

quarter-acre lots; and blacks held white collar as well as blue collar and mining jobs. Such situations may have been rare or perhaps unique, but they must be considered when looking at the matter of race and ethnicity in the United States as a whole.

In the reviewer's opinion, these more enlightened cases do not detract from the picture Lewis has effectively drawn for the eastern United States; but they do suggest that an extension of the regional analysis would be advisable in further articulating matters of race, class, and community conflict in the coal mining industry in America. In the meantime, Lewis' book will remain a very valuable resource for those interested in ethnic studies; and it can provide a model for the analyses of other American industries in which the role of blacks and other ethnic groups has been too-often overlooked or minimized.

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D. H. Melhem. *Gwendolyn Brooks: Poetry and the Heroic Voice*. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1987) 270 pp., \$25.00.

This book might have worked out as an article, but it was a gross mistake in book form. That is to say, on the development of what Melhem calls the "heroic voice" there might have been an intelligent and informative study of about article length. I can't be certain, however, that Melhem had a definite sense of her subject, because "voice" sometimes means "prosody," sometimes "form," sometimes "subject" (or "theme"), most often (possibly!), "style."

Despite the thematic emphasis in the subtitle, this book is not thematic in its organization; it is chronological. The organization doesn't clarify the analysis of a development of a "voice," and the unnecessary repetitions also intrude awkwardly.

Melhem's typical discussion includes prosodic analyses, background and explication. They are seldom neatly linked. Often, there is no attempt whatever to link discussion of form, line length, and meter or rhyme patterns to the content. Very often the prosodic analysis is given in excessive length at the beginning of the discussion, but it might intrude anywhere.

Most writers assert there are no stages, periods, even "facile demarcations" in Brooks. (I think there are; Brooks *said*, more than once, that there are.) In any event, Melhem's way of saying she doesn't think the works break into periods is important because it is unfortunately typical of her style throughout: fulsome, enthusiastic, worshipful, sophomoric, and, finally, blurry: "*In the Mecca* (1968) marks a creative prime meridian

for Brooks. There her oracular voice, prescriptive and prophetic, rings out. No facile demarcations exist, however, between 'early,' 'middle,' and 'late' or 'in progress' Brooks." [The quotation marks are Melhem's.] What Melhem labels "facile demarcations" are probably aimed at Brooks's own words; she said that she believed there were stages in her work, radical changes in her thinking and feeling, and nearly everyone points immediately to 1967, the date of *one* major change, largely because Brooks refers to her dramatic confrontation, especially with younger blacks, that year. That certainly—her own words—should be given some discussion. But Melhem doesn't discuss it further or identify where the words are from; my guess is *Report from Part One* (1972), and almost certainly from speeches and newspaper articles.

Melhem argues that Brooks is essentially the same in all her mature work; that includes the poetry in collections for children. It does not include the juvenilia. Melhem, to give her credit, doesn't only assert that the poems for children are like all the other works; she gives considerable space—more than to a long poem she labelled a great work, and as much discussion as to most of the adult poems.

I have not studied the poems for children, and I did not find Melhem convincing in her attempt to demonstrate that they are as much poetry and as deserving of scholarly and critical discussion as any of Brooks' works. Melhem does make a strong case that the poems should delight, instruct and inspire children. I wish they had been discussed with the emphasis on their characteristics as "children's poems," rather than to argue that Brooks is Brooks, wherever and whenever.

Another key passage, unfortunately, in Melhem's preface is the statement that she began working on this book in the early 1970s. She says she revised it many times, but if she did, she did not significantly update her notes. She concerned herself with secondary sources through the mid-1970s. Very few studies in the end notes are dated later than that. And the later secondary references, sprinkled through her endnotes, do not, in any case, seem to have influenced her ideas, or even seemed important enough to bring up in the text. There, again, she is more inclined to comment at greater length on writers who are made to seem to agree with her.

There is no bibliography of secondary sources. The index, given the emphasis, is good. The highly selective bibliography (possibly bibliographies) of original works is chronological. That is not all that useful for most readers and scholars. It is even less useful to discover that the major divisions of the original items are by publishers, first Harper and Row, then Broadside Press, and by a catch-all listing, also chronological, "Other Publications."

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