary. Additionally, this poem reflects the harsh realities of being Black, such as loneliness, working tirelessly for inadequate pay, and being forced to accept whatever circumstances life presents in order to survive.

As previously mentioned, a crucial part of the Black experience is the constant struggle for basic human rights. This theme is woven throughout the collection and is evident in many of the poems. One of the works that particularly addresses this issue is *Negro Hero*, where a Black soldier questions the absurdity of sacrificing his life to save white people who do not even recognize his humanity because of his Blackness:

> Still - am I good enough to die for them, is my blood bright enough to be spilled,

Was my constant back-question-are they clear

On this? Or do I intrude even now?

Am I clean enough to kill for them, do they wish me to kill

For them or is my place while death licks his lips and strides to them

In the galley still? (lines 27-32)

In *Negro Hero*, Brooks vividly portrays the internal conflict faced by Black soldiers, underscoring the painful irony of fighting for a nation that denies them equality and basic human dignity. Through this lens, Brooks not only critiques systemic oppression but also illuminates the psychological toll it takes on individuals within the Black community. The soldier's existential crisis reflects the broader questioning of identity and worth that many African Americans grapple with in a society that marginalizes them.

Gwendolyn Brooks' *A Street in Bronzeville* offers a profound exploration of African American identity, capturing the complexities of Blackness through the themes of cultural heritage, physical appearance, and the relentless struggle for dignity and human rights. Whether through the vibrant depiction of blues culture in *Queen of the Blues* or the searing introspection of a Black soldier in *Negro Hero*, Brooks' poetry emphasizes the resilience of African Americans in the face of systemic oppression.

These examples of the *I*-positioning of Blackness are just a few; many more instances can be found throughout her work. Her poetry not only reflects the lived realities of being Black in America but also affirms Blackness as an indelible and essential facet of identity, both personal and collective. From the content of the poems, the *I*-positioning of Blackness is clearly evident.

4.1.2 Formality

As outlined in Chapter 3, after collecting and processing all the data from the poems in *A Street in Bronzeville*, I applied Heylighen and Dewaele's formality formula to calculate the degree of formality for each poem. My initial expectation was that the formality would be lower in poems centered around Blackness, with the hypothesis that this *I*-position would be expressed through a less formal register, often combined with African American slang..

This hypothesis is based on the understanding that the level of formality in a mid 20th century African American neighborhood would typically be lower, as the socio-economic conditions of the time did not provide the majority of Black residents with access to higher education. Consequently, the informal register seen in Brooks' *A Street in Bronzeville* can be interpreted as a linguistic reflection of the *I*-positioning of Blackness in that specific socio-economic and cultural context.

The collection as a whole centers on the lives of its inhabitants - ordinary Black individuals living in the 1940s and 1950s. The characters Brooks portrays are people one might encounter while walking around the neighborhood, making the collection a true reflection of her community. This authenticity is further achieved through the use of everyday language and a predominantly informal register, even though her earlier works are not as immediately accessible as her later ones.

Furthermore, this use of informal language helps bridge the gap between the poet and her audience, creating a sense of intimacy and authenticity that resonates deeply within the community she portrays. By employing colloquial language, Brooks captures the essence of everyday life in Bronzeville, making the experiences of her characters feel immediate and relatable – even if not as immediate and readable as later poems by Brooks. This choice of

language also emphasizes the normalization of Blackness, inviting readers to confront and engage with the realities of Black life in a way that feels both personal and universal.

An example of this lower register, reflecting the I-position of Blackness, can be seen in *Patent Leather,* which has a formality level of 48%:

> That cool chick down on Calumet
> Has got herself a brand new cat,
> With pretty patent-leather hair.
> And he is man enough for her.
>
> Us other guys don't think he's such
> A much.
> His voice is shrill.
> His muscle is pitiful.
>
> That cool chick down on Calumet,
> Though, says he's really "it."
> And strokes the patent-leather hair
> That makes him man enough for her.

The poem's overall register is conversational, which aligns with the informal way the speaker addresses the subject. Words like "cool chick," "brand new cat," and the colloquial expression "he's really 'it'" establish a relaxed, street-level tone typical of everyday dialogue, which gives the poem a lower degree of formality. The phrase "patent-leather hair" adds an element of in-group language, making it more relatable to the community familiar with the style. This in

turn contributes to the informal, conversational tone of the poem, as Brooks uses a culturally resonant term to draw a vivid image.

The formality across the collection is average indicating the ever-present *I*-position of Blackness. This poem is just one example of how Brooks' use of language across the collection, in fact the degree of formality fluctuates depending on how different *I*-positions intersect. As Blackness is not the sole *I*-position present - aligning with Hermans' view of the self as plural rather than singular - a higher or lower degree of formality, even within the context of a Black neighborhood, should not be viewed as a discrepancy. Instead these variations highlight the multiplicity of positionalities within Brooks' work.

For instance, poems such as *Ballad of Pearl May Lee* and those in the *Hattie Scott* section exhibit a notably lower degree of formality, as the *I*-position of Blackness intersects with that of Womanhood, which will be investigated in the following sections. Similarly, lower formality is reinforced through the use of direct speech, as seen in *When Mrs. Martin Booker's T*, where the protagonist's direct voice is paired with African American vernacular. This approach not only underscores the I-position of Blackness but also contributes to the poem's overall informality.

In sum, the varying levels of formality in *A Street in Bronzeville* reflect the complexity of Gwendolyn Brooks' portrayal of Black identity. The lower formality, particularly in poems where Blackness intersects with other *I*-positions like Womanhood, underscores the authenticity of the characters' voices and the cultural context they inhabit. On the other hand, in poems where Blackness intersects with the position of Whiteness the degree of formality notably increases, as we will see in following sections.

4.1.3 Poetic Form

The third factor in analyzing the *I*-position of Blackness in *A Street in Bronzeville* is the poetic form employed in *A Street in Bronzeville*. About 60% of the poems in the collection adhere to traditional European forms such as ballads and sonnets, while the other are less traditional and structured. This suggests that while Brooks aimed to be a spokesperson for the Black community and succeeded in many ways, she was still in the process of fully embracing and expressing her Black identity through her poetry.

From a poetic standpoint, Brooks' expression in 1945 was still evolving. Although she utilized free verse, she continued to draw on the structured, aesthetic traditions of European poetry, which can be more formal and challenging to interpret. This indicates that while Brooks was beginning to find her voice as a Black poet, her style remained influenced by the formal poetic education she had recently completed. This influence is seen in her choice of more traditional forms, which may reflect a desire to gain recognition within the literary establishment, dominated by white audiences and critics at the time.

Only later in her life did Brooks express a desire to write more accessible and comprehensible poetry that resonated with broader audiences, particularly within the Black community. In an interview with George Stavros, she recounted an experience during a poetry reading in a tavern:

> The poets started reading, and before we knew it, people had turned around on their bar stools, with their drinks behind them, and were listening. Then they applauded. And I thought that was a wonderful thing, something new. I want to write poetry-and it won't be Ezra Pound poetry, as you can imagine-that will be exciting to such people. And I don't see why it can't be "good" poetry, putting quotes around "good."
>
> (Brooks, “Report from Part One”, 152-153)

This shift in focus reflects a deepening commitment to her Black identity and a move away from the more obscure, formalist styles associated with traditional poetry. It illustrates Brooks' growing desire to create poetry that was not only "good" by traditional standards but also meaningful and engaging to her community.

