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The Influence of International Identity and Geographical Space on the Travel Writings and Literary Style of Langston Hughes, and Richard Wright

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THE INFLUENCE OF INTERNATIONAL IDENTITY AND GEOGRAPHICAL SPACE
ON THE TRAVEL WRITINGS AND LITERARY STYLE OF LANGSTON HUGHES,
AND RICHARD WRIGHT.

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Introduction

In 1932, Langston Hughes was amongst 21 other African Americans that traveled to the Soviet Union to participate in a movie project called *Black and White* (Baldwin 24). They were invited by the Meshrabpom Film Company to partake in the movie about the “Negro Life”. The movie was a collaboration between Louise Thompson and the Meshrabpom Film Company. Louise initiated a Cooperating Committee to get funding for the trip to the Soviet Union to participate in the movie. Thus, it became a collaboration between the Meshrabpom Film Company and the Committee. The movie was supposed to be about the African Americans in the South of the United States of America. However, the movie was never made. Reasons for discontinuing the production were disagreements on the script and movie companies would not participate anymore since there would be a high chance it would become soviet propaganda for the “New Soviet Man” (Baldwin 106).

Langston Hughes recounts his participation in this movie project, “In Moscow, the production of films is quite frankly an art for the advancement of certain ideas of social betterment”. While in America “the artistic ideals go, and box-office appeal takes their place” (58). This comparison between Russian film as propaganda and American film as a capitalist venture demonstrates the tension between communist ideals and capitalism that is exemplified in Hughes’s works. For example, in Hughes *Moscow and Me* and *I wonder as I wander*. Hughes has written extensively about his experiences and differences between the Soviet Union and the United States of America. Writings about his time in the Soviet Union lay bare a question of international identity that has fascinated modernist writers. In addition, the relationship of identity in a national and international context has impacted Hughes’s Writing. Hughes argues in *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain* that African Americans cannot be African American in their expression; white Americans influence the freedom of expression to such an extent that African American expression is impossible

without considering white experience (102). Hughes writes “The Negro artist works against an undertow of sharp criticism and misunderstanding from his group and unintentional bribes from the whites” (Hughes 102). Hughes points towards the difficulty of making ‘racialized’ art in the paradigm of the time. This demonstrates a mimicry of culture as Bhabha describes. One mimics the dominant culture of the ‘oppressor’ to connect with said culture. Hughes describes how Caucasians were important for the Harlem Renaissance which points toward a mimicry of culture. Moreover, Hughes argues that by creating art the African American artist puts himself in a privileged position and undergoes criticism from other African Americans. Hughes describes how an artist cannot write about the experience of non-artist African Americans because one puts himself outside of the group.

A decade later, Richard Wright’s *Blueprint of Negro Writing* is published. In this essay, Wright criticizes Harlem renaissance writers. He argues for a more separate African American literary tradition and insists on the hybridity of literary movements instead of the mimicry that Hughes describes in *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain*. Wright entertains the possibility of a literature in which the writer can express himself without the restraints Hughes describes and within a dynamic and changing society. Wright states “An emphasis upon tendency and experiment, a view of society as something becoming rather than as something fixed and admired is the one which points the way for Negro writers to stand shoulder to shoulder with Negro workers in mood and outlook” (Wright 99). Wright here offers an approach to the problem that Hughes posits. The problem Hughes posits is essentially one of representation of identity and if one can represent a full ‘self’ as an identity. This is a very complex problem that would deserve more attention than what can be offered at this point. However, both Hughes and Wright have different standpoints when it comes to this problem of representing identity. Wright offers solutions and criticizes Hughes’s standpoint. In doing so, Wright distances the South Side Writers Group in Chicago

from the Harlem Renaissance. Wright puts forward a new manner in which the African American writer can maneuver in society and demonstrates a new vantage point for the literary movement. Namely, Wright states that the African American writers should unapologetically write, representing their identity.

Thus, Hughes and Wright explore similar questions about identity and what literature should represent. Whilst both come to different conclusions when it comes to identity, and transnational identity; nevertheless, one can argue that Hughes and Wright have had similar experiences. Namely, before traveling and moving abroad these writers were respectively part of the Harlem Renaissance and the Chicago Black Renaissance, specifically the South Side writers' group. Both Hughes and Wright have been classified as modernist writers even though they differ in their period of writing and style. Both writers have written poetry, non-fiction, and fiction, and both writers were affiliated with the communist party. When Wright moved to France, he contributed to anti-communist work. Hughes and Wright recognized racial difficulties, both wrote about racial issues, and had transnational experiences that informed their writings.

In addition, while travel and modernist writings have been extensively researched this is not the case for African American modernist writers (Farley 4) (Levenson 3). For instance, most scholars are aware of Henry James, Ezra Pound, and James Joyce's international experiences while not all are familiar with Langston Hughes's travels to the Soviet Union and Richard Wright's relocation to France. The reason for this research is the opposition that Wright and Hughes have between them in their approach to literature and what it should represent. This opposition emerges from a similar transnational experience. In addition, the historical context in which Wright and Hughes operated will be discussed. This thesis will consider: What is the influence of international identity and geographical space on the travel writings and literary style of two African American writers, Langston Hughes, and Richard

Wright? In this thesis, I will argue that travel and the forming of a transnational identity further politicized Hughes's and Wright's work. This will be demonstrated through a comparative study between Richard Wright and Langston Hughes's literary works. Richard Wright's works *Blueprint for Negro Writing*, *Black boy*, *Black Power*, and *I have seen black hands* will be discussed. Langston Hughes *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain*, *Moscow*, and *me, I wonder as I wander*, *Justice* are employed to demonstrate the argument. Comparison and close reading analysis will be the central methodology in exploring the research question. The comparative study will analyze works in-depth, through close readings of style and support interpretations. The comparison will focus on the influence of geographical location and sociopolitical circumstances of the groups and Wright and Hughes.

The parameters in which this research will take place are as follows. Firstly, I define Wright and Hughes as modernist writers. According to *The concise Oxford dictionary of literary terms*, modernist literature is "characterized chiefly by a rejection of 19th-century traditions and their consensus between author and reader" (159). Astradur Eysteinnsson gives a similar definition of modernism "modernism" is a legitimate concept broadly signifying a paradigmatic shift, ... beginning in the mid-and late nineteenth century, against the prevalent literary and aesthetic traditions of the Western world" (Eysteinnsson 3). However, Eysteinnsson stipulates that the agreement on what modernism is ended there. The concept of modernism is otherwise problematic and there are an array of applications and interpretations. However problematic the term, we can put Hughes and Wright in the period of the mid and late nineteenth century and their literature plays with aesthetics different from prevalent literary traditions like realism. Moreover, the introspective aspect of Wright's work fits within similar modernist traditions. In addition, both writers have been classified as modernists that in some sense conform to this definition (Kutzinski 9) (Wollaeger 4).

The geospatial and historical context of both writers will be clarified to situate Wright

and Hughes in the national and transnational historiography of modernist writers. To do so, their involvement in the Harlem Renaissance and Chicago Renaissance will be expanded on in the first chapter. The second chapter will draw on Hughes's and Wright's travels and will analyze *A negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia* 1. *Going South, I wonder as I wander, Moscow and me* and *Black boy* written during these travels by these writers. Through these works, the historical context will be exemplified as well. The third chapter will analyze and compare later works of Hughes and Wright, to demonstrate a trend and comparison between the two.

Chapter 1 Harlem Renaissance and the South Side Writers Group

In 1922 Langston Hughes moved to Harlem New York and published his first book of poetry in 1926. During his time in Harlem, he became a prominent figure of the Harlem Renaissance. While Richard Wright was part of another cultural activist group called the South Side Writers group in Chicago. Thus, Hughes and Wright share a similar cultural background, both were members of cultural activist groups. Both writers participated actively in these groups and carried out ideology through their literature. Their similar literary origin is grounds for research because of the different literary careers that would follow.

The question is what links these writers together and how they differ. In this chapter, the focus will be on the shared cultural background of Wright and Hughes. Grouped together as conscious and activist African American writers. Firstly, it will be discussed how “I have black hands” and “Justice” demonstrates a socialist ideology. These two poems will be compared through their place in the bigger historical context of socialism/communism. This argument will contribute to the discussion of the formulation of Wrights and Hughes’s identity. Moreover, it will link their identity to African American internationalism. Secondly, the Harlem Renaissance and the South Side Writers group will be contextualized in the broader field of African American literature. Similarities and differences between the writer’s groups will demonstrate how Wright and Hughes are part of a developing movement.

Two texts that will be studied in this chapter are Langston Hughes’s *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain* and Richard Wright’s *Blueprint for Negro Writing*. The writings by Hughes and Wright will be deployed as evidence to differentiate between the two literary movements that the writers belonged to. Both writers have a broad scale of styles and genres employed in their writing. Both writers employ the essay form, the autobiography form, poetry, and travelogues. The form and style of a written piece impact the interpretation. The importance of the awareness of what is being read can help shed light on the work. Thus, the genre of autobiography and travel literature will be expanded on. Vera Kutzinski expands on

Hughes's ability to take on many voices and employ different non-literary and literary genres in his work (Kutzinski 9). Vera states "Hughes dwelt and traded in multiplicities, donning countless costumes" (9). In agreement with Kutzinski's discussion of Hughes's ability to reflect many literary voices and forms, I would argue that it is important to be aware of such differences in style within Hughes's works. Moreover, Kutzinski argues for a new interpretation of Hughes's work by setting aside "the conventions of the single-author study" and instead focusing on comparative literary and cultural history (Kutzinski 14). Following Kutzinski this thesis concerns itself with multiple facets of Hughes's writing. Through a comparative study, the broader literary framework and conventions will be examined. However, Kutzinski's work focuses exclusively on Hughes, she demonstrates and compares Hughes's works and translations to formulate her argument. Whereas in this study two authors will be compared to formulate an argument. Kutzinski's work provides insight into Hughes's works throughout his career.

