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Raed Al-Ramahi¹
Radzuwan Ab Rashid²
Omar Ali Al-Smadi³

Interwoven blackness and whiteness: Langston Hughes'
perspective on American pluralism

¹The University of Jordan,
Queen Rania St., 11942, Amman
E-mail: r.ramahi@ju.edu.jo
ORCID: 0000-0002-8600-0719

²Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin; Applied Science Private University,
21030 Kuala Nerus, Terengganu, Malaysia; Amman, Jordan
E-mail: radzuwanrashid@unisza.edu.my
ORCID: 0000-0002-1334-6268

³Universiti Sains Malaysia,
11800 USM, Penang, Malaysia
E-mail: o.smadi@usm.my
ORCID: 0000-0003-3630-771X

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Abstract. Hughes, like numerous African Americans, endured segregation, oppression, and marginalisation. In his poetry, Hughes interrogates the dire social conditions of the Black community. Hughes' poetry not only documents the widespread racism that fosters hostile environments for black people but also explores potential remedies to this issue. This study analyses the inequitable social dynamics and power relations between whites and blacks as depicted in Hughes' poetry and examines how the pluralistic politics expressed therein contribute to the improvement of social reality in America. This study attempts to investigate three specific questions: What creates America's unjust social reality? What are the pluralistic politics proposed in Hughes' poetry? And in what ways might pluralistic politics assist in enhancing the social reality in America? A dataset of 40 poems was analysed using thematic, Fairclough's, and van Dijk's critical discourse methodologies. The data analysis indicated that the inequitable reality depicted in Hughes' poetry stems directly from a white-centred ideology. Beliefs in whiteness contribute to the establishment of white supremacy and perpetuation of black inferiority. These beliefs manifest in racist actions and policies. The findings reveal that Hughes' pluralistic framework encompasses interest group pluralism, emphasising civil rights, equitable resource allocation, and equitable voting rights. This framework regards compromise as a form of negotiation. Hughes' pluralistic politics offer insights into the creation of safe spaces within a presumably pluralistic

society. This study provides a novel analysis of the power dynamics between whites and blacks as portrayed in Hughes' poetry, offering an in-depth investigation of the pluralistic ideologies expressed within it.

Keywords: Langston Hughes; Hughes' representation of whiteness; Critical race analysis in Hughes' poetry; Pluralistic ideology; Critical realism

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1. Introduction

Existing scholarly explorations of Hughes' poetry have primarily focused on the racism, racial discrimination, and oppression that blacks have suffered in the United States (e.g., Poongodi, 2012; Reddy, 2013; Nichols, 2014; Muslih, 2016; Stephane, 2017a, 2017b; Prathap and Kumaresan, 2022). The construction of whiteness and blackness, the formation of a black national identity, and Hughes' liberating sense of resistance to oppression have been the subject of several studies (Minato, 1998; Hatem, 2011; Mehta, 2011; Sharma, 2017; Mahmood and Majeed, 2019, Al-Ramahi et al., 2021; Fernández-Alonso and Barros-del Río, 2021; Prathap and Kumaresan, 2022; Almahasneh, 2024). Our study delves into Hughes' pluralistic framework, which helps address the black-white conflict in the US and the contrasting interactions between whiteness and blackness, as depicted in his poetry. Hughes' significance lies in his groundbreaking commitment to portraying the whole spectrum of African American life. By concentrating on these everyday realities, Hughes validated a crucial facet of Black reality that had been largely ignored in serious art, thus democratising the themes of the Harlem Renaissance. His discourse recurrently refers to the narrowness of safe spaces that are assumed to be black. Thus, depicting black people's lives in white supremacist culture has been central to Hughes' work (Boostrom, 1998). In his poems, Hughes questions the terrible social reality of the black community. Hughes' poetry not only chronicles the pervasive racism that creates hostile environments for black people but also delves deeply into

potential solutions to this problem, offering black people hope for a better future (Holley and Steiner, 2005). The following questions were the focus of this study:

RQ1. What creates America's unjust social reality?

RQ2. What are the pluralistic politics proposed in Hughes' poetry?

RQ3. In what ways might pluralistic politics assist in enhancing the social reality in America?

This study presents a novel examination of the power dynamics between individuals from white and black racial backgrounds, as depicted in Hughes' poetry. Additionally, it offers a thorough analysis of the diverse political ideologies advocated by this body of research. This work goes beyond traditional examinations of the language surrounding racial oppression and prejudice, as it addresses the three research questions listed previously. The findings of this study may have an impact on academic discourse aimed at addressing the concepts of whiteness and blackness. This study emphasises Hughes' pluralistic framework, which addresses the unequal relationship between white and black individuals in the United States.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1 Whiteness

Achieving whiteness is considered a form of self-actualisation that occurs in the absence of the Other (Nakayama and Krizek, 1995; Dwyer and Jones, 2000; Scott and Rodriguez Leach, 2024). Whiteness confers an advantage to individuals who are socially identified as white, which is linked to white privilege (Harris, 1993; Frankenberg, 1993; Fanon, 2008; Owen, 2007; Jungkunz, 2011).

