

“Blacks are beautiful. And ugly too”: Moving beyond the Racial barrier and foregrounding Resistance in Langston Hughes’ poetry

Auritra Munshi

Abstract

Langston Hughes, a famous African American poet of the Harlem Renaissance, raises his voice like other Afro American writers such as Claude McKay, Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larsen, Jean Toomer and others regarding the collective black consciousness which was eclipsed by the European High Modernism. Harlem modernism brought out new avenues for the blacks by privileging upon their own southern black vernacular, the rhythms of blues, and jazz. Thus, the Harlem modernism, having its fervor of intense racial consciousness spurned European cultural tropes, and thereby attempting to recuperate the souls of the black folks from the ideological repression of the white mythology. African American identity refers to the split personality, which a diasporic individual usually undergoes on a daily basis in the host country. Langston Hughes, an African American poet, seems to recourse to, to put in the words of Salman Rushdie, the concept of ‘imaginary homelands’ in the United States of America with a view to accentuate upon Afrocentricity because a large number of African Americans used to be fond of considering them Americans in the United States of America. It concomitantly, drives Hughes to think of them as white-induced African Americans, who kept themselves away from their ancestral cultural heritage enshrined in the Afrocentricity. It stands in the way of the resurrection of the Africans in the United States of America. Although, it may be indicative of foregrounding the ‘ghetto mentality’, he feels a dire necessity to mobilize the oppressed Africans, and thereby asks for forging a racial mountain for the blacks from where they can anticipate their strategic positions by performing their own ethno-cultural slabs; it appears to be counter hegemonic and self-contemplative, too, in carving out one’s own niche, which the present paper seeks to show.

Keywords: Harlem Renaissance, ideological conflicts, Afrocentricity, carnivalesque, resistance