Additionally, similarities between Richard Wright's style and form will be compared. For example, the essays and travelogues written by both writers can be compared. In the Cambridge Companion to Richard Wright Glenda Carpio discusses how Richard Wright's literary career has been described by critics. She states there is "a well-known argument that Wright's expatriation contributed to his supposed literary decline" (Carpio 4). However, Carpio challenges this argument and proposes that Wright's expatriation helped develop a different literary style. Her goal is to demonstrate that Wright's "exile both sharpened his political perspective and allowed him to experiment with form relatively unconstrained [from] the expectations placed upon writers of color in America." (Carpio 4). Whilst taking Carpio's viewpoint as departure, it can be established how Wright developed his style and form over time. In addition, the question that Carpio raises is useful in analyzing Hughes work as well. Both Hughes and Wright have been challenged by their

travels and have had their styles impacted by traveling.

Now that it is demonstrated what style Hughes and Wright used and how well versed, they are in different styles it is important to draw attention to some qualities of travelogues. This form of writing has been a big part of Hughes and Wrights' oeuvres and will be discussed in this thesis. Autobiographical work is closely related to travelogues and needs to be addressed to establish the workings of travelogues. Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf discusses in *The Handbook of Autobiography* that biographies have been analyzed as truthful up until the 1960s (Wagner-Egelhaaf 1). She demonstrates how the practice of deconstruction and the 'death' of the author has changed this idea about autobiography. Her argument is furthered by the awareness that one human's perspective is just that, one person's perspective (Wagner-Egelhaaf 1). Moreover, she argues that autobiographies are "designed", meaning that autobiographies conform to narrative and are structured and therefore the truth is manipulated. Wagner-Egelhaaf concludes that the question that is at the core concern of autobiography is "How to tell the truth by fiction"? The question posited by Wagner-Engelhaaf is highly important for the interpretation of Hughes and Wrights' works. For example, the Soviet Union was under Stalinism when Langston Hughes was traveling there. Whilst Hughes work demonstrates a highly positive experience regarding the lack of racism, it does not discuss other cruelties that were taking place. Therefore, showing the truth in autobiographical work is relative and the question of "how to tell truth by fiction" that Wagner-Egelhaaf raises is one to keep in mind when reading autobiographical work or travelogues.

Though travelogues have been related to the autobiographical genre for a long time, they were seen as functional reports rather than a literary genre (Michaela Holdenried 675). However, it was not uncommon for travelogues to incorporate fictional aspects into the narrative. Holdenried states that after 1945 travelogues take on an essayistic-reflexive and

experimental-autobiographical form. Sometimes travelogues take on a hybrid form in which the traveling subject is both “researcher and introspective explorer” (Holdenried 679). In the travelogues of Wright and Hughes, the “researcher and introspective explorer” are roles that the writers take on (Holdenried 679). Even though Hughes’s work is written before 1945, early signs of this writing style are shown in his travelogue.

Moreover, Holdenried demonstrates that travelogues intersect with the genre of autobiography. She states, “The development of travel literature was to some degree always connected with autobiographical writing” (Holdenried 697). Arguing that writing accounts or observations of travel cannot be neutral. For example, there is always subjectivity in describing foreign customs (Holdenried 697). By Holdenried, it is valid to keep in mind that travelogues, just like other works of literature have a subjective component. Moreover, it is the viewpoint of the writer that counts which might also, either overtly or covertly be fictionalized. Wright explicitly mentions his awareness of subjectivity as a Western traveler in his travelogue *Black Power*. Holdenried continues to demonstrate that the genre of travelogues evolved. It is relevant to discuss Holdenrieds argument about the travelogue in the 20th century, namely when Hughes and Wright employed this genre. Holdenried states “Journeys to experience the inner self increased in the twentieth century instead describing the outward facts of foreign countries and landscapes or even the inability to experience anything at all” (679). Holdenrieds statement demonstrates the focus on the experience of the individual. In line with Holdenried, the argument can be made for Hughes and Wright’s style of writing, where the individual experience is the focus of the work, instead of a functional relay of the journey.

Furthermore, Holdenried states autobiography and travelogue have come together as a specific genre (680). Corresponding with Holdenried the travelogues studied are very close to autobiographical works. Thus, putting the focal point on the personal experience and the eye-

witnessing. While “Vouching for the authenticity of the experience and the autobiographical claim of truthfulness are analogous to both genres” (680). All in all, Wagner-Egelhaaf argues that we should think about the construction of an autobiographical narrative as impacting the truth of narratives. In continuance of Wagner-Egelhaaf, Holdenried exemplified how the development of the travelogue specifically influences truth in its genre. In conclusion, one should take into consideration that travelogue and autobiography are aestheticized to fit a narrative and has a degree of fictional characteristics. While this raises concerns about truth within the works of Hughes and Wright. One might wonder if the analysis of the travelogues should take fiction as a point of departure. However, it might be enough to be aware of autobiographies with fictional aspects by using other sources for context. Thus, one might formulate where the fictionalized travelogue fits within the broader context. On the other hand, it provides a broader opportunity for analysis of travelogues and autobiographical work.

Langston Hughes’s work can be contextualized during his time in the Harlem Renaissance. The Harlem Renaissance has been remarked on as a period in which African American literature, arts, and culture flourished. This period spanned the 1920s and 30s and finds its roots in Harlem, New York (Brown 218). The Harlem Renaissance encompasses ideology and aesthetics. Furthermore, the movement had a strong capability of self-reflection and criticism. A prominent figure of the Harlem Renaissance is Langston Hughes. He has demonstrated the ideology and aesthetics associated with the Harlem Renaissance through his works. The capability of self-reflection and criticism of the movement is another aspect that he demonstrates through his essays. In addition, Hughes’ work has been published in *The New Negro*. This anthology has become a manifesto for the Harlem Renaissance depicting the values that the Harlem Renaissance operated from (Gosselin 39). *The New Negro* situates the movement in a national and international sphere (Locke 25), recognizing that the

Harlem Renaissance is both the same and different from other Modernisms. Moreover, Locke situates the Harlem Renaissance as a separate African American identity that flourishes within this national and international space (Locke 24). He states that literature is “about” the African American and not “of him”. Thus, Locke argues that self-expression and self – determination for the African American is available through this new movement. However, Locke continues that the importance of interaction between African Americans and American society is something to consider (Locke 25).

Thus, formulating an ideology that considers society *and* seeks permission from society. It becomes clear that Hughes conforms to this ideology that is described by Locke when we look at his work. For example, in *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain* Hughes discusses the idea of race being “distinction without a difference” (Locke 24). Hughes argues that African American has the desire to conform to American standardization and set aside ‘racial individuality’ (Porter 99). Hughes furthers his argument by describing how the acknowledgment of the African American artist is complicated by racial binaries. Hughes states ‘The Negro artist works against an undertow of sharp criticism and misunderstanding from his group and unintentional bribes from the whites’ (Porter 102). This means that African Americans are thought that they are less and act accordingly. Therefore, the African American artists are not acknowledged by their group and depend on Caucasian Americans for approval. What Hughes describes can be classified as the phenomenon of mimicry. The idea is that ‘the immigrant’ abides by the dominant culture to fit in. The Harlem renaissance employs this strategy to exercise their art. For example, Hughes was aware of the African Americans employing mimicry in valuing their culture, mimicking the Caucasian view. Moreover, Hughes describes how mimicry is necessary to have art accepted by the Caucasian population.

In *the Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain* Hughes demonstrates how mimicry plays

a part in the experience of African Americans. The essay starts with the awareness of racial distinction demonstrating the workings of different cultures. Hughes writes “I want to be a poet—not a Negro poet” (Porter 99). Thus, this essay sets out to demonstrate how racial separation influences African American thought on what it is to be an artist, or rather, a successful artist. In addition, Hughes’s poetry demonstrates this similar awareness, strengthened with resistance. According to Kutzinski Hughes’ poetry has been categorized as ‘social’ and ‘protest’ poetry (Kutzinski 4). This categorization of “social” and “protest” poetry is useful to discuss Hughes’s work. The poem “Justice” demonstrates protest poetry. It was first published in the *Amsterdam news* in 1923.

Justice

That Justice is a blind goddess
 Is a thing to which we black are wise.
 Her bandage hides two festering sores
 That once perhaps were eyes. (Hughes 31)

This poem exemplifies the struggles that African Americans faced because of race. “Justice” is not blind but blinded by cultural norms. The point that Hughes makes is that norms that have shaped the justice system make it unjust. Moreover, African Americans are aware of this bias in the justice system. Hughes protests the bias of this justice system through this poem. He strengthens this protest by dehumanizing “justice”. Hughes takes away the eyes of “justice” and therefore makes her blind and unable to see. In addition, Hughes’s poem can be interpreted as a rejection of Western ideals. Namely, the historic value of the “justice character”. Hughes takes the historic European idealism of the old Greek symbol for justice that demonstrates the connection to the old traditional world. With this, he sets up a binary between Caucasian Americans and African Americans. Furthermore, he demonstrates

how this view of “justice” can be interpreted in a negative light. Moreover, he shows how racism insists on the status quo of justice. Within the Harlem renaissance, this is the artistic ideology. Protesting and demonstrating how long-lasting western views and a sense of heritage influence the lives of African Americans and their artistic experiences.