Whites and blacks live in a racially controlled reality in which whites are taught to regard their lives as morally neutral, normative, average, and ideal (Giddens, 1984; McIntosh, 1988; Roediger, 1992). DiAngelo's (2011) concept of white fragility has helped explain whites' lack of racial stamina when confronted with whiteness on a regular basis. Furthermore, Frankenberg (1993) contends that whites not only build the world of colour and exclude coloured people but also establish whiteness as an imperceptible and unmarked norm. According to Mahoney (1997), whiteness is a dominant, transparent criterion that determines which racial features should be measured. The language of whiteness assumes Whites' claim to agency while denying others' agency (Samaj, 1981). Whiteness, with its deep relationship to race and racism (Bhabha, 1998; Ogbonnaya, 1994; Allen, 2001; Khan, 2024), aids in the maintenance of the racist system. Thus, whites' incapacity to see their whiteness contributes to the perpetuation of race and racism (Allen, 2001; Leonardo, 2009; Cole, 2009).

Despite extensive analysis of whiteness by several scholars (e.g., Fanon, 1986; Nakayama and Krizek, 1995; Efird et al., 2024), the flexibility of whiteness as a classification is more than commonly perceived (Satzewich and Liodakis, 2010). Whiteness, as defined within the paradigm of white privilege (McIntosh, 1988), refers to a collection of decisions that provide advantages to white individuals. While whiteness has traditionally been associated with the lifestyle, beliefs, and ideals of White individuals, the notion itself is widely regarded as problematic due to its inherent racism, as it perpetuates the racist system (Satzewich and Liodakis, 2010). Post-racial societies have consistently criticised and questioned the concept of whiteness and white privilege, as these concepts highlight the institutionalisation and validation of racism (Lund and Carr, 2015).

2.2 Blackness

The association of blackness with black skin has marginalised black people's identity, leading to a sense of inferiority (Fanon, 1986). According to Johnson (2003), blackness is characterised as elusive because of its ability to undergo transformation and move in a different direction. Blackness is not solely determined by skin colour but is also a social construct that is consistently defined in contrast to whiteness (Johnson, 2003; Mapedzahama and Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017; Jablonski, 2021). Since Black people have historically been mostly classified according to their biological traits, blackness is occasionally boiled down to a simple physical attribute (Gabriel, 2006; Yancy, 2008). Whiteness ideologies stereotype blackness as negative, which makes whites detest and fear blackness, justifying its exclusion (Fanon, 1986; Biko, 1996; Marriot, 2007). For some Black people, escaping the constraints of blackness has been more beneficial than remaining in the black space. However, many people feel forced to accept white values and practices. Logan (2014) contends that black people who wish to appear white should be personable, lively, helpful, pleasant, and well-spoken without appearing excessively black.

2.3 Pluralism

Pluralism denotes the presence of multiple cultures coexisting within a single civilisation. The distinctiveness of each culture is preserved. According to McLennan (1995), pluralism is a concept of being both equal and distinct. McLennan (1995) defines pluralism as the utilisation of diverse concepts and attitudes, allowing for an impartial evaluation of different options. On the other hand, Giménez (2003) sees pluralism as a fundamental characteristic of a democratic society, where there is a presence of social, political, and legal diversity. Swann (1985) highlighted the facets of pluralism. One such aspect is social harmony. Furthermore, pluralism ensures that all citizens shape society's democratic framework. The pluralist

position is that different groups should have equal access to political power so that they can pursue their own interests (Miller, 1983). Another strength of pluralism is the equitable allocation of the political power it promotes, which contributes to the idealisation of democracy (Miller, 1983).

According to Hughes, the plural society can contribute to making life safe for Black people in America. Thus, Hughes has expressed pluralistic politics in his poetry, which could help Black people feel stronger and prouder of who they are. Hughes has continued to express his pride in being Black, despite the prejudice that Black people are weak and inferior. According to Nash (2012), Hughes draws strength and inspiration from his blackness, which is evident in his deep dedication to black culture. By highlighting the importance of blackness and establishing blacks as an interest group capable of competing, Hughes' insistence on polarisation between whiteness and blackness reinforces blackness.

3. Theoretical Framework

An analytical lens grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was used in this study. Critical Discourse Analysis examines how social power, domination, and inequality are performed, reproduced, and resisted in texts and speeches in social and political situations (van Dijk, 2001; Fairclough, 2010). According to Young and Harrison (2004), the CDA uncovers language-encoded ideologies that justify power inequality. CDA makes naturalised ideas unnatural, allowing them to be challenged or rejected (Lazar, 2005). CDA discusses language, ideology, power, discourse, social identity, social change, and the discourse's role in creating and preserving inequality (McGregor, 2011). CDA emphasises that the persistent use of unequal representations encourages unequal social processes where authority misrepresents marginalised and vulnerable people (O'Halloran, 2001). Thus, CDA's critical analysis brings attention to discourse tactics that create, maintain, and perpetuate symmetrical power dynamics (van Dijk, 1997a).