In short, from the perspective of poetic form, what emerges is Brooks' *I*-position of Blackness, much as in the content of her work. However, her poetry at this stage remains somewhat dense and allusive, still attuned to the expectations of a white audience. The varying poetic forms in *A Street in Bronzeville* underscore Brooks' negotiation between her emerging Black identity and the influence of the traditional European forms she was trained in. Over time, her work would increasingly reflect a more fully realized Black identity, both in content and form, as she continued to refine her poetic voice.

4.2 Whiteness

As previously mentioned, Hermans' Dialogical Self Theory posits that the external environment occupies certain *I*-positions within our self-repertoire. For Gwendolyn Brooks, who lived, communicated, and published within a predominantly white American society, it is understandable that white America held a significant *I*-position in her identity.

In her autobiography, *Report From Part One*, Brooks says: "Not one celebration in my black household or in any black household that I knew featured any black glory or greatness or grandeur." (44) This statement highlights how the *I*-position of Blackness intricately intertwined with that of Whiteness, particularly in the 1950s, when racism and the "us versus them" rhetoric was still deeply ingrained.

As with the analysis of the previous *I*-position, the *I*-position of "Whiteness" will be examined through three different aspects: content, formality, and poetic style.

4.2.1 Content

Regarding content, the *I*-position of "Whiteness" does not occupy a prominent role in Brooks' work; as she repeatedly emphasized, her primary focus was on the lives of Black people in Bronzeville.

However, as previously established, the broader social context is a significant part of one's identity, and it shapes the self in complex ways. Thus, the presence of white characters and societal influences in Brooks' work not only underscores their role as antagonists but also reflects the pervasive nature of systemic racism that permeated every aspect of life. Therefore, white people, as part of the societal fabric in which Black individuals lived, are inevitably present in Brooks' works, even if they do not take center stage.

In Brooks' poems, white characters often emerge as powerful antagonists – background figures who steal dreams, dignity and freedom from Black protagonists. Even when not physically present, the influence of the "white" *I*-position manifests itself as an oppressive force against which Black individuals tirelessly struggle, trapped in dire conditions with little hope of escaping.

Sometimes, the white antagonist is depicted more subtly, as in *Ballad of Chocolate Mabbie*, where Mabbie's heart breaks upon seeing her love interest prefer a white girl:

> Out came the saucily bold Willie Boone.
> It was woe for our Mabbie now.
> He wore like a jewel a lemon-hued lynx
> With sand-waves loving her brow. (lines 17-20)

This dynamic of unfulfilled desire illustrates even further the emotional damage of racial hierarchy, as Mabbie's pain signifies not only personal loss but also a larger societal

commentary. The ideals of beauty and affection are impossible to achieve since they are often aligned with Whiteness.

In other instances, white people are mere background characters, always in a position of power relative to the Black characters. An example is the white lady who makes the character of *The Date* run late by assigning her additional chores:

> She got another think comin'. Hey, you.
> Whatcha mean talkin' about cleanin' silver?
> It's eight o'clock now, you fool.
> I'm leavin'. Got somethin' interestin' on my mind.
> Don't mean night school. (lines 4-8)

As the childhood illusion of being equally valued fades, Brooks reflects on the irony and sadness faced by Black soldiers in both *The White Troops had Their Orders but the Negroes Looked Like Men* and *Negro Hero*. Here, the *I*-positions of Whiteness are recounted through the eyes of Black soldiers:

> (In a southern city a white man said
> Indeed, I'd rather be dead;
> Indeed, I'd rather be shot in the head
> Or ridden to waste on the back of a flood
> Than saved by the drop of a black man's blood.) (lines 33-37)

The Black soldier's account highlights the *I*-position of Whiteness as emblematic of American society, expressing a coherent, though racist and cruel, sentiment that prefers death to being saved by a Black man. Elsewhere, Brooks critiques the absurdity of making Black people fight for a country that does not treat them as human:

Naturally, the important thing is, I helped to save them, them and a part of their democracy.

Even if I had to kick their law into their teeth in order to do that for them.

And I am feeling well and settled in myself because I believe it was a good job,

Despite this possible horror: that they might prefer the

Preservation of their law in all its sick dignity and their knives

To the continuation of their creed

And their lives. (lines 38-44)

In *The White Troops had Their Orders but the Negroes Looked Like Men*, Brooks reflects on the *I*-position of Whiteness within the "us versus them" rhetoric. The poem illustrates how white soldiers, to harbor racist suspicions toward Black soldiers, are perplexed upon realizing they were just men. The compartmentalization that defines their worldview - mirrored in the separate *I*-positions of Blackness and Whiteness – clashes in the shared experience of war:

They had supposed their formula was fixed.

They had obeyed instructions to devise

A type of cold, a type of hooded gaze.

But when the Negroes came they were perplexed.

These Negroes looked like men. (lines 1-5)

The poem's resolution points to a moment of existential crisis for the white soldiers, revealing the fragility of their constructed identities in the face of shared humanity.

Similarly, in *The Progress*, the *I*-positions of Whiteness and Blackness, often portrayed as polar opposites throughout the collection, find a form of sameness in the reflection on war. This is evident in the last poem of the collection:

And still we wear our uniforms, follow
The cracked cry of the bugles, comb and brush
Our pride and prejudice, doctor the sallow
Initial ardor, wish to keep it fresh.
Still we applaud the President's voice and face.
Still we remark on patriotism, sing,
Salute the flag, thrill heavily, rejoice
For death of men who too saluted, sang.
But inward grows a soberness, an awe,
A fear, a deepening hollow through the cold.
For even if we come out standing up
How shall we smile, congratulate: and how
Settle in chairs? Listen, listen. The step
Of iron feet again. And again wild. (lines 1-14)

This poem underscores how the shared experiences of war bring these two seemingly disparate identities closer together, highlighting the common humanity that emerges even amidst deeply rooted societal divisions. The hard imagery of war serves as a unifying force, temporarily dismantling the barriers of race and identity**.** Within Brooks herself, the harsh realities of war momentarily break down the persistent barriers of race and identity, which reflect the two opposing *I*-positions mirroring the American society she lived in.

4.2.2 Formality

In the previous section, we noted that in term of content, the *I*-position of Whiteness plays a background, though persistent, role in Brooks' work. This influence becomes even more evident when we analyze the formal aspects of her poetry.

As discussed in the chapter on the *I*-position of Blackness, the level of formality in *A Street in Bronzeville* is higher than one might expect for a portrayal of a Black neighborhood in 1950s Chicago. While there are poems with lower degrees of formality, the general trend reflects a level of linguistic sophistication that surpasses what might be anticipated given the setting.

