

The Critical Response in Japan to Langston Hughes

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Abstract

Langston Hushes was first introduced to Japan when the cover of the September 1932 issue of the Japanese monthly literary journal, *New English and American Literature* [*Shin Eibei Bungaku*] 1 (8) (Sep. 1932), featured a photograph of Hughes on the cover, although this is as many as ten months before Hughes actually came to Japan for the first time in June 1933. This essay traces the history of the critical reception of Langston Hughes in Japan between 1932 when Hughes was first introduced to Japan and the present in 2007, considering translations, essays, reviews, and journal and newspaper articles on Hughes, published in Japan.

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I. Before World War II

Langston Hushes was first introduced to Japan when the cover of the September 1932 issue of the Japanese monthly literary journal, *New English and American Literature* [*Shin Eibei Bungaku*], featured a photograph of Hughes on the cover,¹ although this is as many as ten months before Hughes actually came to Japan for the first time in June 1933. This means that a small group of Japanese literary critics already noticed the importance of Hughes as a poet. Hughes was later shown the cover of the journal while he was staying in Japan, and he himself wrote about the impression of this photograph much later in his 1956 autobiography, *I Wonder As I Wander* :

Some of my poems already had been translated and published in a Japanese literary magazine and my picture had appeared on the cover—a drawing made from a photograph—in which I appeared quite Japanese, with my eyes slanting a

Hughes just turned thirty in 1932 and began his literary career as Arnold Rampersad writes in his foreword in the collection of essays :²

If he had died when he was thirty, in 1932, he would doubtless be remembered as one of the brightest stars of the Harlem Renaissance, with his two important books of poems *The Weary Blues* (1926) and *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927), his novel, *Not Without Laughter* (1930), and his landmark essay of 1926 in the *Nation*, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain.”

However, in addition of two children’s books, *The Dream Keeper* and *Popo and Fifina* (1932), it is no small wonder that his reputation must have reached Japan as early as in 1932. The literary journal, *New English and American Literature* [*Shin Eibei Bungaku*], just founded in February 1932, carried on the cover, other than Hughes, portraits of then newly

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rising English and American writers, such as James Joyce, Theodore Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, and Sinclair Lewis.³

From 1932 to 1933, Hughes was traveling from Europe to the Soviet Union. He crossed the Sea of Japan and entered the country late afternoon on June 23, 1933. He recalls in his autobiography as: “Late one afternoon we were at Tsuruga on the western coast of Honshu, Japan’s main island” (Hughes 238). This news was reported in the Japanese newspaper, *Tokyo Everyday Newspaper* [*Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shinbun*].⁴ Hughes noticed that the police were keeping an eye on him when “they inspected our papers and asked us why we had been in Russia, how long, and for what good reason” (Hughes 238).

On June 24, Hughes went by train to Kyoto, which is 94 kilometers South of Tsuruga. And then, on June 25, he took the train to Tokyo, which is 513 kilometers East of Kyoto. He stayed at the beautiful Imperial Hotel because he already knew that the building was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and opened ten years earlier in August 1923. After spending a few days doing nothing in Tokyo, Hughes went to the Tsukiji Theater, which had been suggested to visit by Seki Sano he met in Moscow, a former director of the theater, who “promised to alert their colleagues at home Hughes’s coming trip” (Rampersad 271). Hughes was interested in the fact that DuBose Heyward’s play, *Porgy*, and other foreign plays were performed at the theater. Hughes recollects of the play he saw at theater :

I saw a play by a contemporary Japanese writer about a strike of fishermen in feudal days—one of the few plays not modern in setting. But it was performed in the naturalistic manner of the West, not stylized as traditional Japanese plays are.” (Hughes 241).

This contemporary Japanese writer must be Takiji Kobayashi (1903-1933), who was just arrested by the Japanese police on February 20, 1933 under suspicion of the violation of the Maintenance of the Public Order Act and was tortured to death by the Tsukiji Police station just before Hughes came to Japan. His memorial service happened at the Tsukiji Theater on March 15, 1933. The play Hughes saw at the theater must be a play made out of Kobayashi’s short novel,

The Crab Factory Ship [*Kanikosen*] (1929). Hughes did not know that the theater was already that much under a dark political cloud. The tension lying between Japan and China was extremely heightened. In 1933, after Japan’s founding of Manchuria, the League of Nations dispatched the Lytton Commission to Manchuria to do research there and took the League of Nations’s recommendation of Japan’s withdrawal from Manchuria to Japan, based on the research result. On March 8, 1933, Japan decided to break out of the League of Nations, because it was angry at this decision, and began to isolate itself internationally. Hughes’s biographer Rampersad reveals that :

He also found the degree of militarism frightening. The country was covered with restricted zones; foreigners were watched closely. ‘The Japanese militarists are quite open about all this,’ Hughes wrote. ‘They make no secret that they are shadowing you, and that they are suspicious of everyone’” (272).