The data from the present study were examined using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which helped us assess the social context of Hughes' poems and illustrate the interdependence between language and ideology. Fairclough (1996) investigated the correlation between power and language in discourse, with a specific emphasis on the textual and social knowledge necessary for its creation and understanding. Discourse is involved in the creation and understanding of language since language is inherently social (Fairclough, 2001). Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis approach consists of three essential elements: discourse-as-text, discourse-as-discursive-practice, and discourse-as-social-practice (Blommaert and Blucaen, 2000; Simpson and Mayr, 2010). These components helped this study analyse discursive social practices related to whiteness, blackness, and pluralism. According to Fairclough (1992, 1995), the analysis of texts as a social practice exposes the existence of hegemony and ideology within them.

Hughes' poetic discourse was analysed using systematic functional grammar (SFG) of texts (Fairclough, 1995). Literary text style elements associated with ideologies of whiteness and plurality in Hughes' poetry were identified by the SFG's social context language analysis (Cunanan, 2011). Moreover, our study's critical analysis depended on the ideational functions of language patterns to help us better grasp the human experience as a means of experiencing 'reality' (Halliday, 2002). Transitivity is necessary to study how language alters people's perspectives on the world, (Halliday, 1985, 1994). Our mental representation of the universe and reality is reflected in language (Simpson, 1993; Young and Harrison, 2004). In our research, we used transitivity system analysis to compare the social experiences of Blacks and Whites. Transitivity applies to all verbally articulated phenomena, such as acts, events, consciousness processes, and relationships. Transitivity patterns reveal the author's 'mind style' (Fowler, 1986) which is

defined as any distinct language representation of one's mental self (Fowler, 1977).

Although Fairclough's CDA approach played a significant role, van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis was crucial for analysing the data of this study. This approach establishes a connection between cognition, text, and society, with cognition having an impact on society (Hart, 2010). According to van Dijk (1990), language plays a key role in the formation, acquisition, and alteration of social cognition, including ideological beliefs, opinions, and attitudes toward others. Van Dijk (1995) argued that discourse analysis is essentially an analysis of ideologies. He suggests that any aspect of discourse that conveys, establishes, affirms, or highlights a biased group opinion, viewpoint, or stance, particularly within the sociopolitical context of societal conflict, should be considered. Applying van Dijk's methodology to evaluate Hughes' poetry facilitated the examination of ethnic discrimination and resistance of dominant groups (van Dijk, 2005).

4. Materials and Methods of Research

Purposive sampling was used to collect the data. This selection strategy allowed us to select examples that contained a considerable amount of information, thus enhancing our ability to answer the study questions. Data from 40 poems were meticulously studied and evaluated twice to acquire complete comprehension of their underlying meanings. We used Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. Using this iterative method, we created and identified initial codes associated with whiteness ideas such as 'discrimination' and 'oppression.' Other codes were grouped according to their relevance to pluralistic politics, such as 'equal voting rights,' 'freedom of thought,' and 'civil rights.' Following the first coding, the resulting codes were examined to derive their comprehensive meanings.

Subsequently, we categorised the recently surfaced codes into potential themes, considering their resemblances in meaning and purpose, such as 'white supremacy,'

'black inferiority,' and 'interest group pluralism.' Subsequently, we revisited the evolving themes and subthemes to ensure that the collected poems for each theme were appropriately cohesive. The data underwent thematic mapping, allowing for identification of the portions where each theme was most prominently depicted. The current study determined that the material was encoded and organised in a natural and sequential manner. Prior to the report's production, the final themes were generated.

In addition, the critical discourse methodologies of van Dijk and Fairclough were subsequently utilised to critically analyse the codes and themes produced by the thematic analysis. This facilitated the identification of the linguistic features of Hughes' poetic discourse that encapsulate ideologies linked to identified codes and themes. The following section elucidates how Critical Discourse Analysis facilitated the interpretation of the data in this study.

We employed GPT-4o (OpenAI) to assist topic extraction and topic labeling as a part of our methodology. All analytical decisions and conclusions were the authors' own. We used [wordservice.ai](https://www.wordservice.ai) for English proofreading only (spelling, grammar, and stylistic edits). The service did not generate substantive content or perform analysis. No generative tool made interpretive or methodological decisions without human oversight.

5. Findings and Discussion

The research findings indicate that Hughes' poetry encompasses various themes that illustrate the concepts of whiteness, blackness, and pluralistic viewpoints. The data provide additional evidence that these themes highlight racial policies and pluralistic politics. This study employs the frameworks of van Dijk and Fairclough to analyse the discourse in Hughes' poetry, elucidating its portrayal of the intricate relationship between whiteness and blackness, along with Hughes' inclusive perspective. The analysis examines the inequitable social conditions experienced by African Americans, emphasising the theme

of racial segregation, oppression, and discrimination. The analysis also highlights Hughes' pluralistic politics, encompassing interest groups that advocate for equal voting rights, civil rights, and the distribution of resources, along with Hughes' perspective of negotiation-based compromise, which emphasises the recognition and appreciation of differences while valuing shared commonalities. Therefore, it analyses Hughes' efforts to foster a more inclusive society.