This higher degree of formality can be attributed to the enduring influence of the *I*-position of Whiteness within Brooks. Despite her focus on Black American life, Brooks could not entirely distance herself from the literary traditions dominated by white culture, which held a monopoly over the literary scene at that time. To gain recognition and visibility, especially in a predominantly white literary world, poets had to engage with these established norms and styles. Thus, while Brooks content centers on Black America, the elevated register in her poetry reflects the necessity of navigating the "front door" of white poetic traditions.

This higher degree of formality is evident throughout the collection, particularly in poems like *The Sundays of Satin-Legs Smith* and those in the *Gay Chaps at the Bar* section, where the formality, calculated using the formula by Heylighen and J.M. Dewaele, reaches, 68,5% and 65,6%, respectively.

In T*he Sundays of Satin-Legs Smith*, Brooks employs a high register to describe the Sunday routine of the titular character with a touch of irony. Consider the following passage, where she describes Satin-Legs' closet:

> Let us proceed. Let us inspect, together
> With his meticulous and serious love,
> The innards of this closet. Which is a vault
> Whose glory is not diamonds, not pearls,
> Not silver plate with just enough dull shine.
> But wonder-suits in yellow and in wine,

Sarcastic green and zebra-striped cobalt.

All drapes. With shoulder padding that is wide

And cocky and determined as his pride;

Ballooning pants that taper off to ends

Scheduled to choke precisely. (lines 43-53)

Satin-Legs is portrayed as a "hep-cat", a term *Merriam-Webster* defines as **"**a person who is unusually aware of and interested in new and unconventional patterns (as in jazz or fashion)". The irony lies in the fact that every action in the poem feels like a performance. Satin-Legs' regal bearing is meticulously crafted, almost as if he is trying to embody something he is not naturally. This "wannabe" behavior is traced through the poem's formality, with Brooks describing his actions with a level of aesthetic refinement that elevates his performance to that of a real white king, despite the underlying irony.

In the poems of *Gay Chaps at the Bar*, the formality is heightened due to the gravity of the subject matter - the experiences of soldiers during World War II. This section's elevated register and careful construction align with the solemnity of the soldiers' struggle, as they fight in a war while still enduring the racism of the society they are defending.

Moreover, Brooks was acutely aware of her place within the American literary tradition and the expectations placed upon her as a Black poet. Using a higher degree of formality, particularly in a collection addressing such significant themes, could be seen as a way of asserting her mastery of complex poetic forms and her right to be considered part of the literary elite. By infusing her poetry with formal sophistication, Brooks demonstrates her ability to operate within the canon while simultaneously expanding its boundaries to include Black voices and experiences. Within her poetic practice, the *I*-position of Whiteness

remained quite strong, subtly infusing her exploration of Black experiences with elements of White literary tradition.

4.2.3 Poetic Form

The higher degree of formality in poems reflecting the Whiteness *I*-position is complemented by a poetic form that is more traditional and structured then those reflecting the Blackness *I*-position, which often employs free verse.

In *A Street in Bronzeville*, Brooks still engages with white literary traditions. During this early phase of her career, she places significant emphasis on formal elements of poetry, including meter, rhyme, and structured forms. This focus contrasts with her later work, where she increasingly prioritizes accessibility, freedom, and the thematic content over strict adherence to traditional forms.

Although Brooks was never solely focused on aesthetics, the early part of her career shows a greater emphasis on traditional poetic forms, likely due to the stronger influence that white culture and the Whiteness *I*-position held in her life and in society at large.

For example, the poems *The Ballad of Chocolate Mabbie* and *Ballad of Pearl May Lee* show a more traditional structure. In these poems, Brooks employs rhythmic and rhymed forms, often associated with European literary traditions. These forms provide a sense of formality and sophistication, aligning with the Whiteness *I*-position as reflected in the content and structure of the poetry.

The *Gay Chaps at the Bar* section of the collection further exemplifies Brooks' use of traditional forms. This section predominantly features sonnet-like structures, which are known for their compact, intricate, and often formal qualities. Sonnets traditionally explore themes of time, mortality, and philosophical reflection. Brooks' choice to use sonnet-like forms for this

section aligns with the solemnity and gravity of the subject matter - Black soldiers' experiences during World War II. The sonnet form allows Brooks to convey profound emotional and intellectual reflections within a structured framework. An example of Brooks' usage of sonnet form is *Love Note II: Flags*:

> Still, it is dear defiance now to carry
> Fair flags of your above my indignation,
> Top, with a pretty glory and a merry
> Softness, the scattered pound of my cold passion.
> I pull you down my foxhole. Do you mind?
> You burn in bits of saucy color then.
> I let you flutter out against the pained
> Volleys. Against my power crumpled and wan.
> You, and the yellow pert exuberance
> Of dandelion days, unmocking sun;
> The blowing of clear wind in your gay hair;
> Love changeful in you (like a music, or
> Like a sweet mournfulness, or like a dance,
> Or like the tender struggle of a fan).

While the poem seems to address themes of love and longing, it also alludes to the internal struggle of a soldier who experiences both pride and pain in his service. Through the sonnet form, Brooks conveys both the beauty and the conflict of the soldier's inner world, making *Love Note II: Flags* a powerful piece within the collection.

Brooks' explanation of her sonnet series illustrates her deliberate choice to use this form:

> I like to refer to that series of soldier sonnets. (…) A sonnet series in off rhyme, because I felt it was an off-rhyme situation-I did think of that. I first wrote the one sonnet, without thinking of extensions. I wrote it because of a letter I got from a soldier who included that phrase in what he was telling me; and then I said, there are other things to say about what's going on at the front and all, and I'll write more poems, some of them based on the stuff of letters that I was getting from several soldiers, and I felt it would be good to have them all in the same form, because it would serve my purposes throughout. ("Report from Part One", 156)

Sonnets, one the most enduring and beloved forms of poetry, offer a compact yet powerful way to explore complex emotions and ideas which is exactly what she does here.

4.2.4 *I*-positions Not Always Opposite: Blackness vs Whiteness

While the previous sections have detailed how the *I*-positions of Blackness and Whiteness manifest themselves differently in Gwendolyn Brooks' *A Street in Bronzeville*, it is important to recognize that these positions are not always in direct opposition. This phenomenon can be explained through the concept of "personal chronotopes": in Brooks' poetry Blackness is the main *I*-position, while white America serves as the counter-position. In some instances, the characteristics associated with one *I*-position can coexist with or complement those associated with the other – Brooks creates a dialogue between these seemingly contradictory *I*-positions. Blackness, whiteness, and poetry form a dialogical triad where poetry acts as the "ambiguous signifier", facilitating a dialogue between the two positions. Poetry helps Brooks in creating her personal chronotope as an African American poet since it's an important part of identity, which in turn reflects a broader segment of American society.

For example, Brooks often employs ballads, a traditionally European form characterized by simple, direct language and a rhythmic structure. The original popular ballad tells a story,

often about events well known to its audience, such as unfaithful lovers, shocking murders, mysterious happenings. Although ballads, as a traditional form, are linked to the Whiteness *I*-position, they are also well-suited for recounting everyday life stories, aligning with the Blackness *I*-position. The intrinsic musicality of ballads resonates with Black content, reflecting the influence of Black musical traditions. Brooks likely chose this form not only because of its traditional aspects but also because it effectively complemented the stories she aimed to tell.

