

Satire and Humor in Langston Hughes's poems

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1. Abstract

The Afro-American poet Langston Hughes (1902 - 1967) was interested in poetry at an early age. Being matured as a poet, his major concern was writing as a black man, as he felt that doing otherwise might mean surrendering racial pride to what he called "false integration" (Pockell, 2009: 252).

Though it is considered that race problem is too deep to be thermalized through satirical verse, Hughes uses satire in his poems, as a means to expose such social follies as inequality, prejudice and the unjust laws. Yet it is not an easy task to write against the white folk in a society dominated by them. Therefore, Hughes celebrates humor as a method for comic relief.

This study is an attempt to reveal satire in some of Langston Hughes's poems, and to show its significance as a literary means in criticizing the follies of his society. It aims at illustrating the agony and suffering caused by racial discrimination and class division at the beginning of the twentieth century in America. It also manifests the humorous techniques manipulated by the poet for alleviating the tensions within the white race while they are satirized.

For the sake of paving the way, for the reader, to comprehend Hughes's poems, the researcher will focus on the presentation of certain influential factors, in Hughes's life, which contribute in the creation of the poet's beliefs and ideas about the black race. This concentration meanwhile presents an examination of some of Hughes's prominent themes.

2. Satire:

Stephen, Martin (1984:30) defines satire as "directing laughter at human vice, folly, and frailty. Satire can be light and amusing, or savage in bitterness with which it exposes human wrongdoings."

So, it is a literary art through which a subject is diminished or derogated and made ridiculous, contemptuous and scornful. Unlike the comedy, in which laughter is invoked as an end in itself, satire manipulates laughter as a weapon against a principle, an individual, a class, a type of people, a situation, or even the entire human race, outside the work itself (Abrams, 2005: 284,285).

Consequently, the satirist is a guardian for preserving various standards, ideals and values. He aims at correcting, censoring, and ridiculing the follies and vices of society. In this way, satire means a type of protest and refinement of anger and indignation. It is considered by many people as a therapy, the function of which the destruction of the root reasons of certain diseases of the spirit, as hypocrisy, pride, and greed. (Cuddon, 1979: 599).

Therefore, a moral element is observed as the satirist attempts to expose vices and follies and to render them ridiculous. The satirist's aim is mainly reforming the manners of society. His business is not restricted in entering the audiences' minds, but putting them on guard against vices and follies. Hence, the satirist conveys a set of values to his readers either implicitly or explicitly. Edward Bloom and Lillian Bloom, in their elaboration upon the moral aspect of satire say:

At its highest level, the satiric impulse is humanistic, its essence a tough-minded dedication that to paraphrase Pope wishes the world well. Satire, when thus broadly motivated, weeps, scolds, and ridicules, generally with one major end in view: to plead with man to return to his moral senses. (Moosa, 1983 1983: 3, 4)

Scolding and ridiculing the flaws in man's behavior are means by which satire brings man to his moral senses.

The satirist employs two methods for dealing with his topic. They are the method of attack and the method of persuasion. In spite of regarding attack as a significant element, the satirist might engage the element of persuasion in assisting his task for accomplishing his objectives. He has to convince his readers and audiences about the reality of his speech. Failure in being persuasive makes the satirist the object of his satire.

To attack human follies and vices, the satirist manipulates various techniques: lampoon or invective, burlesque, parody, and irony. It is true that all these forms have the same purpose, but their

methods are different. It is the satirist's attitude and topic which determine the use of any of these forms. (Moosa, 1983: 4, 5).

3. Humor :

Humor is a spicy of the comedy. It is a character, event, utterance, or any other element in a work of literature which aims to amuse or to arouse mirth in the reader or the audience.

Unlike wit which has only spoken and written references, humor covers a much wider range of references. It is encountered, for instance, in the way a character looks, dresses, and acts, as well as in wordless cartoons. Sometimes the sources of amusement are complex in thoroughly humorous situations. The greatness of an author's comic creation arises from his full exploitation of comic possibilities.

Furthermore, the term "Humor" is a reference to what is purely comic: it excites mirth or sympathetic laughter, which is regarded as an end in itself. It is a harmless form of the comic. Humor evokes the reader's or audience's laughter at a person merely because he is ridiculous – the laughter is void of any element of contempt or malice. (Abrams, 2005: 339-341).