5.1 Whiteness Ideologies and the Unjust Social Reality in the United States of America

Whiteness has been emphasised in Hughes' poetry, notably its function in creating safe spaces for whites.

Simultaneously, this poetry extensively depicts the threat to blackness posed by whiteness ideologies. As a result of the incompatible ideologies of both blackness and whiteness, Hughes' poetry has generated dichotomies of whiteness and blackness inside unjust social reality. It is important to note that whiteness portrays whites as a privileged ethnic group by emphasizing their superiority over blacks. Whiteness ideologies that reinforce white superiority have been shown through racist acts and policies. The 40 selected poems had a total of 72 instances where racist acts and policies were repeated. The data obtained from the 40 selected poems in Table 1 illustrate the emerging themes in whites' racist acts and policies, along with their corresponding frequencies.

Table 1. Evolving thematic points in relation to racist acts and policies portrayed in Hughes' poetry

Themes related to racist acts and policies	n	Percentage
1) Racial segregation (social-geographical)	13	18.05
2) Oppression by force (e.g., lynching)	19	26.38
3) Oppression by deprivation (e.g., dignity)	8	11.11
4) Cultural oppression (superior-sub cultures)	7	9.72
5) Racial discrimination (e.g., education)	25	34.73

The findings reveal a discrepancy in the occurrence of racist acts and policies depicted in Hughes' poetry. The predominant racist conduct and policy observed in the selected sample of Hughes' poetry was racial discrimination (Table 1). Data analysis revealed a recurring theme of racial discrimination, accounting for approximately 34.73% of the dataset. The prevalence of racial discrimination in the 40 poems indicates that Hughes aims to illustrate the dominance of white individuals, while also highlighting the detrimental impact of racial discrimination on black individuals. Hughes' poetry exhibits racial discrimination more frequently than oppression by force, which is a racist act and policy. This constituted nearly 26.38% of the sample, as shown in Table 1.

Racial segregation was less prevalent in the sample selected than in instances of racial discrimination and oppression through coercion. This constituted approximately 18.05% of the sample (Table 1). This finding suggests that Hughes' main concerns revolved around racial discrimination and the use of force to oppress the people. This highlights the contradictory link between whiteness and blackness, as both racist acts and policies involve a significant level of violence (van Dijk, 2001). The selected poems exhibited a limited recurrence of themes related to the oppression caused by deprivation and cultural subjugation. The prevalence of oppression by deprivation was 11.11% in all instances, while cultural oppression accounted for 9.72% (see Table 1). We argue that these two themes are

only sporadically reiterated, since Hughes primarily concentrates on the perpetration of violence against black individuals, which serves to perpetuate the dominance of whites and engenders an unfair world. The following sub sections address themes related to racist acts and policies against Black people. As part of the theme presentation, five extracts from the current study's sample were covered, which were examined using Critical Discourse Analysis by Fairclough and van Dijk.

5.1.1 Racial Segregation

Hughes' poetry mostly focuses on depicting the hardships faced by black individuals and has extensively addressed the problem of racial segregation. Hughes portrays bleak images of black individuals residing in segregated neighborhoods in his poems. The selected instances were thoroughly analysed to enhance the conversation regarding this problem. Extract 5.1 from Hughes' poem *Air Raid over Harlem* highlights racial divisions. Segregation is achieved by isolating-coloured individuals in Harlem.

Extract 5.1

1 *Harlem, that's where I live!*

2 *Look at my streets*

3 *Full of black and brown and*

4 *Yellow and high-yellow*

5 *Jokers like me.*

(Hughes, 1994, p.185)

The analysis of polarisation in Extract 5.1 contributes to highlighting the segregation of coloured people. According to van Dijk's (1998) ideological square, the polarisation of inter-group discourse occurs through Us against the Them dichotomy. Hughes' reference to all coloured people in Harlem, including himself (lines 1-4), polarises the inter-group relationship. Inter-group polarisation is also accompanied by the presentation of the group's positive aspects. To clarify, Hughes' allusion to colourful individuals living in a crowded location (lines 3-4) implies that those people can coexist. Hughes' exclusion of white is ideologically motivated, as demonstrated in Extract 5.1.

This exclusion reflects the sociological reality that groups coloured people together in this small area and separated them from whites. According to Willhelm (1970), these ghettoised communities have marginalised coloured people. More crucially, the final phrase of this extract emphasises the terrible other by referring to the other's unfavourable attitudes that have caused those coloured folks to become Jokers (line 5). It is possible to argue that whites' racial policies, which isolate coloured people, are the root cause of their misery. In this sense, Hughes' depiction of coloured people as clowns (line 5) implies that Whites regard them as inferiors, and hence racial regulations prevent whites from socialising with such inferiors.