Furthermore, the juxtaposition of traditional forms with the themes Brooks addresses highlights the tension between her identity as a Black poet and the prevailing white literary standards. While she engages with these traditional forms, her content - focusing on the experiences of Black individuals and communities - challenges and expands the boundaries of those forms. Brooks' use of traditional structures serves as both a means of navigating the literary world and a way to assert the relevance and importance of Black voices and experiences within that context.

The *Ballad of Pearl May Lee*, is a prime example of reflexive positioning through what Raggatt calls a micro-dialogue, where different voices within the self speak with one another. The poem opens in *medias res* with the Black narrator, Pearl May Lee, retelling the story of her now-murdered lover, Sammy: "Then off they took you, off to the jail, / A hundred hooting after" (lines 1-2). Here, both *I*-positions are already present: Whiteness - represented by the poetic form chosen and the "they" standing for the white group - and Blackness - represented by the choice of a Black first-person narrator instead of the third-person narrator typical of European tradition. The first-person narrator - characteristic of the Afro-American blues tradition – retells the details of Sammy's lynching while fluctuating between an objective observer (1) and a more judgmental voice (2):

(1) They wrapped you around a cottonwood tree.

And they laughed when they heard you wail. (lines 84-85)

(2) And what was I doing? Laughing still.

Though never was a poor gal lorner,

Lorner,

Lorner. (lines 10-13)

The two *I*-positions are also evident in the traditional plot, where a white innocent princess is attacked by a "dark villain" and then avenged by the white group. However, this plot is traditional and regular only on the surface; upon closer examination, it mirrors the reality of a racist Southern town, recounted with the irony and directness that characterizes Brooks' poetry.

Similarly, Brooks used off-rhyme sonnets - a traditionally white poetic form - and transformed them to fit the content she had in mind. By choosing off-rhyme sonnets for an "off-rhyme" situation, she navigated both *I*-positions simultaneously. This adaptation illustrates how Brooks blended traditional forms with her unique perspective, bridging the gap between Black and white literary traditions.

The use of sonnets here may not be merely a stylistic choice but a reflection of Brooks' intention to address complex themes with a sense of formality and control. Sonnets, with their (not so) structured rhyme schemes and meter, offer a powerful means of exploring and articulating the multifaceted experiences of Black soldiers. By employing this form, Brooks not only connects her work to established poetic traditions but also underscores the significance and solemnity of the subject matter.

Overall, the early phase of Brooks' career reflects a complex interplay between her engagement with traditional poetic forms and her commitment to depicting the realities of Black life. This process of formation of the self can be detected also in the content. As she continues to develop as a poet, her work increasingly reflects a balance between the two positions within her "personal chronotope", ultimately contributing to a broader understanding not only of herself but of Black identity and experience in American literature.

4.3 Womanhood

The third section of this chapter investigates the "Womanhood" *I*-position, adding a further layer of complexity to the analysis. As an African American woman poet, Gwendolyn Brooks offers a distinctive perspective that differs from that of other African American poets such as Langston Hughes, James Weldon Johnson, and Paul Laurence Dunbar. Brooks' exploration of gender and the female experience in her poetry provides a critical perspective on the roles and challenges faced by women, particularly within the African American community.

4.3.1 Content

Brooks' poems often features female protagonists who embody the *I*-position of Womanhood, reflecting both her personal perspective and the broader experiences of women. The ages of her female characters in the collection span from childhood to adulthood, offering insights into the different stages of a woman's life and the challenges faced at each stage.

The exploration begins with the innocence and aspirations of young girls and extends to the complex realities faced by adult women, including marriage, motherhood, and societal roles. Brooks delves into the desire for freedom from societal judgment and constraints. In *A Song in the Front Yard*, Brooks presents the thought of a young girl longing to explore life beyond

the familiar boundaries of home, desiring to stay out late and engaging in activities that might lead to her being labeled a "bad" woman:

> I've stayed in the front yard all my life.
>
> I want a peek at the back
>
> Where it's rough and untended and hungry weed grows.
>
> A girl gets sick of a rose. (lines 1-4)

Here, Brooks expresses the early tension between societal expectations and a young girl's desire for agency and self-determination.

Moving from the desire to explore life to a more somber note, *The Ballad of Chocolate Mabbie* depicts the sorrow of a first heartbreak, where Mabbie's heart is broken not only by love but also by the harsh realities of colorism[9]. The innocence of childhood is disrupted as she realizes that lighter-skinned girls will always be preferred. It's the first of many rejections she will face due to the color of her skin:

> It was Mabbie without the grammar school gates.
>
> And Mabbie was all of seven.
>
> And Mabbie was cut from a chocolate bar.
>
> And Mabbie thought life was heaven. (lines 21-24)

This early intersection of Womanhood and Blackness introduces another dimension to Brooks' work. Brooks' own experiences of colorism, as recounted in her autobiography *Report from Part One,* is woven into this portrayal. She writes that "a dark-complexioned girl just didn't have a chance if there was light-skinned competition. In grammar school I got my

[9] Colorism is defined as prejudice or discrimination especially within a racial or ethnic group favoring people with lighter skin over those with darker skin.

first introduction to the fact that bias could exist among our people, too" (172). This personal reflection offers deeper insight into the poem, where Mabbie's heartbreak mirrors Brooks' own encounters with internalized racial bias.

Related to the theme of insecurity and feeling different or inadequate as a woman, *Hunchback Girl: She Thinks of Heaven* addresses physical appearance and the discomfort associated with it. The protagonist speaks to God, hoping that Heaven will be a place where she can be accepted for who she is:

> My father, it is surely a blue place
> And straight. Right. Regular. Where I shall find
> No need for scholarly nonchalance or looks
> A little to the left or guards upon the
> Heart to halt love that runs without crookedness
> Along its crooked corridors. My Father,
> It is a planned place surely. Out of coils,
> Unscrewed, released, no more to be marvelous,
> I shall walk straightly through most proper halls
> Proper myself, princess of properness. (lines 1-10)

The central topic of this poem is the pain of feeling out of place in the world, particularly as a woman whose physical appearance does not conform to society's beauty standard. The girl's longing for Heaven, where she will be "proper" and accepted, reflects a deeper yearning for a world where she is embraced without the burden of external judgment. This *I*-position of Womanhood in Brooks' poem highlights the universal experience of insecurity and the hope for acceptance and love.

In *Sadie and Maud,* Brooks explores the lives of two sisters who make different choices for their futures. Maud chooses to pursue higher education, while Sadie stays at home due to her pregnancy. The contrasting paths taken by these two sisters reflect societal pressures and expectations about womanhood. Maud, despite her education, ends up being "a thin brown mouse / (…) living all alone / In (…) a old house" (lines 20-22), while Sadie, who has children outside of marriage and brings shame to her family, leaves behind "her fine-tooth comb" - a symbolic heritage for her daughters. This duality suggests that neither path offers true fulfillment, with Sadie's maternal legacy outlasting Maud's academic success. The poem examines the societal pressures on women that have to choose – if they could choose - between education and family and the alienation faced by those who deviate from expected norms.

