

IMPACT OF THE WORLD WARS AND THE COLD WAR ON LANGSTON HUGHES

*O IMPACTO DAS GUERRAS MUNDIAIS
E DA GUERRA FRIA EM LANGSTON HUGHES*

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Abstract

The two World Wars and the Cold War had a profound impact on Langston Hughes. World War I and the October Revolution wove a web that connected the Soviet Union and its socialist cause to African Americans, and then the Yokinen and Scottsboro trials directly nurtured the “New Red Negro” writings with the spirit of rising “up from bondage” as oppressed people. Hughes traveled the world, became a global citizen, and assumed a cosmopolitan mission for international and racial affairs. However, the Nazi-Soviet Pact changed his view of the world. Hughes began to focus on the problems of “colored soldiers” and compared the advantages and disadvantages of the United States of America and the Soviet Union. When the Iron Curtain came about, McCarthyism drove Hughes to stay in the United States, maintain a distance from international and political affairs, confirm his national position, and rely on writing children’s books for a living, as well as translating and editing others’ works.

Keywords: World War; Cold War; Langston Hughes; African American literature.

Resumo

As duas guerras mundiais e a Guerra Fria tiveram um impacto profundo em Langston Hughes. A Primeira Guerra e a Revolução de Outubro teceram uma rede que conectava a União Soviética e a sua causa socialista aos afro-americanos, e além disso os julgamentos de Yokinen e Scottsboro alimentaram diretamente a escrita do “Novo Negro Vermelho” com o espírito de se lutar contra os grilhões da opressão. Hughes viajou pelo mundo, tornou-se um cidadão global e assumiu uma missão cosmopolita em relação a questões internacionais e raciais. Porém, o pacto Hitler-Stalin mudou a sua

Résumé

Les deux guerres mondiales et la guerre froide ont profondément influencé Langston Hughes. La Première Guerre mondiale et la révolution d’Octobre ont établi des connexions entre les visées socialistes de l’Union soviétique et les Afro-Américains. Par la suite, les procès de Yokinen et Scottsboro ont directement inspiré les écrits du « New Red Negro » qui se sont nourris de l’appel à sortir de l’esclavage en tant que peuple opprimé. Hughes a voyagé à travers le monde et est devenu un citoyen global, qui s’est chargé d’une mission cosmopolite dans les affaires internationales et raciales.



concepção do mundo. Hughes começou a focar nos problemas dos “soldados de cor” e a comparar as vantagens e desvantagens dos Estados Unidos e da União Soviética. Com o início da Cortina de Ferro, o McCarthyismo levou Hughes a permanecer nos EUA, manter uma distância em relação a problemas políticos e internacionais, confirmar sua posição nacional e depender da escrita de livros infantis e da edição de obras de outros autores para sobreviver.

Palavras-chave: Guerra Mundial; Guerra Fria; Langston Hughes; literatura afro-americana.

Le pacte germano-soviétique a néanmoins changé sa vision du monde. Hughes a ainsi commencé à se concentrer sur les problèmes des « soldats de couleur », comparant les avantages et désavantages des États-Unis et de l’Union soviétique. Avec le début du rideau de fer, le maccarthysme a conduit Hughes à demeurer aux États-Unis, à rester à distance des affaires internationales et politiques, à confirmer sa position nationale et à gagner sa vie en rédigeant des livres pour enfants, tout comme en assurant la traduction et l’édition d’œuvres d’autres auteurs.

Mots-clés: Guerre Mondiale; Guerre Froide; Langston Hughes; Littérature Afro-Américaine.

World Wars I & II and the Cold War shaped Langston Hughes’ writings differently. Their precise impact¹ could be divided into two stages. In the first stage, Hughes chose to be close to the East. More specifically, the Russian October Revolution made a great impression on him and this, along with his working-class experience in the 1920s, well nurtured Hughes’ race consciousness, class consciousness and concern for colored and oppressed people worldwide. In the second stage, Hughes shifted to the West and fell silent due to the national consciousness and pressure fostered by World War II and the Cold War, mainly by the Stalin-Hitler Pact in 1939 and McCarthyism.

Close to the East: From Yokinen Trial and Scottsboro Trial to World War II

According to Richard Wright, World War I “provided the first real break” in the “continuity of hopelessness” (WRIGHT, 1995, p. 102) for African Americans because “each new generation of Negro writers lived in an environment that was almost the same” before the war. More specifically, for three centuries, the “American Negro had to depend upon white Americans” to define “his problem” and “position”, had to “accept the friendship of white liberals” (WRIGHT, 1995, p. 102). However, after World War I, this

¹ For more information on related topics, please see Arnold Rampersad (2002); Jonathan Scott (2006); Evelyn Louise Crawford and Mary Louise Patterson (2016); and Faith Berry (1973).

three-century “spell” was “broken forever”, because “Soviet Russia rose and sent out her calls to the oppressed” (WRIGHT, 1995, p. 102) and pointed to a direction for African Americans. Hence, African Americans woke up, and “for the first time since Phyllis Wheatley,² the Negro began to make a wholehearted commitment to a new world” (WRIGHT, 1995, p. 102) with the following characteristics:

Color consciousness had lost some of its edge and was replaced in a large measure, by class consciousness and, with the rise of an integral working-class movement, a new sense of identification came to the American Negro. (WRIGHT, 1995, p. 102).

In this new world, African Americans strove to find “a new sense of oneness, a new integration”, and to “write of the shared hopes and aspirations of millions of people” (WRIGHT, 1995, p. 102), which was the “New Red Negro” writing. It is true that World War I had two direct impacts on African Americans’ everyday life, one of which was an intense domestic context after its outbreak. This was because the “start of U.S. belligerency in 1917 led to an outbreak of intense repression of domestic dissent”, which especially “led to an extraordinary outbreak of violence against African Americans” (BORSTELMANN, 2001, p. 22). The racial tension was so harsh for African Americans that “from the summer of 1917 through to 1919, white mobs across the nation beat, shot, burned and mutilated black Americans with impunity”. These “incidents ranged from rural lynchings across the South to full-scale riots in cities around the country” (BORSTELMANN, 2001, p. 22), *e.g.*, Chicago, Washington D.C., Detroit, New York, and three dozen cities across the United States in 1919, which James Weldon Johnson called “The Red Summer”. There were two main reasons for those anti-black riots, one of which was the Great Migration of African Americans from the South to the North during World War I. Although the migration of European laborers to the United States ceased because of the War, the demand for unskilled industrial labor increased rapidly. When a massive contingent of African Americans arrived in the North, who were willing to work as cheaper labor, their existence triggered a crisis in a job market that was once dominated by whites. Hence, the job competition lit the flame of white supremacist terrorism against African Americans with the simple goal to restrict them from being hired. For instance, Langston Hughes described his experience

² Phyllis Wheatley was the first African American who published a book of poems in English in 1773. The reason her publication is so important is because, since the 1660s, African Americans and Africans had been judged by European humanity standards as “born to be slaves” because they couldn’t “write” and didn’t have a written civilization or literature. Wheatley’s book overturned this judgement.

of trying to find a job to help his poor mother in the summer of 1916: “summertime came and pure Americans could easily find a job quickly, but not a “nigger” for even during the war, when help was badly needed, a lot of employers would *not* hire Negroes”, so “a colored boy had to search and search for a job” (HUGHES, 1932, p. 50).

