Poetry Prompt A1: What kinds of patterns run throughout Gwendolyn Brooks's *Anniad*? Why are they significant?

Gwendolyn Brooks' poem "The Anniad" creates patterns through cyclical forms. In the poem, she does this both by returning to ideas from previous lines and through using purposeful line breaks. The significance of the patterns themselves vary depending on the usage of line break and punctuation, not to mention subject matter, but on the whole, the usage of patterns throughout the poem structurally related in a symbolic way to the ancient form of poetic cycles– referring to ancient epic Greek poetry such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey,* works that provided the source material for the Roman *Aeneid* by Virgil, which Brooks bases her poem's title and form on. This essay response will consist of two analyses of the use of cycle as a pattern in Brook's poem, first through analyzing cyclical forms in the text, and later into the significance of this text as a continued part of the ancient epic poetic cycles.

As previously mentioned, cyclical patterns in the poem are established through intentional punctuation and line breaks. For example, in lines 7-8 repetition creates a kind of cycle of beginning and end being separated physically by the line break and the stanza break. The words barely differ from each other: "What was never and is not. / What is ever and is not." Even the punctuation creates a stark separation between the two nearly identical phrases. Looking at the content, this separation is indicative of Brooks' ponderings on her place in the canon. The repeated phrase "what…is not" can be taken as referring to storytelling itself– what is ever and is not is the practice of storytelling itself, and what was never and is not can be seen as the same thing that never occurred, and is not true, yet still exists. Yet, the separation of the two sentences in terms of both punctuation and stanza is a kind of interruption of two things that go together, two things arguably inextricable if they mean the same thing. This is the first time the

theme of separation of things that belong together is seen in this poem, and it is the first of many. This idea of separation leads up to the greater idea of why Brooks wrote about her poem based on the Aeneid, and prompts the idea that Brooks feels in some ways separated from a canon that she could otherwise belong to.

Brook's choice to recreate the *Aeneid* specifically rather than the other arguably more famous epic poems is a significant choice. This significance, in the context of this analysis, comes from the exclusion of the *Aeneid* in the study and categorization of epic poetic cycles, so this idea of a pattern of cycles relates to a pattern of epic poetic cyclical form returning throughout history. Brook's choice to name her poem after the *Aeneid* is significant in that both poems– hers and Virgil's– share a resemblance to one another in the sense that they are both excluded from and opposing a dominant literary canon. This disparity between the dominant literary canon is in terms not only of time period but more importantly, being of a different culture. Both works are a reinterpretation through a different cultural lens from a member of a group that has been oppressed by the dominant force of the modern literary canon. For example, he epic poem by Virgil, written between 29-19 BC, the tells the story of Aeneas, a symbolic figure of the Trojans rising from the ashes of the Greeks slaughtering them in their capital during the Trojan war– and how his escape became the origin story of the Roman empire. Meanwhile, Brooks creates a kind of cycle in time by drawing connections to the classics to bring attention to the oppressive, but also resilient parts of human nature. Her choice to use the foundation of the Aeneid to compare the Black person in America's oppression suggests an uprising of Black culture into a kind of global empire or dominance, as the Roman Virgil did of his people through his work. Some examples of this idea present within the poem are the few but highly important expressions of her Black identity and the oppression of being a Black person in America: "Of the

black and boisterous hair, / Taming all that anger down" (34-35) and "No dominion is defied. / Narrow master master-calls" (42-43). Although these lines evoke a sense of oppression still occurring as the lines are being written, there is still a hopeful tone within the entirety of the poem itself. Rather than the content of the poem creating a hopeful tone, however, this analysis will return to the idea of cycles in terms of patterns; the choice to cycle back to the *Aeneid* is what creates the hopeful tone, whereas the lines themselves have a more angry and war-like diction. Again, in terms of form, the pattern of stanza breaks and period separating two related clauses creates this feeling of disconnect or externalization from a dominant force, that being the white Western literary canon.