4. Langston Hughes and His Prominent Poetic Themes:

4. 1. Hughes's Life:

Langston Hughes was born in 1902. He was widely regarded as the quintessential poet of the Harlem Renaissance. The separation of his parents came shortly after his birth. His father who worked as

a businessman and a lawyer moved to Cuba then to Mexico to settle in. Hughes lived with his mother before leaving to remain with his maternal grandmother (Paschen and Mosby, 2007: 166).

Since his childhood Hughes was brought up with an acquaintance of an important African American legacy. He lived with his maternal grandmother, the widow of Lewis Sheridan Leary who was one of the participants in John Brown's raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry in 1859. The raid was a failure and Leary was killed, but the shawl he wore was transferred to his wife. She used to use this shawl to cover her grandson at night when he was a young boy, fifty years after the raid.

Consequently, Hughes remains a true professional writer to the celebrated African American heritage theme, throughout his poetic career. He insists on the need of drawing on their heritage rather than escaping from their race, as a black artist:

We younger Negro artists, who create, intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful and ugly too. The tom-tom cries and the tom-tom laughs. If colored people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves. (Meyer, 2010: 401,402)

Therefore, Hughes's fame results from his generosity and his support to many younger Negro writers. As an early star of the

Harlem Renaissance, he defends young black authors' right to express the spirit of their race (Davis, et. al., 2003: 877).

In spite of Hughes's early and deep connection to his ancestors, he is known of keeping a stormy relationship with his father who offers to send him to study in one of the European colleges, to run away from racism and segregation in the American life. However Hughes's refusal is justified by: "More than Paris, or the Shakespearean country, or Berlin, or Alps, I wanted to see Harlem, the greatest Negro city in the world" (Chin, et. al., 2005: 738)

Hughes's life in Harlem on and off, leads him to an early introduction to the Afro-American affected style of Jazz music. Therefore, for experiencing this new and influential Jazz style, which would influence the black and the white societies alike during those times, Hughes revolves around it and even he promotes to exit from Colombia University. It is Jazz rhythms and tone which assists Hughes in capitalizing the directness and comprehensibility of his poems for appealing the common reader through his easy grasped topics. (Edrich, 2003: 2, 3) After winning many prizes in poetry during his life time, Hughes's death was in 1967 (Young, 2010: 97).

4. 2. Hughes's Prominent Poetic Themes:

4.2.1. Racial Pride:

Hughes incorporates the emerging spirit of the Harlem Renaissance in his poetry from the beginning of his poetic career. He dismantles narratives of submission which integrated to African – American literature in the time of enslavement, via his expression

of the rising black consciousness and racial pride. The Harlem Renaissance poet is not satisfied with satirizing and condemning white oppression but also denies the oppressor's narrative of his superiority which attempts to dismiss the Blacks outside human history. Hughes undermines the black people's traditional image and idea of themselves along three centuries of oppression. In his simple poetic words, he is skillful in turning colonial cultural mythology up-side down and successful in his celebration of the African land as the place of civilization and ancestors. Hence, after the Harlem Renaissance era Hughes's poetry is transfigured into a resisting power facing the consequences of racism.

Hughes's celebration of Harlem and African American life as a major theme in his poetry is due to his grandmother's tales about heroic ancestors, fighting racism and slavery, and due to his realization of the need of securing the essential rights for the black race. (Gohar, 2007: 152).

4.2.2. Class Struggle:

During the period of Hughes's writing segregation was legalized according to laws in the South; while black workers were exploited in being hired for low-wage jobs in the North. Little success was achieved in securing the basic rights for African Americans.

In spite of being the son of a wealthy father, Hughes understood the meaning of life in poverty. Before moving to live with his grandmother, he moved around six different cities, because his divorced and college-educated mother was looking for a work

but could find only menial jobs. In his poems, Hughes undertook the issue of the frustration and experiences of poor people as a significant issue along with his racial pride and personal dignity themes:

I didn't know the upper-class Negroes well enough to write much about them. I knew only the people I had grown up with, and they weren't people whose shoes were always shined, who had been to Harvard, or who had heard of Bach. But they seemed to me good people, too. (Chin, et. al., 2005: 738, 739)

So, tackling such significant themes discriminates Hughes's poetic career. He is regarded as the surest and most preserved talent which is revealed in the cultural movement during the 1920s which is later known as the Harlem Renaissance (Perkins and Perkins, 2002:1602).