5.1.2 Racial Discrimination

Extract 5.2 from Hughes' poem *The Backlash Blues* highlights how white ideologies restrict life prospects for black individuals, emphasising the issue of racial discrimination. Hughes highlights how several aspects of black life have been significantly impacted by the ideologies of whiteness in this extract. These ideologies have contributed significantly to racist policies that benefit whites. Racist policies have had a significant impact on the economy, housing, and education of black individuals.

Extract 5.2

1 *You raise my taxes, freeze my wages,*

2 *Send my son to Vietnam.*

3 *You give me second-class houses,*

4 *Give me second-class schools,*

(Hughes, 1994: 552)

Studying the pattern of transitivity in this extract reveals unequal power dynamics resulting from institutional racist practices strongly backed by white supremacist ideologies. Stylistically, the dominance of Whites is mainly achieved through the frequent use of material process verbs like 'freeze' (line 1), 'send' (line 2), and 'give' (lines 3-4) in this extract. The verbs in question are commonly linked with the out-group pronoun 'you' in lines 1 and 3, which specifically pertain to Whites. The verbs (e.g., raise-line 1 and send-line 2) demonstrate the

significant level of agency of Whites. Whiteness has enabled white individuals to develop agency, thereby enhancing their power. The examination of 'lexicalisation' (Fairclough, 1989) in this extract shows the negative impact of Whites' actions on blacks. The derogatory words associated with black people indicate their socioeconomic status, such as 'second-class residences' (line 3) and 'second-class schools' (line 4). These words also demonstrate the devaluation of blackness, which has significantly affected the perceptions of black individuals in American society. This sample highlights how whites institutionalise the inferiority of black individuals by impacting their quality of life. This has significantly contributed to the creation of unsafe environments for black individuals. Pinderhughes (1989) agrees that institutional racism impacts the opportunities, lifestyles, and quality of life for both white individuals and people of colour.

5.1.3 Oppression by Force

Hughes' poetry describes numerous forms of forceful oppression, including lynching, gunshots, biased laws, police brutality against blacks, hard labour, and humiliation. Hughes' poetry accurately illustrates the tyranny by force that Blacks have suffered in America, since he is deeply concerned with communicating the suffering they have endured in an unjust reality.

Extract 5.3 from Hughes' poem *Always the Same* depicts the horrific realities that Blacks have had because of a social reality controlled by whiteness beliefs. As a result, this extract provides significant evidence of Whites' contribution to the creation of hazardous settings in which blacks are endangered because of their blackness.

Extract 5.3

1 *Black:*

2 *Exploited, beaten and robbed,*

3 *Shot and killed.*

(Hughes, 1994: 165)

Analysis of the 'pattern of transitivity' (Fairclough, 1989) can assist in exposing the extract's gloomy impression of blackness. In this extract, the passivized verbs of the

material process used in the phrases reflect Black and White roles in the social order. Because the passivized structure may be related to ideological text (Fairclough, 1992), agency could be a significant attribute stated in this extract. In these phrases, Black is portrayed as agentless and is impacted by acts (lines 2-3). According to Karp (1986), an agent utilises power to achieve a specific result. The extract constructs power relations using passivized structures, confirming blacks' lack of power. It is possible that the construction of blacks as agentless stems from both their blackness and whiteness ideologies. Those Blacks, who were seen as being agentless, were threatened. Furthermore, the technical chains (Fairclough, 2006) of passivized EN participle verbs exploited, beaten, robbed (line 2), shot, and slain (line 3) highlight Blacks' weaknesses and the many methods used by Whites to subdue those Blacks. The finding that blacks are perceived as agentless in comparison to agent whites supports Logan (2014), who argues that there is no meaning of blackness in the United States without an implicit connection to whiteness. In Extract 5.3, the continuous use of passivized language structures to convey blacks' experiences demonstrates how whiteness beliefs have had a significant impact on the formation of agent and agentless ethnic groupings. Consequently, passive constructs in Hughes' language play a stylistic role in representing power relations in social reality.

5.1.4 Cultural Oppression

Hughes' poetry centres on culture due to the impact of cultural oppression on Black identity. Cultural oppression refers to the unequal recognition of ethnic groups' traditions within a common geographical area (Hanna et al., 2000). Dominant groups establish and formalise their superior culture among various ethnic groups to retain power. Hughes may be alert because this type of persecution has become ingrained and inherent in black life. Extract 5.4 from Hughes' poem *Poem [1]* shows his apprehension of the ultimate European

American civilisation, which is said to be the wellspring of universal principles.

Extract 5.4

1 All the tom-toms of the jungles beat in my blood,

2 And all the wild hot moons of the jungles shine in my

3 soul.