Thus, Hughes’s poem is an exercise in hybridity, utilizing a western cultural symbol for justice, he examines how it affects the African American culture. Thus, questioning the status quo and exercising a hybrid expression of culture. However, throughout Hughes’s work, he demonstrates the struggle of finding one’s place within the diverse cultural landscape of the US. He takes on different standpoints in this struggle. On the one hand, his poem “Justice” expresses cultural hybridity. While on the other hand, *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain* express that African American art should unapologetically take its place within the broader culture. *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain* calls for an understanding and creation of art in which African American beauty is valid and the approval of white man does not matter anymore. This must be a call that *The South Side Writers group* heard and took to heart. One of the prominent writers of this group was Richard Wright. For Wright, the process of belonging and conforming to a group that forges an ideology and moving away from it similarly happens. However, his group *The South Side Writers group* in Chicago set out with a different ideology to the Harlem Renaissance. One factor that is at play here is chronology, *The South Side Writers group* originated after *The Harlem Renaissance*. Therefore, the South Side Writers Group had an example they could work with. If we look at Wright’s *Blueprint for negro writing*, we can find a difference in style and ideology that Wright uses in comparison to Hughes’s argument in *The negro artist and the racial mountain*.

Hughes demonstrates racial separation influences African American art in such a way that it changes the voice of writers. Whereas Wright recognizes that African American

writers did conform to the broader cultural/ Caucasian context. Moreover, Wright argues against Hughes's call for an African American art in which validation of white people is not necessary anymore. Wright does not argue against this because he disagrees but because he does not see African American Writers as a fair representation of African American culture. Wright states "Negro writing assumed two general aspects: (1) It became a sort of conspicuous ornamentation, the hallmark of achievement. (2) It became the voice of the educated Negro pleading with white America for justice" (Jane Anna Gordon 214).

Therefore, African American writers should write for African Americans but not be separated from African Americans. Wright's critique continues, he discusses how African American workers did not have the same ability to take "advantage of their minority position" (214). Wright warns against the gap that might develop between African Americans and African American writers. The solution that Wright offers is a self – criticism and awareness that can work towards African American writing that is inclusive in African American culture.

In conclusion, Hughes calls for African American writing that focuses on African American art and writing that is valid without validation from Caucasians. Whereas Wright argues for African American art that is validated by and written for African Americans. In addition to these differences in ideology, there are similarities in Hughes and Wrights essays. Both Hughes and Wright establish the importance of a culture that is owned by African Americans. They both demonstrate how self-determination is important. For example, Hughes states "Let the blare of Negro jazz bands and the bellowing voice of Bessie Smith singing Blues penetrate the closed ears of the colored near-intellectuals until they listen and perhaps understand" (Porter 104). Meaning that the acceptance and propagation of one's own culture is space that one should take and employ.

In agreement with Hughes, Wright argues for propagating one's culture through African American nationalism (Gordon 216). Wright explores the importance of folklore and

separate institutions for African Americans as a basis for African American nationalism (Gordon 216). However, Wright states that propagating one's culture comes with responsibility. He states, "for purposes of creative expression the Negro writer must realize within the area of his personal experience those impulses which, when prefigured in terms of broad social movements, constitute the stuff of nationalism" (Gordon 218). Thus pointing toward the importance of self-awareness one more. This discussion about self-awareness is less overt in Hughes's works. However, Hughes discusses a broader cultural context with less focus on the individual responsibility as a writer. In conclusion, both writers feel the importance of propagating culture. However, both writers frame their concerns differently. Moreover, both Hughes and Wright do partake in self-determination in a national and international context.

Chapter 2 Langston Hughes in Russia

In chapter one Langston Hughes's experience with racism as an African American writer during the Harlem Renaissance was discussed. Hughes has actively pursued travel and had different experiences that came to oppose the forms of racism that he experienced in the United States. In 1932 Hughes traveled to the Soviet Union for a movie project at first, but it turned into a more extensive trip. In this chapter, the emphasis will be on the journey Langston Hughes made to the Soviet Union. In addition, this journey can be seen in the broader context of African American internationalism developing as a whole. The Soviet Union that Langston Hughes visited in 1932 was under the rule of Stalin. The first five-year plan during Stalinism ran from 1928 – to 1932. Therefore, during Hughes visit, a lot of development was going on in the Soviet Union. There were two major developments at the time, unparalleled socialist industrialization, and the implementation of collectivist agriculture.

David Shearer describes how the Soviet government implemented industrialization on a massive scale (Shearer 192). Shearer describes what the growth of the industry entailed for the population. He states "Tractor and locomotive manufacturing plants rose or were renovated and modernized. Military weapons, tanks, ships, and airplane production also increased as secret military factories were constructed" (193). During Stalinism, the government developed despite the social and financial costs. Forced labor, deaths of workers, and financial ramifications were part of the industrialization under Stalin. Shearer discusses that entire cities were built to accommodate factories and that people moved there to work.

These harsh societal conditions did not seem to be of any concern for Hughes. His travelogues do not describe industrialization or the serious consequences it had for many people. Hughes was visiting a newly industrialized country that had problems and was treating people poorly. While Hughes was not critical about this, he was discussing the small villages he visited, talking about the culture of the people living there. He provides us with a

description of a rural area in a light and uplifting tone. Hughes states “one afternoon to speed through a fertile oasis of water and greenery, cotton growing, trees in fruit, then crowds of yellow-brown Uzbeks in brightly flowered robes, waving from village stations” (125). Hughes is describing a scene where they were traveling by train and at each stop, they were handed tea. Showing how colorful and nice the people are, and without any hesitation describing the nice scenery. Hughes also mentions cotton in this excerpt, a term that is mentioned frequently in *I wonder as I wander*. This is one example in which Hughes compares horrific situations in the Soviet Union with those in America. The cotton workers in Uzbek remind him of the cotton workers of the South. Hughes’s commiseration towards the Soviet Union is formulated through the lack of racism that he experienced. On multiple occasions, Hughes compares appalling situations in the Soviet Union to those of the American South. He tolerates purge trials and liquidations because, to him, it was part of the Soviet class struggle which he relates to abolitionism (Hughes 219). Hughes compares his reaction to the European and American press denouncing Soviet atrocities with Fredrick Douglass’s reaction to slaveholding papers denouncing abolitionists (Hughes 219). Similar to Douglass, Hughes concluded that it cannot be bad or “unfriendly” for the population of the Soviet Union. Finally, Hughes explicitly expresses self-awareness stating, “After all, I suppose, how anything is seen depends on whose eyes look at” (Hughes 219). The rural areas that Hughes describes leave out the campaign for collectivization of agriculture.

Collectivization meant that the government took back the ownership of farms and farmers had to work for the state farm. Shearer demonstrates that moderate party leaders were opposed to collectivization. However, Stalin did implement harsh rules and claimed support for his plans and moved forward with them (Shearer 195). Shearer exemplifies that resistance against collectivization was widespread but in essence, resistance was dangerous (195). One that was resisting would be “branded a kulak” and could be subject to deportation to a penal

colony or execution (Shearer 195). The peak of the collectivization conflict was in 1931-1932, during this year “authorities deported 1.8 million peasants as class enemies who had resisted collectivization” (Shearer 196). This resulted in the collectivization of 60% of the farmers by 1933. Thus, during Hughes’s visit to the Soviet Union, farmers were fighting against the regime or were forced to work for the regime. As Shearer discussed, other farmers were deported to penal colonies far away.

Hughes experienced new freedoms from racism against colored people in the Soviet Union while citizens were fighting against their government. It is important to note that Hughes is not critical of collectivization and did not actively write about these conditions. One result of Stalin’s policy was the famine that happened in 1932 in Ukraine. Shearer exemplifies the heinous consequences of the famine, five million people died by the end of the famine (197). Shearer offers significant historical insight that helps contextualize Hughes’s visit to the Soviet Union. The historical moment during which Hughes was in the Soviet Union was filled with conflict and cruelties against citizens. These political issues did not seem relevant or urgent for Hughes. Instead, his travelogues focus on his experience as an African American visiting the Soviet Union.

In *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain* Kate Baldwin states that in literary historiography the Soviet writings of African American writers have always been studied separately from the rest of their works. Therefore, Baldwin argues that to understand these works, they must be recognized as part of the total oeuvre of a writer (Baldwin 10). Moreover, by studying these works in the broader context Baldwin has demonstrated how African American internationalism can be understood through these works. In agreement with Baldwin’s argument, African American internationalism is shown in Hughes’s work. The argument made here is that Hughes’s traveling contributes to African American internationalism through his description of other cultures. Hughes continuously contrasts his

African American frame of reference to his experiences in the Soviet Union. For example, Hughes discovered a society without Jim Crow laws. Hughes's travelogues showcase a strong African American internationalism. The travels and different laws concerning race contributed to a worldview Hughes fosters in which freedom becomes a central theme for his works.

Hughes traveled to the Soviet Union in 1932 to participate in a movie project, the movie was called *Black and White* (Baldwin 24). This movie was part of the Soviet project to the representation of African Americans in the South. However, this movie was never made because they could not agree on a script, and movie companies would not allow them to make it since there would be a high chance it would be soviet propaganda for the "New Soviet Man" (Baldwin 110). This movie production is significant because it entailed a project for twenty-two African Americans that wanted to participate. The importance of this is best explained through another concept that Baldwin explores. Baldwin equates Russians and Africans as 'other'. She writes "By European convention, Africans and Russians alike were excluded as non-historic peoples, marginalized in the narrative of world progress and civilization" (Baldwin 26). In line with Baldwin's argument one might argue that African Americans can be equated to the Russians and Africans too. African Americans are often non-historic as well. For example, the voice they had was controlled by other Americans and they could only speak from the periphery of their culture. This might account for the chance that the twenty-two participants in the movie project *Black and White* saw to take their voice and make it heard. However, the movie was never made due to so-called creative differences which reveal cultural differences. The willingness of African Americans to travel to the Soviet Union to participate in this project shows a willingness to self-actualize and control one's narrative, which must have been the appeal for Langston Hughes. However, the project was never finished which shows that cultural differences stood in the way.