The Mother is a sharp and touching exploration on abortion. Here, Brooks addresses the complex emotions and struggles associated with the experience, addressing a general "you" to speak to any woman who has undergone an abortion. The *I*-position of Womanhood within Brooks is nearly silenced to give voice to the universal experience of women, offering a cruel yet compassionate depiction without any judgment. Brooks does not offer her own opinion; it's as if her *I*-positions fuses with a broader one, her only interest seemingly to tell every woman in the world that they are not alone:

> Abortions will not let you forget.
> You remember the children you got that you did not get,
> (…)
> If I poisoned the beginnings of your breaths,
> Believe that even in my deliberateness I was not deliberate.
> Though why should I whine,
> Whine that the crime was other than mine?-

Since anyhow you are dead. (lines 1-24)

The personal narrative is expanded into a reflection on collective guilt and loss, highlighting the nuances of motherhood even in its absence.

Another theme in Brooks' poetry is the reality of marriage in the mid-1900s, where women were often expected to back down, treated as possessions, and pressured to submit to men. In *The Battle*, Brooks presents a harsh reality through the story of Moe Belle Jackson and her husband:

Moe Belle Jackson's husband
Whipped her good last night.
Her landlady told my ma they had
A knock-down-drag-out fight.

I like to think
Of how I'd of took a knife
And slashed all of the quickenin'
Out of his lowly life.

But if I know Moe Belle,
Most like, she shed a tear,
And this mornin' it was probably,
"More grits, dear?" (lines 1-12)

The story of Moe Belle Jackson highlights the violence women could endure and the societal expectations to endure such suffering quietly. Here, the *I*-position of Womanhood is split between two archetypes: the narrator imagines a violent response to set herself free, in contrast with Moe Belle's likely resignation. Moe Belle, who conforms, is juxtaposed with the

narrator's imagined resistance, showcasing the tension between societal conformity and personal agency. Regarding marriage, Brooks remarked:

> "Marriage is a hard, demanding state. Especially if you're a woman. You have to set yourself aside constantly." ("Report from Part One", 178-179)

In *Queen of the Blues*, the narrator recounts Mame's loneliness, her disappointment, and her story. The narrator's voice interchanges with direct speech, where we hear Mame's loneliness because she does not have any family, and she cannot seem to believe there is any fine man left in Chicago, any man who really respects her. The third-person narrator and Mame's voice seems to merge into the *I*-position of Womanhood. The internal struggle of self-worth is projected outward, as Mame's feelings of worthlessness are tied to the lack of male recognition, a theme that threads through much of Brooks' poetry. At the beginning of the poem, there is the conviction that she does not have any value because there is no man to vouch for her; she "could shake her body / Across the floor / For what did she have /To lose?" (lines 5-8).

Toward the end, Meme has a painful realization:

> "Men don't tip their
> Hats to me
> They pinch my arms
> And they slap my thighs" (lines 79-82)

So, says the narrator:

> Men are low down
> Dirty and mean.
> Why don't they tip

Their hats to a queen? (lines 89-92)

Here, the two voices join to give expression to the Womanhood *I*-position within Brooks, reflecting on the true meaning of the word "queen": if a woman is called a queen, why isn't she treated with the same respect as a king? Why is she instead disrespected and treated as a mere object? Why is her worth tied to the presence of a man in her life?

In *Obituary for a Living Lady*, we witness a woman's emotional trajectory as she moves through key stages of her life: her "decently wild" childhood, her interest in beauty and romance as a young woman, and ultimately, her heartbreak once when a man dismisses her worth because of her sexual boundaries. The man's decision to pursue a woman 'who dressed in red' leaves her devastated, spending "a hundred weeks or so wishing she were dead. The Woman's experience speaks of the pervasive theme of women being valued primarily through the male gaze – in this case, reduced to her sexual availability and ability to conform to male.

This pivotal heartbreak leads her to "discovered the country of God", a retreat into faith that serves as an escape from the pain of unfulfilled love and societal pressures. However, even in this space of religious devotion, male attention persists. The preacher's attraction underscores the inescapable nature of objectification, highlighting how religious sanctity does not protect women from being reduced to male desires:

The preacher (...) wonders (...)
how long it will be
Before he can, with reasonably slight risk of rebuke, put his hand on her knee. (lines 18-22)

Women are constantly reduced to their relationship with men, leaving them with little autonomy or self-worth beyond those interactions. As we saw in *The Mother*, the *I*-position of Womanhood seems not to be able to stand alone and is often tied to motherhood.

One aspect of this can be seen in *When Mrs. Martin's Booker T*, where a mother tries to make her son takes his responsibility for Rosa Brown, a girl with whom he has a relationship. Once again, the woman is defined through the actions of a man, in this case her son, who:

> "wrung [her] heart like a chicken neck.
> And he made [her] a disgrace." (lines 7-8)

Moving to a lighter perspectives, *The Date* offers a picture of life as a Black woman: we can see the working woman juggling between white maids giving her a lot to do and her desire to leave and go on a date. Even in this context, Brooks points out how Black women must navigate between social responsibilities and personal freedom.

In *At the Hairdresser's*, the *I*-positions of Womanhood is depicted through feminine vanity, where Womanhood is portrayed as frivolous and competitive. The protagonist talks to Minnie, the hairdresser, detailing the hairstyle she wants in order to stand out and assert her beauty among her peers:

> Long hair's out of style anyhow, ain't it?
> Now it's tie it up high with curls.
> So gimme an upsweep, Minnie.
> I'll show them girls. (lines 13-16)

Despite its lighter tone, the poem highlights the societal pressure women face - the *I*-position of Womanhood is evident here, shaped by external expectations of beauty that create competition between women.

All of Brooks' female protagonists offer insight into what it meant to be both a woman and a Black woman during youth and beyond. Brooks' portrayal of Womanhood is complex,

multifaceted, and often situated at the intersection of race, gender, and class, making her one of the most significant voices in the literary representation of Black womanhood.

4.3.2 Formality

As already emphasized throughout this thesis, *A Street in Bronzeville* focuses on the lives of its inhabitants: African Americans in the 1940s and 1950s. Narrowing this focus even farther to African American Women, formality in the poems reflects the *I*-position of Womanhood in two distinct ways: Womanhood as experienced by Brooks herself and Womanhood as imposed by societal expectations for Black women in general. Brooks, as one of the few African American women of her time who had access to higher education, uses a more formal linguistic style than the average Black woman, reflecting her unique position. This does not imply that Brooks was isolated from the experiences of other women, but rather that her linguistic style might be more formal due to her educational background.