One night he thought he heard tractors were passing in front of his hotel, “but they were tanks, more than a dozen of them. Where they were going down a big city street in the middle of the night, I do not know” (Rampersad 272-73). Hughes thought of Japan as a tyrannical and dangerous country as was shown in his poem, “Columbia,” “a highly sensational attack on the United States” (Rampersad 266), which was published in the 1933 first number of *International Literature*.⁵

Being one of the world’s big vampires,
Why don’t you come on out and say so
Like Japan, and England, and France,
And all the other nymphomaniacs of power

After the visit to the Tsukiji Theater, “The next day several Japanese writers and actors, artists and newspapermen came to see me at the Imperial Hotel” (Hughes 242), as the August 1933 issue of *New English and American Literature* [*Shin Eibei Bungaku*] reported on his alleged meeting with a well-known Japanese writer, Kan Kikuchi, and a poet-critic Yone Noguchi, whose son became a famous Japanese-American sculptor, Isamu Noguchi.⁶ Matsuo Takagaki, an American literary scholar, and Kenjin Ono, an editor

of the journal, met Hughes, who brought to them his unpublished poems and the English translation of poems by a Cuban poet and surprisingly even promised to continue to contribute to the Japanese journal.⁷ Poems by this Cuban poet must be *Cuba Libre* by Nicolás Gullién, whom Hughes met in Cuba in 1930. When Hughes recalls in his autobiography, “The translations of my Harlem blues poems, so I was told, were quite well done and attracted considerable attention in Tokyo” (Hughes 242), one of the Harlem blues poems is “Black Belt” and “Moon-Colored Nymph” and other twenty-one poems, which were down by Takagaki in the original text with an annotated Japanese translation in the September 1933 issue of *New English and American Literature* [*Shin Eibei Bungaku*].⁸ Although other twenty-one were later republished in *Opportunity* and other magazines, these two poems, were only and for the first time published in the Japanese journal. “Black Belt” reads,

There stands the white man,
Boss of the fields—
Lord of the land
And all that it yields.
Here bend the niggers,
Hands to the soil—
Bosses of nothing,
Not even their soil.

After seeing a Kabuki play at the Kabuki Theater in Tokyo, Hughes sailed for Shanghai, China, aboard the *Empress of Canada* on July 1, but “the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Board had warned the Japanese consulate in Shanghai to track his every move when he arrived there” (Berry 193). Hughes met Madame Sun Yat-Sen in China and visited Nanking, spending about two weeks there. And then he sailed back from Shanghai to Japan in mid-July on the Japanese ship *Taiyo Maru*, bound for San Francisco via Kobe and Yokohama, from where he took the train to Tokyo and registered once again at the Imperial Hotel on July 23. Another Hughes’s biographer, Faith Berry describes what happened between Hughes and the Japanese police :

Taken to the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Board for questioning, he was held for six hours and forced to make “official” statements about what

he had done in Russia and China, what he had discussed with Madame Sun Yat-sen, what organizations he belonged to, and what his intentions were in Japan... ‘I realized that the Tokyo and Shanghai,’ he wrote later. ‘I was amazed as well as flattered that my activities had been so closely watched.’” (195)

Ordered by Japanese authorities to have no more communication with Japanese in Tokyo, Hughes was told to leave the country within two days and not to return to Japan again.

The news that Hughes was deported from Japan appeared as an article, “Negro Writer Ordered Out of Japan by Police,” in the July 25, 1933 issue of *Japan Times and Mail*.⁹ Ki Kimura, a Japanese writer and literary critic, also states in the left-wing and reformist journal *Reorganization* [*Kaizo*] that the Japanese police ordered Hughes out of Japan, though they did not even know who Hughes was before Kenjin Ono and Kimura let them know that. Followed by Kimura’s essay was a Japanese translation of his new poems “Share-Croppers” and “Dream.”¹⁰

Even after Hughes left Japan for the United States, [Matsuo Takagaki], one of the group of the journal’s critics, continued to annotate with the original text of Hughes’s poems, such as “October 16,” “Desire,” “Share-Croppers,” “Christ in Alabama,” “Dream,” “Fulfillment,” and “God” in the October issue,¹¹ and [Kenjin Ono], another group member as well as the journal’s editor, annotated “Cora Unashamed,” published serially in the November and December issues, with the original text.¹²

Before World War II, no other full-scale critical studies of African American writers appeared in Japan. Importantly, however, Hughes is one of the earliest African American writers to be introduced to Japan. The first translation of Hughes’s *Not Without Laughter* was published in March 1940¹³ despite the Japanese government’s strict censorship during this dismal period. The translator, Yae Yokemura, is an author of three collections of poems, who graduated from University of Michigan in 1929. Her husband, a professor of Russian, was just expelled from his school in 1940 since his writings were thought to be ideologically prejudiced.