Langston Hughes's works about the production of this movie demonstrate how ideals clashed between them and people from the Soviet Union. In *Moscow and me*, Hughes writes "In Moscow, the production of films is quite frankly an art for the advancement of certain ideas of social betterment" (Hughes 58). While in America "the artistic ideals go, and box-office appeal takes their place" (Hughes 58). Thus, this one example demonstrates certain tensions that arose from cultural differences. The African American internationalism at that time encountered different cultures. Hughes was drawn to the Soviet Union because of the promise of a society without racism. In addition, he has an interest in the "artistic innovation of the avant-garde culture of the Soviet Union" (Baldwin 386). This fascination caused him to document his travels through the Soviet Union thoroughly. Following the failed film project Hughes did not decide to go home but instead decided to travel more, namely to Soviet Central Asia.

In *A negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia I. Going South* Hughes writes about his journey going South from Moscow. He contrasts his travel experience in Jim Crow USA with the Soviet experience on the train. Hughes describes the difference in experience traveling as a colored person. He writes "Thus it is that in America.... You can never travel without being reminded of your colour" (Hughes 72). This quote demonstrates the severity of Jim Crow laws and the impossibility to avoid those laws in America. The freedom that Hughes is subject to during this train ride reflects how he writes with a comparison style and with an awareness of the lack of racism. For example, the significance of 'Going South', meaning that Hughes would be infringed on his freedom. While 'Going South' traveling from South from Moscow was an opposite occurrence. Going to the South in America meant that as soon as Hughes travels came past Washington, he had to move to a coach at the end of the train in coherence with separation laws. However, in the Soviet Union there were no such laws and mixed travel was possible, no awareness of color or race was needed for Hughes'

travels to the South in Central east Asia. Not only was traveling itself different, but Hughes also writes about the position of a black man in the government. Namely, one passenger on the train tells them that he is a “chairman of the City Soviet” and Hughes writes “In the Soviet Union dark men are also the mayors of cities” (Hughes 67). This demonstrates an alliance between the African diaspora and non-black allies following the development of African American internationalism. Hughes is building on his international identity through his essays to establish self-determination. He discusses a narrative that fits with his interest in a racism-free society and demonstrates the possibilities of such a society. The examples that Hughes gives, show the Soviet Union in which African Americans are equal citizens through an alliance with Soviet society.

Hughes gathered more stories from passengers on the train South and talked with them about the consequences of the revolution in South East Asia (Hughes 74). For example, literacy has increased to fifty percent, the workers are in power, there is art, theatre, education, and “white and brown live and work together” (Hughes 74). This points to the social mobility that the Soviet Union had which Hughes had not seen in the United States. Once more, Hughes writes about a different and hopeful society with cultural characteristics that he enjoyed and did not recognize in the United States. Additionally, Hughes discusses how The Soviet Union gave cultural space to marginalized groups in Soviet Asia. For example, by printing books in their native language by using the Latin Alphabet (Hughes 74). This sentence seems exemplary for the fine line between the assimilation of culture and the preservation of marginalized cultures. While on the one hand, Hughes focuses on the good things, like higher literacy and more books being published in native languages albeit with a different alphabet. On the other hand, it shows a form of cultural intervention that might lean towards the assimilation of native cultures. Hughes could have been more critical of the treatment of people or the culture in general. However, the chance for self-determination that

lay within Soviet society took priority in his writing. While on the one hand, Hughes's comparison between Soviet society and the United States was a way for him to establish a 'self' that knew a different society to be a part of. On the other hand, it opened the possibility to be part of the internationalist American culture. However, in an alternative way, Hughes found a way to respond to that international society by formulating an African American internationalism, in which the African American experience was central. Not only by going through things firsthand but also by adding to a canon of other African American writers. For example, Hughes frequent discussion of the Soviet unveiling of Muslim Uzbek women.

Hughes discusses this considering Du Bois's influential theory of the veil and double consciousness. Du Bois uses the veil as a metaphor for racism in America. Through the veil, one can look out, but others cannot look in (Du Bois xvii). Du Bois uses the veil to describe how African Americans perceive themselves and how others perceive them. Moreover, Du Bois's point is that African Americans can only perceive themselves within the racist context in which they live in America. Du Bois states "... the Negro is a sort of the seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, -- a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world" (2). Hughes rewrites the theory in such a way that one could be "colored" without being veiled" and "a way of being unveiled without being "white" (Baldwin 101). For Hughes, this unveiling represented the transgression of boundaries and raised questions of racialized sexual emancipation. In other words, he writes about boys who dress up as girls and dance (Baldwin 101). Baldwin illustrates that Hughes's sexual identity was repressed in this writing, to accommodate the readers. The vocabulary that he used while writing about the dancers was cautious. Ultimately, he "infuses his vision of unveiled Uzbek women with the image of gender-blurring boys" (Baldwin 104). Furthermore, when Hughes discusses unveiling, he links it back to the cross-dressing boys making space for cross-gender

identification (Baldwin 104). Hughes goes beyond heteronormativity and complicates the question of gender, oppression, and identity by reconceptualizing unveiling. Gender and perceived gender became part of the anticolonial front in the development of African American internationalism.

While Richard Wright was in some ways a different writer with different ideological values than Hughes. Both writers did undergo the experience of lack of American racism, and both appreciated how freeing that experience was. To demonstrate Hughes's critical stance against racism in America we discussed the poem "Justice". In comparison, Wright's memoir of his first year *Black Boy* gives us a good insight into his experience in America. The novel describes his time as a child in the South, it predates his Marxist and northern times. The narrative demonstrates the life of an African American in the South under the oppression of white people. In *Black Boy* Wright describes how he became increasingly aware of the social structure that racism had put forward. At first, the only white people he knew were his white-colored family members, such as his grandma. While the main character's first confrontation with Jim Crow laws was on a train from Mississippi to Arkansas. The oppression that Wright had to cope with, and how it formulated his black identity for him as a child becomes clear by discussing the following excerpt from *Black boy*.

I now associated with older boys and I had to pay for my admittance into their company by subscribing to certain racial sentiments. The touchstone of fraternity was my feeling toward white people, how much hostility I held toward them, what degrees of value and honor I assigned to race. None of this was premeditated, but sprang spontaneously out of the talk of black boy who met at the crossroads. (Wright, 76)

Thus Wright demonstrates how racism is inherent in formulating an African American identity. Similarly, to Hughes's poem "Justice", Wright shows how relating to the oppressor is a major factor in forming one's identity. However, Wright is more aggressive in his

explanation of such an identity development. Though Hughes poem shows more subtlety in questioning justice. The formation of an African American identity that Wright discusses in *Black Boy* demonstrates the double consciousness that Du Bois writes about.

Whereas Hughes is clearly aware of Du Bois's work and employs it to further his interpretations of his travel experiences. Wright inadvertently demonstrates how Du Bois's double consciousness works for African Americans. Wright does this by demonstrating that not only race but racist values within the culture make double consciousness a problem at once. On page 37 in *Black boy* Wright states "Whenever I thought about the essential bleakness of black life in America, I knew that Negroes had never been allowed to catch the full spirit of Western Civilization, that they lived somehow in it but not of it." This passage expresses the double consciousness that Du Bois describes. Du Bois writes about double-consciousness as a way of looking at "oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (2). Wright seems to be aware of this approach, as he writes about "bleakness of black life in America" (37). Wright shows that double consciousness is insistent and a constant factor that he had to cope with growing up, forming, and shaping his identity. Moreover, Wright's confrontation with the reality that he exists in causes him to struggle with his identity and feelings of hopelessness.

Wright states "I know that not race alone, not color alone, but the daily values that give meaning to life stood between me and those white girls with whom I worked. Their constant outward-looking" ... "made them dream and fix their eyes upon the trash of life, making it impossible for them to learn a language that could have taught them to speak of what was in their or others' hearts. The words of their souls were the syllables of popular songs." (Wright 273) This excerpt from *Black boy* demonstrates how DuBois's veil and double consciousness affect the life of the main character in the book. It demonstrates how the character Wright is perceived as an African American and as an African American alone.

Moreover, Wright states that it is impossible due to the cultural status quo at the time for the girls to formulate another opinion. Thus, demonstrating how the veil goes beyond just racism and demonstrates systematic racism that is ingrained in the American culture at that time.

Expressing a reality that African Americans had to deal with double consciousness feeling a binary sense of self. In the words of Du Bois “One ever feels his twoness, -- and American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (3).

In conclusion, Langston Hughes and Richard Wright have experienced racism in America. Both writers demonstrate an awareness of this racism in their works. Both Hughes and Wright’s works can be analyzed by using Du Bois’s theory on double consciousness. In this chapter it is demonstrated that Hughes’s poem and Wright’s novel both show how living in the United States at that time had a strong impact on formulating an identity. These identities are colored by a double consciousness that is a consequence of the workings of racism and the status quo of cultural values at the time. Hughes recognized this and wrote about recognizing double consciousness during his travels, which can be interpreted a covert minor critique of culture in the Soviet Union. However, Hughes is not critical and even slightly naïve in his experience when we look at the historical context of his travels.

In addition, we can conclude that Wright does not explicitly mention Bois work but does demonstrate Du Bois’s theory in his novel *Black Boy*. Moreover, both Wright and Hughes are dealing with the sense of self being binary and not just one sense of self. Thus, it might seem like a logical step to move abroad too, just as Langston Hughes did.