The first group of poems that reflects a more formal linguistic style comprehends:

- *Southeast Corner*
- *Hunchback Girl: She Thinks of Heaven*
- *A Song in The Front Yard*
- *The Ballad of Chocolate Mabbie*
- *Sadie and Maud*
- *Obituary for a Living Lady*

In this group, we see different narrators offering varying perspectives. In *Hunchback Girl: She Thinks of Heaven* and *A Song in The Front Yard,* and *Obituary for a Living Lady***,** the first-person narrator give us access to the inner thoughts of the narrator *I*. In the first two poems, Brooks' voice is particularly evident, as the desires expressed by these young girls

reflect her own experiences and longings from her youth, which she has mentioned in various interviews. This makes the *I*-position of Womanhood within these poems feel deeply personal, rooted in both individual and collective experiences of growing up as a Black woman in a world filled with limitations. The formality of these poems mirrors Brooks' higher education, with *Hunchback Girl: She Thinks of Heaven* standing out for its particularly formal tone , likely influenced by its prayer-like quality, which serves as a metaphor for the aspirations of these marginalized characters.

Obituary for a Living is slightly different, as the first-person narrator recounts another woman's story, weaving in commentary and irony. However, it remains more external than the previous two poems. As mentioned earlier, this poem tells the story of a woman unable to escape male gaze, even in spaces that should transcend such desires. Brooks' "obituary" for her, though she is still alive, suggests that societal pressures and the pervasive male gaze have already erased her inner life, reducing her to a living ghost. This aligns with the broader theme of how Womanhood is often constrained, objectified, and defined by others - particularly men. The formality in this poem likely arises from Brooks recounting the woman's story through her own lens, rather than presenting it from the woman's direct perspective.

The other poems of the first group - *Southeast Corner*, *The Ballad of Chocolate Mabbie*, and *Sadie and Maud* - are all narrated by a third-person voice that largely stays in the background, offering an observational rather than intrusive perspective. However, the level of intrusion varies slightly: in *Southeast Corner*, the narrator remains detached, in *The Ballad of Chocolate Mabbie* the narrator shows some empathy toward Mabbie. In *Sadie and Maud*, the narrator offers subtle commentary, which feels more like a moral reflection than a direct intrusion. Whether the narrator's voice is that of Brooks or another instance, the *I*-position of

Womanhood and the formality of an educated voice are clearly present, further emphasizing the formal tone of the poems. Excluding *Southeast Corner*, where the narrator's detachment suggests a neutral stance, an argument in favor of the idea that this voice belongs to Brooks lies in the themes explored in these poems, which are deeply personal and significant to her.

Queen of the Blues, *When Mrs. Martin's Booker T* stand out with an average level of formality and don't fit in either group. They are the only poems in this selection that feature large portions of direct speech. In these poems, the third person narrator, reflecting Brooks' voice, remains largely objective, describing the scene without intrusion, since the characters speak directly to the reader and reveal their thoughts. This directness lowers the formality of the language, as the direct speech reflects the linguistic style of two woman from Bronzeville, who likely have limited education and speak in a more colloquial, everyday manner.

The second group of poems that reflects a more informal linguistic style includes:

- *The Mother*
- *The End of the Day*
- *The Date*
- *At the Hairdresser's*
- *When I Die*
- *Ballad of Pearl May Lee*

The End of the Day, *The Date*, *At the Hairdresser's*, *The Battle* and *When I Die* are all written in the first person, allowing us to hear the thoughts of the protagonists - ordinary women from Bronzeville. In these poems, the *I*-position of Blackness and Womanhood are intertwined. Unlike the poems from the previous group, which may explore deeper desires or ambitions, these center on everyday actions and desires - whether they involve navigating social

interactions, personal appearance, or, in the case of *The Battle*, enduring the terrible reality of domestic violence. For Moe Belle Jackson, violence is an integral part of marriage. These are not poems about grand aspirations or life-altering dreams, but instead capture the often harsh rhythm of daily life.

The language in these poems mirrors casual, everyday speech, incorporating slang and abbreviations, which further emphasize the grounded, real-world struggles of these women. In these instances, we hear the voices of women more than that of Brooks herself, reflecting an *I*-position shaped by societal expectations rather than her personal one.

In *The Mother*, in the first stanza the narrator addresses a “you” in which, as discussed in the previous section, any woman in the world could indentify. The same can be said for the *I* since the experience described transcends race, touching on a almost universal aspect of womanhood. Here the *I*-position of Womanhood within Brooks that of women beyond her personal experience merge, resulting in a less formal, more intimate poem. The simplicity of the language serves the purpose of creating something that could be understood and shared by all women, regardless of race and education, emphasizing the universality of the experience.

Ballad of Pearl May Lee is unique in this group as it features a third person narrator. The story is recounted by Pearl May Lee, the girlfriend of Sammy, who has been lynched because he touched a white girl. Here, the formality reflects that of Pearl May Lee, who, being a black 1950s girl from Bronzeville, likely did not have access to higher education. The direct speech, while ostensibly coming from more educated white characters, is delivered with low formality, reflecting the insults from (1) the sheriff and (2) the accusers of the white girl:

> (1) "You son of a bitch, you're going to hell!" (line 17)
>
> (2) "You raped me, nigger," (…)

"You raped me, nigger, and what the hell
Do you think I'm going to do?
What the hell,
What the hell
Do you think I'm going to do?

"I'll tell every white man in this town.
I'll tell them all of my sorrow.
You got my body tonight, nigger boy.
I'll get your body tomorrow.
Tomorrow.
Tomorrow.
I'll get your body tomorrow." (lines 68-81)

The low formality in these direct speeches reflects the *I*-position of Womanhood shaped by society's prejudice and oppression towards both Blacks and Woman.

In conclusion, the examination of formality in these selected poems highlights how the *I*-position of Womanhood is shaped both by Brooks' own experiences and the broader societal expectations for Black women. The more formal linguistic style present in certain poems reflects Brooks' educational background and personal voice, while the informal style in others aligns with the voices of ordinary women from Bronzeville, whose language reflects the daily realities they face. The subtle shifts in formality suggest Brooks' ability to navigate and represent different layers of Womanhood, revealing the complexity of these women's experiences.

4.3.3 Poetic Form

In her essay *Poetry and Gender*, American poet Ellen Bryant Voigt argues that poetic form is not inherently gendered; rather, it is the poet's creative engagement with form that shapes meaning. She asserts that poets of all genders, races, and backgrounds have drawn from a wide variety of forms and techniques to articulate their unique experiences. Voigt champions the idea that form should be seen as an adaptable tool, capable of accommodating and expressing a diverse array of personal, social, and cultural experiences. This perspective aligns well with Gwendolyn Brooks' poetic style, which features a rich diversity of forms, ranging from traditional European styles like the sonnet to free verse and Blues rhythm, forms often associated with African American oral traditions.

While the use of certain forms may evoke particular cultural or racial associations - such as traditional European forms being linked to Whiteness and free verse or Blues rhythms reflecting African American experiences - there is no strong indication that the forms Brooks uses are a direct reflection of the *I*-position of Womanhood. Rather, the formal choices in her poetry appear to be influenced more by the content, the speaker's voice, and the subject matter than by gender.