These textual hints, as well as the background of the epic poem that Brooks based her work on provide insight into where Brooks sees herself in the Western literary canon– an outsider, historically oppressed, who's writing may not be included despite its worthiness and subject matter. However, the depiction of a young Black woman in South Side Chicago, a prominent hub of Black culture in America, as parallel to that of the Roman hero Aeneas, provides a hopeful tone that suggests a powerful international uprising of Black culture, with or without the white Western canon's inclusion.

Fiction Prompt B1: When it was first published, some said Tutuola's *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* was too repetitive—perceiving its repetitiveness as a fault rather than an artistic convention or choice. Identify one pattern of repetition in the novel and explain why it's helpful for understanding the book as a whole.

In *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts,* one way that Amos Tutuola uses repetition is as a subversion of typical Western storytelling mechanisms to reveal and share aspects of Yoruba culture. Through this subversion of structure while writing in a more widely spoken language internationally such as English, Tutuola is able to widen the English language literary canon to

include other kinds of storytelling besides the conventional European methods. It's helpful to keep this idea of repetition as an artistic, subversive choice in mind while reading, especially as a non-Yoruba or non-African reader who is most familiar with the Western canon. This is important in order to avoid misunderstanding the text as faulted where in reality it really is gracious in sharing intimate details of ancient culture.

One form of repetition that Tutola uses to subvert conventional Western traditions of storytelling is through the sentence structure of his writing. This repetition is exemplified on page 158, when the narrator engages in a magical fight with a ghost magician in the "Bad-bye Function" chapter. The repetition occurs through a repeated plot device of metamorphosis from different animals and natural phenomena in their magical battle: "Having left this village to a distance of a mile this ghost magician came to me on the way, he asked me to let both of us share the gifts, but when I refused he changed to a poisonous snake, he wanted to bite me to death, so I myself used my magical power and changed to a long stick at the same moment and started to beat him repeatedly…then he changed from the snake to a great fire…I myself changed to rain…I myself changed to a big fish…he himself changed to a crocodile…I changed myself to a bird…he changed himself to a big hawk chasing me about in the sky to kill as his prey." This repetition of plot and sentence structure, which only changes in terms of the animals and other natural phenomena that the magician and the narrator change to, create a subversion of conventional literary narrative. Additionally, the idea of magic or 'juju' as a natural process lacking a need for explanation also reveals aspects of magic's relationship to ancient Yoruba legends and cultures. Aspects of magic, chaos and deep connection to the natural surroundings to the point of personal metamorphosis is revealed through this repetition to be a central part of the Yoruba heritage that Tutuola desires to share with his audience.

Rather than engaging in varying sentence structure and word choice, Tutuola remains true to a more traditional version of storytelling reminiscent of and based on oral literature and folklore. The phrases not being repeated identically and being focused on animals and nature as a part of the 'juju' or ancient magic is reflective of Tutuola's deep connection to ancient African folktales and heritage. The focus on these culturally important symbols rather than varying sentence structure or diction is again part of this graciousness of cultural openness rather than an attempt to be overly prosaic in order to mimic and impress the Western literary canon. Further, according to Michael Thelwell, Amos Tutuola said that he wrote to "tell of my ancestors and how they lived in their days" (190, Introduction to *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*). The deep cultural connection to animals in terms of spirituality and heritage is revealed through this form of repetition.

Another time this pattern of repetitive sentence structure is used to give access to Yoruba culture and to subvert Western readers' expectations of how to tell stories (and through doing so, bringing awareness and respect to the Yoruba way of storytelling) is on pages 74-75. In this chapter, "River-Ghosts. Gala-day under the River", Tutuola uses a more direct form of repetition, repeating parts of the story word for word for emphasis on Yoruba cultural aspects he wishes to imprint on his audience. For example, the sentence "So at this time I forgot all my sorrow and started to sing the earthly songs which sorrow prevented me from singing about since I entered this bush" is first said by the narrator on page 74 and repeated soon after on page 75. This idea of "earthly", grounding song that alleviates spiritual sorrow is an aspect of African culture that has been widely studied as a form of unwritten poetry– again, through repetition, Tutuola is examining the way that the Western canon excludes oral literature and folktales despite being equally as culturally important.

In sum, this repetition is allowing non-Yoruba readers to access parts of Yoruba culture and greater African culture. This is reminiscent of Tutuola's choice to write in English rather than in Yoruba– it is a gracious sharing of intimate aspects of culture. What Tutola's unabashed and unashamed subversive version of storytelling reveals is a flaw in narrative mechanisms or an incompetence with the English language, but rather, a deep personal pride that prompts him to want to share his culture's version of storytelling and legend with a wide and international audience through the accessible medium of the English novel.

Drama Prompt C1: Identify a moment in Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* where the mise-en-scène and speech seem to move in different directions. What effect does this produce? Why is it important for thinking about the rest of the play?

A moment in Samuel Beckett's play *Krapp's Last Tape* where the mise-en-scène and the speech seem to move in different directions is the final scene, where Krapp sits in silence after the final tape plays. The speech from the tape recorder is in stark contrast with the mise-en-scène, which is deeply hopeless, depressing and lifeless whereas the speech is ambitious, passionate and prideful. This produces a layered consciousness effect, where the surface level 'self' is working to convince a more subconscious, unhappy self of their own satisfaction with losing their youth. Additionally, all this occurring outside of the mise-en-scène creates another layer to the consciousness, the consciousness of the even older many mourning a long lost youth rather than experiencing it slip away and still feeling hope for a satisfactory life. These three levels of consciousness, the two past selves fighting against one another and the lifeless, hopeless older self listening back is important in the sense of understanding Beckett's message of old age as a harbinger of truth in this play— but also, as the mise-en-scène reveals, the truth itself is the meaninglessness, hopelessness and randomness of life.

From the text: “Here I end this reel. Box–[Pause.]–three, spool– [Pause.] –five. [Pause.] Perhaps my best years are gone. When there was a chance of happiness. But I wouldn’t want them back. Not with the fire in me now. No, I wouldn’t want them back. [KRAPP motionless staring before him. The tape runs on in silence.]”

Taking the words by themselves, there is a self assured tone in terms of his lack of regret, created through the repetition of “I wouldn’t want them back” as well as a passionate, ambitious tone created through the use of the word fire to describe creative energy. However, on a more hidden level of the subconscious, this repetition could indicate a self-doubt about life getting better and his ‘best years being behind him.’ The repetition could be a way that Krapp tries to convince himself that there is hope for the future, despite missing the past– and although both these realities could coexist in the moment the tape was recorded, by the end of the play it’s revealed that the subconscious level of doubt and anxiety about the meaning of life and the future, rather than the hopeful one on the surface, is the reality and the truth that older Krapp comes to terms with in this final scene.

In terms of the mise-en-scène, the younger, recorded version of himself– his voice, the emotion– is completely disconnected from the emotion on the tape and the actor: the way he stares, trembling, looking out into nothing, is revealing of Beckett’s message that there is no meaning to existence, just silence at the end, just distractions from the eventual nothingness. This is just one component of the mise-en-scène that is creating the message of hopelessness (of life getting better, of life being meaningful at all) being a part of old age and acceptance of death. Another aspect of the mise-en-scène that creates this message is the idea that what he’s saying on the tape, in the past, is given an entirely new meaning through the silence that goes on after the

tape stops. This is even written in the stage directions, and was specifically created by Beckett for the directors, in order to get his layered and indirect message across to the audience.

The disparity between the words on the tape and the action (or lack of) on the stage is stark; The "fire in him" that his younger self speaks of is not represented on the stage at all, but rather Krapp sits motionless, quivering, a deeply sad look on his face. This is showing a deep contrast between his younger self and his reality now– that the fire he once felt has burnt out and now he's left with nothing but memories and the lost hope of finding life's meaning through creating art. Additionally, besides just the acting, the lack of lighting in the mise-en-scène shows how his fire, be that creativity, life force, and his chances at happiness are burning out slowly as time goes by. The lighting throughout the play is faint already, but at the end, after his younger self on the tape specifically speaks about the fire in him 'now', there is a moment of silence, and then the light fades away slowly, and with it, Krapp's life force and his last hopes of happiness and meaning, through art, love, or otherwise.