The other was the First Red Scare in the United States following the anti-Bolshevik sentiment of the 1917 Russian Revolution. Many politicians, government officials, and mass media were worried that African Americans would be contaminated by Socialist and Communist ideologies and hence feared them. They were especially afraid that soldiers coming back from Europe would attempt to overthrow the United States’ political regime, as the Bolsheviks did in Russia. For instance, Woodrow Wilson once privately said that “the American Negro returning from abroad would be our greatest medium in conveying Bolshevism to America” (McLAREN, 2003, p. 56). Hughes narrated a similar episode with his first perception of Europe when he compared it to when he learned that “free verse was not good” in school, since “there are ways of saying or doing things”, especially for “niggers”: I learned [from students in Central High School in Cleveland, Ohio] Europe was not far away, and that when Lenin took power in Russia, something happened in the slums of Woodlawn Avenue that the teachers couldn’t tell us about, and that our principal didn’t want us to know” (HUGHES, 1932, p. 50).

However, Hughes and some of his classmates still celebrated the Russian Revolution and Lenin, which was when the seeds were planted in him to support Socialism in the 1930s.

The other impact was the inhuman treatment of African American soldiers, both during and after World War I. During the war, most African American soldiers were sent to France under racist instructions when the “U.S. Army authorities campaigned strenuously to convince French soldiers and commanders not to treat darker-skinned U.S. soldiers as equals”, and especially “not to eat, shake hands, or socialize with them and not to praise them too highly in front of lighter-skinned U.S. soldiers” (BORSTELMANN, 2001, p. 23). When African American soldiers returned to the United States with “guarded hopes that their patriotic service and sacrifice would help to initiate a new era of diminishing discrimination” (BORSTELMANN, 2001, p. 24), “white hostility” drove them back to reality. When Walter Jones went back home to Waco in Texas from France, he was warned by a white man, “Nigger, you ain’t in France no more, you’re in America” (BORSTELMANN, 2001, p. 24). Hughes witnessed this cruelty when he was still in high school in Cleveland. When World War I ended in November 1918, everybody “poured into the streets to celebrate the Armistice. Negroes, too”; however, they started

to wonder what kind of democracy they had “fought to preserve”, because even in Cleveland, a “liberal city, the color line began to be drawn tighter and tighter” (HUGHES, 1932, p. 63). Theaters and restaurants refused to “accommodate colored people”, landlords “doubled or tripled the rents” of “a dark tenant”, and when “white soldiers came back from the war, Negroes were often discharged from their jobs” (HUGHES, 1932, p. 63) and black veterans could not find jobs as other blacks. Hence, Hughes was once again attracted by Russia and Lenin with his classmates when John Reed’s *Ten Days That Shook the World* “shook Central High School”. They did not talk about the end of the war, but rather “about Russia, where Lenin had taken power in the name of the workers, who make everything, and who would now own everything they made”. Among them, Jews said “no more pogroms”, “no more hatred, no more landlords” (HUGHES, 1932, p. 63). It was at this time that Hughes started to have his own opinion of Bolsheviks. He vehemently disagreed with the picture daily papers drew of them: “the greatest devils on earth” because, in his mind, Bolsheviks “could not be that bad if they had done away with race hatred and landlords” (p. 63), which were two real evils. Hughes’ understanding nurtured his doubt about American democracy in his poem on World War I: “The Colored Soldiers” (1931). In the first 12 lines, Hughes explained how proud two brothers were to fight for their “Nation”, for the “U.S.A.” and for “Democracy” in France:

My brother died in France---- but I came back
We were just two colored boys, brown and black,
Who joined up to fight for the U.S.A.
When the Nation called us that mighty day,
We were sent to training camp, then overseas---
And me and my brother were happy as you please
Thinking we were fighting for Democracy’s true reign,
And that our dark blood would wipe away the stain
Of prejudice and hate, and the false color line---
And give us the rights that are yours and mine.
They told us America would know no black or white:
So, we marched to the front, happy to fight.
(RAMPERSAD; ROESSEL, 1995, p. 147)

In the next 35 lines, he narrates the dream of “mine”, in which “my brother” who was “dead in France” paid “me” a visit, so excited about “the chance” that “I” was about to get, by comparing “our” past:

Black boys couldn't work then anywhere like they can today,
 Could hardly find a job that offered decent pay.
 The unions barred us, the factories, too,
 But now I know we've got plenty to do.
 We couldn't eat in restaurants; had Jim Crow cars.
 Didn't have any schools; and there were all sorts of bars
 To a colored boy's rising in wealth or station----
 But now I know well that's not our situation:
 The world's been made safe for Democracy
 And no longer do we know the dark misery
 Of being held back, of having no chance----
 Since the colored soldiers came home from France.
 Didn't our government tell us things would be fine
 When we got through fighting, Over There, and dying?
 So now I know we blacks are just like any other----
 'Cause that's what I died for---- isn't it, Brother...
 (RAMPERSAD; ROESSEL, 1995, p. 147)

However, before "I" woke up, "I" realized "the dream was cruel, bitter and somehow not right", because "It's a lie / It's a lie / It's a lie / Every word they said". Hence, "I" told "my dead brother" that "it's better a thousand times you're in France dead / For here in the South there's no votes and no right / And I'm still just a 'nigger' in America tonight"; and "it's a good thing all the black boys lying dead / Over There / Can't see! And don't know! And won't ever care!" (RAMPERSAD; ROESSEL, 1995, p. 148). It is this amended dream that caused many African Americans to wake up.³

3 From the end of World War I to the 1920s, the majority of African Americans did not trust Soviet Communism, and very few activists and intellectuals in the United States expressed their opinion of Socialism and Communism. The interesting phenomenon was that the representatives were from the Caribbean, and they had opposite opinions, e.g., Marcus Garvey and Claude McKay. Garvey was inspired by the October Revolution and by Lenin and Trotsky's ability to give the world its first socialist republic: "If Lenin and Trotsky were able to do that for Russia, you and I can do that for Africa". Garvey's goal was to build a new Africa for Africans worldwide. However, he did not support Communism, because he believed that the real exploiters of the Blacks were not white capitalists, but the white working class; hence, he clarified that "what the Negro must do is to let the Communists fight their own battles and stand back to watch the fight" and meanwhile, "the Negro must take advantage of the opportunities presented during the fight, but he must not join the fight as a Communist" (see Tony Martin (ed.), *Marcus Garvey: Messages to the People, The Course of African Philosophy*. Dover: The Majority Press, p. 137-138). McKay disagreed with Garvey on two key points: nationalism was important to Communism, the British Empire was the real enemy of International Socialism, and the British Empire was the target of Garvey's movement. The core difference between Garvey and McKay was that McKay chose to stay in line with Socialism, Communism, Socialists and Communists. However, he did not criticize Garvey for his attitude toward socialism and communism; instead, he used Du Bois as an example of opposing

Then there were two trials that “transformed the fortunes of the Communist Party in their attempt to win black working-class support” (BERGIN, 2015, p. 34). The first trial was of August Yokinen, a Finish-American Communist, in March 1931. When he was on duty, a “small group of blacks arrived at the club for a social event” (SOLOMON, 1998, p. 139), and Yokinen “muttered something inhospitable like ‘your dance is in colored Harlem’”. Later, he “claimed that if he had allowed blacks into the club, they would soon be using the sauna, and ‘he did not want to bathe with Negroes’” (SOLOMON, 1998, p. 139). The Yokinen trial was public with “nearly two thousand spectators, about five hundred of whom were black, crowded into the Harlem Casino on the first Sunday in March 1931” (SOLOMON, 1998, p. 139).