Brooks employs form as a versatile tool to capture the complexities of life in Bronzeville, using its structure to amplify themes of race, gender, class, and identity. However, this versatility does not imply that form itself inherently expresses Womanhood. Instead, Brooks' treatment of Womanhood is more evident in the thematic concerns and character perspectives within the poems, while the formal choices serve to enhance those narratives without directly representing gender in the same way.

Thus, while we can argue that poetic form in Brooks' work is tied to expressions of Blackness and Whiteness due to the historical and cultural connotations of different forms, it does not

seem to act as a vehicle for the *I*-position of Womanhood. Instead, form remains a flexible and neutral medium, capable of carrying multiple identities without being confined to one, highlighting Brooks' mastery of a wide range of poetic tools.

5. Conclusion

This thesis has examined the intricate interplay of identity through Gwendolyn Brooks' *A Street in Bronzeville*, employing the Dialogical Self Theory to dissect the multifaceted *I*-positions of Blackness, Whiteness, and Womanhood. The initial chapters established a theoretical framework grounded in the work of Hubert Hermans and then expanded by Peter Raggatt, which illuminated the dynamics of the self as inherently dialogical and contextual. This premise was essential to understanding how Brooks navigates her complex identity, considering the historical context and society's expectations, as well as the cultural narratives that shape and restrain the expression of the individual.

The subsequent analysis of Brooks' poetry revealed how her formal linguistic choices and thematic explorations provide deep engagement with the lived experiences of Black individuals, particularly women, in America. The discussions of Blackness and Whiteness highlighted the tensions and convergences within these identity constructs, emphasizing that they are not merely oppositional but rather exist in a dynamic interplay that informs both personal and collective narratives. Brooks' portrayal of Blackness transcends mere representation; it captures the essence of a struggle for recognition and agency within a racially stratified society. Her nuanced depictions challenge stereotypical portrayals and open up spaces for more authentic expressions of Black identity.

The examination of Womanhood in Brooks' poetry reveals her distinct position as an educated Black woman. This complexity is reflected in the formal structures and linguistic

choices she makes, which convey her individual voice while also engaging with the broader societal narratives surrounding womanhood. The interplay between her refined poetic style and the imposed expectations on Black women underscores the intricate layers of her identity. By portraying her female characters with both resilience and fragility, Brooks crafts a deep exploration of their experiences, encouraging her readers to reflect on the different dimensions of womanhood.

Ultimately, this thesis illustrates that Brooks' poetry serves as a vital site for the negotiation of identity, offering insights into the intersections of race, gender, and societal expectations. By engaging with the Dialogical Self Theory, we gain a richer understanding of the complexity of Brooks' self-representation and the ways in which her work challenges dominant narratives. Her poetry not only reflects her personal journey but also resonates with the collective experiences of marginalized communities, underscoring the enduring relevance of her voice in contemporary discussions of identity.

Moreover, the implications of Brooks' work extend beyond her immediate historical context. In a world that continues to grapple with issues of race and gender, her contributions remain essential for fostering empathy and understanding across diverse experiences. By articulating the nuanced realities of her subjects, Brooks invites us to reflect on our own identities and the societal structures that shape them. The dialogues she creates within her poetry serve as a reminder that identity is not a fixed state but rather a fluid and evolving narrative influenced by the interplay of individual experiences and collective histories.

In conclusion, Gwendolyn Brooks emerges not only as a prominent literary figure but also as a vital voice in the ongoing dialogue about identity, resistance, and the search for belonging. Her work continues to inspire and challenge readers to engage critically with the complexities of their own identities and to consider the broader implications of these narratives in the

context of a continually evolving society. Through the lens of her poetry, we are invited to embrace the rich, multifaceted nature of our identities and the shared human experiences that connect us all.

Appendix

A STREET IN BRONZEVILLE

THE OLD-MARRIEDS

POS					NEG					TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections			
15	5	5	11	0	0	7	10	0	5	0	58		
25,86	8,62	8,62	18,97	0	0	12,07	17,24	0,00	8,62	0	62,07	**62,1%**	

KITCHENETTE BUILDING

POS					NEG					TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections			
25	11	10	10	0	0	9	23	1	7	0	95		
26,32	11,58	10,53	10,53	0	0	9,47	24,21	1,05	7,37	0	58,42	**58,4%**	

THE MOTHER

POS					NEG					TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections			
38	15	14	16	5	0	43	49	0	18	1	194		
19,59	7,73	7,22	8,25	2,577319588	0	22,16	25,26	0,00	9,28	0	44,33	**44,3%**	

SOUTHEAST CORNER

POS					NEG					TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections			
13	11	5	7	3	0	0	8	1	5	0	49		
26,53	22,45	10,20	14,29	6,12244898	0	0,00	16,33	2,04	10,20	0	75,51	**75,5%**	

WHEN MRS MARTIN'S BOOKER T

POS					NEG					TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections			
19	4	5	4	0	1	11	14	9	2	0	60		
31,67	6,67	8,33	6,67	0	0	18,33	23,33	15,00	3,33	0	46,67	**46,7%**	

THE SOFT MAN

POS					NEG					TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections			
17	8	6	4	0	0	6	11	2	3	0	64		
26,56	12,50	9,38	6,25	0	0	9,38	17,19	3,13	4,69	0	60,16	**60,2%**	

THE FUNERAL

POS					NEG					TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections			
35	15	17	11	4	0	13	21	0	7	0	119		
29,41	12,61	14,29	9,24	3,36	0	10,92	17,65	0	5,88	0	67,23	**67,2%**	

HUNCHBACK GIRL: SHE THINKS OF HEAVEN

POS					NEG					TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections			
16	13	10	5	2	0	7	9	0	6	0	66		
24,24	19,70	15,15	7,58	3,03	0	10,61	13,64	0	9,09	0	68,18	**68,2%**	

A SONG IN THE FRONT YARD

POS					NEG					TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections			
35	18	16	15	0	0	17	25	7	10	0	136		
25,74	13,24	11,76	11,03	0,00	0	12,50	18,38	5	7,35	0	59,19	**59,2%**	

A STREET IN BRONZEVILLE

PATENT LEATHER

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
7	3	7	2	0	12	9	8	3	1	2	51	
13,73	5,88	13,73	3,92	0,00	0	17,65	15,69	6	1,96	0	48,04	**48,0%**

THE BALLAD OF CHOCOLATE MABBIE

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
53	14	19	15	0	0	12	24	0	7	2	146	
36,30	9,59	13,01	10,27	0,00	0	8,22	16,44	0	4,79	0	69,86	**69,9%**

THE PREACHER: RUMINATES BEHIND THE SERMON

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
27	8	13	10	1	2	11	20	1	7	0	98	
27,55	8,16	13,27	10,20	1,02	0	11,22	20,41	1	7,14	0	60,20	**60,2%**

SADIE AND MAUD

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
35	8	11	5	0	0	5	15	1	4	0	83	
42,17	9,64	13,25	6,02	0	0	6,02	18,07	1	4,82	0	70,48	**70,5%**