In the preceding year, 1939, World War II broke out and in the next year Japan declared war against the

United States. It seemed almost impossible that, when Japan closed its gate to America, Yokemura found a publisher for such an American fiction. Hughes's reception began in Japan in such a way that African American literary criticism has from the beginning been inseparable from leftist criticism. As Hiromi Furukawa remarks, in "The History of Black Studies in Japan," "The mainstream of African American studies in Japan before World War II was based on international diplomatic relations in line with the national policy."¹⁴ Therefore, it was not until after the war that a serious critical study of African American writers began to be published.

II. The Fifties after World War II

Several years after the war, known as the post-war democratization period, the relationship between Japan and the United States became so close that American culture had strong influence on this country. Jazz was especially popular in Japan at this time, and a keen interest in black culture derived from this interest, and continues to the present. The fifties mark the beginning of "serious" Japanese criticism on Hughes's life and works. First, his works were introduced to Japan in translation, such as the play *Mulatto*, in 1952;¹⁵ *Popo and Fifina: Children of Haiti*, by Hughes and Bontemps, in 1957;¹⁶ *The Weary Blues*, in 1958;¹⁷ *A Collection of Poems by Langston Hughes*, in 1959;¹⁸ and *One Friday Morning*, in 1959.¹⁹

Four out of these five Hughes translations were done by Hajime Kijima. Kijima, also a published poet,²⁰ introduced Hughes to the Japanese audience after World War II. In a collection of essays, *What Emits Light: Revolutionary Poets [Hikari wo Hakobu Mono – Henkakuki no Shijintachi]*,²¹ Hajime Kijima's essay "Negro Poets and the Background: From the Beginning to the 1930s" is the first critical study in Japan to take into account Hughes in general.

In 1954, a group of liberal critics formed the Association of Negro Studies in Japan (the Black Studies Association in Japan since 1983) and began issuing a journal, *Negro Studies (Black Studies* since 1983). The association played a leading role in African American studies in Japan since its foundation. After Hughes's works were introduced to Japan in translation, reviews and literary essays began to come out in the journal *Negro Studies* and other literary journals. In

spite of the fact that it was extremely difficult for Japanese critics to obtain the original text as well as translation of American literature during the period of disorder in the 1950s just after World War II, it is noteworthy that some reviews and essays were written on Hughes. For example, Ichiro Ando's favorable review of Tadatoshi Saito's 1958 translation of Hughes's *The Weary Blues* argues that Carl Sandburg was a strong influence on modern black poets such as Langston Hughes and that Countee Cullen's poetry is superior to Hughes's poetry.²² Mitsuo Nagata's "A Negro and the River" is a favorable review of the translation, praising Hughes's categorization of the themes and emphasizing the hopeful nature of this collection.²³

Tadatoshi Saito's essay, "On Langston Hughes's *The Weary Blues*," stresses the importance of this collection of poems because it is a Negro Renaissance work and is Hughes's starting point, classifying the poems into six genres: experimental, racial problems, ordinary materials, the sea and rivers, the rhythm of jazz, and social criticism.²⁴ Hiromi Furukawa's essay, "Langston Hughes: The Aspect of the Negro Folks's Laughter and Tears in *The Weary Blues*, I, II, III," is an annotated Japanese translation of "The Weary Blues," "Jazzonia," "Cabaret," "Fantasy in Purple," "The South," "Black Pierrot," "Summer Evening," "Disillusion," "Mother to Son," "Black Clown," and "I, Too, Sing America," providing a list of works by Hughes.²⁵

Hughes's other works also attracted Japanese critics's attention. Three earliest essays by Tadatoshi Saito at the end of the fifties place te focus on other works: "Langston Hughes's *Fields of Wonder*," introduces and translates thirteen poems in the collection, exploring their lyrical qualities;²⁶ "Contemporary Negro Poetry: Langston Hughes," analyzes Hughes's poem "Proem," concluding that he has not yet published a collection of poems that surpasses his first book, *The Weary Blues*;²⁷ "On a Contemporary Negro Poet Langston Hughes's Works," begins with the statement that the Negro Renaissance originated from the liberation of their spirits, introducing and translating "Proem," "Poem," "Epilogue," "Our Land," "Young Prostitute," and "Fired."²⁸ Also Fukuo Hashimoto's essay, "Modern America and Negro Poems: On Langston Hughes," praises Hughes as a pioneering black poet who laid the foundations of

black literature.²⁹

III. The Sixties

As soon as the 1960s began, because of an increasing interest caused by the civil rights movement, the Japanese interest in African American literature increased. The publication of *The Complete Works of Black Literature*³⁰ began in 1960 to meet the demands of not only people interested in black culture, but also an increasing number of serious readers of black literature. The collection introduced a substantial number of African American writers, including a new translation of Hughes's *Not Without Laughter* and Hajime Kijima's long essay, "On Langston Hughes." The essay depicts Hughes's childhood as a mulatto, of his youth wandering around the world with his dream to realize an ideal world through socialism. Kijima concludes with an analysis of Hughes's mature period as a poet worrying about his relationship with his own country America, with an emphasis on the blues poems in which laughter overcomes sorrow.³¹ "Hughes's *Not Without Laughter*," a brief review of the translation of Hughes's novel in *The Complete Works of Black Literature*, appeared in the prestige English literary journal, *Rising Generation* [*Eigo Seinen*] in 1962.³²

There were four brief but important essays on Hughes in *Monthly Report on the Complete Works of Black Literature*: Kenji Inoue's "Visiting Hughes's Apartment" depicts the circumstances in Hughes's room when Inoue visited him;³³ Hiroshi Iwata's "On Hajime Kijima" praises Kijima's translation, *A Collection of Poems by Langston Hughes* (Tokyo: Shichosha, 1959);³⁴ and Zenji Kataoka's report, "Harlem Nocturne: Jazz, Liquor, Bar, etc.," is a depiction of the Harlem that Kataoka used to frequent, with an introduction to Hughes's *Not Without Laughter*;³⁵ and Hajime Kijima's "What Hughes Had Done" clarifies Du Bois's influence on Hughes.³⁶

Because almost all of the members of the Association of Negro Studies lived in the western part of Japan, the monthly meeting began to be held in Kobe in June 1954, as mentioned earlier. Later, the Tokyo branch of the Association was established and the members began to have a regular meeting in Tokyo in June 1961, and, two years later, held a special meeting on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of "the Eman-

ipation Proclamation," where, interestingly, Kenzaburo Oe, then a novice novelist and now a Nobel-Prize winner, gave a speech, "Negro American Literature and Modern Japanese Literature," and Mizuho Suzuki, a well-known Japanese actor, gave a reading of Langston Hughes's poems.

When a translation of Hughes's *Shakespeare in Harlem*³⁷ was published, Takeo Hamamoto's unfavorable review pointed out that the translation does not make the most of his witty rhythms.³⁸ Since almost all the major works by Hughes were already translated, translation quality concerning poetic rhythm matters more than quantity in the 1960s.

The February 1964 issue of *Rising Generation* [*Eigo Seinen*], as mentioned earlier, one of the most widely-read journals among English teachers in Japan, was devoted to black literature. Richard Wright, James Baldwin, and Langston Hughes were featured as the most important black writers. One of them is Tadatoshi Saito's essay, "On the Works of Langston Hughes,"³⁹ an introduction to the characteristics of Hughes's *The Weary Blues* and *Fine Clothes to the Jew*. Tadatoshi Saito's revised translation of *The Weary Blues* was published in 1964 almost at the same time as the essay. Hiromi Furukawa's favorable review comments that the translation has witty, unconventional poems and those with a black orientation. The poems, Furukawa praises, are well translated with serious significance.⁴⁰

Not only poetry but also plays by Hughes began to attract a good deal of critics' attention. For example, Mitsuo Akamatsu's essay, "Langston Hughes's Plays," introduces *Mulatto*, *Little Ham*, *Simply Heavenly*, and *Tambourines to Glory*,⁴¹ while Kozo Ishibashi's "Langston Hughes: The Awareness as a Black Person and His Humanity," translates with annotations Hughes's poems, summarizing his literary career.⁴² Takao Kitamura's "Introducing Langston Hughes: American Negro Poet" [in English] recalls that Professor Moore at International Christian University for the first time introduced Hughes's poem "Dream Variations" to Kitamura. Impressed, he further read "Dreams," "American Heartbreak," "Still Here," "Bad Luck Card," "Life Is Fine," "Ku-Klux," "Merry-Go-Round," "Democracy," "The Backlash Blues," and "I, Too, Sing America."⁴³ This initial interest led to his close friendship with Hughes as I will cite his essay later. Hiromi Furukawa's essay,

“Laughter in a Place of Interrupted Communication : On Hughes’s *One-Way Ticket*,” the first Japanese interpretation of the collection of poems, analyzes the poems “Madam to You,” “Life Is Fine,” “Dark Glasses,” and “One-Way Ticket,” concluding that Hughes caught humor in the gap between races, generations, and classes in black communities. Hughes’s humor, Furukawa contends, is based on the blues in his earlier days, and on dark comedy.⁴⁴

IV. The Sudden Death of Hughes

The news of Hughes’s sudden death on May 22, 1967 immediately came to Japan. Numerous obituary notes were written in that year. [Hiromi Furukawa]’s “Lamenting over the Death of Langston Hughes,” is the first and prompt obituary note on Hughes’s death, saying that folk singer Odetta suddenly announced his death to the audience during her performance in Osaka, Japan. Praying for the repose of his soul, she eulogizes Hughes as one who was always creating work in close contact with the mass of the people, and was perpetually a new poet.⁴⁵ Kenzaburo Ohashi’s “H.’s Death: The Rich Thought of the Blues and Rivers,” is on Langston Hughes’s death, eulogizing Hughes as a person who embodied what is human and natural more than any other black writer.⁴⁶ In his obituary note, “Poet Hughes’s Death: A Consistent Attitude,” Hajime Kijima reports that he got a call from Takao Kitamura saying that Hughes died in late May. Kijima recalls that he acquainted himself with Kitamura through Hughes’s introductory letters and had many recitation records, very often anthologized. He regrets that he did not have another chance to visit Japan.⁴⁷ Obituary notes on Hughes’s death continue well into August to October: “Langston Hughes Dies” in the August 15 issue of *Misuzu*;⁴⁸ “Langston Hughes Who Continued to Write about Black Laughter and Tears” in the September 15 issue of *Newsletter of American Books [Beisho Dayori]*, summarizing his literary career and plots of his major works and closing with a quotation of his poem “Border Line”;⁴⁹ Hiromi Furukawa’s “A Black Poet and Uncollected Tickets: A Tribute to Langston Hughes” in the October issue of *Negro Studies [Kokujin Kenkyu]* which is another obituary note on Hughes’s death, along with the death in the same year of Carl Sandburg who had an influence on him, saying that his

collection of poems *One-Way Ticket* ironically had a poem “A Funeral,” and that his own funeral was simplicity itself. Furukawa relates an episode in the note that Hughes was so warm a person that, when the records the poet sent to Furukawa were broken, he immediately sent a new set in a tighter package to Furukawa again;⁵⁰ and Takao Kitamura’s “The Memory of Langston Hughes” that recollects that Kitamura frequented Hughes’s apartment in Harlem. Hughes’s lifestyle, Kitamura recalls, was very simple and he always talked to the people walking on the street.⁵¹

Above all, Hajime Kijima’s memoir, “Letters from Harlem: Fifteen-Year Correspondence with Langston Hughes,” is an introduction to Hughes’s letters from 1952 to 1967, which Kijima received from Harlem. This essay provides a translation and refers to certain events in Hughes’s life.⁵² As mentioned earlier, Kijima, a poet himself and translator of numerous works by Hughes, is also known to be a long-standing personal friend of Hughes. Just after Kijima graduated from college, Kijima recalls, he was moved by Hughes’s poem, “Let America Be America Again” and wrote Hughes immediately. Since then he began to receive Hughes’s complimentary copies. The memoir by Kijima shows a long-term correspondence between them must have had a serious influence on each poet’s work. The very first letter from Hughes dated on January 30, 1952 begins with the remarks, “How very kind of you to write me such a charming letter.” Kijima felt sorry because he heard from Takao Kitamura that Hughes had an intention to drop by in Japan in summer 1967. Takao Kitamura’s “Langston Hughes: Poet of the People” [in English] traces Hughes’s literary career on the occasion of his death with an analysis of his poems “Feet o’ Jesus,” “Prayer Meeting,” “Morning After,” “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” “The Backlash Blues,” and “Let America Be America Again.”⁵³

The October 1, 1967 issue of the journal *20th-Century Literature [20 Seiki Bungaku]* is a special number featuring articles which pay a tribute to the memory of Hughes. Fukuo Hashimoto’s “Praise for the Dead” (58-65) eulogizes Langston Hughes. Reading Hughes’s stories and essays, Hashimoto feels as if he had a heart-to-heart talk with the dead.⁵⁴ The journal further provides Toru Kono’s translations of Hughes’s stories, “Professor” (66-72) and “Who’s

Passing for Who?" (73-78) and Hajime Kijima's translation (79-93) of the part of Hughes's visit to Japan, an extraction from *I Wonder As I Wander*.

V. The New Trend of the Hughes Studies in Japan

Another element of the Japanese interest in Hughes involves the fact that Hughes scholars in Japan began to pay more attention not only to Hughes's works themselves but also to books on Hughes published in the United States. "Hughes's New Study Published" is an announcement of the publication of Donald C. Dickinson's *A Bio-Bibliography of Langston Hughes, 1902-1967* (1967).⁵⁵

During the 1950s and the early 1960s, the performance of Hughes's plays was never given although he was also known to be a prolific playwright. However, as a new trend, a professional dramatic company put Hughes's play *Mulatto* on the stage. "A Pamphlet for a Trial Public Performance" is a 26 page pamphlet for the presentation by the Theatrical Troupe "Taka no Kai" of Hughes's play at Sogetsu Hall in Tokyo on January 18, 1968, including: Hajime Kijima's "On Langston Hughes, I" (5-6) concerns the difficulty in the first performance of the play in 1935; Takao Kitamura's "On Langston Hughes, II: A Memoir of Hughes" (7-9) recalls Hughes who always warmly welcomed Kitamura in his Harlem apartment since his first visit in late August 1962; "On Langston Hughes, III" (12-20), tr. Shiro Kobayashi, is Webster Smalley's "Introduction" to *Five Plays by Langston Hughes* (1963). This introduction provides a record of the performances at Senichidani Hall and Yoyogi Ward Hall in December 1965.

More translations of Hughes's came out as in the past few decades. *The First Book of Jazz*⁵⁶ received favorable reviews: Tamotsu Aoki's "As a Product of Contradiction";⁵⁷ Masayuki Senga's "Explaining a Restoration of Jazz."⁵⁸ Thus, almost all of Hughes's major works were available in Japanese at that time.

Takao Kitamura, as mentioned above, was a long-term personal friend of Hughes's, so he wrote numerous essays and memoirs regarding his association with Hughes especially after the death of the poet. Kitamura describes his days in Japan before going to the United State in the essay "The Deep River," saying that, when Hughes's poem "Dream Variations"

led Kitamura to change the topic of his M.A. thesis to Hughes, Kitamura's professor at International Christian University introduced to him a black man living in Japan.⁵⁹ Kitamura's "The Deep River, I-XII" is a sequential account of Kitamura's experiences in America as an exchange student at Austin College in Texas. The interest in the poetry of Hughes led him to the correspondence with Hughes himself. He then moved to Howard University to study more about Hughes and began to live in Washington, D.C. He had an argument with his professor when he wrote a graduation thesis "Langston Hughes: American Negro Poet."⁶⁰ Kitamura's third essay, "Langston Hughes, a Blues Poet" [in English], is an interpretation of his poems with an annotated citation, maintaining that Hughes, holding an important place in American literary history, transformed the blues to poetry.⁶¹

VI. The Seventies

In some ways, the 1970s marks the greatest interest ever about black literature in Japan. This can be demonstrated by the fact that no less than nine Japanese original book-length studies specifically on black literature were published. A great many translations of Hughes's works were also published, including: *Fight for Freedom: The Story of the NAACP*, in 1970; *Trouble with Angels*, in 1971; *The Big Sea*, in 1972; *I Wonder As I Wander* (the former part in 1972 and the latter part in 1973); *One-Way Ticket*, in 1975; *Fields of Wonder*, in 1977; and *Langston Hughes: The Collected Essays*, in 1977. Translations receive reviews on publication. Satoru Hamano's review of the translation of *The Big Sea*, translated by Hajime Kijima, appeared in the popular magazine.⁶² Atsuko Furomoto's favorable review of the translation of *One-Way Ticket* reveals that, though it is less satirical than his other collections, he had no choice but to be so because the times demanded "an urgent cry, a severe accusation, and a manifest will." Translation and annotation, Furomoto adds, are attentive to details.⁶³ Yoshitaka Goto's "The Black Artist's Stand" is a review of the translation of *Langston Hughes: The Collected Essays*, translated by Hajime Kijima.⁶⁴

The seventies opened with a written symposium in the black literature issue of *Literature* [*Bungaku*]

(March 1970), one of the premier journals in Japan, published by Iwanami Shoten. The participants in the symposium were Katsuichi Honda, a journalist, Shotaro Yasuoka, a novelist and translator of Alex Haley's *Roots*, Hajime Kijima, a poet and translator of Langston Hughes, Toru Takahashi, Fukuo Hashimoto, and Kenzaburo Ohashi. They discarded the 1960s point of view, and agreed to talk about the future of black literature. The special issue, titled "A Recent Trend of Black Literature and American Society," approached black literature from a sociological point of view. In his essay, "American Society and Black Writers: The Stand and Literature," among others, Takao Kitamura writes, Langston Hughes's opinion differs from that of an elite scholar Arthur P. Davis.⁶⁵

Hughes criticism continued to flourish through the 1970s as thematic diversity in the following Hughes criticism well attests: essays on *Not Without Laughter*;⁶⁶ his literary career as a poet;⁶⁷ his short story;⁶⁸ his poetry;⁶⁹ the relationship with Wright;⁷⁰ Hughes and the Spanish Civil War;⁷¹ his religious belief;⁷² his stay in Japan;⁷³ and his play *Mulatto*.⁷⁴

VII. The Eighties

A great difference between the 1970s and the 1980s in the Japanese study of African American literature is that there arose in the 1980s an increase of academic connection between American and Japanese scholars. American professors published their essays in Japanese journals, while Japanese scholars published in American ones.

During the fifties, few American novels and studies were available because of the post-war disorder. Nowadays no students of African American literature would find difficulty presenting a paper at an international symposium, as one can see from Konomi Ara's 1989 report, "The Harlem Renaissance Reconsidered," a summary on the conference on Langston Hughes in New York in November 1988.⁷⁵ What is worthy of special mention is that there were four active Hughes scholars who had direct contact with Hughes himself for quite a long time and published essays and translations: Takao Kitamura who frequented Hughes's apartment in Harlem since 1962; Hiromi Furukawa to whom, in the course of their association, Hughes was kind enough to send the new records again im-

mediately when Hughes knew that the records he had sent to Furukawa were broken; Hajime Kijima who was in correspondence with Hughes from 1952 to 1967; and Tadatoshi Saito who also exchanged letters with Hughes for quite a long period. Kitamura's "Langston Hughes and Japan" [in English] is an essay on Hughes's response to Japan.⁷⁶ Furukawa introduces Hughes's first play *Mulatto*, summarizing the plot and referring to the difficulty in staging the drama and Hughes's visit to a theater in Japan.⁷⁷ Furukawa also summarizes Hughes's literary career in a journal.⁷⁸ Saito briefly comments in English on the earliest reception of Hughes in Japan, including the first Japanese translation of his poetry and his brief stay in Japan.⁷⁹ Saito also introduces Hughes's visit to see the performance of an opera *Porgy* conducted by the Japanese theater company during his 1933 stay in Japan. Saito argues that Hughes received warm welcome from Japanese artists and actors there. The Japanese translation *Not Without Laughter* was done very early, because Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*, with which Japanese were familiar, is similar to the novel. The Japanese police, however, evicted Hughes from Japan as a political offender. Saito provides a list of Japanese translations of his works.⁸⁰

There are significant portions of Hughes's writing that have hardly accumulated any critical attention, and a number of the essays in the eighties offer readings of understudied works. Accordingly, this is the first time during the eighties that Hughes's plays, Jesse Semple stories, *Tambourines to Glory*, his visit to Africa, and the influence of the blues on him have been topics for literary studies, unlike a few decades preceding the eighties. For example, Mitsuo Akamatsu contends that Hughes's play *Don't You Want to Be Free?* is influenced by the Russian theater. The stage by an amateur theatrical troupe "Harlem Suitcase Company" recorded a long run all over the United States. The minor changes Hughes made in the play are indicative of the process of his thought. His poems are well incorporated into the play. Though a considerable commercial success can be expected, Hughes had to turn his back on the whiteness of Broadway.⁸¹ Hiromitsu Komiyama considers Hughes's artistry through his Jesse B. Semple series.⁸² Fumio Ozawa cites 42 unique passages from Hughes's collected poems *Tambourines to Glory* with annotations.⁸³ Hiromi Furukawa provides the details of Hughes's

first visit to Africa in line with his autobiography *The Big Sea* and examines the depiction of Africa in his poems and short stories. Furukawa concludes with a description of Hughes's eminent reputation in Africa.⁸⁴ Mitsuo Miyagawa divides Hughes's literary life into five phases. The most important phase is the first one when he was influenced by Carl Sandburg, beginning to be aware of African culture and the Harlem Renaissance. His collection of poems *The Weary Blues* is indicative of the influence of the blues on Hughes. Influenced by the blues, Hughes's form of poetry is A-A-B, A-B-B, and A-B-repetition. Subjects were the problem of women, separation, journey, Christianity, unemployment, racial issues, protest, and hope for freedom.⁸⁵

The same topics as in the preceding decades have been objects of literary research study of Hughes. In his book,⁸⁶ Toshikazu Niikura provides the Japanese translation of Hughes's poem "I, Too" and observes the importance of the pioneering black poet who mediates between two distinct periods in American poetry. Ayako Ando explores Hughes's treatment of the mulatto and father-son problems in his short story "Father and Son," his poems "Cross" and "Mulatto," and his play *Mulatto*.⁸⁷ Toshio Mine notes that, though Hughes's short stories have some defects, they will be rich and full-flavored only if they are considered to be prose poems, as in "Cora Unashamed," "One Friday Morning," and "Mulatto."⁸⁸ Satoshi Onishi notes that Hughes collected new materials in Spain during the Spanish Civil War with a Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén. Hughes, Onishi contends, was not hurt and despaired when he witnessed a battle between black American republican volunteers and Franco's Moor soldiers.⁸⁹ Keiko Higuchi reveals that Hughes's novel *Not Without Laughter* "has an element of black music," in her brief note.⁹⁰

One of the new trends of Hughes studies in Japan beginning from the eighties is that there were more reviews of and introductions to Hughes studies, published in the United States, rather than literary essays on works by Hughes. For instance, Hajime Kijima's favorable review praises Faith Berry's biography, *Langston Hughes: Before and Beyond Harlem*, for clarifying the relationship of Hughes with his patron and women.⁹¹ Tadatashi Saito introduces Hughes's essay "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" in *Five Black Writers*, edited by Donald B. Gibson.⁹²

VIII. The Nineties

In 1990, more than half a century passed since Hughes came to Japan in 1933. Many articles and reviews and translations on Hughes have since appeared not only in academic journals but also in popular literary magazines and periodicals. Hughes's appeal to wider audiences in Japan can be explained in terms of his themes and ideas. Among other African American writers, Hughes has received more critical attention in Japan than any other writer. In 1992, it was timely that Toru Kiuchi's bibliography traced the history of the critical reception of Hughes in Japan between 1932 and 1990, considering translations, essays, reviews, and journal and newspaper articles on Hughes, published in Japan.⁹³ Tadatashi Saito as well as Hiromi Furukawa still continue to report more about Hughes in Japan and the themes in his poetry, respectively.⁹⁴

Hisao Kishimoto clarified the relationship between Nella Larsen and Hughes for the first time in Japan.⁹⁵ Yoshifumi Minato examined Hughes's political perspective in his poems, especially during the 1930s.⁹⁶

As is the case with the past decades, more translations of Hughes's works continued to be published during the nineties: *The Dream Keeper and Other Poems*;⁹⁷ *Don't You Turn Back: Poems*;⁹⁸ *Fine clothes to the Jew*;⁹⁹ and *The Panther and the Lash*.¹⁰⁰

IX. The Recent Scholarly Projects on Langston Hughes in Japan

The year 2002 marked the centennial of the birth of Hughes still affectionately referred to as the "Negro poet laureate," there has been a flow of new criticism on Hughes's enormous oeuvre: Mitsuo Miyagawa dealing with colors in Hughes's poems;¹⁰¹ Kyoko Yokozawa's detailed analysis of Hughes's poems.¹⁰² *The Collected Works of Langston Hughes*, published from the University of Missouri Press in that year, finally gives critics access to a little-known archive of Hughes's thinking in a uniquely comparative context.

In 2006, Toru Kiuchi translated into Japanese Hans Ostrom's *A Langston Hughes Encyclopedia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002). The original text *A Langston Hughes Encyclopedia* is one of the Greenwood and Garland encyclopedia series, covering

important American writers such as Hawthorne, Melville, Poe, Dickinson, Twain, Henry James, Dreiser, Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Ezra Pound, Updike, Tennessee Williams, Toni Morrison, and John Steinbeck. Hughes was one of the American writers whom the Japanese publisher Yushodo Press selected to include in the encyclopedia series. As a result, it was proved that Hughes was still considered one of the most important American writers in Japan. While there were full-length studies on Richard Wright, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison in Japan, there has not been a full-length volume on the Hughes studies in Japan. Kiuchi's translation offers an approach that is still underrepresented in Hughes criticism.

Topics on female mulatto characters, novels and Jesse B. Semple stories, poetry, plays have not been studied yet. Biographical studies would be difficult in Japan; however, there should be more to be known regarding what Hughes did during his stay in Japan. There should be a comparative literary study project on the influence of Hughes on other Japanese poets such as Hajime Kijima, Shuji Terayama, a well-known Japanese tanka and haiku poet, among others. According to the interview I conducted with Tadatoshi Saito on December 1, 1991, lyrics for a Japanese blues song, which Saito translated from Hughes's poem, were used for the song which Maki Asakawa, a Japanese blues singer, was singing. It is necessary to do research on the influence of Hughes on Japanese popular songs. Given up for dead as a writer in the past, Hughes is now seen as one of the major world writers now that colonialism is finished in the political as well as literary sense of the word and we begin to see the world through a genuine cosmopolitanism. In this new world, Hughes's new discovery in Japan adds fame to literature in Japan. One can hope that these kinds of work are the initial wave in a coming flood of ambitious scholarship on Hughes.

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日本のラングストン・ヒューズ研究史

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概 要

ラングストン・ヒューズは、1932年に日本に初めて紹介された。その写真が日本の英文学関係の進歩的な雑誌『新英米文学』の1932年9月号に掲載されたからである。写真と言っても、写真から絵を描いたものだった。このとき、日本の読者は初めてラングストン・ヒューズという詩人の存在を知った。それから、2007年までの現在のあいだ、ラングストン・ヒューズが日本にいかを受容されたか、どのような研究がされたかを、年代を追って調べる。日本で発表されたもの、たとえば、さまざまな文芸雑誌、あるいは翻訳を通じて、ヒューズは多くの雑誌で研究され、紹介された。

キーワード：ラングストン・ヒューズ、アフリカン・アメリカン、研究上の受容、民族、歴史