Chapter 3 Richard Wright travelogue

In the previous chapter Richard Wright and Langston Hughes's experiences within America have been discussed and Hughes's travels have been examined. In this chapter Wright's move abroad to France and the impact of this move on his writing will be examined. In addition, Hughes's writing will be compared to that of Richard Wright. This chapter is about Wright's travel literature, but it is important to provide the context in which Hughes and Wright were writing. In *The New Red Negro: The Literary Left and African American Poetry* Smethurst discusses a new context for Left African American writers. He argues for two problematic categorizations of African American writers in the 1930s and 1940s. First, the periodization of African American literature, and second the anti-ideological approach. Smethurst asserts "Perhaps the most disputed aspect about African-American literature in the 1930s and 1940s is that of periodization" (5). Meaning that periodization can be problematic, such as before and after the New Negro Renaissance, denying continuity between the 1920-1930s (Smethurst 5). As Smethurst states, the problem with periodization, or categorizing literature in general is that it can cause scholarly work to disregard possible connections. It is no question that there is continuity between the 1920s and 1930s in African American literature. Moreover, the study of Hughes and Wright's work is such a 'continuity' between the two decades. In agreement with Smethurst, other angles, such as comparative research between writers, can be useful to categorize works in a different manner than periodization. Moreover, tracing the development of African American writing on the Left is what Smethurst is doing in *The New Red Negro: The Literary Left and African American Poetry*.

Secondly, Smethurst discusses how previous studies into the ideological aspect of the Communist Left are crude. For example, Smethurst states "this anti-ideological approach tends to reinforce the notion of black writers, and indeed all writers associated with the Left to one degree or another, as dupes or opportunistic cynics" (6). Thus, expressing that scholars

have neglected the ideological impact of the Communist Left on writers. Instead, writers had been urged into radicalization by the great depression and the CPUSA (5). In agreement with Smethurst, the focus on a clear ideological interest by Wright and Hughes is something that is taken into consideration. This study fits with the methodology employed in this thesis. Namely, comparative analysis, and provides a context in which the literary style of Hughes and Wrights works can be analyzed. Moreover, Smethurst demonstrates how focusing on ideology can demonstrate continuity between the 1930s and 1940s. While *The New Red Negro: The Literary Left and African American Poetry* focus is poetry, this scholarly work does provide context for travelogues as well. Similarly, it discusses a broader range of writers than the focus of this thesis, but it provides a good background to analyze works by Wright and Hughes. Turning to Wright and Hughes, not only did they have in common that they both traveled, but both were also interested in the Communist Left. Consequently, Smethurst arguments about ideology and periodization are a good tool to analyze Wrights and Hughes interest in the Communist left and to study the periodization of their works.

Wright was a member of the Communist party and both Wright and Hughes were members of the *John reed club*. The John Reed Club was founded in 1929, right before the great depression. The club was a radical organization associated with the communist magazine *New Masses* (McKoy 87). The club had around 30 branches in different cities that all operated independently. In addition to the association with *New Masses*, the club was influential for writers on the left cultural spectrum and had a literary periodical called, *Partisan Review* (McKoy 87). The *John Reed club* was dissolved in 1935, thus it was short-lived, but it had a major influence on writers that were part of the group. The association with the *John Reed club* periodical *New Masses* is all too familiar to Hughes and Wright, both were actively working for the magazine (Smethurst 4). In addition, Hughes supported Communist Party initiatives and was president of *The League of Struggle for Negro Rights*

(Smethurst 4). Both Wright and Hughes stood by the ideology of the Communist party at that time. Both wrote activist poetry for the *New Masses* and other periodicals to demonstrate their ideological standpoints. Thus, the writers studied here were both active in a Communist activism group and employed their skills to establish their political viewpoints.

One example of a political poem was originally published in *Negro Worker* (Nov.-Dec.1932) is a well-known poem by Langston Hughes. In the poem “Goodbye Christ”, the speaker renounces Christianity. As the poem starts “Listen, Christ, You did alright in your day, I reckon — But that day's gone now.” (Hughes 166). Wallace Best discusses what the implication of the poem was on his career. In addition to Best other scholars have asserted implications as well, for example Smethurst and Ramperstad, thus the poem has been influential for Hughes career. The scholars have states that the poem would haunt Hughes’s further career, and it has. Hughes has tried to distance himself from it but was unable to do so, it was out there, and it had been printed (Best 109). Best continuously discusses how it sparked debates about religion and African American religion (Best 109). Best asserts that this poem most clearly showcases Hughes’s “alignment with Communist causes and ideology” (109). Best does clearly explain that the poem asserts a renunciation of capitalism in addition to the renunciation of Christianity. However, what Best is lacking is a deeper analysis of the poem. For instance, it can be argued that the poem’s denunciation of capitalism is a critique of western thought in general. Combining a critique of religion and capitalism and demonstrating how it influenced the African American position at the time. The following lines demonstrate that according to the speaker religion has become a capitalist endeavor “The popes and the preachers've Made too much money from it” (Hughes 166). In addition, it can be argued that capitalism cannot be religious, thus religion has left when capitalism came. However, the second stanzas are more interesting for discussing how it is a critique of broader western thought.

Go ahead on now, You're getting in the way of things, Lord.
 And please take Saint Gandhi with you when you go,
 And Saint Pope Pius,
 And Saint Aimee McPherson,
 And big black Saint Becton Of the Consecrated Dime. (Hughes 166)

In this stanza, Hughes takes an international approach to the renunciation of religion.

Similarly to Christians that took an international approach to spread religion. In addition, this poem can be interpreted as a renunciation of the “white man’s burden”. The poem gives a voice and agency to the speaker through which renunciation is possible. It demonstrates the freedom to say “no” and to choose something else. The poem appeals to the alternativity of the Communist party. The very end of the poem alludes to slavery, “And nobody's gonna sell ME To a king, or a general, Or a millionaire” (Hughes 166). It is impossible to delve into the specifics of the economical side of things. However, this line does connect the slavery history to the capitalism of the time. Describing how capitalism can cause “modern slavery”.

Moreover, the voice in the poem once again takes agency and, this time can say ‘no’ to oppression. Thus, this poem is a strong articulation of ideological principles that Hughes bolstered in 1932. Similar articulations of this theme are seen in other poems by Hughes, for example, “Good morning revolution”. Other poems share a sense of hopelessness towards Hughes ideology. For example, the poem “Tired”, published in *New Masses*, shows that Hughes is not always combative (4). Thus, demonstrating a strong ideology however, there is a sense of weariness and hopelessness within that for Hughes.

Other scholars have executed comparisons between the poems of Hughes and Wright (Fabre 19). Fabre makes a comparison between “I have seen black hands” and “I have Known Rivers” (Fabre 19). Fabre does this to demonstrate that Wright has been inspired by Hughes in form and content. In agreement with Fabre other comparisons between Hughes and Wrights poems can be made Namely, the poem “I have seen black hands” exemplifies similar hopelessness demonstrated in some of Hughes’s poems such as “Tired”. Moreover, it

shows the implications that racism and capitalism can have. The poem was published in *New Masses* in June 1934. Whereas “Goodbye Christ” is a full-on critique of capitalism, “I have seen black hands” exemplifies the implications of it. Fabre states that the poem shows the development of the black community (36). This argument is strengthened by the analysis of the poem by Robert Coles. He states that the narrator of the poem “unifies his identity with the collective masses” (388). Thus, the collective experience is demonstrated by the narrative voice of the poem. In agreement with Coles and Fabre, it can be argued that the poem traces the development of the African American community. The poem does this through “black hands” in all stages of life. Coles states “Wright cites specific details that illustrate the meaning of collective oppression” (388). One example of such specifics is the “black hands” which take on the character of the collective. The use of hands symbolize a sense of agency, in the sense of work, unity, violence, and that hands are double in and of themselves. Thus, Wright’s choice to use hands instead of other body parts should be noted here. The poem starts with the black hands of a child. Wright writes “Out of millions of bundles of wool and flannel tiny black fingers have reached restlessly and hungrily for life. Reached out for the black nipples at the black breasts of black mothers” (16). Thus, Wright turns a personal experience of one life into the voice of millions.

On the contrary, “Goodbye Christ” is a first-person narration in which the narrative only invokes the personal experience of the narrator. Another example of first-person narration by Langston Hughes is in “Good Morning Revolution”. Hughes writes “Good-morning, Revolution: You're the very best friend I ever had” (169). The poem continues with the first-person narration. Thus, for Hughes, the personal voice is part of his style in these examples, whereas Wright chose to evoke the voice of “millions”. Moreover, Wright’s critique of capitalism might be less overt, his voice on race is much more out there. The speaker in “I have seen black hands” is constantly confronting the reader with the blackness

of the characters and narrator in the poem. Every stanza starts with “I am black, and I have seen black hands” (Wright 16). This has the effect of making the reader of the poem aware of the blackness of the narrator. It mirrors the experience of racism that the narrator and African American community is always confronted with. Similarly, this dichotomy is posited in *Goodbye Christ* in which the reader is made aware of a distance between African American culture and Caucasian culture. Thus, poems by Hughes and Wright both recognize and stipulate racism and oppression that comes from that. Both write and express the difficulties they experience in America as African Americans. Wright uses strong symbolism with the “hands” and the collective experience of “millions” whereas Hughes utilizes a first-person narrative voice. This comparison demonstrates a difference in style whilst exploring similar critiques on society. In addition, both writers share a view of a different future and use their agency as writers to incite change

I am black and I have seen black hands
 Raised in fists of revolt, side by side with the white fists of white workers,
 And some day—and it is only this which sustains me—
 Some day there shall be millions and millions of them,
 On some red day in a burst of fists on a new horizon! (Wright 16)

Analyzing the last stanza of “I Have Seen Black Hands” Wright talks about black hands but white fists. The use of the word fist demonstrates the agency that “white fists” have. Fists are associated with violence. However, they are also associated with power. Thus, Wright is hoping to gain agency and raise “fists of revolt” together with “white fists”. Wright alludes to a Marxist revolution quite obviously by stating “On some red day”. Thus, pleading for a “revolt” of “Black” and “White fists” without racism within the communist ideology which was without racism and class struggle. This is a theme that the main character from *Black boy* also encounters and discusses. “The speakers claimed that Negroes were

angry, that they were about to rise and join their white fellow workers to make a revolution” (Wright 273). The difference is that the main character of the novel has lost hope and does not believe that a revolution is bound to happen. Whereas *Black boy* gives detailed descriptions of communism, it seems that in “I have seen black hands” the voice of the poem is more hopeful and strongly believes in the possibility of revolution. Whilst the main character of *Black Boy* almost rejects the whole principle of revolutions. Moreover, he recognizes the naivety of members of the Communist Party in America. Wright states “I could not refute the general Communist analysis of the world; the only drawback was that their world was just too simple for belief” (Wright 275).