4 I am afraid of this civilization —

5 So hard,

6 So strong,

7 So cold.

(Hughes, 1994: 32)

Van Dijk's (1998) ideological square can show Hughes' 'positive self-presentation' and 'negative other presentation' in Extract 5.4's discursive ideas about cultural oppression. Hughes depicted Black self-identity using traditional African scenery (e.g., jungle tom-toms-line 1 and wild hot moons-line 2). Hughes compares the African cultural heritages that beat in my blood (line 1) and shine in my soul (line 2) to the American cultural scene that is so hard, strong, and cold (lines 5-7) to show his pride in his cultural legacy and his concerns about dominant American culture (lines 4-7). Hughes uses severely negative terms (e.g., hard-line 5 and cold-line 7) to highlight Whites' civilisation's negativity, reinforcing his deep connection to his African culture, which runs in his blood (line 1) and soul (line 3). We argue that Hughes' comparative impression of African culture's warmth and American civilization's coldness is an immediate consequence of his anxiety over Blacks' involvement in such a hard and strong (lines 5-6) society. Hughes believed that Blacks would be quickly civilised and cold by the dominating American culture since they had lost their African culture.

5.1.5 Oppression by Deprivation

Hughes' poetry depicts the oppression that black people face daily because of deprivation, including a lack of respect, dignity, and necessities. The rejection of Black people's fundamental rights is a key theme in Hughes' poetry, which shows how White racial policies perpetuate the Black

people's inferiority complex and white supremacy. Extract 5.5 from Hughes' poem *Porter* demonstrates his reverence for the Black people's inherent worth.

Extract 5.5

1 I must say

2 Yes, sir,

3 To you all the time.

4 Yes, sir!

5 Yes, sir!

6 All my days

7 Climbing up a great big mountain

8 Of yes, sirs!

(Hughes, 1994: 116)

Examining the power dynamics in Extract 5.5 demonstrates the impact of Whites' power on Black self-esteem. The authority of whites can be exposed using Fairclough's (1989) transitivity pattern in the power relations analysis of the extract. The deontic modal auxiliary 'must' (line 1) is used only once, yet it creates the impression of the Blacks' duty throughout the clause (lines 1-3). Simpson (1993) defined deontic modality as a speaker's attitude toward the level of obligation associated with performing specific actions. Consequently, blacks must address whites as sirs (line 8) because they are in positions of authority. Blacks' devotion to this language behaviour displays their lack of agency while demonstrating Whites' authority. As the discourse reflects the social structure, the recurrence of 'Yes, sir!' (lines 2, 4, 5, and 8) reveals the high level of devotion that blacks are expected to demonstrate toward authoritative whites.

5.2 A More Equitable Social Reality in the United States—the Pluralistic Politics Advocated in Hughes' Poetry

Hughes' poetry helps address Black people's conflicting relations with the Whites by creating a pluralistic worldview. Redistributing power among all ethnic groups within one society is the basis of the pluralistic framework proposed in his poems to improve the prejudiced reality. Doing so would keep these groups on equal grounds, which would pave the way for a world in which everyone has a voice and can pursue

their passions. Hughes' pluralistic perspectives are supported by two pillars. One is the pluralism of interest groups, which advocates equal voting rights, civil rights, and resource distribution. Regarding Hughes' pluralistic perspective, the second pillar is negotiation-based compromise, which

emphasises recognising and appreciating differences while valuing commonalities. Among the 40 poems chosen, there were 34 instances of pluralistic politics. The data derived from the 40 poems in Table 2 show the rising themes and frequency of Hughes' pluralistic politics.

Table 2. Evolving thematic points in relation to pluralistic politics portrayed in Hughes' poetry

Themes related to pluralistic politics	n	Percentage
1) Civil rights	8	23.53
2) Equal resource distribution	11	32.35
3) Equal voting rights	6	17.65
4) Valuing commonalities and respecting differences	9	26.47

According to the data presented in Table 2, the most common form of pluralistic politics is equal resource distribution, accounting for 32.35% of the total number of instances. The likely explanation for this relatively high percentage is that Hughes appears to be cognizant of the situation that blacks face, which is a lack of resources that causes vulnerability. The following are the valuing commonalities and respecting differences, which together accounted for 26.47% of the total. Hughes' belief that African culture is equivalent to white culture may explain the high prevalence of this pluralistic perspective. The data presented in Table 2 demonstrates that the occurrence of civil rights was also significant, accounting for 23.53% of the total occurrences. Equal voting rights are pluralistic politics that occur the least frequently, accounting for 17.65% of all instances. Voting is extremely important; nevertheless, other pluralistic politics are prioritised in terms of frequency since they meet basic needs. The following subsections discuss topics related to pluralistic politics. Four extracts from the study's sample were analysed using Critical Discourse Analysis by Fairclough and van Dijk as part of the theme presentation.

5.2.1 Equal Resource Distribution

Hughes' deep concern about the distribution of power in American society manifested itself in his poetry. Extract 5.6, from Hughes' poem *To Captain Mulzac*, highlights the unequal allocation of resources between Blacks and Whites, which is a direct result of unfair power distribution.