THE INDIPENDENT MAN

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
16	7	7	9	0	0	11	13	1	9	0	72	
22,22	9,72	9,72	12,50	0	0	15,28	18,06	1	12,50	0	53,47	**53,5%**

OBITUARY FOR A LIVING LADY

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
58	26	21	22	0	0	27	38	3	16	0	208	
27,88	12,50	10,10	10,58	0	0	12,98	18,27	1	7,69	0	60,34	**60,3%**

WHEN YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN SUNDAY: THE LOVE STORY

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
44	14	17	16	0	0	32	37	2	18	0	178	
24,72	7,87	9,55	8,99	0	0	17,98	20,79	1	10,11	0	50,56	**50,6%**

THE MURDER

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
26	11	9	6	0	0	3	19	2	12	0	86	
30,23	12,79	10,47	6,98	0	0	3,49	22,09	2	13,95	0	59,30	**59,3%**

A STREET IN BRONZEVILLE

OF THE WITT WILLIAMS ON HIS WAY TO LINCOLN CIMITERY

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
26	14	10	8	0	0	15	15	1	8	0	96	
27,08	14,58	10,42	8,33	0	0	15,63	15,63	1	8,33	0	59,90	**59,9%**

MATTHEW COLE

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
39	20	18	18	0	0	15	19	4	8	1	138	
28,26	14,49	13,04	13,04	0	0	10,87	13,77	3	5,80	0	67,75	**67,8%**

THE VACANT LOT

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
18	13	7	6	0	0	1	9	2	3	0	57	
31,58	22,81	12,28	10,53	0	0	1,75	15,79	4	5,26	0	75,44	**75,4%**

THE SANDAYS OF SATIN-LEGS SMITH

THE SUNDAYS OF SATIN-LEGS SMITH

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
287	113	120	65	25	3	84	131	10	63	3	869	
33,03	13,00	13,81	7,48	2,876869965	0	9,67	15,07	1,15	7,25	0	68,53	**68,5%**

NEGRO HERO

NEGRO HERO

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
84	34	53	33	1	0	60	75	3	29	0	368	
22,83	9,24	14,40	8,97	0,27173913	0	16,30	20,38	0,82	7,88	0	55,16	**55,2%**

HATTIE SCOTT

THE END OF THE DAY

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
17	3	11	12	0	6	10	8	11	9	0	76	49,5
22,37	3,95	14,47	15,79	0	0	13,16	10,53	14,47	11,84	0	53,29	**53,3%**

THE DATE

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
9	1	3	1	0	3	10	12	14	2	1	42	
21,43	2,38	7,14	2,38	0	0	23,81	28,57	33,33	4,76	0	21,43	**21,4%**

AT THE HAIRDRESSER'S

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
18	3	8	4	0	6	17	15	17	8	0	79	
22,78	3,80	10,13	5,06	0	0	21,52	18,99	21,52	10,13	0	34,81	**34,8%**

HATTIE SCOTT

WHEN I DIE

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
8	6	3	2	0	1	10	12	8	6	0	48	
16,67	12,50	6,25	4,17	0	0	20,83	25,00	16,67	12,50	0	32,29	**32,3%**

THE BATTLE

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
14	5	2	5	0	1	7	10	4	4	1	49	
28,57	10,20	4,08	10,20	0	0	14,29	20,41	8,16	8,16	0	51,02	**51,0%**

QUEEN OF THE BLUES

QUEEN OF THE BLUES

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
68	25	24	25	0	5	48	55	13	12	0	262	
25,95	9,54	9,16	9,54	0	0	18,32	20,99	4,96	4,58	0	52,67	**52,7%**

BALLAD OF PEARL MAY LEE

BALLAD OF PEARL MAY LEE

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
110	34	62	36	4	14	111	110	15	32	5	514	
21,40	6,61	12,06	7,00	0,778210117	0	21,60	21,40	2,92	6,23	0	47,86	**47,9%**

GAY CHAPS AT THE BAR

GAY CHAPS AT THE BAR

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
24	10	11	11	2	1	6	16	0	10	0	89	
26,97	11,24	12,36	12,36	2,247191011	0	6,74	17,98	0,00	11,24	0	64,61	**64,6%**

"STILL DO I KEEP MY LOOK, MY IDENTITY…"

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
28	13	12	5	2	1	9	16	2	4	0	88	
31,82	14,77	13,64	5,68	2,272727273	0	10,23	18,18	2,27	4,55	0	66,48	**66,5%**

MY DREAMS, MY WORKS, MUST WAIT TILL AFTER HELL

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
21	9	11	2	3	0	14	24	0	5	0	86	
24,42	10,47	12,79	2,33	3,488372093	0	16,28	27,91	0,00	5,81	0	51,74	**51,7%**

LOOKING

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
21	10	10	11	1	0	7	19	0	5	3	86	
24,42	11,63	11,63	12,79	1,162790698	0	8,14	22,09	0,00	5,81	0	62,79	**62,8%**

GAY CHAPS AT THE BAR

PIANO AFTER WAR

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
28	13	12	9	5	0	4	12	0	6	0	84	
33,33	15,48	14,29	10,71	5,952380952	0	4,76	14,29	0,00	7,14	0	76,79	**76,8%**

MENTORS

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
26	14	12	7	3	1	10	14	1	1	0	85	
30,59	16,47	14,12	8,24	3,529411765	0	11,76	16,47	1,18	1,18	0	71,18	**71,1%**

THE WHITE TROOPS HAD THEIR ORDERS BUT THE NEGROES LOOKED LIKE MEN

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
29	8	7	12	0	0	7	18	0	7	0	88	
32,95	9,09	7,95	13,64	0	0	7,95	20,45	0,00	7,95	0	63,64	**63,6%**

FIRSTLY INCLINED TO DO WHAT IS TOLD

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
18	24	10	8	12	0	6	12	0	6	0	84	
21,43	28,57	11,90	9,52	14,28571429	0	7,14	14,29	0,00	7,14	0	78,57	**78,6%**

"GOD WORKS IN MYSTERIOUS WAY"

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
25	8	12	6	11	0	6	14	1	7	0	78	
32,05	10,26	15,38	7,69	14,1025641	0	7,69	17,95	1,28	8,97	0	71,79	**71,8%**

LOVE NOTE I: SURELY

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
19	9	6	3	2	0	20	15	0	14	0	86	
22,09	10,47	6,98	3,49	2,325581395	0	23,26	17,44	0,00	16,28	0	44,19	**44,2%**

LOVE NOTE II:FLAGS

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
27	12	17	11	7	0	9	8	0	4	0	88	
30,68	13,64	19,32	12,50	7,954545455	0	10,23	9,09	0,00	4,55	0	80,11	**80,1%**

THE PROGRESS

POS					NEG						TOT.	FORMALITY
Nouns	Adjectives	Adposition	Articles	Elevated	Slang	Pronouns	Verbs	Abbreviation	Adverbs	Interjections		
20	5	6	12	5	0	7	22	0	11	0	83	
24,10	6,02	7,23	14,46	6,024096386	0	8,43	26,51	0,00	13,25	0	54,82	**54,8%**

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