5. Satire and Humor in Hughes's Poems:

The poet is considered as an individual with a personal vision. His poem is neither an expression of something happens in social history, nor a description of a symptom of a literary movement; it is the poet's assertion of his singular identity. Implicitly, he tells the reader his own way of seeing and shaping a moment of living or a view of life. He invites the reader to feel it through his senses, emotions and perceptions. Meanwhile, no writer can live or write in isolation. He is a living personality in a specific time, in a specific place, and in a specific social environment. He lives among the individuals of society as a member and inevitably society plays its role in his poetry. He may sympathize with his

social environment or rebel against it; or he may attempt to reject it altogether, but it still affects him. The poet himself is aware of this fact.

However, the poet's concern with his audience differs very much with the difference of poets and ages. Poetry could be distributed nearly into private and public. On the one hand, poetry which overflows as a result of great human personal and spiritual affairs as the meditative contemplation with nature, love, and religion, and on the other hand poetry which creates social entertainment and effect, as satirical verse.

In satirical verse, the poet does not seed the self in the consciousness of the others, but has a deliberate moral aim. He addresses his society in a direct way, and picks up its defects for general recognition. Though being easier than self criticism, the insights of the criticism of others may be quite as piercing and its expression quite as powerful as self-criticism. It is obvious that there are offenses in every individual, in every society, and in every era, and the poet, as a human being, has to protest sometimes through his art. Louis MacNeice describes the poet as "Not the loud-speaker of society, but something much more like its still, small voice ... He can be its conscience, its critical faculty." (Drew, 1967: 148-150)

Yet satirizing and criticizing others are performed variously. Some poets use a very rigid and harsh style for holding up the abuses and shortcomings of an individual or a society. Meanwhile, some poets satirize vices with a mild, gentle and light- hearted language. They may make use of humor as a device for adding fun,

as the case in Langston Hughes's poetry. As an African American poet, Hughes celebrates his own culture and the Negro life which he calls "low-down folks" life. He manipulates humor as a means for protesting and satirizing the existing injustices. He aims at conveying about racial segregation in poems as "I, Too".

"I, Too" which was written during Langston Hughes's life in Genoa, Italy, illustrated the unequal treatment that the black people received during the time of slavery. It showed how the "darker brother" was seeking for a chance to take part in the table of freedom with the whole American people. It was the black skin that black people had which made them become the low class in society. The black men were frequently dehumanized. Treating the Blacks as an inferior class by the white people caused suffering to them. In American society the Blacks had been kept in the bottom position in all aspects: economical class, status group, and power state.

Difference in the place of eating of the Blacks and the Whites, and differentiation between the Blacks and the Whites in receiving the general facilities supplied by government are instances of racial segregation actions. Though Hughes satirizes such actions, nevertheless, he presents optimistic statements which show the Blacks' rapid acquirement of power in spite of the bad treatment they get (Marpaung, 2010: 42, 43):

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes
But I laugh,

And eat well,

And grow strong.

(Meyer, 2010:407, ll.2-7)

In the next lines, the black poet's willingness and optimism are conveyed. One day, no racial segregation will be felt. Blacks and Whites will be equal in eating in the same place and getting the same facilities (Marpaung, 2010: 43):

Tomorrow,

I'll be at the table

When company comes.

Nobody 'll dare

Say to me,

"Eat in the kitchen,"

Then.

(Meyer, 2010:407, ll. 8-14)

Humor, in "I, Too", emerges from the fact that eating well in the kitchen makes the Black to attend the table with his lords and guests in the future. However more fun is added to the poem when the poet attacks the Whites by describing their ashamed situation in the future:

Besides,

They'll see how beautiful I am

And be ashamed

(Meyer, 2010: 407, ll. 15-17)

Despite that, Hughes takes a realistic perspective in expressing himself; he uses comedy and humor as a means for delighting, instructing and subverting. Ethic humor, which is regarded frequently as a weapon of oppression in the hands of powerful groups, can be used sometimes as a weapon of liberation. It is used dually; serving as a mode of aggression and for revolutionary purposes, and as a mode of communication and conciliation as well. Hughes understands the effect that satire and humor leave on people as he says:

Humor is a weapon, too, of no mean value against one's foes. Think what colored people in the United States could do with a magazine devoted to satire and fun, especially, one aimed at the racists of society. Since we have not been able to moralize them out of existence with indignant editorials, maybe we could laugh them to death with well-aimed ridicule. I'd like to see writers of both races write about our problems with black tongue and white cheek or vice versa. (Lowe, 2002)

It is noticeable that Hughes's satire is sometimes implicit and his humor is understated. He rarely expresses his satirical spirit obviously. It is presented either in the form of an argument running throughout the poem, or as a description of a rather ridiculous situation. Consequently the implicit humor smoothes his satirical modes in his poems.