Thus, “I have seen black hands” is much more hopeful and blunter in its hope for some time of revolution. In addition, Wright states that hope is what sustains the narrator of “I have seen black hands”. It is that hope for a collective “revolt” that can help collectivize the community and go from a separated country to a collective one. Looking at Hughes’s poem “Good Morning revolution” a comparable hope can be seen.

Boy! Them radios —

Broadcasting that very first morning to USSR:

Another member the International Soviet's done come

Greetings to the Socialist Soviet Republics

Hey you rising workers everywhere greetings—

And we'll sign it: Germany

Sign it: China

Sign it: Africa

Sign it: Poland

Sign it: Italy

Sign it: America

Sign it with my one name: Worker

On that day when no one will be hungry, cold, oppressed,

Anywhere in the world again. (Hughes 162)

The hope for a revolution is expressed in this poem as much as in Wright's poem.

However, Hughes is not talking about a collective African American experience. He is referring to an international collective experience of workers. In addition, compared to I have black hands the poem overtly mentions the USSR instead of covertly revering to communist ideology. What both poems do have in common is a shared hope for revolution and a world where there is no oppression. Both poems share this hope for equality resulting from a communist ideology. All in all, both poems demonstrate the struggle against oppression experienced by African Americans. One poem evokes a collective voice in showing this while the other does not. Moreover, both poems share a desire for change and hope to reach that change through revolution.

It is not a surprise that Hughes's poem in this case has an international angle. Both Hughes and Wright have an international inclination. Since both writers had an international focus. This focus has been bolstered by the Communist Party, especially through the connection with the Comintern (Communist International). The Comintern is the Communist international founded in 1919. The Comintern was the international organization advocating world communism led by the Soviet Union. Stalin was forced to abolish it in 1943. However, in 1947 it was revived as the Cominform. Several international Communist parties, including France, became members of the Cominform (Palmowski). Smethurst discusses the effect of the Comintern on the CPUSA. First, he states the CPUSA bolstered the connection between African Americans with the colonial populations. Smethurst states that this has been attributed to African American internationalism (Smethurst 8). He furthers his argument that this theoretical connection drawn by the Comintern has practical implications, such as a

literary connection between “oppressed people” that was not there before on such a big scale (Smethurst,8). Smethurst elucidates further on the development of the position the CPUSA took towards African Americans. According to Smethurst, the CPUSA centers on the “struggle against racism”, especially after the Comintern's Sixth Congress” (21). This was in the late 20s, during this congress the "Negro liberation" was connected to the anticolonial fights worldwide (21).

Thus, the link between the CPUSA and internationalism is demonstrated by Smethurst. Building on what Smethurst argues, it can be demonstrated that this international focus has been passed on through communist ideology to the members of that ideology. Hence, it demonstrates why Wright and Hughes were inclined to an international focus. In addition, Smethurst elaborates on the Black-Belt thesis. The Black-Belt thesis is an example of the power the Comintern had over the CPUSA. In 1928, the Black-Belt thesis was discussed at a Comintern congress. Equalizing the Southern population of African Americans to an oppressed nation that should have the right to form a separate state (Smethurst 23).

Most historians agree that the Black Belt thesis was forced on the CPUSA by the Comintern (24). One problem is that The Black-Belt thesis is influenced by the “European valorizations of peasants, soil, and blood” (Smethurst 10). It romanticized the idea of being in rural culture. Another problem is that it puts the entire African American culture into that of a rural one in the south and has a disregard for African American culture in cities. However, the Black-belt thesis does recognize African Americans as an integral part of the United States (Smethurst 10). Smethurst’s argument is compelling and to a certain extent it can be agreed upon that the internationalism bolstered by the Comintern and the CPUSA has provided agency for writers such as Wright and Hughes. Or in other words, it provided a structure for Wright to operate within the anticolonial movement. However, Baldwin critiques Smethurst’s assertion that the cultural model is based on a European model. Even

though, Smethurst makes this assertion and claims the European model is problematic in the Black Belt thesis. Baldwin argues that the assertion of a European model is problematic (Baldwin 15). This assertion is problematic according to Baldwin. Rather, it is the non-Western aspect that was the appeal of the communist movement. Following Baldwin, the appeal of an alternative is what has been the appeal for the writers studied in this thesis. However, Baldwin furthers her argument by stating that the basis for the cultural model is based on Russian culture (Baldwin 15). In this instance, it can be argued that Baldwin's assertion shows that the communist party offered an alternative to the Western paradigm. Taking that argument further, the mere existence of an alternative paradigm might be appealing to oppressed people in general. Thus, it seems fair that the European cultural thought romanticizing the worker is irrelevant to the appeal of the cultural model of the Communist Party. Moreover, a couple of years after the Black Belt thesis this is the case, as I have discussed and will be discussing.

In conclusion, with the development of the American communist party, African American internationalism developed as well. The Comintern Congress recognized the 'problem of the negro' and synthesized this into the Black Belt thesis. This led to a faulty recognition of African American culture within but separate from America. The allegiance between other colonized people and African Americans grew as the Comintern stressed the connection between African Americans and colonized people. Which fueled a broader African American internationalism. This is relevant to Wright's travel writings that have a strong focus on decolonization. For example, Wright's travels to the Gold Coast focus on the fight for independence from the British. However, first it would be helpful to discuss Wright's move to France. Similarly, to Hughes, Wright moved to France to feel free from racism. In part because he was in a bi-racial relationship with his wife. Wright and his wife moved to France in 1947, after he had visited two times. Wright's perception of France was

positive. For many African Americans, the impression was that a black person could be "just another human being (Fabre 145). The absence of racial discrimination was an important reason for Wright to move to France. Another reason was the active cultural and literary world that France had. In that cultural world, he became a celebrated and known writer in France. His works pair well with French existentialism (Fabre 310). Wright's novels *Black Boy* and *Native Son* were received with praise. Fabre demonstrates the viewpoint of an important literary critic at the time (Fabre 311). Her critique focuses on Wright's ability to convey his personal experience of racism and how he deals with the "Negro problem" (Fabre 311). Thus, Wright moved to France to have a life free of racism but became known for writing about the African American experience. Wright was well received within the literary community precisely because he is a voice of the African American. James Baldwin has noted this at the time and posited critique on Wright's involvement with Paris literary circles.

Carpio states "Baldwin distrusted his associations with French intellectuals, arguing that, for instance, "Sartre, de Beauvoir, and company" did not see Wright's full humanity" (6). This means that they did not see Wright as a full person but as a black man. According to Carpio this view has hardened over time, even after his death. Arguing that there is a "stubborn tendency to tether Wright's artistic vision to his racial identity" (6). As Carpio rightfully argues this is a pitfall in discussing Wright's work and several scholars have entertained that pitfall. However, Wright has employed his racial identity in his writings and work. Therefore, Wright's artistic vision is connected to his racial identity. However, this does not mean that interpretation of his work or discussing his work should solely hinge on that identity. Nevertheless, a good example of Wright's employment of his racial identity is how he observed perceptions of African Americans by the French. Wright did not agree with how African Americans were portrayed and was opposed to the idea of the "noble savage" and the "heroic victim" (Fabre 312). For readers in French, this viewpoint of Wright was a

truth of the African American voice. Thus, Wright's arrival and reception in France did turn him into a voice for the African American community, a power that he was aware of according to Fabre (312).

In addition, his position within the French literary community was critiqued by James Baldwin and this criticism continued. Caprio is skeptical about linking everything to Wright's racial identity, whilst I agree, that the voice that Wright had can skeptically be linked to racial identity. After Wright published *Outsider*, he started traveling to other countries. Over three years Wright published three travelogues. He experienced these travels as an expatriated American living in France. In the *Cambridge Companion to Richard Wright* Stephen Kuhl rightly asserts that Richard Wright's international scope is inscribed in his earlier work (185). Throughout his literary career, Wright has transgressed national borders. The point to be made here is that Wright's focus on an international scope is bolstered by his time in the communist party. However, even after he left the party his focus grew to be decolonization. The demonstration of decolonization thought is well seen in his travelogues. It is important to note that, even though Wright and Hughes were involved in the CPUSA simultaneously, Wright's travelogues are written in the mid-1950s, two decades after Hughes's travelogues discussed earlier in this thesis. However, Wright's travelogues have a similar theme to Hughes's writings. Namely, both have a similar background, and both adhere to African American internationalism. The three travelogues that Wright has written are *Pagan Spain*, *The color curtain* and *Black Power*.