Yokinen’s trial had two major impacts on African Americans. On the one hand, it enabled them to recognize the white superiority ideology that gave the “ruling-class an excuse for acts of suppression and the persecution of Negro workers and farmers” (*Daily Worker*, 1931, p. 3). This recognition pointed to a direction for them to argue for their rights with a sharp class consciousness and it blurred the color line. On the other hand, it built a foundation for African Americans to rethink Communism, because the Communist Party had not only “made clear the anti-working-class character of race prejudice”, but also “shown that it will not tolerate any form of racial prejudice within its own ranks and will fight tooth and nail to root it out of the working class as a whole” (p. 3-4). Therefore, the Comintern and the international concern about “Black Problems” nurtured many African American proletarian writings. Representative poems are Hughes’ *Sharecroppers* and the *Ballad of Lenin* (1936), in which he described his confidence in Lenin and the future: “Comrade Lenin of Russia / Rises in the marble tome / *On Guard with the fighters forever---The world is our room!*” (HICKS *et al.*, 1936, p. 167). Meanwhile, in *Sharecroppers*, Hughes criticized the exploration of “Negroes” of the “boss man” in the cotton fields:

socialism: “Dr. Dubois has flirted with the socialist idea from a narrow opportunist-racial standpoint; but he is in spirit opposed to it”, because “the Negro question is primarily an economic problem”, and he believed that the Soviet model showed the capacity for the Blacks to solve their economic problem (see Claude McKay, “Socialism and the Negro”, *Workers’ Dreadnought* Vol VI No. 45, 31 January 1920, p. 1-2). Du Bois’ idea for Black Americans to solve their problem was the “Talented Tenth”, which he coined in 1903, and it was not until 1948 that he coined another term: “Guiding Hundredth”. Hughes met Du Bois in the early 1920s when he was at Columbia University, but they parted ways when Hughes dropped from Columbia University and had to do many jobs to support himself. Hence, Hughes did not write about Socialism or Communism until the Yokinen and Scottsboro Trials in the 1920s and his early twenties. Therefore, unlike Du Bois’ elite opinion, when Hughes started to express his political opinions in the early 1930s, his concept of Socialism and Communism was working-class oriented based on his life experience.

Just a herd of Negroes
Driven to the fields,
Plowing, planting, hoeing,
To make the cotton yield.

When the cotton's picked
And the work is done
Boss man takes the money
And we get none.

Leaves us hungry, ragged
As we were before,
Year by year goes by
And we are nothing more

Than a herd of Negroes
Driven to the field---
Plowing life away
To make the cotton yield.
(HICKS *et al.*, 1936, p. 167)

The second trial was of the Scottsboro Boys. On March 25, 1931, a “Southern Railroad freight train left Chattanooga, Tennessee, bound for Memphis” (ACKER, 2008, p. 1), and when it was about to stop at Paint Rock, “roughly 20 miles beyond Scottsboro” (ACKER, 2008, p. 2), nine black youths were arrested for “assaulting” a few white boys, and they were later accused of “raping” two white prostitutes, Victoria Price and Ruby Bates. These nine black youths were put in jail and sentenced to death in the electric chair, despite the lack of solid evidence. Since they were “poor, uneducated, and far from home when they were arrested”, they “lacked the resources and skills to defend themselves against the rape accusations” (HOWARD, 2008, p. 4). It was then that the Communist Party and the Comintern “perceived the Scottsboro Boys case as a vehicle for making inroads in the South, particularly among blacks” (HOWARD, 2008, p. 4).

Compared to the domestic trial of Yokinen, the Scottsboro trial became the first international case, and when Hughes, Harper Lee, Allen Ginsberg, Countee Cullen and Jean-Paul Sartre all directly wrote about it, it quickly became a worldwide literary and cultural theme. In the African American community, the Scottsboro case nurtured the image of a “New

Red Negro” based on the close ties between “the new type of Party and the new Negro” (SMETHURST, 1999, p. 16). In this community, Hughes paid great attention to Scottsboro. On the one hand, he wrote four poems and a play in *Scottsboro Limited* (1932), in which he declared that “justice is a blind goddess” (HUGHES, 1932, p. 5) in this case that “8 black boys⁴ in a southern jail / world, turn pale! / 8 black boys and one white lie / is it much to die?”. Giving voice to the resistant spirit of colored people, he wrote “Nat Turner / Fighters for the free / Lenin with the flag blood red / (Not dead, not dead! None of those is dead) / Gandhi / Sandino / Evangelista, too / To walk with you” (p. 7). Expressing his hope through religion, he averred that “Christ is a Nigger / Beaten and black / ... Mary is His Mother / Mammy of the South / Silence your mouth / God’s His Father / *White Master above / Grant us your love / ...Nigger Christ / On the cross of the South*” (p. 9). While Hughes condemned the “southern gentlemen, white prostitutes and mill-owners”, he still pinned his hopes on “American justice”. He stressed that the 9 black youths would have their “freedom” (BERRY, 1973, p. 49), that “the South will rise up in press and pulpit, home and school” for “the honor of Southern gentlemen”. Hughes wished that “the mill-owners of Huntsville [would] pay their women decent wages, so they won’t need to be prostitutes”, and “let the sensible citizens of Alabama supply schools for the black populace of their state”, so that “Negroes won’t be so dumb again” (BERRY, 1973, p. 49). Hughes also emphasized that other countries should not interfere in the Scottsboro case: “keep silent, Germany, Russia, France, young China”, and “listen Communists, don’t send any more cablegrams to the Governor of Alabama. Don’t send any more telegrams to the Supreme court”, and “let the law wash its hands in peace” (BERRY, 1973, p. 50).

On the other hand, after visiting Moscow in June 1932, Hughes changed his view of the connection between Russia, Communism and African American problems, and began to directly demonstrate the different attitude between the Soviet Union and the US toward “Negroes”⁵. For example, the reason “Moscow is different from Chicago or Cleveland, or New York” is that “in the cities at home, Negroes must stay away from a great many

⁴ It should be 9 black boys, rather than 8. Before the publication of *Scottsboro Limited* (1932), Hughes published the prose entitled “Southern Gentlemen, White Prostitutes, Mill-Owners, And Negroes” (1931) in *Contempo*. He mentioned “If the 9 Scottsboro boys die”; see Faith Berry (ed.), *Langston Hughes: Good Morning Revolution* (1973).

⁵ Hughes wrote over ten essays about the Soviet Union since 1933, e.g., “Moscow and Me” (*International Literature*, July 1933), “Going South in Russia” (*The Crisis*, June 1934), “Lenin” (*New Masses*, January 22, 1946), “The Soviet Union” (*The Chicago Defender*, June 1, 1946), “The Soviet Union and Jews” (*The Chicago Defender*, June 8, 1946), “The Soviet Union and Color” (*The Chicago Defender*, June 15, 1946), “The Soviet Union and Women” (*The Chicago Defender*, June 29, 1946), “The Soviet Union and Health” (*The Chicago Defender*, July 20, 1946), “Faults of The Soviet Union” (*The Chicago Defender*, August 3, 1946), “Light and The Soviet Union” (*The Chicago Defender*, August 10, 1946). ”.

places---hotels, clubs, parks, theaters, factories, offices and union halls”, but in Moscow, “all the doors are open to us”, so “I find myself forgetting that the Russians are white folks” because they are “decent and polite”⁶ (BERRY, 1973, p. 71). Hence, Hughes highly praised the Soviet Union, saying that

There is one country in the world that has NO JIM CROW of any sort, NO UNEMPLOYMENT of any sort, NO PROSTITUTION or demeaning of the human personality through poverty, NO LACK OF EDUCATION FACILITIES for all of its young people, and NO LACK OF SICK CARE or dental care for everybody. That country is the Soviet Union. (HUGHES, 1932, p. 80)