In "Theme for English B", Hughes wrote about discrimination. During his life and study at the Y in Harlem, Langston was the only colored student in his class. Consequently his background as a colored student was different from his white

instructor's background. During those days black students were not allowed to live in the dormitories. As a Colombia student, he was unknown and unwelcome though he was provided with a room in the Hortly Hall by the Universities which supplied it unwillingly. Hughes satirized his white instructor by showing that in spite of being black; the student was similar to his instructor in many ways. Hughes probably aimed at saying, though different in skin color, the Blacks possessed the same position as the Whites.

His satire is mixed with a sense of humor as he runs on at demonstrating his equality with the instructor. He affirms that he resembles others in being like to perform the daily routines. He is interested in "Bessie, bop", which are the favored styles of music listened to frequently by the Blacks. Moreover, he is also interested in listening to "Bach" which is the music style favored by the Whites. It is obvious that Hughes wants to convey that the music common to other races, as the white race, is common to the black race too. (Marpaung, 2010: 37, 38):

Well, I like to eat, sleep, drink, and be in love.

I like to work, read, learn, and understand life.

I like a pipe for a Christmas present,

or records – Bessie, bop, or Bach.

I guess being colored does n't make me not like

The same things other folks like who are other races.

(Arp and Johnson, 2006: 973, ll. 21- 26)

Yet Hughes's satire of the white instructor is combined with racial pride. He announces his determination of not being a part of white people and he thinks that his white instructor does not want to be a part of his people either. He acknowledges his ability to learn from his instructor, and guesses that his instructor is able to learn from him also despite that the instructor is older than Hughes. (Marpaung, 2010: 38):

Sometimes perhaps you don't want to be a part of me
Nor do I often want to be a part of you.
But we are, that's true!
As I learn from you,
I guess you learn from me
Although you're older – and white –
and somewhat more free.

(Arp and Johnson, 2006: 973, ll. 34 – 40)

Irony rises from the fact that though the poem is focusing on equality, it is a concentration on differences as well. According to the researcher, the word “Free” is used ironically too.

It is significant to keep in mind that the comic vision signaled in Hughes's satiric poems is not aimless. Humor is used as a method for forging a sense of authenticity. It is figured as a mask, since under each pose there is a preacher and beneath each joke there is a Jeremiah. Moreover, making fun of racism and corruption is a guise under which Hughes incorporates a description of the terrible

conditions of black people and the reasons leading to such conditions (Lowe, 2002).

However, humor is used sometimes so impliedly by Hughes: It is mixed with terror in poems as "Ku Klux". In it, the poet satirizes the Whites through presenting a scene of an accosted black man by members of Ku Klux. The poem is a record of the experience of humiliation and violence that Negroes receive from the white police in the South:

They took me out
To some lonesome place.
They said "Do you believe
In the great white race"
I said; "Mister,
To tell you the truth;
I'd believe in anything
If you just turn me loose."

(Gohar, 2007: 175, 176, ll. 1-8)

Here, the black man, mocks the white police by showing his readiness to believe in anything if they turn him free. This is because of the black victim's full awareness of that any word he utters will be against him. The poem is a document of the racist history of the South through which Hughes satirizes the physical torture by which the white police obliges the black man to acknowledge his inferiority to the white race.

While the victim in some of Hughes's poems is subjected to the physical violence and brutality he is exposed to, in "Ku Klux" the black man challenges his oppressor by torturing him spiritually. Consequently the humorous status in the poem is enforced by the victim's response of saying anything for the sake of letting him free. However, Hughes's satire of the savageness of the white police is perhaps portrayed more vividly in the last lines of the poem. (Gohar, 2007: 176):

They hit me in the head
And knocked me down.
And then they kicked me
On the ground
A Klansman said, "Nigger"
Look me in the face –
And tell me you believe in
The great white race?
(Gohar, 2007: 176, ll. 13-20)

It is obvious that ending the poem with the same question, and the repetition of attributing the White as "great", explores more humorous irony, since no reply is repeated. The researcher thinks that the repetition of the question is a revelation that even the white police are uncertain of the greatness of their race, whereas absence of the black man's response is an indirect way of declaring the equality between the Blacks and the Whites.

Unlike many black poets, Hughes does not restrict the focus of his poetic universe on race and color, but tackles the suffering of black people in terms of being a part in the conflict of the proletariat against the ruling capitalist minority. Hughes's turning from the folklore poetry of the Harlem Renaissance toward the revolutionary poetry is pictured in poems as "White Man." In this poem, class struggle between the majorities on the one hand and economic exploitation and capitalism on the other hand, substitutes racial struggle between Blacks and Whites:

Sure, I know you;
You're a white man;
I'm a Negro.
You take all the best jobs;
And leave us the garbage cans to empty and;
the halls to clean.
You have a good time in a big house at;
Palm Beach;
and rent us the black alleys;
and the dirty slums.
(Gohar, 2007: 153, ll. 1 – 10)

Therefore, Hughes's satire is manifested through exposing the white man as an oppressor and capitalist who exploits the poor classes systematically. A sense of humor and fun is added in the lines that Hughes wonders why the white rich man dislikes spelling his name as it is claimed by Marx:

That rich people don't like to spell.

Is that true, White Man?

Is your name in a book

Called the Communist Manifesto?

Is your name spelled?

C-A-P-I-T-A-L-I-S-T?

Are you always a White Man?

(Gohar, 2007:153, ll.24-30)

Consequently, Hughes uses humor not only for upholding his race and culture, but to satirize class-divisions as well. He contrasts between the rich white people and the poor Blacks and criticizes the inequality of rules. In "Ballad of a Landlord," Hughes involves four different speakers' perspectives on the action of the poem. The black man's experience in the society is dramatized through the voices of a tenant, a landlord, the police and the press.

In spite of using a nonstandard English language, the tenant's argument is organized and logical. The tenant starts with complaining and reminding the landlord that the complaint is a week old. (Hacker, 2003:29):

Landlord, landlord,

My roof has sprung leak.

Don't you member I told you about it

Way last week?

Landlord, landlord,

These steps is broken down.

When you come up yourself

It's a wonder you don't fall down.

(Barnet, et. al., 2006: 946, ll. 1-8)

The tenant's use of colloquial English represented by contracted words as "member", and nonstandard grammar as "these steps is broken down", illustrates his deprivation from the world conventions. Alternatively these worldly conventions are represented through the voice of the landlord and the press.

Instead of repairing the house for the tenant, the landlord threatens to evict him and cut off the heat. The tenant inevitably uses the language of violence. (Hacker, 2003:29):

You ain't gonna be able to say a word

If I land my fist on you.

(Barnet, et. al., 2006:946, ll. 19, 20)

These are the last uttered words by the tenant in the poem, and probably Hughes aims at showing how black people who threaten violence are silenced. The landlord's reaction is humorous:

Police! Police!

Come and get this man!

He's trying to ruin the government

And overturn the land!

(Barnet, et. al., 2006: 946, ll. 21-24)

These words show how the reaction is sinister as they portray the landlord as careless of the excessiveness of his claims since he has police and law at his side.

After the breaking down of the regular meter and rhyme of the poem, while arresting the black man, meter and rhyme return with the voice of the press. This voice is represented in newspaper headlines (Hacker, 2003:30, 31):

MAN THREATENS LANDLORD

TENANT HELD NO BAIL.

JUDGE GIVES NEGRO 90 DAYS IN COUNTY JAIL.

(Barnet, et. al., 2006:947, ll. 31- 33)

The return of the meter and rhyme is manifested as if to say that life can go on its usual manner after the arresting of the tenant. The coldness and distance in the language of the press and that of the police diminishes the status of the tenant. First the tenant is presented as a man, then he is demoted to a tenant, and lastly as a Negro.

The causes of the predicament of the poor Negro is obvious by the end of the poem. The landlord exploits him, others oppress him politically by thinking that he aims at ruining the government, the police and the judicial system restrain him physically, and the press denies his individuality. The only factor that saves him is his sense of humor as it is portrayed in the second stanza in which the tenant describes the broken steps “When you come up yourself\It's a wonder you don't fall down.” There is a suggestion of the speaker's – and the poet's – sense of humor in the very title of the poem as

well. Though the tenant sings a song to his oppressors, the ballad is not a love song. It presents the cowardice of the landlord and the dullness and soullessness of the police and the press through their own voices. Despite lacking political power, the tenant speaks with vitality and owns dignity and the spirit of survival. (Hacker, 2003: 31).

Hence the issues of class division, poverty, and hard working are concentrated on in Hughes's poetry as the main concerns of everyday life in Harlem. This is because in addition to being troubled by racial discrimination, the Blacks are disturbed by the treatment of high classes.

It is obvious that Hughes along with other Harlem Renaissance writers faced many difficulties in composing self-proclaimed poetry. They wondered whether they were capable of speaking for an entire race. They are questioned if their trials tend to homogenize and stereotype a diverse people or not. The Harlem poets, realized that the audiences of their poetry were almost all White, therefore they had to consider the role of producing a particular image of black people in helping or harming the cause. They felt that being obliged to idealize their folk risked them into racist primitivism. They also wondered whether they had to emphasize their similarities to or differences from the dominant race. Hughes solved such problems by turning from the rural black folk toward the city. The focus on contemporary urban life was a factor in freeing Hughes from the issues of primitivism. He turned to be a realist and a modernist. He was successful in his adaptation of stanza forms derived from blues music and the vocabulary of

everyday black speech to poetry away from emphasizing stereotypes. He insisted on the equality of all Americans in being entitled to liberty, justice and opportunity. (Baym, 2003:458).

6. Conclusion:

The sense of oppression, poverty and racial pride are expressed by many poets throughout the history of English poetry, but few poets could make such a great influence as Langston Hughes. As an African American poet, Hughes is not satisfied with the inequality and the master-slave relationship between the Whites and the Blacks. Therefore, he satirizes this relationship by criticizing the treatment they receive from the dominant race at times, and via exposing the miserable situation of the poor black race at other times. Moreover his greatest satiric points are stressed on by emphasizing the similarities between his race and the Whites, rather than the differences. Furthermore, his turning to the urban life facilitates his job since it is the means by which he gets rid of race primitivism.

As a Negro poet Hughes's satire is mixed with a humorous vision. Humor, which is preserved frequently through irony in his poems, is used as a device for alleviating his attacks to the white people and the unjust rules of his days. It is noticeable that Hughes's satire is frequently social and political, and in most of his poems, it tends to belong to Horacian Satire because of the pose of humor indulged in it. Hence, the greatness of Hughes's satirical verse arises from his full exploitation of comic possibilities. His sense of humor excites mirth and sympathetic laughter.

Consequently, Hughes is a revolutionary poet who expresses the pains of his fellow citizens. Unlike some Negro poets, he is not ashamed of his nationality and poverty but struggles for bringing justice and equality in the modern age.

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الهجاء و السخرية في قصائد لانجستون هيوز

ملخص البحث

ولع الشاعر الأمريكي من اصل افريقي لانجستون هيوز (١٩٠٢ - ١٩٦٧) بالشعر منذ سن مبكرة. بعد نضوجه كشاعر اصبح تركيزه على الكتابة كونه ينتمي الى عرق البشرة السوداء، وقد احس ان العمل بغير ذلك يعني تسليم الفخر العرقي لما سماه بـ"التكامل الزائف". على الرغم من ان مسألة العرق تعتبر اكثر تعقيدا من ان تعالج من خلال الهجاء، فقد استخدم هيوز الهجاء في قصائده كوسيلة لعرض المشاكل الاجتماعية كعدم المساواة، التمييز، والقوانين غير العادلة. وبما انه ليس من السهل الكتابة عن العرق من ذوي البشرة البيضاء في مجتمع هم فيه اكثر سيادة فان الشاعر هيوز استخدم السخرية كوسيلة لاعطاء طابع كوميدي لقصائده. يهدف هذا البحث الى اظهار الهجاء في بعض قصائد لانجستون هيوز، واظهار اهمية الهجاء كوسيلة ادبية لانتقاد الازعاج السائدة في مجتمعه. ويهدف ايضا الى عرض المعاناة الناتجة من التمييز العرقي (السلالي) و تقسيم الطبقات في بداية القرن العشرين في اميركا. اضافة الى ذلك يوضح البحث التقنيات الهزلية التي اتبعها الشاعر لتسكين التوترات الداخلية لعرق ذوي البشرة البيضاء عند هجائهم. ولغرض تمكين القارئ من استيعاب قصائد هيوز يركز الباحث على بعض العوامل المؤثرة في حياة الشاعر، و التي ساهمت في تكوين مفاهيم و افكار الشاعر عن عرق البشرة السوداء. ويشمل هذا التركيز ايضا عرض بعض الافكار الشعرية للشاعر.

Satire and Humor in Langston Hughes's poems
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