Kuhl argues that *Savage Holiday* should be considered to fully map out the transnational experience that Wright is discussing, as it represents the USA. Kuhl's argument is compelling because the *Savage Holiday* does provide insight into Wright's stance on anti-colonialism (190). However, Wright's actual travelogues do provide enough context to understand anti-colonialism from the European context. *Black power* is Wright's account of

traveling to Ghana, describing life there. In the introduction, Wright states that he will use Marxist analysis to investigate decolonization and modernization in Ghana (Wright 18). In addition, the Marxist theory provides a useful structure to discuss decolonization and modernization, but it does not entail his support of communism.

Wright also provides us with grounds for choosing the Gold Coast for his travelogue.

Describing that “the Gold Coast, an area comprising perhaps the most highly socially evolved native life of present-day Africa” (Wright 18). Moreover, Wright clearly states that his narration and study is subjective. The introduction to *Black Power* provides the reader with conditions that prove a self-awareness of Richard Wright. In comparison to Hughes Wright is better capable of providing a scope in which these texts should be read. This warning, or clarification of how to read one’s work provides valuable information and demonstrates a self-awareness within the work. Hughes regularly lacks these clarifications. For example, his autobiographical work *I wonder as I wander* does not provide us with an introduction.

Comparing Hughes and Wright their styles differ, and Wright seems to prioritize clarifying his work to the reader more than Hughes is. However, both writers use the “West” to relate their experiences whilst traveling. Hughes has done this with his journey to the Soviet Union and Wright with his travels to Gold Coast (Ghana). Wright traveled to the Gold Coast in the summer of 1953, four years before the country’s independence (Shankar 20).

The first chapter of *Black Power* starts with Wright exploring how he, if at all belongs to the African community. Wright states “Being of African descent, would I be able to feel and know something about Africa based on a common “racial” heritage?” (21). Wright is ruminating about his identity “But am I African?” (21). Wright is fully aware of his ancestry, but that ancestry does not make one African. However, he wonders if any trace of his ancestry will affect his bond or reactions to Africans. The question of ‘racial’ identity becomes a central question in *Black Power*. Wright’s question can be interpreted in a broader

framework of representation and a hybrid identity. Several scholars argue that Wright exists within multiple cultures and that it can be difficult to place him within one framework. For example, Ngwarsungu Chiwengo problematizes the question of “home” for Wright. She interprets the question of ‘racial’ identity as Wright being “alien”. Chiwengo argues that Wright has been uprooted and cannot be ‘home’ anywhere (42). Moreover, she posits the problem of representation when one’s identity is uprooted so often. She critiques Wright for not identifying African tradition and not giving African a voice or presence in *Black Power*.

However, she later contradicts her arguments as she explores the importance of the African American voice that Wright has. According to Chiwengo “The African American voice occupies a marginal position within Western society” (42). Thus, how Wright be voiceless on the one hand because of a problematic hybrid identity and voice the African American position on the other. Chiwengo establishes that America will only comprehend how the identity of African Americans is constructed by looking at “the African through the eyes of the African American” (42). On the one hand she argues that Wright’s representations are problematic because his identity is uprooted and cannot easily represent one vantage point. While on the other hand she credits him with the vantage point of the “African American”. Opposing to Chiwengos specific argument it would be better to say that Wright’s hybridity contributes to multiple vantage points.

In addition, those different vantage points need to be critically assessed which is in agreement with Chiwengos article. Joseph Keith similarly posits Wright’s hybrid identity as an advantage. He argues that Wrights unbelonging offers an opportunity to analyze from a unique perspective (Keith 108). According to Keith, Wright was aware of his position and advocated for a new language beyond the binary of left and right (Keith 108). Wright called this the “third way of knowing” resembling a new way of knowing based on hybridity and beyond a political spectrum. This third way of knowing demonstrates Homi Bhabha’s theory

on hybrid identity in which the third space can act as a space where cultural hybridity can exist without “imposed hierarchy” (Bhabha 4). That is to say the third space gives the colonized a space to form a new culture outside of the imposed culture. This is a space that Wright tries to occupy during his travels to the Gold Coast. However, he is more exploring how and if he can occupy this third space. Bhabha exemplifies the difficulties of representing here as well, arguing that in the third space something is created which cannot represent either the colonized or the colonizer (Bhabha 4). However, Bhabha’s theoretical deconstruction of colonialization inherently struggles with the question of representation. Since, the colonized and colonizer exist in relation to one another the Third space is problematic. This challenge of representation is demonstrated in Wright’s *Black Power*, Wright’s unbelonging can be situated within Bhabha’s third space. However problematic the third space offers a unique perspective.

Similar to Chiwengos critique, the question on Wright’s ability to represent is discussed by other scholars. For example, his representation of the Gold coast and their fight for independence. Wright witnesses the activities of the Kwame Nkrumah’s Convention People’s Party as it campaigns for independence. Not surprisingly, Wright’s interest is with this group, as he has been politically active as well. His interests remain with political activities, in this case concerning the fight for independence. On page 63 in *Black Power* Wright describes his visit with the prime minister of the Convention People Party. Wright is invited in and has a short conversation with the prime minister.

Pm: “How are you?” Wright: “Fine, but panting to see your party and your comrades.” He laughed. He presented me to a series of his friends whose strange names I did not recall, then we sat down. (Wright, 63)

In this short snippet of conversation Wright reminds the reader that he is an outsider. He cannot remember the ‘strange’ names of the prime ministers’ friends. The consequence of the

outsider position is twofold. On the one hand, Wright might come across as a witness, implying less agency than a participant would have which would vouch for objectivity that a witness can offer. While on the other hand Wright reminds the reader that this is the experience of a “Western” man and that we should interpret his work as such. Other scholars are in accordance with framing Wright as a Western traveler. For example, Shankar contends that Wright is a traveler of the west and Wright is aware of this (Shankar, 28). He furthers his argument by positing that Wrights awareness of being Western forms his attitude towards African culture. Wrights position as a Western traveler comes up a lot in the novel, like the example above. Shankar points to other aspects of Wright as a travel Writer that are interesting. He states that Wright had an ability to take the discussion of race out of *Black Power* and instead focusses on culture (Shankar, 26). An example of Wrights focus on culture is his travel with the prime minister to a Convention People Party meeting.

Many of the women waved their hands in that strange, quivering gesture of welcome ... common to the entire Gold Coast; it consisted of lifting the hand, but, instead of waving the hand as one did in the West, one held the arm still and shook the palm of the hand nervously and tremblingly from side to side, making the fingers vibrate
(Wright, 65)

On his way to that visit Wright describes how people waved to the president of the party. Once more, Wright clearly situates himself as an outsider and a Western witness. He describes the waving as something non- Western and specific to the Gold Coast culture. For Wright this as a cultural difference that he can still recognize but is different to him. It is yet another small example that almost alienates Wright and bolsters his Western view on things. However, the observation of a different type of waving is without further discussion, thus there is no judgement by Wright. However, Wright also recognizes cultural expressions demonstrating his connection to the people of the Gold Coast (67). He recognizes the dance

that women were doing outside when the president of the party and Wright drove by. Wright describes that he had seen those same dances in the “Deep South” in front of churches. Though, his depiction of the women is reminiscent of oriental descriptions. Wright states “...women, stripped to the waist, their elongated breasts flopping wildly, do a sort of weaving, circular motion with their bodies, a kind of queer shuffling dance which expressed their joy...” (67). Even though Wright recognizes the dance he “others” the women by framing it through an orientalist lens. Thus, demonstrating a Western outlook on a familiar dance he recognized from America.

Additionally, Wright offers another example that “others” the women who are members of Kwame Nkrumah’s Convention People’s party. Once the party leader and Wright visit a meeting, they discuss the current strategy of involving those women. Essentially, they categorize these women as tribal “others”.

“You have fused tribalism with modern politics,” I said (Wright). “That’s exactly it,” he said (Nkrumah). “Nobody wanted to touch these people. The missionaries would go just so far, and no farther toward them. One can only organize them by going where they are, living with them, eating with them, sharing their lives. (Wright 70)

Nkrumah does two things in this passage. First, he is placed in a similar position to the colonizers, while arguing that he has a better grasp on this culture. Namely, the party’s leader is showing that the strength of the party lies within the entire population of the Gold Coast, going beyond the missionaries. In addition, this is a subtle critique on colonialism, since Nkrumah is defending the worth of *all* inhabitants. However, Nkrumah also does not want tribes to stay unaffected by “modern politics”. Nkrumah wants to “organize them” for the use of the party. The comparison with missionaries is striking since it complicates the intentions of Nkrumah’s party.

The comparison implies that what the party is doing might be like what the

missionaries did, apart from Nkrumah seeing the worth of the tribes. Nkrumah would be, what Shankar describes as “the Westernized and tragic elite” (Shankar 23). Shankar argues that Wright depends on leadership that have access to knowledge which is a sign of privilege and consequently places them “margins of culture” (Shankar 23). Even though, Shankar refers to Wrights *White Man, Listen!*, the “Westernized and tragic elite” is extant in Nkrumah. Wright states “...Nkrumah ... would first have to have the intellectual daring to know that the British had created a vacuum in these people’s hearts” (Wright 70). He is privileged leader of the party which becomes the viewpoint of Wright in his travelogue.