In addition, Hughes expressed his hope “toward Soviet America” (BERGIN, 2015, p. 16) in a poem entitled *One More 'S' in the U.S.A.*: “Put one more s in the U.S.A / To make it Soviet / One more s in the U.S.A. / Oh, we’ll live to see it yet / When the land belongs to the farmers / And the factories to the working men / The U.S.A. when we take control / Will be the U.S.S.A. then” (qtd. in DAWAHARE, 2003, p. 107). Hughes represented many African Americans’ attitude toward the Soviet Union in the early 1930s. Influenced by the Soviets, African Americans had two basic world views, one of which was a focus on the class struggle, rather than racial problems. In Hughes’ words: “Black and white workers united as one...THE BLACK AND WHITE WORKERS--- / you and me” (HUGHES, 1932, p. 185). The other was an “anti-nationalist perspective”, and the “internationalist stance advances working-class unity above all else” (DAWAHARE, 2003, p. 80), which was caused by the similar cosmopolitan contexts of Russians and African Americans. In short, the Soviet impact made the liberation of African Americans “theoretically internationalist”, since the “liberation from imperialism unites the national liberators with other anti-imperialist and potentially socialist struggle” (DAWAHARE, 2003, p. 82). As William Peterson observed, “Let us have strong vital criticism, Marxism criticism;

⁶ Of course, Robert Robinson took a different stance in *Black On Red: My 44 Years Inside the Soviet Union*, when he wrote “the Russians pride themselves on being free of prejudice”, but “their racism is more virulent than any I encountered in the United States as a young man. I rarely met a Russian who thought blacks---or for that matter Orientals or any non-whites---were equal to him. Trying to deal with their prejudice was like trying to catch a phantom. I could feel their racism singeing my flesh, but how do you deal with something that officially doesn't exist? I was the target of racism even though I had gained national recognition as a mechanical engineer by inventing machinery that dramatically increased industrial productivity. I even have my share of Soviet medals and certificates of honor” (ROBINSON, 1998, p. 15). Robinson even categorized Russians’ racism as “all non-Russians are considered inferior”, but there is an “unofficial scale of inferiority” with “the Armenians, Georgians, and Ukrainians more acceptable than other non-Russians. While the eastern Soviet citizens with yellow skin and almond-shaped eyes are considered to be at the bottom of society”, and “they think of blacks as even worse” (ROBINSON, 1998, p. 15-16).

let us have the poetry of the masses, let us have international poetry” (qtd. in DAWAHARE, 2003, p. 73). Likewise, Hughes expressed this need of “international poetry”.

His travels across the world in the 1920s (e.g., Mexico, Africa, Caribbean, England, Paris) and early 1930s (e.g., Soviet Union, China, Japan, Korea) drew Hughes’ attention to the political rights of other nations. For instance, as the first African American ever to visit China (in 1933), Hughes wrote his Shanghai and Nanjing journey in the poem entitled *Roar, China* (1937). He perceived that China contributed to global civilization as “the porcelain-maker”, “the poem maker” and the “old maker of firecrackers” (RAMPERSAD; ROESSEL, 1995, p. 198-199), as the old authority in the East, the “old lion of the East”, the “yellow dragon of the Orient”, and the “old beast” (RAMPERSAD; ROESSEL, 1995, p. 198). In terms of China’s international status in the early 1930s, Hughes said “THEY came with gunboats / Set up Concessions... / International Settlement / Missionary houses / Banks / And Jim Crow Y.M.C.A.’s / THEY beat you with malacca canes”, “THEY kicked you daily” (RAMPERSAD; ROESSEL, 1995, p. 198-199), and in response to the China of the future, he urged his readers to “roar”, “snort/spit fire”, “laugh”, “shoot” and “stand up”, cause “you’re no tame lion”; therefore, “little coolie boy on the docks of Shanghai” / “red generals of in the hills of Sian-kiang” / “child slaves in the factories of foreigners”, “break the chain of the East”, and “smash the iron gates” of the “Concessions” / “pious doors of the missionary houses” / “revolving doors of Jim Crow Y.M.C.A.’s” because China could “crush the enemies of land and bread and freedom” (RAMPERSAD; ROESSEL, 1995, p. 199-200).

In short, World War I had a general impact on the African American community through Soviet Socialism and Communism, which nurtured the “New Red Negro” writing along with internationalism. The “cosmopolitan” feature was important as a similar feature of the African American and Slavic races in the 1920s, for two reasons. On the one hand, “large historic forces and events had brought into being a newly-awakened diasporic consciousness among Russian and black intellectuals” (PETERSON, 2000, p. 11) because Russians, as “Westernized” Russian emigrants and élites, were “forced to come to terms with an ancient homeland that had apparently embraced both a socialist revolution and modernism” (PETERSON, 2000, p. 11). As for African Americans, they were Americanized and northern urban élites who were born in the South, but had migrated to the North and hence, had to face their “double consciousness”, both African and American, and both Southern and Northern. On the other hand, World War I, as the first war in human history that had a global impact, drove “Russian Eurasianists” and “New Negroes” to redefine their “ethnic soul as essentially multicultural and syncretic”.

Put simply, in the context of World War I, Russians and African Americans were “destined to express a distinctive and historic culture that would establish the modern foundations of a third world civilization”, (PETERSON, 2000, p. 11) located between “Europe and Asia” and “America and Africa” (PETERSON, 2000, p. 31). This is why Hughes’ writings crossed both racial and national lines under a Soviet influence in order to unite different races and nations to fight the dominant classes, namely, capitalists and imperialists.

Shift to the West and Be Silent: From World War II to the Cold War

However, the Soviet impact on African Americans changed in the mid and late 1930s for two main reasons. One was Stalin’s Great Purge from 1934 to 1938, and the other was the “Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact”/Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact on 23 August 1939.⁷ These two reasons greatly supported the “anti-Communist alliance of the New Critics and a significant section of the intellectuals associated with the anti-Stalin Left” (SMETHURST, 1999, p. 206). Therefore, the “New Red Negro” writing underwent two changes: one was American nationalism at the very heart of African Americans,⁸ and the other was based on doubt of the Soviet model and Communism.

7 World War II in the late 1930s did not really change Hughes’ attitude. He wrote letters to support the purge and stayed silent about the Stalin-Hitler Pact. However, in the 1940s, when the United States joined World War II in late 1941, Hughes’ national consciousness overcame his class consciousness and internationalism of the 1930s.

8 African Americans’ idea of “American nationalism” roughly underwent three stages. 1) “Double Consciousness” Nationalism, which began when Du Bois published *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) and coined the term “double consciousness”, and ended at the end of World War I, when African American intellectuals’ core concern was being Black and American. 2) “Black Nationalism”, which was fostered by Garvey’s “Back to Africa” of the 1920s, built a new “nationalism” for African Americans: the nation-consciousness of being Africans, rather than Americans. After the Scottsboro Case, the Soviet Union coined the “Black Belt” theory so that, in the 1930s, African Americans’ nation-consciousness was a central concern of an independent Black Republic within the United States, along with a connection to internationalism and worldwide class consciousness. The latter was important because it indicated the difference between the elite and mass “Black Nationalism” in the 1930s; more precisely, the differences within African Americans. For example, Claude McKay once criticized Du Bois’ élitism. In his words, Du Bois’ concerns were professional Blacks, rather than Black masses; hence, Du Bois was opposed to socialism, see McKay’s “Socialism and Negroes” (1921). In his article “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” (1926), Hughes also expressed his critique of the “Negro middle class”, which he divided into two classes, and their different expectations of African American literature: the “fantasies” of “the smug Negro middle class” was to be “white in soul” and write “white, respectable, ordinary books and papers”, but “we younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame”, because “the tom-tom cries and the tom-tom laughs”, so “If white people are pleased, we are glad, If they are not, it doesn’t matter. We know we are beautiful, and ugly too”, so similarly “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” (see Angelyn Mitchell’s *Within The Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from Harlem Renaissance to The Present*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1994, p. 55-59). Here, “colored people” include middle- and upper-class African Americans, e.g., Du Bois’ “Talented Tenth” (1903) and “Guiding Hundredth” (1948), which is different from the working class of Hughes, the Scottsboro Boys and their families, and the African American mass who were awakened by the Scottsboro Case and got