Extract 5.6

1 Formerly the beaten and the poor

2 Who did not own

3 The things they made, nor their own lives—

4 But stood, individual and alone,

5 Without power—

(Hughes, 1994: 293)

Hughes, as indicated in this extract, has pointed to the conflict of interest that has occurred between Blacks and Whites, resulting in Whites, the powerful group, controlling resources while other powerless groups are unable to protect their interests. This pluralistic discourse, which incorporates the argument over conflicts of interest among diverse groups within one society, is consistent with van Dijk (1987), who states that groups live safely when they have access to resources; however, when access is threatened, they engage in disputes. Similarly, the extract highlights blacks' lack of agency,

which has allowed the dominant group, Whites, to monopolise resources.

Agency was evaluated by studying the chains of negative lexicalisation (Fairclough, 2006) associated with blacks in this extract. These negative lexical chains contain nouns (e.g., the beaten and the poor-line 1). The chains also comprised adjectives (e.g., individual and alone-line 4). They also include negated structures with not (e.g., did not own-line 2, nor their own lives-line 3, or without power- line 5). Ideologically, the extensive usage of chains of negated lexicalisation to describe Black people demonstrates their lack of agency because of American society's unequal power distribution. As a result, their lack of autonomy jeopardises their personal security and assets (line 3). We suggest that Hughes' recommendation to reconsider power allocation among competing parties stems from his reference to the consequences of such unequal power distribution (lines 2-4). Notably, resource allocation is significantly affected by an unequal power distribution.

5.2.2 Civil Rights

Hughes' pluralistic perspective includes liberal democracy, which protects the civil rights of all groups regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. This ensures the involvement of all ethnic groups in every element of life. Sniderman et al. (1996) stressed the need to grant all individuals equal rights, such as freedom of thought, personal security, and property protection. Extract 5.7 from Hughes' poem *Beaumont to Detroit: 1943* highlights the exclusion of Black individuals from the democratic realm. Simply put, black individuals are denied equality, resulting in their inability to compete with other groups and acquire civil rights.

Extract 5.7

- 1 *Yet you say we're fighting*
- 2 *For democracy.*
- 3 *Then why don't democracy*
- 4 *Include me?*

(Hughes, 1994: 281)

Applying the discursive approach of polarisation (van Dijk, 1997b) to analyse

Extract 5.7 demonstrates how Blacks are portrayed as victims since they are unable to protect their political interests. Thus, they have been denied the opportunity to acquire civil rights that would have enabled them to become a powerful group (lines 3-4). Whites are shown negatively for bringing blacks to fight to further their own interests, as indicated in the passage (line 1). Upon returning to America after the war, black individuals encountered a stark truth of inequity. Whites' assurances to black soldiers that they would achieve freedom and have common goals after the war were not fulfilled. The Black persona, portrayed as a victim, criticises the democracy of Whites that excludes them. Extract 5.7 highlights Hughes' pluralistic perspective as the most effective way to safeguard Black civil rights.

5.2.3 Equal Voting Rights

Hughes' poetry offers perspectives on how to confront white supremacist beliefs. Hughes, a pluralist, sees pluralism as an action in his poetry, emphasising the political rights that black people have been denied because of white ideas and racial practices. Extract 5.8 from Hughes' poem *Ballad of Sam Solomon* emphasises the Black community's desire to obtain their democratic right to vote.

Extract 5.8

- 1 *Negroes never voted but*
- 2 *Sam said, It's time to go*
- 3 *To the polls election day*
- 4 *And make your choice known*
- 5 *Cause the vote is not restricted*
- 6 *To white folks alone.*

(Hughes, 1994: 295)

Hughes expresses the concept of liberal democracy in this extract, which grants all diverse groups equal rights to participate in the entire political process, including voting. Pluralism is a democratic approach which ensures that various groups freely express their viewpoints (Longley and Kiberd, 2001). Extract 5.8 illustrates the black community's fight for voting rights and the white community's efforts to prevent them from participating in the political process by denying them the right to vote. Whiteness

glorifies and excludes others, allowing White people to wield political power and achieve dominance.

Applying van Dijk's actor description (van Dijk, 1997b) to this extract, the demonstration of shared authority among agents (Dahl, 1956) can be realised. The portrayal of social actors in the extract highlights the favorability of in-group and the unfavourability of out-group identifications. Blacks are depicted in this extract as actively working to safeguard their interests (lines 2-4), while whites are portrayed unfavourably for imposing limits on other groups, such as limiting voting rights to white individuals only (lines 5-6). The method of actor description in ideological stylistics reveals the ideological battle between Blacks and Whites in both poetic discourse and social reality. The power construction process is controlled by opposing interests, leading whites to continuously strive to influence resources, such as the voting rights of other groups. Whiteness is attained by excluding black individuals and depriving them of civil rights. Hughes challenges the social reality governed by white beliefs to transform it (lines 5-6). Hughes' poetry helps establish safe environments for black individuals by examining the elements of a societal structure that favours white people.