Whilst Langston Hughes speaks with ordinary people on the train, Wright speaks with leaders of this Party and takes on that specific understanding to discuss his viewpoint on anti-colonialism. Wright asserts only by recognizing that the imperialist actions are “crimes of the highest order” a new way of organizing the lives of the tribe’s people can be projected (Wright 70). Moreover, Wright offers other interpretations of culture that carry forms of “Western” judgement. Wrights’ interpretation of women pledging to the party leader carries an oriental undertone that equates illiterate women to being “less than” because they had not been subjected to imperialism. Wright describes women taking an oath to Nkrumah, the party leader (70). For him it belongs to “traditions and culture” of the “illiterate” and “mythminded” women of the tribes. Wright goes as far as stating that the oath to the leader is “perhaps the most rational pledge” that these women have taken. Wright gives the impression that an oath to gods is less valid and one to a flag would be too abstract for these women (70). The description of tribal women pledging an oath to the party leader is formed by Wright’s position as a Western writer informed by Nkrumahs viewpoint. Wrights position in *Black Power* creates difficulty interpreting his work. Through his Westernized view Wright is conflicted about the ‘self’ and about modernity, which influences his views on politics. One might even argue that valuing democracy as the epitome of freedom is Westernized. At least,

the structure of nationwide democracy might be interpreted as such. Wright is sympathetic towards the “oppressed masses of the Third World” and he vouches for Western modernity within the Gold Coast for example (Nicholas Rinehart 174).

Looking at Wrights encounter with Nkrumah it almost seems like the natural course that nationalism is needed for Nkrumah to succeed. In accordance with Keith, it can be argued that Nkrumah’s attempt to fuse “tribalism” with “modern politics” is the type of influence of imperialism that Wright supports. Keith states that Wright’s opinion was similar to the status quo within the western world formulated by the U.N and the US. Namely, “the reins of this development needed to be handed over by the West to the “tragic elite” of the colonial world” (115). However natural this development seems; Wright has difficulty attesting to a people that would rationally develop an internationalism resulting in independence.

For Wright nationalism might function as a replacement of religion, thus asserting a denial towards a rational modernity. Wright describes how “religious interests” were frightened by “this wild and liquid emotion that Nkrumah had channeled into a new political party” (Wright 66). Wright denies agency to the followers of the new political party in which the political party is a replacement for religion. In addition, Wright puts emphasis on the importance of a “tragic elite” that might be able to lead the “masses” towards independence with little believe in development of the “masses”. Wright’s depiction of the Gold Coast and the Convention People Party is littered with oppositions that complicate a clear interpretation of *Black Power*. Difficulty with interpretation of Wrights work is supported by several scholars. Nicholas Rinehart recognizes that “several aspects of Wright’s writings in exile have posed considerable difficulties for his interpreters” (174). Whilst other scholars show Wright’s travelogue starting as “a journey toward greater intellectual clarification” changing into a “chronicle of confusion” (82).

In accordance with other scholars, it can be shown that Wright's travelogue is a quest for answers about ancestry and Wright's relation to the "African". It has been demonstrated that some things are recognizable for Wright while it is impossible for Wright to reconcile the belief of independent development of a nation without a "tragic elite" influenced by the West. Wright's travelogue is a description of a nation that is developing through a Western gaze. Even though it is a problematic travelogue to interpret, Wright has been clear on his position as a Western traveler. Wright shifts from taking an inclusive international outlook in "I have seen black hands" towards a division between Western and non-Western in *Black Power*. In the poem Wright culminates the black experience as one that is different but collective, hoping for an international response. Whereas Wright starts questioning his own identity as an African American in relation to the culture and people of the gold coast. Thus, Wright shifts from a strong cohesive international power to one that is connected but leaves room for differences.

Conclusion

This thesis examined the influence of international identity formation through analyzing the works of two contemporary African American writers, Richard Wright and Langston Hughes, across geographical space. It has researched the international identity from their national roots towards the international experience while the writers were expatriated or travelling abroad. First of all, the interest that developed for an internationalism from a national context will be discussed. Namely, the basis of each writer's career in respectively the Harlem Renaissance and the Chicago writers' groups. It is argued that Hughes and Wrights development of an international identity is rooted in a similar background and literary development. Both writers developed a socialist activist attitude which was bolstered by the Harlem Renaissance and the Chicago writers' group. The increasing interest in communism led to Langston Hughes travelling to Russia. His work can be placed in an international context, within the international context of the Comintern and socialism in general. Moreover, this thesis argued that Hughes travel abroad contributed to an experience in which racism was less prevalent. However, the importance of the genre travelogue needs to be considered. Namely, travelogues are personal experiences that do not directly represent the truth, it represents a truth. Thus, Hughes mostly disregards the socio-economic and political environment in Russia which encompasses Stalinism.

To demonstrate how internationalism takes shape a comparison between Wright and Hughes writings has been made. It has been discussed how the Harlem renaissance and the south side writers have shaped the ideological and literary style of Hughes and Wright. A clear distinction can be made based on the evolution of society itself. The Harlem renaissance was a predecessor of the South Side Writers group. Thus, Wright was able to develop from a space in which African American writing and self-determination through it was already being practiced. Additionally, the broad scale of styles and genres employed by Hughes and Wright

offer a context in which these writings should be interpreted. Moreover, both writers have the ability to utilize different genres and voices in their works. Kutzinkski argues for a new interpretation of Hughes work by accounting for comparative literary and cultural history study. Carpios argument is similar for Richard Wrights work, namely the impact of the historical context and cultural history is extant throughout Wright's work. Most scholars have argued that Wrights expatriatism has led to a decline in his literary works. However, the argument made is not about Wrights decline but about Wright's style and form throughout his writing career. *The New Negro* situates the Harlem Renaissance in a national and international sphere (Locke 25). Langston Hughes adhered to the Harlem Renaissance ideology and aesthetics. In *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain* Hughes argues that the African American has the desire to conform towards American standardization and set aside 'racial individuality'.

Wright goes through a similar process of belonging and conforming to a creative group that forges an ideology only to move away from it later in his career. Wrights, and *The South Side Writers group* had a different ideological standpoint. Hughes demonstrates racial separation influences African American art in such a way that it changes the voice of writers. Whereas Wright recognizes that African American writers did conform to the broader cultural/ Caucasian context. Moreover, Wright argues against Hughes call for an African American art in which validation of white people is not necessary anymore. Both writers feel the importance of propagating culture while framing their concerns in a different manner. Concluding that Hughes and Wright do partake in self- determination in a national and international context. The analysis of travelogues demonstrated different manners in which the writers expressed their experiences on international identity. First, it has been clarified where travelogues exist within the literary landscape. Travelogues adhere to certain qualities that need to be considered when analyzing them. Travelogues as a literary genre is closely

related to the autobiography genre. It is an autobiographical work because it is written from personal experience and often about researching some aspect of the place one travelled to. In addition, it is an introspective work, raising the question of what the influence of the environment of the destination has on the writer. The difficulty of travelogues lies in the difficulty of representation. However, with this considered one can analyze such works as fictionalized autobiographical works. Travelogues are a part of Wrights and Hughes oeuvres written during their travels. In conclusion one should take into consideration that travelogue and autobiography is aestheticized to fit a narrative and has a degree of fictional characteristics. Wrights' travelogue is quite self-reflexive and concerned with the question of interpretation. Namely, Wright is clear about his position as a "Western" traveler but does not seem to be aware of a presumed bias that might stem from "Western-ness".

Whilst Hughes travelogue seems to be more of constructed narrative focused on primarily the experience itself. Both writers are experiencing less racism and celebrate that kind of de-racialized life in their travel writings. Both compare their experience to earlier experiences in the USA. In addition, both writers felt community through communism and used it to form an international view on their national difficulties. Communism was an alternative for Wright and Hughes and represented a form of hope for a better world.

In conclusion Langston Hughes and Richard Wright have experienced racism during their time in America. Both writers process this racism in their literary works demonstrating an awareness of this racism in their works. It is demonstrated that Hughes poem and Wright's novel both show how living in the United states at that time had a strong impact on formulating an identity. These identities are colored by a double consciousness that is a consequence of the workings of racism and the status quo of cultural values at the time.

In accordance with other scholars it is demonstrated that Wright's travelogues are a search for ancestry and how Wright relates to the "African". It has been demonstrated that

some things are recognizable for Wright in the Gold Coast culture whilst other aspects are irreconcilable. Namely, Wright struggles to believe in the independent development of a nation without a “tragic elite” influenced by the West. Wright’s travelogue is a description of a nation that is developing through a Western gaze. Even though it is a problematic travelogue to interpret, Wright has been clear on his position as a Western traveler.

This Thesis has a narrow scope and therefore has been limited in the discussion of primary works. It has concentrated on six works in total, two essays, two creative works and two travelogues. However limited, these works have been selected based on an attempt to represent the careers of the writers discussed (Hughes and Wright). In addition, it would have been fruitful to analyze more works to gain a more developed understanding of the relation between international identity and the oeuvre of Wright and Hughes. The specifics of Wright’s expatriation to France, such as friendships and or specific events in France also fall outside of the scope of this thesis because not everything is related to the topic at hand. Except for writings and events that are relevant to establish an interpretation and perception of racism.

Thus, the focus on Wright in France has also been his place as a Westerner and outsider concurrently. This is a question that Wright has discussed in *Black Power* and therefore it was relevant to stipulate it in the thesis. Because Hughes’ writings were less aware of the question of identity related to descent and more related to race and gender that has been the focus in discussing Hughes. In addition, the common denominator of the communist influences and the descendance from an African American writers’ group has been discussed.

Further research can explore the relationship between African American internationalism and other writers or take the direction of comparing multiple writers from different backgrounds. For example, comparing Ezra Pound with Langston Hughes. These are two writers who were active during the interbellum and have a different outlook on literature whilst both writers can be described as “modernists”. The term modernism is often

problematized and difficult to define. Therefore, it can be interesting to research the relationship between writers, internationalism, and modernism.

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