During World War II, the “Communist theory of a Negro state for the Black Belt” (DAWAHARE, 2003, p. 95) was no longer persuasive, and the “formula that black writing should be ‘national in form and socialist in content’ was watered down to mean that it should be ‘American’ in form and ‘democratic’ in content” (DAWAHARE, 2003, p. 89). Put simply, Hughes had stressed in the early 1930s that “the voice of the red world / Is our voice, too” (SANDERS; JOHNSTON, 2002, p. 127), but nationalism replaced the “red world” and its “voice” in the early 1940s when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. As Hughes maintained, “We are all Americans. We want to create the American dream, a finer and more democratic America” (BERRY, 1973, p. 130), so “Let America be America again / Let it be the dream it used to be” (RAMPERSAD; ROESSEL, 1995, p. 189). After all, “I, too, sing America /... I too, am America” (RAMPERSAD; ROESSEL, 1995, p. 46). Meanwhile, he began to compare the Soviet Union and America in “Faults of the Soviet Union” (1946), in which he emphasized their advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of the United States were that the American “standard of living, even for the poor people, is higher than that of most other countries of the world”. Daily things like “radios”, “kodak”, “wristwatches”, “Ford cars”, “orange juice”, “Coca-Cola”, “alarm clock”, “pencil” and “variety of food” were basic commodities, even for “the poorest person” in the United States, but they were “luxuries” for the Soviets. Cultural issues like worldwide “newspapers”, “sports”, “condensed novels”, “comics”, daily “pictures”, “commercials”, “crime news”, “racial groups”, diverse “radio programs” and “freedom of speech” were either “missing” or “lacking” in the Soviet Union. In terms of the disadvantages of the United States, Hughes focused on the balance among people:

[Soviet] salaries and living conditions are still unequal. But nobody can profit from or exploit the labor of another. What one makes must be made from one’s own labor, initiative and intelligence. And nobody can make a million dollars.... But in the Soviet Union nobody needs fear poverty, either, since all basic human needs, food, health care, jobs, childcare, education, are planned for by the state to benefit ALL THE PEOPLE. (BERRY, 1973, p. 91-92)

to know the Soviet Union, Socialism and Communism. 3) Since the United States joined World War II, “American Black Nationalism” was developed from the beginning of the Cold War and the Korean War to the Vietnam War. During this stage, Civil Rights, Black Power, and Black Aesthetic Movements had a premise of citizenship cognition for African Americans. Also, with internal differences of upper, middle and lower-class consciousness and internationalism, which nurtured the different fate of African American intellectuals under McCarthyism, Du Bois was forced into exile and passed away in Ghana, while Hughes kept his distance from Du Bois and stayed silent about international and domestic affairs.

He concluded that, although “the Soviet Union is not a perfect country”, it was “not as bad as some of the books published in this country and many of our newspapers have made it out to be” (BERRY, 1973, p. 90). Hence, “America can learn some good things about race relations, democratic education and health programs, and insurance against poverty from the Soviet people” (BERRY, 1973, p. 92). When asked why he did not “go and stay” in the Soviet Union, Hughes answered, because “the U.S.A. is my home. I was born in the very middle of it”. Hence, “it is mine----faults and all---- and I had rather stay here and help my country to get rid of its faults----racial prejudice, economic inequalities... than run away” (BERRY, 1973, p. 92). It is obvious that Hughes emphasized American nationalism in his early writings in the 1940s, but he began to be silent in the late 1940s under the pressure of the Cold War and McCarthyism.

The Cold War after World War II made two major changes to the American masses, one of which was that the American mainstream began to be concerned about “racial equality”, represented by “the decision of the United States Supreme Court to integrate the schools of America” (WRIGHT, 1995, p. 108). According to Richard Wright, this change was mainly caused by America’s eagerness to maintain “world leadership” and avoid “world criticism” (WRIGHT, 1995, p. 107). In other words, it was self-consciousness and the “shame” of racial inequality that drove “white Americans” to make “several dramatic alterations to the Negro’s relationship to the American scene” (WRIGHT, 1995, p. 107-108). Put simply, World War II had made America more concerned about racial problems because it wanted to maintain its world leadership, especially after the establishment of the United Nations (UN) in San Francisco in 1945.

At that time, the UN brought pressure to bear on American élites like John Foster Dulles, who feared that the UN Charter of Human Rights “could lead to an international investigation of ‘the Negro question in this country’” (BORSTELMANN, 2001, p. 41) because, on the one hand, the South was hostile to African Americans, especially when they had a socialist cause. For instance, Georgia governor, Eugene Talmadge, was re-elected based on “campaigning against Moscow, Harlem zoot suiters trying to take over Georgia”. Mississippi Senator, Theodore Bilbo, asked “Congress to pass a bill providing for the deportation of African Americans to Africa” (BORSTELMANN, 2001, p. 44). On the other hand, African American soldiers of World War II faced the same racism as World War I soldiers, which Hughes addressed in many poems and tried to find answers for. In the poem he wrote in the mid-1940s entitled “*Will V-Day Be Me-Day Too?* (A Negro Fighting Man’s Letter to America, Over There, World War II)”, Hughes asked “dear fellow Americans” a vital question on behalf of African

American soldiers who were “Over There / World War II”: “WILL V-DAY BE ME-DAY, TOO” (RAMPERSAD; ROESSEL, 1995, p. 303). After all, “I wear a U.S. uniform / I’ve done the enemy much harm / I’ve driven back / The Germans and the Japs / From Burma to the Rhine”. Even though “I am a Negro American”, “I” am still “Out to defend my land / Army, Navy, Air Corps / I am there...I face death the same as you do / Everywhere”. Therefore, Hughes continued to ask questions by comparing African Americans with other nations, asking “When we see Victory’s glow / Will you still let old Jim Crow / Hold me back / When all those foreign folks who’ve waited / Italians, Chinese, Danes----are liberated / Will I still be ill-fated / Because I’m black” (RAMPERSAD; ROESSEL, 1995, p. 303-304), or other minorities: “When I take off my uniform / Will I be safe from harm / Or will you do me / As the Germans did the Jews?”, or other whites who did not join the battle: “Here in my own, my native land / Will the Jim Crow laws still stand / Will Dixie lynch me still / When I return / Or will you comrades in arms / From the factories and the farms / Have learned what this war / Was fought for us to learn” (RAMPERSAD; ROESSEL, 1995, p. 304), or white soldiers they fought alongside:

In each battle,
 As a soldier, and a friend,
 When this war comes to an end,
 Will you herd me in a Jim Crow car?
 Like cattle?
 Or will yours stand up like a man
 At home and take your stand
 For Democracy?
 (RAMPERSAD; ROESSEL, 1995, p. 304)

In the poem entitled *Dear Mr. President*, Hughes directly asks “President Roosevelt” about the racist reality after African American soldiers came home from World War II: “I am a soldier / Down in Alabam... / But when I get on the bus / I have to ride in the back / Rear seats only / For a man who’s black”, and “When I got on the train / It’s the Jim Crow car”, so “Mr. President, sir / I don’t understand / Democracy that / Forgets the black man... I call your attention / To these Jim Crow laws / Your speeches don’t mention / I ask why YOUR soldiers / Must ride in the back / Segregated / Because we are black?” (RAMPERSAD; ROESSEL, 1995, p. 272). Likewise, in the poem *Message to the President*, written in the mid-1940s, Hughes pinpointed the problematic American image as a world leader: “I hear you telling the world

/ What you want them to know...I hear you talking about freedom / For the Finn / the Jew / And the Czechoslovak / But you never seem to mention / Us folks who're black", but "We're all Americans, Mr. President", so "I've had enough / Of putting up with this / Jim Crow stuff / I want the self-same rights / Other Americans have today", such as "fly a plane". After all, "We're one-tenth of the nation / Mr. President, fourteen million strong", and "We try to live like / Decent Americans should / That's why as citizens, Mr. President / We have the right to demand" (RAMPERSAD; ROESSEL, 1995, p. 591). Therefore, Hughes asked for "No more segregation in the U.S.A.", let's "Give Jim Crow a blow" (RAMPERSAD; ROESSEL, 1995, p. 592), but he received no answer. Instead, what was ahead for Hughes was censorship and surveillance due to the Cold War atmosphere, especially the anti-communism wave.

Thomas Borstelmann identified the major American Cold War initiatives of the late 1940s and early 1950s as the "Truman Doctrine of March 1947", the "European Recovery Plan (commonly known as the Marshall Plan, 1948)", the "North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO, 1949)" and the "National Security Council document 68 (NSC 68, 1950)" (BORSTELMANN, 2001, p. 47). The similarity between these plans and doctrines was "anti-Communist democracy" (BORSTELMANN, 2001, p. 47). In September 1949, President Harry S. Truman "announced that the Soviets had detonated an atomic bomb" (WHITFIELD, 1996, p. 5). The loss of the "nuclear monopoly" dramatically damaged America's world leadership, and it became a matter of urgency to wage war "upon the Russian barbarians" (WHITFIELD, 1996, p. 5). This was a propaganda war, a Cold War, in which protagonists struggled for cultural supremacy⁹ "to prove their virtue, to demonstrate their spiritual superiority, to claim their high ground of progress, to win public support and admiration by gaining ascendancy in each and every event of what might be styled the Cultural Olympics" (CAUTE, 2003, p. 3). Therefore, for the outside, in order to win the "hearts and minds" of the Free World, and avoid the contamination of the Third World by Communism,¹⁰ it was essential to define the Soviet Union as a "totalitarian menace to the free world of the West, and the enemy of civilization" (MALIA, 1999, p. 3) and describe Communism as "simply a mutation of tsarist autocracy" (MALIA, 1999, p. 3), which was "so dangerous and so sinister" (WHITFIELD, 1996,

⁹ For the mutual Cold War cultural competition between the Soviet Union and the United States of America, see David Cauter's *The Dancer Defects* (2003), for how and why the U.S. narrated the "Red Scare", see Martin Malia's *Russia Under Western Eyes* (1999), and Stephen J. Whitfield's *The Culture of Cold War* (1996).

¹⁰ This article agrees with Christian G. Appy's words that "terms like Cold War, Free World and containment are not fixed, immutable terms, but created within particular historical and cultural contexts and are subject to contention and change over time" (see Appy's *Cold War Constructions* (2000), p. 3-4).

p. 5) that it could equal Fascism. For the inside, American élites should avoid Communism and Soviet contamination because “there is no difference between Reds and Pinks”: “the Pinks want to socialize America”, while “the Reds want to socialize the world and make Moscow the world capital”. However, “their paths are similar”, since “they have the same bible---the teaching of Karl Marx”¹¹(WHITFIELD, 1996, p. 19). In short, the “Red Scare was more deadly than the black plague” (WINDT; WINDT JR., 1991, p. 14). This “rhetorical war” of the early Soviet-American Cold War, which “fought words as weapons”, had a practical influence on American foreign and domestic affairs, since “wars of words last longer than wars of bullets” and “the pen is mightier than the sword” (WINDT; WINDT JR., 1991, p. 14-15).

Therefore, anticommunism became “the status of national ideology” (KLEIN, 2003, p. 32), especially after the so-called “lost China”¹² in 1949, when the outbreak of containment “against the disease of communism” (PIETTE, 2009, p. 157) reached its peak with the Korean War. When the Chinese joined the Korean War and “Communist forces crossed the 38th parallel” (WHITFIELD, 1996, p. 5), Chinese elements were added to anticommunism to form the new “yellow peril”, specifically the Chinese “brainwashing”¹³ ability. After all, China was wholly located in “Asia” and had authentic “Asian-ness”, which symbolized inferiority, which is why Senator Margaret Chase Smith “expressed hopes for the success of the talks” when “truce negotiations in Korea had begun in the summer of 1951”, and “if not”, she “suggested that her country drop the atomic bomb on these barbarians” (WHITFIELD, 1996, p. 5-6). Hughes expressed his opinion of “lost China” in his essay entitled “The Revolutionary Armies in China---1949” (October 8, 1949), and of “drop the atomic bomb” on “barbarian” Chinese in his article “Concerning the Future of Asia” (August 15, 1953).¹⁴ In 1949,

11 According to Nixon, “the Pinks included the New Deal or progressive wing of the Democratic party”, such as “his opponent in his rock ‘em-sock ‘em senatorial campaign of 1950, Helen G. Douglas, who was ‘pink right down to her underwear”, because she “follows the Communist Party line” (see Stephen J. Whitfield’s *The Culture of the Cold War* (1996), p. 19).

12 As Christina Klein said, “in the early years of the Cold War, Asia exploded into the center of American life”, after the first Asian crisis “in 1949, when the United States ‘lost’ China” to the “Communists”. Then, “Asia seized center stage in the nation’s political consciousness around 1950 and held that position until the last helicopter lifted off from the roof of the Saigon embassy in 1975” (see Klein’s “Family Ties and Political Obligation” in Christina G. Appy’s *Cold War Constructions* (2000), p. 35).

13 According to David Seed, the notion of the Chinese’ brainwashing ability got such “popular receptivity” that the American sociologist, Raymond A. Bauer, was “disturbed” by it: “A single American soldier converted to Communism could arouse feelings of anxiety and guilt over one’s own repressed ideological doubts. Hence, our eagerness to attribute such conversions to the demonic machinations of the Doctors Pavlov and Fu Manchu” (see Seed’s “The Yellow Peril in the Cold War”, in Andrew Hammond’s *Cold War Literature: Writing the Global Conflict* (2006), p.26).

14 Both essays were published in *The Chicago Defender*, but both titles were supplied by the editor, rather than Hughes.

Hughes fully supported the New China for three reasons: “the revolutionary armies [Red Army] now sweeping over China are doing a better job” to end 1) the exploration of “child-labor and child-prostitution”; 2) “Chinese Jim Crow” separated “Europeans only” and “Chinese and other colored people”; and 3) “Chinese Uncle Toms” exploited Chinese workers, and “Chiang Kai-shek was a Chinese Uncle Tom” (BERRY, 1973, p. 117-118). Hence, for Hughes, Mao’s China did not mean that the United States had “lost China”, but rather it meant that there was hope for “Negroes” and even “to people of all color all around the world” (BERRY, 1973, p. 117), since it established a model to weaken Jim Crow. It is easy to see that Hughes’ opinion of the New China implied a focus on race and class consciousness. Although Hughes changed his position to a national consciousness in 1953 due to the Korean War and the Cold War, he retained his race consciousness, maintaining that “Red China told everybody to kiss her unbound feet”, and “after months of blood and battle, we still did not get to the Yalu River in Korea”, but “I think it would be a very great mistake for the white world to drop another atom bomb anywhere near the Pacific” (BERRY, 1973, p. 121). The words, “I think” underlined Hughes’ position, because “colored people do not like to be ruled by outside forces”, nor “Jim Crowed”. Thus, for the Korean War, the colored people were “told what to do by aliens”, those Chinese “aliens” in Korean War. But for the Jim Crow, the colored people didn’t want to be segregated either, so they “kicked around” (BERRY, 1973, p. 121). However, Hughes was forced to relinquish his standpoint and became silent with the intense Korean War situation and Cold War competition, especially McCarthyism.

The “global imaginary containment” changed the American masses’ daily life in two ways in the late 1940s. On the one hand, it “translated anticommunism into a structure of feeling and a set of social and cultural practices that could be lived at the level of everyday life” (KLEIN, 2003, p. 36). “Fear” and “anxiety” were the “emotional glue that held this imagined world together” in an atmosphere of containment. In this world of the containment theory, the fear of “Soviet expansion abroad”, “communist subversion at home”, and “nuclear war”, “opened up the Cold War” to the American masses. They were not only participants, but also informants, because “ordinary Americans could take part in the ‘world struggle’ by naming names, testifying before investigative committees, enlisting their local community in the crusade, and keeping an eye on their neighbors and colleagues” (KLEIN, 2003, p. 36). As Alan Nadel ironically observed, even though “television constantly reminded us” that “the Soviet Union was a Godless place”, “while in America, ‘the family that prays together stays together” (NADEL, 1995, p. XI), some people were even “naming” their own family members.

The contaminant theory merged later with “vigorous” McCarthyism and became a “political weapon” that was not only aimed to eliminate communism in labor unions to “make economic expansion a matter of patriotic obligation”, but also to enable “the administration to equate opposition to its foreign policy with disloyalty to the country” (LIPSITZ, 1981, p. 140). For instance, the Truman administration issued “an executive order initiating the Federal Employee Loyalty Program” (LIPSITZ, 1981, p. 140) with the purpose of enabling people who were disloyal to the anticommunism wave to be charged as “traitors” or “enemies of democracy”. After “the anticommunist emotion sweeping the nation” that was “generated by Senator Joseph McCarthy and his staff on the Senate Sub-Committee of Permanent Investigations” (RAMBERSAD; ROESSEL, 1995, p. 196), African Americans were subjected to massive investigations to determine if they were communists or sympathizers.

African Americans were the main victims of McCarthyism when the “McCarthyite anticommunist political movement was in full swing”. “Building in part on FBI files that had been compiled against writers like Langston Hughes” (MORGAN, 2004, p. 22), Margaret Burroughs recalls that McCarthyism had a profound impact on the African American masses: “You know, black and white people were together all the time. We visited each other’s homes.... The thing that broke that up was the 1950s and the McCarthy scare. The McCarthy period came on and suddenly any black person who had a white friend was a Communist” (qtd. in MORGAN, 2004, p. 22). After all, “anticommunism was more important to Congress than civil rights”,¹⁵ and “casting a red taint on a civil rights bill was an effective way to derail it” (DUDZIAK, 2000, p. 89).

Hughes described the impact of McCarthyism on his daily life in *My Adventures As a Social Poet* (1947). When he received an invitation from a public high school in Indiana, some parents asked for his identity to be clarified. In order to properly answer “a small group of reactionary parents”, the principal “communicated with the F.B.I. in Washington to find out if I was a member of the Communist party”. Only after being “assured that I was not, with the approval of his school board, he presented me to his student body” (BERRY, 1973, p. 143). Hughes concluded that “none of these things would ever have happened to me had I limited the subject matter of my poems to roses and moonlight” (BERRY, 1973, p. 143). However, Hughes

¹⁵ In fact, right after World War II, when anticommunism equaled Americanism, African Americans faced a military threat. For instance, in order to deal with the South riots connected to the Black Belt Republic idea imported from the Soviet Union, the “New York-based League for Freedom of the Darker Peoples of the World” took the hard side with J. Edgar Hoover. Hoover analyzed Southern isolation, and then “offered a novel solution in a 1947 telegram to the president”, in which he asked him to “send General Douglas MacArthur and his forces”, who “having successfully reconstructed Japan and taught its peoples ‘the fundamental principles of Americanism’, to Georgia and South Carolina to do the same there” (see Thomas Borstelmann’s *The Cold War and The Color Line* (2003), p. 56).

still had different ideas about this limitation in 1947, as he said, “But... I cannot write exclusively about roses and moonlight” because “I was born poor and colored” so that “all the prettiest roses I have seen have been in rich white people’s yards”, and “in the moonlight a dark body sways from a lynching tree, but there are no roses for his funeral” (BERRY, 1973, p. 143).

Nevertheless, in the intense atmosphere of McCarthyism and the Cold War, two events dramatically changed Hughes’ opinion. The first was the Du Bois event. Du Bois was the “chairman of the Peace Information Center”, an organization that had been “declared subversive” during “the height of the Cold War”. Meanwhile, since Du Bois had refused to “register as an agent of ‘foreign principle’” in response to a demand from “the Department of Justice”, he was “indicted in 1951”, and “the Department of State refused to issue a passport to him in 1952, preventing him from traveling abroad until 1958” (DE SANTIS, 2001, p. 239). McCarthyism had forced Hughes to stay silent since the Korean War and he was “careful not to speak about international affairs” (RAMPERSAD; ROESSEL, 1995, p. 194). He was also “silent about almost all political and military affairs” (RAMPERSAD; ROESSEL, 1995, p. 195), but he broke his silence to speak out about Du Bois’ situation on October 6, 1951, in the *Defender*:

Somebody in Washington wants to put Dr. Du Bois in jail. Somebody in France wanted to put Voltaire in jail. Somebody in Franco’s Spain sent Lorca, their greatest poet, to death before a firing squad. Somebody in Germany under Hitler burned the books, drove Thomas Mann into exile, and led their leading Jewish scholars to the gas chamber... (RAMPERSAD; ROESSEL, 1995, p. 196).

This gesture caused a series of negative consequences. For example, when Hughes wanted to have “an engagement at a black Texas Southern University”, he was “asked to sign an oath of loyalty as required by state law” (RAMPERSAD; ROESSEL, 1995, p. 196). His poem, *Goodbye Christ*¹⁶ was defined by General Charles A. Willoughby in his book, *Shanghai Conspiracy* as having a “traitorous and corrosive quality”. Although he defended himself, Hughes became more cautious, and he “resigned from the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship” in May 1952 (HUGHES, 1932, p. 198).

16 In “Goodbye Christ”, in lines 7-9, Hughes criticized “The popes and the preachers’ve / Made too much money from it [Bible] / They’ve sold you [Christ] to too many”, so “You [Christ] ain’t no good no more / ...Goodbye”. Lines 21 to 24 expressed new hope that Christ’s leaving would “Make way for a new guy with no religion at all / A real guy named / Marx Communist Lenin Peasant Stalin Worker ME / I said ME”. Line 34-38 described the characteristic of ME: it could ask Christ “Don’t be so slow about movin[g]”, cause “The world is mine from now on / And nobody’s gonna sell ME / To a king, or a general / Or a millionaire” (see Arnold Rampersad and David Roessel’s *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes* (1994), p. 166-167).

The second negative event was that many journals, magazines and videos were investigated as “forms of disloyalty to the nation and the anti-Communist cause”, and this directly led to Hughes’ own “trial”. “Various heads of sections of the Voice of America” were “publicly accused of atheism, free love and insubordination”, and the editor of the “anti-Communist, but liberal, New York Post”, was “forced to name activities he had known in his long-repudiated radical youth” (RAMPERSAD; ROESSEL, 1995, p. 212). In the same way, “the internationally known gossip columnist, Walter Winchell” denounced Hughes as a “disguised communist” (RAMPERSAD; ROESSEL, 1995, p. 208). After this denouncement, Henry Allen Moe, the secretary of the Guggenheim Foundation, “testified that awarding a fellowship to Langston Hughes had indeed been a mistake” based on “threats to its tax-exempt status” and then, Louis Budenz, who was “formerly a member of the National Committee of the Communist Party and an editor of the Daily Worker”, identified Hughes “among twenty-three alleged Communist Party members to have won such awards” (HUGHES, 1932, p. 208). On Saturday, March 21, 1953, Hughes received a summons from a United States Marshall, to “appear in Washington D.C., before an investigation committee”. More specifically, he was required to appear “at two o’clock on Monday afternoon before the Senate Permanent Sub-Committee on Investigations, led by Senator Joseph McCarthy” (HUGHES, 1932, p. 209).

Lloyd K. Garrison, an “attorney and prominent NAACP official”, reminded Hughes that Roy Cohn¹⁷ would “push hard for the names of any Communist writers he had known and that, if he refused to answer, he could be held in contempt of Congress and might have to face penalties in court” (HUGHES, 1932, p. 209). On Sunday, Hughes “sent a long wire to Senator McCarthy”: “AS AN AMERICAN CITIZEN WHO BELIEVES IN DEMOCRACY AS A WAY OF LIFE FOR THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, I DESIRE AT ALL TIMES TO COOPERATE WITH ANY AGENT OF OUR CONSTITUTED GOVERNMENT”, along with a request for a “one-week extension” to “secure a lawyer and prepare himself”. However, on Monday, Hughes received “a rude answer” from Cohn: “YOU ARE DIRECTED TO APPEAR BEFORE THIS COMMITTEE AS SPECIFIED IN YOUR SUBPOENA AT 2PM TODAY. IF YOU FAIL TO DO SO CONTEMPT ACTION WILL BE RECOMMENDED” (qtd. in RAMPERSAD; ROESSEL, 1995, p. 210).

¹⁷ Cohn was an important figure of McCarthyism. As McCarthy’s “chief council” and a member of “the U.S. Attorney’s office in New York”, Cohn had “assisted in the prosecution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, and the mass trial of Communist Party leaders against which Hughes had protested in one of his few forthright statements” (see Arnold Rampersad’s *The Life of Langston Hughes*. Volume II: 1941-1967, *I Dream a World*, p. 212).

Although Hughes was “almost reckless in the face of force”, like “in the South in 1931-32, and Japan in 1933”, he became “more and more agitated” as he “approached his encounter” (HUGHES, 1932, p. 210) with McCarthy, since “McCarthy had crushed men of far greater prestige and importance” (HUGHES, 1932, p. 211) than Hughes. Then “intimidated” Hughes “brought with him a five-page typed statement” (HUGHES, 1932, p. 212) and presented himself to the subcommittee “at 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, March 26” (HUGHES, 1932, p. 213) in 1953 when he asserted, “I am not a member of the Communist Party now and have never been a member of the Communist Party” (HUGHES, 1932, p. 215). Later, he was questioned by Cohn and McCarthy about his books’ anti-American orientation, and he gave them satisfactory answers.¹⁸

After McCarthy “excused” him, Hughes went back to New York and limited his writing subjects to “roses” and “moonlight”, more precisely to children’s books, but he also cut down his own writing, and began to edit other African Americans’ work. In addition, in the same year (1953) he again clarified his political position: “I could never accept the totalitarian regimentation of the artist nor the Communist theory of a Negro state for the Black Belt” (BERRY, 1973, p. 144). In addition, he rethought the difference between the Soviet Union and America. In terms of the Soviet Union: “I was shocked at the Nazi-Soviet Pact, just as I am shocked now by the reported persecution of the Jewish people, and I was disturbed by the complete lack of freedom of press and publication I observed in the USSR” (BERRY, 1973, p. 144). As for America, Hughes was not just “greatly heartened in recent years by the progress being made in race-relations, by the recent Supreme Court decisions relative to Negro education, restrictive covenants, the ballot, and travel” (BERRY, 1973, p. 144), but he was also confident that “here people are free to vote and work out their problems”, because “here all of us are a part of democracy” (BERRY, 1973, p. 145). Hence, Hughes finally came to a nationalistic conclusion that despite “our country [having] many problems still to solve, America is young, big, strong, and beautiful, and we are trying

¹⁸ Cohn asked was there “ever a period of time” that Hughes “believed in the Soviet form of government”. Hughes answered, “there was a such a period”. Cohn continued: “when did that period end?” Hughes’ key words included “Scottsboro case”, “the American Depression”, then “Nazi-Soviet Pact”. Then Cohn asked when Hughes “completely broke with the Soviet ideology”. Hughes confirmed “a complete reorientation of my thinking and emotional feelings occurred roughly four or five years ago” (see Rampersad’s *The Life of Langston Hughes*, Volume II:1941-1967, *I Dream a World*, p.216). Among McCarthy questions were: whether Hughes’ books in “a library on foreign soil” would be “an effective way of fighting the Communist nation? Or would that tend to put us in a bad light as compared to the Communist nation?”; “do I understand that your testimony is that sixteen different books of yours which were purchased by the information program did largely follow the Communist line?”; and would Hughes’ books appear “with the apparent stamp of approval of the United States Government?” (see Rampersad’s *The Life of Langston Hughes*, Volume II:1941-1967, *I Dream a World*, 2002, p. 217-118).

very hard to be, as the flag says, ‘one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all’” (BERRY, 1973, p. 145).

In 1954, when Hughes published “a set of biographical essays entitled *Famous American Negroes*”, he dropped “the entry on” Du Bois at the request of his publisher, because Du Bois had “become a reliable fellow traveler”¹⁹ (WHITFIELD, 1996, p. 16). However, his “compromise” was not “designed to make him rich”, and neither the children’s books nor the anthologies earned him much money but were “only to allow him to survive on acceptable terms as a writer and continue his lifelong services as an artist to his race” (RAMPERSAD; ROESSEL, 1995, p. 231). Still, Hughes stayed in the U.S. for the rest of his life. If an outline were drawn of the effect of the World Wars and the Cold War on Hughes, it would show that his perspective was internationalist and cosmopolitan in the 1930s, but it became nationalistic in the 1940s, especially since World War II, whether by choice or not.

In conclusion, the World Wars and the Cold War had a profound impact on Hughes. World War I and the October Revolution built a platform for Hughes to consider African American problems beyond the minority and national contexts. In the 1930s, he had truly cosmopolitan ideas. He traveled the world, talking about international affairs, and writing as a “world citizen”. Joseph McLaren described him as “a citizen of the world and knowledgeable in global politics”, who was “no longer wondering about racial identity”, because “Hughes realized that his ‘interests had broadened from Harlem’ to ‘all the colored peoples of the world’ to ‘*all the people of the world*’” (McLAREN, 2003, p. 23). However, World War II and the Cold War forced Hughes to become a nationalist first and later he became silent. In the early and mid-1940s, Hughes refused to limit his writing to “roses” and “moonlight” because he cared deeply about the problems of “colored soldiers”. Therefore, he talked about the international situation, and especially used it to criticize American democracy, while also hoping for a better America. However, in the late 1940s, McCarthyism forced Hughes to find a safe way to survive by writing children’s books and translating and editing other people’s work for a living. He stayed in the U.S., having confirmed that American democracy had improved, and maintained a distance from international affairs, and social and political problems in later life.

¹⁹ Hughes did not even mention Du Bois in the chapter on Booker T. Washington and ignored the fact that Du Bois and Washington were “chief antagonists in the black community at the turn of the century”. He “airbrushed history” in the context of McCarthyism. However, a decade later, his “arbitrary, ephemeral and inefficient” efforts eventually backfired, because “some publishers yielded to right-wing intimidation and dropped it from their own history textbooks”, including Hughes’ bookbook (see Whitfield’s *The Culture of Cold War* (1996), p. 16).

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