5.2.4 Valuing Commonalities and Respecting Differences

Hughes emphasised the importance of highlighting shared values among different ethnic groups in American society to encourage mutual acceptance. Extract 5.9 from Hughes' poem *America* exemplifies Hughes' idea of creating a diversified society in which power is equally shared among different ethnic groups. The plural sense in this extract implies harmonious connections among all ethnic groups in a plural society. Building diversity in America helps maintain shared characteristics and distinctions among many ethnic groups, leading to the development of a thriving American society.

Extract 5.9

1 You and I,

2 You of the blue eyes
3 And the blond hair,
4 I of the dark eyes
5 And the crinkly hair.
6 You and I
7 Offering hands
8 Being brothers,
9 Being one,
10 Being America.
 (Hughes, 1994: 52)

Hughes' depiction of diversity in America is evident in this extract. Hughes portrays a pluralistic America in which black and white individuals have close ties, live as equals, and work together for the country's success. Blackness and whiteness are equally important in plural societies. Utilising van Dijk's (1998) ideological square, the examination of the polarised structure, in lines 1 and 6 of *You and I*, shows that both Black and White are portrayed favourably. The positive nature of this polarised structure (lines 1 and 6) reflects Hughes' ideological position in diverse America in terms of style. The main theme of this extract is the increasing rationality expected to develop because of the equal possibilities provided to both Black and White individuals in the suggested democratic plural American society (lines 6-10). In this society, power is evenly dispersed among all ethnic groups, ensuring that blacks are no longer under risk. This extract illustrates a utopian society that creates secure environments for all ethnic groups, eliminating any potential for opposing interests.

7. Conclusion

This study examined 40 Langston Hughes' poems from the perspectives of van Dijk and Fairclough to find a challenging relationship between whites and blacks in the United States, as well as Hughes' pluralistic perspectives as suggested in his poetry. The findings of this study imply that the unjust reality in American culture is a direct effect of white-centered ideology. Whiteness notions contribute to the establishment of white supremacy and perpetuation of black inferiority. Our findings suggest that the

inequitable reality portrayed in Hughes' poetry stems from whites' racist actions against blacks, encompassing racial segregation, coercive oppression, deprivation, cultural subjugation, and racial discrimination. The data indicate that Hughes' pluralistic paradigm encompasses interest group pluralism, emphasising civil rights, equitable resource distribution, and equal voting rights. This framework perceives compromise as a type of negotiation. Hughes' pluralistic politics offer explanations for the establishment of safe zones within a seemingly pluralistic society. This study contributes novel insights into the existing body of research on Hughes' depictions of social reality and pluralistic viewpoints. We aim to demonstrate how Hughes' poetry encapsulates the social dynamics of competing whiteness and blackness, along with his pluralistic suggestions for enhancing reality, thereby contributing to an expanding corpus of knowledge.

However, this study had a few limitations. The study included a limited sample of 40 poems. Given the qualitative nature of this study, we prioritised selecting examples with significant information for comprehensive analysis rather than emphasising data quantity. Another limitation was the narrow scope of issues, encompassing racist actions and pluralistic politics. This study prompts a reevaluation of Hughes' political ideologies and the contentious dynamics between whiteness and blackness in America. Future research may enhance the existing knowledge on this issue by exploring intrinsic political ideologies within poetry. Potential avenues for additional research involve analysing this context and considering emerging ideologies concerning whiteness.

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Appendix. 40 purposively selected Hughes' poems

Air Raid over Harlem	Imagine	Ballad of Walter White	America
Little Song on Housing	Porter	Song of the Refugee Road	Dream of Freedom
Go Slow	Freedom Train	The Bitter River	The Mitchell Case
Silhouette	The Backlash Blues	Seven Moments of Love	The Kids in School with Me
Always the Same	Vagabonds	Circles	We're All in the Telephone Book
One-Way Ticket	Bible Belt	Beggar Boy	Ballad of Sam Solomon
Who but the Lord?	Argument [2]	Beaumont to Detroit: 1943	Dear Mr. President,
Blue Bayou	Flight	Listen Here Blues	Beaumont to Detroit
Poem [1]	Memo to Non-White Peoples	To Captain Mulzac	Abe Lincoln
A Ballad of Negro History	Migration	Black Workers	Sailor

STATEMENT. We employed GPT-4o (OpenAI) to assist topic extraction and topic labeling as a part of our methodology. The roles of these tools are reported here and reflected in the Methods; all analytical decisions and conclusions are the authors' own. We used wordservice.ai for English proofreading only (spelling, grammar, and stylistic edits). The service did not generate substantive content or perform analysis. No generative tool made interpretive or methodological decisions without human oversight, and no confidential or personally identifiable data were provided to third-party services. The authors take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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Raed Al-Ramahi, Doctor of Philosophy in American Literature, Lecturer, The University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan.

Radzuwan Ab Rashid, Doctor of Philosophy in Education, Associate Professor, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Kuala Nerus, Terengganu, Malaysia; Applied Science Private University, Amman, Jordan.

Omar Ali Al-Smadi, Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Linguistics, Lecturer, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia.