

“Yo también soy América”: Latin American Receptions of Langston Hughes’s American Dream ____

Laurence E. Prescott

“Langston Hughes es el poeta universal de todas las razas oprimidas.”

—Ildefonso Pereda Valdés, *Antología de la poesía negra americana* (1936)

Among twentieth-century writers and intellectuals of Latin America, few Anglo-American authors have earned as much respect, admiration, and attention as the poet, novelist, short story writer, and playwright Langston Hughes. Hughes’s questioning of his society’s values, his ability to discern and represent the issue of race not just as a problem of the United States but of the world, and his understanding of the broader concerns of poverty, discrimination, and oppression that dehumanized not only African Americans but other peoples as well motivated Latin American writers, poets, journalists, and others to appreciate and comment on his literary production. Indeed, his example as a committed writer encouraged Latin American contemporaries to explore and interrogate problems of race, class, and exploitation in their own cultures and societies. In particular, the simple yet penetrating verses of Hughes’s poem “I, Too” resonated with many readers of Cuba, Mexico, Colombia, Peru, and other nations of the Americas who could easily identify with its message of resistance and pride. Often represented as “the darker brother,” writers of multiracial Latin America often found in “I, Too” a reflection of their own cultural and economic realities and an affirmation of liberation, dignity, and hope in the triumph of the true meaning of America.

Primary evidence of Hughes’s resonance among Latin Americans can be found in the numerous translations of his poetry, drama, and fiction into Spanish and also into Portuguese. Donald C. Dickinson and Edward J. Mullen have identified several Spanish versions of his poems that were published in anthologies and periodicals between the 1920s

and the 1970s. Examining Hughes's impact in South America, Richard L. Jackson has shown that the North American author was and remains a literary and racial model to writers of Uruguay and Colombia as well as of Portuguese-speaking Brazil. More recently, in a lengthy article titled "'Yo también soy América': Langston Hughes Translated," Vera M. Kutzinski expands the research and study of Spanish translations of Hughes's poems.¹

New archival investigations, as well as interviews I conducted with poets and writers of Latin America, have led to the finding of texts, previously unknown to North American scholars, that exemplify the profound and far-reaching reverberation of Hughes's literary voice throughout the Americas. In this essay I propose to examine some of the findings to show how and why Hughes, particularly in his poem "I, Too," articulates the hopes, aspirations, and needs of those who toil, struggle, and create and in doing so broadens the applicability of his poetic message and endears himself to peoples throughout the hemisphere.

Jackson has stated that Hughes's most popular poem among Spanish Americans was "Proem" or "Negro" ("African Diaspora" 29). In fact, however, the quantitative and qualitative data confirm that "I, Too" holds that distinction.² According to Mullen, the Cuban writer José Antonio Fernández de Castro's version of "I, Too" is the earliest known Spanish translation of verse by Hughes. Rendered as "Yo también honro a América," the translation appeared in the Cuban journal *Social* in September of 1928 ("Mexico and Cuba" 25).

Within weeks the translation came to the attention of the Peruvian writer Esteban Pavletich Trujillo, a young revolutionary and poet whose student activities had resulted in his deportation in 1925 from Peru to Central America, where he campaigned against the United Fruit Company and also joined the Nicaraguan Army of Liberation, becoming secretary of war to the group's charismatic leader, Augusto César Sandino. While in exile, Pavletich maintained ties to Peru and contributed to the two important periodicals that his compatriot, the Marxist philosopher and essayist José Carlos Mariátegui, founded and

edited—*Amauta* in 1926 and *Labor* in 1928. The purpose of the latter publication was “to organize and create class consciousness among Peruvian workers” (Wise 119). The third issue of *Labor*, corresponding to December 8, 1928, included an article by Pavletich titled “Un mensaje y un anuncio” (A message and an announcement) in which he reproduces Fernández de Castro’s translation of Hughes’s poem and, more importantly, comments on the relevance of the poem’s message to Latin American people’s conditions and struggles.³

Pavletich discerned in “I, Too” a defiance and resistance to the common oppression and discrimination that African Americans and Latin Americans faced and struggled against in their respective homelands. Pavletich’s reading of Hughes’s poem constitutes or coincides with a cultural materialist reading. According to Hans Bertens, cultural materialism views the dominant sociocultural and political order (in this context, that of the United States) as “threatened from the inside, by inner contradictions and by tensions that it seeks to hide” (186). As Pavletich himself observes, “The youthful power and vigor of the American Empire have been able to *conceal* . . . within the deafening noise of the conquest of universal destinies, the germs of decomposition that *within its own bowels* conspire against its dubious future stability” (7; emphasis added).⁴ To Pavletich, Hughes’s poem exemplifies such an internal threat. The young Peruvian intellectual identifies the “strong, bitter and lyrical message” of “I, Too” as “the clamor of twenty million implacably oppressed human beings who, in spite of the Ku Klux Klan and the dawning of the Empire, ‘also are America’” (7).⁵ Pavletich opines that in “I, Too,” Hughes “announces the broad destiny of his race.” At the same time, he discovers in Hughes’s poetics of the African American condition “so much of our common destiny.”⁶ Thus Pavletich found or made common cause between Latin Americans’ struggles against capitalist exploitation and imperialist domination by the United States, on the one hand, and African Americans’ struggles against racism and economic exploitation in the United States on the other.⁷

To Pavletich, Hughes's poetic discourse offered assurance that African Americans, by virtue of their history of enslavement and their courageous and unyielding fortitude in the face of racial discrimination and white supremacist violence, constituted a formidable force for the prospect of positive change in the United States. As the native-born group directly affected by the US nationalist fervor that generated the idea of racial superiority,⁸ African Americans, Pavletich believed, held a unique position within the country and offered a singular perspective on their homeland, one that provided a keen awareness of and opposition to their nation's internal contradictions and unjust practices and paralleled Latin Americans' anti-imperialist stance and subversive discourse. Their pain, their anguish, and their labor had developed the nation's agricultural economy and had strengthened significantly its growth as a power. According to Pavletich, precisely because of the African American's separation "from the bourgeois machinery, [he] . . . today constitutes a dangerous poison for the body of the Empire, despite the barbarous antidote of the Ku Klux Klan" (7).⁹

Expanding upon this idea in a later section of his essay, Pavletich states, "If the North American agrarian regime was able to develop effectively, thanks—in large part—to the brutal enslavement of a race, the dynamic of the Empire has come about lubricated by the enslavement of a continent."¹⁰ Both economic cycles, he points out, have been fueled by oppression and injustice, blood and exploitation. The result is, on the one hand, colonial oppressed classes and peoples ("pueblos y clases oprimidas coloniales"), and on the other, metropolitan oppressed classes and races ("razas y clases oprimidas metropolitanas"). Therefore, the Peruvian writer concludes, "Hughes's message speaks profoundly to our subversive consciousness, breathing into it new life and strengthening it. From different—yet convergent—camps, our voice joins his voice, breathless and full of longing" (8).¹¹

Pavletich uses precise language and specific references pertinent to the United States that encapsulate the unique history of black people in the country and pinpoint their contemporary situation: slavery, ra-

cial superiority, oppression, injustice, Ku Klux Klan. But he does not limit his assessment of the African American condition to matters of race. As a Marxist-oriented thinker, he views race and class as linked. Indeed, they are two interrelated dimensions of the problem of oppression, exploitation, and discrimination. African Americans, he asserts, are “oppressed today as a race and as a class” (*oprimidos hoy como raza y como clase*). In his references to Latin America, however, Pavletich uses the term “*esclavitud*” (slavery) primarily in a figurative sense, just as Simón Bolívar and other privileged Creole leaders of the independence movement used it to describe their situation as colonized peoples under Spanish rule. Similarly, Marx and Engels would employ the term later to describe the proletariat. In other words, Pavletich does not mention or acknowledge the actual historical fact of African slavery in Latin America and its far-reaching social and economic consequences. Although he sees US imperialist ventures in Latin America as fueled by a consciousness of white racial superiority, he does not give equal consideration to the issue of race in Latin American societies.

This observation notwithstanding, Pavletich’s essay is especially significant not only because it is one of the earliest critical commentaries on Hughes’s work by a Latin American author but also because it identifies and links the conditions and struggles of racially discriminated and marginalized African Americans in the United States with those of politically dominated and socioeconomically oppressed peoples in Latin America. Laying bare attitudes and actions that denied and undermined the principles and promise of America—equality, inclusion, freedom, fairness, brotherhood—Hughes’s poem allowed Pavletich to envision African Americans as a moral and social force capable of tempering the United States’ drift toward imperial conquest. As Pavletich declares at the end of his essay, Hughes

is and feels himself “America too” because he—he is twenty million men—was a laborer of this strong and arrogant North America, that owes him much, that owes us much. When the solid and united ranks of dissenters

impose new and wide continental roads, when our revolutionary action is joined to their revolutionary action—many others will join along the way—he will really be the “darker brother” in a free America in which there is room neither for slaves nor for slavers. (8)¹²

About a year after the publication of Pavletich’s commentary, the Colombian journalist and critic Jaime Barrera Parra published his translation of Hughes’s poem along with the original English text in an article titled “Los negros dentro de la civilización actual” (Negroes within the present civilization).¹³ Editor of the literary supplement of *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, Colombia’s leading newspaper, Barrera Parra was well aware of the avant-garde currents of the day and attentive to publications from the Americas and Europe. His article, which appeared in his “Notas del Week-end” column, offers a brief but cogent summary of the US radical Victor F. Calverton’s essay “The Negro’s New Belligerent Attitude.” Published in the September 1929 issue of the journal *Current History*, the essay would later become the introduction to Calverton’s *Anthology of American Negro Literature* (1929). While Barrera Parra also took note of poets Claude McKay and Countee Cullen, he was particularly impressed by the “impertinencia fanfarrona”—or brazen insolence—of “I, Too.”

By virtue of his position with *El Tiempo*, Barrera Parra helped introduce younger writers into the Colombian capital’s literary establishment. One of these was the poet Jorge Artel, who no doubt was familiar with Barrera Parra’s column and who had probably read about Langston Hughes. Artel, a mixed-race native of the Atlantic coast who embraced his African heritage, found Hughes’s work particularly engaging. In a statement on black literature written in 1932, Artel argues that those who aspire to express the pains, hopes, and dreams of black peoples in the Americas would do well to read, among other exemplary writings, the poetry of Langston Hughes and Paul Laurence Dunbar, which according to the Colombian poet had begun to reveal “the true image of the race and its unmistakable voice” (“La literatura negra en

la costa”). Several years later, Artel included Barrera Parra’s translation of “I, Too” in a public address that he titled “Modalidades artísticas de la raza negra” (Artistic modalities of the Negro race) and gave at a book fair (Feria del Libro) in his hometown of Cartagena de Indias. Characterizing Hughes as “the first . . . among Negro poets of North America,” Artel glosses the poem as follows:

I, too, am a man, like the white man. I, too, contribute with the strength of my spirit and my mind to the enhancement of the democracy in which I live. I, too, am beautiful because I have a soul just like the white man. I am a creator of art like the white man. And one day he and the caste he represents will see that my people have the same rights as theirs, and that the world and the sun and the joys of life were made for all. (16–17)¹⁴

Such statements of racial affirmation and insistence on equality by a black poet in a Latin American nation that espoused the ideology of *mestizaje* (the blending or amalgamation of racial groups and cultures), generally denied the existence of systemic prejudice and discrimination, and discouraged expressions of black pride were uncommon, fairly radical, and often met with censure—if not accusations of racism. In this case, however, Artel—no stranger to conflict and polemics—could not be wholly criticized for commenting on and interpreting the African American poet’s words. Indeed, Hughes’s message had emboldened him to criticize white supremacist attitudes and actions in Colombia indirectly and to bolster racial consciousness among Cartagena’s black masses.

More than a decade later, Artel, then in self-imposed exile from Colombia, reached New York City where he sought out and finally met Langston Hughes, the poet laureate of Harlem. Recalling in 1960 the times spent at Hughes’s home, he describes the poet as “a cordial man, inclined to the noble demonstrations of friendship and comradeship. I met him in 1951; he had the extraordinary kindness of introducing me to several of his friends. . . . At his home in Harlem we used to converse

at length on issues of America, human conflicts, political ideals. His is a generous spirit, without reservation” (“El autor de *Mulato*”).¹⁵ Three years later, in 1963, Artel published his translations of several of Hughes’s poems in the Panamanian newspaper *La Hora*.¹⁶ Finally, in 1967, on the occasion of Hughes’s death, Artel paid homage to the poet in a public program that he organized at the University of Panama.

In addition to the mentioned writers, the Afro-Colombian novelist, short story writer, dramatist, essayist, and anthropologist Manuel Zapata Olivella must be included in any discussion of Langston Hughes’s wider literary engagement with the American dream. In the early 1940s Zapata Olivella, then a young, leftist-thinking student and aspiring writer, had abandoned his medical studies to travel the roads of life. During his sojourn in the United States just after the end of World War II and in need of sustenance, he journeyed to Harlem to meet Hughes and seek his support. In *He visto la noche* (1953), his book of travel narratives about his experiences and observations in the United States, Zapata Olivella recounts succinctly the meeting with Hughes: “En el poeta encontré mucho más de lo que abrigara mi alma abatida: un amigo” (88; In the poet I found much more than what my battered soul hoped for: a friend). Their friendship, characterized by the reciprocal exchanges of autographed books and occasional correspondence, grew steadily and ended only with Hughes’s death in 1967 (Prescott, “Brother to Brother”).

Shortly after his return to Colombia in 1947, Zapata Olivella published an article entitled “Langston Hughes, el hombre” (Langston Hughes, the man) in which he narrates at length the meetings and conversations with Hughes, the generous hospitality and assistance extended to him, the poet’s work ethic and eagerness to learn about the literature and condition of South American blacks, his impact on Zapata Olivella’s own literary development, and, finally, Hughes’s role in the African American struggle for freedom.¹⁷

The article served to give Colombian readers a more revealing portrait of the African American poet and writer who was known then

largely through his publications. Zapata Olivella recalls Hughes's willingness to take time from his busy schedule to critique a short story that Zapata Olivella had hoped to sell to a New York newspaper. "I like the style . . . and the theme is interesting," he recalls Hughes saying. But Hughes offered strong constructive criticism as well: "I think you are neglecting the human passions in the description. In the novel, and particularly in the short story, man must be the central concern around which the narration turns. If there is no human sensibility deciphering the landscape, there is no life. Write it again in accordance with the main protagonist and someone will buy it" (12).¹⁸

To Zapata Olivella, the experience was especially beneficial; it enabled him to comprehend his own existential situation and to appreciate better "Langston Hughes, the man." He discovered in him a mentor "much more interesting, much more sensitive, much more human than his very own poetry; [showing] understanding toward young people who have still not discovered the mystery of the equation of art, but who are trying to decipher it through categorical imperatives" (12).¹⁹

Familiar with Hughes's first autobiography, *The Big Sea* (1940), which had been published in Spanish as *El inmenso mar* in 1944, Zapata Olivella identified deeply with his African American confrère not only as a friend and writer but also as a fellow wanderer (Prescott, "Brother to Brother" 93). "We had become acquainted only six hours before and it seemed we knew each other since childhood. It's the law of the vagabonds," he explains at the outset of his article (12).²⁰ Elsewhere, no doubt recollecting Hughes poem "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," he writes that Hughes "raises his vagabond voice that has the taste of the waters of the Mississippi, the wisdom of the Euphrates and the fecundity of the Congo . . ." (12).²¹ Situating Hughes in the "revolutionary trenches" (*trincheras revolucionarias*) and among those who "have drunk in the miserable springs of the poor of the world," he asserts that "Hughes does not waste time on light palliatives nor lets resentment drag him to hatred; rather, he approaches reality with the moderation of the vagabond who has learned to take on all dangers, desiring for his

race and the oppressed races of the world, the economic solution that makes them equal at its base” (12).²²

Imbued with Marxist and liberal ideas from his own upbringing and readings, Zapata Olivella represents Hughes as a racial freedom-fighter who, despite setbacks to racial progress and the mounting threat of violence by the Ku Klux Klan, did not despair but saw beyond race to grasp the greater significance of class struggle. “Hughes does not believe in races but in opposing classes,” Zapata Olivella concludes. “Hughes has faith in the proletariat that will liberate the oppressed” (16).²³

If we consider Zapata Olivella’s political orientation, it should not be surprising that he uses a Marxist language of machinery and oil—similar to the language Pavletich employed nineteen years earlier—to characterize the contribution and exploitation of enslaved Africans and their descendants within the US socioeconomic structure. Hughes, he repeats, “raises his vagabond voice . . . so that that very same North American people in their mad dash toward mechanization, do not forget the oil, the Negro who raises on his shoulders the miracle of the atoms.”²⁴

With the exception of *Pero con risas*, the Spanish translation of the novel *Not without Laughter* (1930), and the allusion to “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” Zapata Olivella does not mention Hughes’s publications. But in conversations with Yvonne Captain-Hidalgo in the 1980s, he confirms the strong fraternal sentiment that his friend’s poem had inspired in him: “Perhaps the [poem] that most influenced me in the sense of delighting me, in making me feel his brother, was “I, Too, Am America” (26).²⁵

During the decade of the 1950s, Langston Hughes’s engagement with Latin America continued unabated. But like many other intellectuals of the period, Hughes fell victim to the unrelenting attacks of Senator Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin on persons identified as or suspected of being Communist Party members or sympathizers, or who were merely outspoken critics of US foreign policy or social ills.

If earlier writings by Hughes and his support of leftist causes made him vulnerable to the anticommunist hysteria sweeping the United States at that time, they most likely also strengthened his support from Latin American writers and intellectuals who opposed US policy in the hemisphere, including the coup d'état in Guatemala in 1954 and the continual bolstering of dictatorial regimes, such as that of the Somozas in Nicaragua.

New translations of Hughes's work appeared in anthologies of black poetry published in Mexico, Uruguay, and Argentina²⁶; collections of poetry by French and English authors²⁷; anthologies of contemporary US poetry²⁸; and a variety of periodicals. These translations not only allowed previous generations of readers to reconnect with the poet and broaden their knowledge of his work but also introduced Hughes's name and writings to a new generation of readers. Among these was a group of students enrolled at the University of El Salvador who established the *Círculo Literario Universitario* (University Literary Circle) in 1956. The members of the *Círculo* published a monthly section in the newspaper *Diario Latino* in which they commented on literature, culture, and political issues.

One of the members of the *Círculo*, and perhaps its leading voice, was the aspiring poet and Marxist-oriented journalist Roque Dalton García, who in later years would gain international recognition as an original and revolutionary author. Among his early contributions to the Circle's monthly literary page was an article titled "Langston Hughes el ejemplo" (Langston Hughes the example), published in February of 1956. Identifying himself as a person incapable of understanding the concept of racial superiority that was evident in the United States and its concomitant practices of deprivation and discrimination, Dalton exalts and embraces the aesthetic counterweight of black poetry, asserting that "only we must understand the enormous beauty contained in the painful, prophetic, and eminently human Negro poetry."²⁹

Within this poetic genre Dalton invokes the name of Langston Hughes, "un ejemplar poeta negro" (an exemplary Negro poet), as one

of many “who have raised the flag of total redemption for the ridiculed, repudiated, and harried race.”³⁰ He insists that the African American poet “is indicating roads of beauty to the desired future in which disappear the accursed pains that concomitantly have accompanied the Negro up to now.” Hughes, Dalton continues, belongs to “the hemisphere of poets who tell the truth, to the hemisphere of poets committed to achieving a synthesis of the present pain and the certain hope of tomorrow.”³¹ To Dalton, Langston Hughes is thus “the logical and arrogant result of a pathetic state of homicidal actions and circumstances against a human sector that has been denied its humanity” and “a shining example” for the youth of America.³² Reiterating Hughes’s stature as a model, Dalton concludes that the poet is “an example that invites concern so that the truth will shine, in each throat, in each pen, above adversity and the interests that fight nightmarishly against him. An example that may give us the thirst for justice that all youth need, to fulfill the spiritual stature that their historical moment demands of them.”³³

Like Pavletich and Zapata Olivella, both of whom were relatively young writers of leftist persuasion, Roque Dalton also discerned in Hughes’s writings a message that spoke to the needs, condition, and concerns of Latin American peoples, especially the youth of his generation, for whom the discourse of anti-imperialist and antidictatorial struggle paralleled that of the struggle of African Americans for freedom and against racism and discrimination. As Kutzinski states,

The discourse of anti-US imperialism so pervasive in Latin America during the aftermath of the Spanish-Cuban-American War (1895–98), and quite inseparable from nationalist ideologies, provided translators and commentators alike with fertile ground for analogizing external and internal colonization: that is, they likened Latin American reactions to US neocolonial expansionism to the predicament of anti-black racism which Hughes scorned in so many of his poems. (551)

In short, as the title of Dalton's brief article denotes, Hughes provided to Latin American writers and intellectuals an example, a model, of committed literary art that successfully articulated the social and spiritual reality of a people. His literary art merged an awareness of the past with a vision of the future while also exuding aesthetic value simply and directly. Latin American writers and thinkers, Dalton suggests, could learn from Hughes's example.

Dalton's mention of several well-known poets of Spanish America and the United States³⁴ and use of undocumented quotations referring to Hughes suggest that he most likely had access to anthologies of black poetry, such as Toruño's *Poesía negra: Antología y ensayo*, published in México in 1953, or the second edition of Pereda Valdés's *Antología de la poesía negra americana*, published the same year in Uruguay. In fact, Toruño was editor of the "Sección Sábados de *Diario Latino*" in which the *Círculo Literario Universitario* was published. Using their original English titles, Dalton mentions four books by Hughes that were familiar to Latin American audiences: *Not without Laughter*, *The Big Sea*, *The Weary Blues*, and *Fine Clothes to the Jew*. The English usage suggests that Dalton was not personally acquainted with these texts. While he makes no reference to "I, Too," Dalton does cite verses from the poems "Negro" and "The Negro Speaks of Rivers."

Roque Dalton, Manuel Zapata Olivella, Jorge Artel, Jaime Barrera Parra, and Esteban Pavletich Trujillo are just a few of the many Latin American translators, commentators, and friends of Langston Hughes whose names, all too frequently, have been absent from scholarship devoted to Hughes's international reputation. Nevertheless, they are crucial to understanding his profound impact on the Latin American literati. His poems—and in particular "I, Too"—which captured the new dynamic spirit of African Americans while expressing their despair and enduring faith, readily found a receptive audience among the racially alienated and culturally marginalized citizens of Latin America. They understood his message well, for they, "too," wanted social change in their homelands. It is also important to remember that although Hughes

was “black” according to the US hypodescent rule, which classified as black anyone of even distant African descent, for many Latin Americans he was a mulatto who could easily be one of them. Similarly, while the line “I am the darker brother” from “I, Too” is, understandably, usually construed within the US context to refer to African Americans, a reading of the verse within a broader continental context affords it a more general relevance to peoples of color throughout the Americas. Indeed, citizens of multiracial Latin America, who were commonly represented by Euro-Americans as darker-skinned peoples, often discerned in “I, Too” both a reflection of their own social, economic, and cultural realities and an insistence on the eventual triumph of the true meaning of the Americas as lands of freedom and opportunity. Moreover, despite the tendency of many in the United States to equate the name “America” with their country, the poem itself is neither racially nor geographically specific. Even though Hughes most likely had North America in mind, his use of the generic, all-encompassing toponym—“America”—confers to the poem a possibly unintentional ambiguity and flexibility that allow it to transcend national boundaries and encompass multiple historical and national contexts.

All available evidence indicates that Langston Hughes never set foot in Colombia, Peru, El Salvador, Panama, or many other lands of Latin America. Nevertheless, through his writings on everyday yet important concerns of the masses and the enlightened, through the many international friendships that he honored and maintained, and through his example as an able and dedicated poet who skillfully and unapologetically combined art and social commitment, he left a deep imprint on many Latin American writers.³⁵ In short, Langston Hughes engaged the Americas, and the Americas embraced Langston Hughes.

Notes

This essay is a revised and expanded version of a paper originally presented at the 2004 MLA Meeting in Philadelphia. I wish to thank Professors Dolan Hubbard and R. Baxter Miller for their interest and encouragement.

1. Asserting that she has “mapped the trajectory of every single known Hughes poem translated into Spanish and printed either in a book or in a periodical” (551), Kutzinski notes that prior to 1952 many of these translations had been circulating in anthologies and periodicals in Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Mexico, Uruguay, and Venezuela (572). Kutzinski’s research is both impressive and valuable. It does not, however, identify translations of Hughes’s poems published in periodicals and anthologies in countries such as Colombia, Peru, and Panama.
2. Further evidence of the poem’s significance for Spanish American poets and writers is Marcos Fingerit’s anthology of African American poetry in Spanish translation, the title of which pays homage to Hughes’s poem: *Yo también soy América: Panorama de poetas negros norteamericanos* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Grifo, 1944). Kutzinski’s research confirms that “I, Too” is Hughes’s most translated poem in Spanish but does not mention Fingerit’s collection (551).
3. The words “México, Octubre 1928” appear at the end of the article, indicating the place and date of the writing. Ironically, in that same year Mariátegui published his *Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana*, in which he vilified the African influence in Peru. I know of no other publication on Langston Hughes’s work that mentions or lists Pavletich’s essay, and Wise does not mention it either.
4. The Spanish text reads: “La pujanza y el vigor juveniles del vasto Imperio Americano han podido *ocultar* . . . en el ensordecedor ruido de la conquista de los destinos universales los gérmenes de descomposición que *en sus propias entrañas* conspiran contra su dudosa estabilidad del porvenir” (7; emphasis added). All translations, unless otherwise noted, are mine.
5. The Spanish text reads: “el mensaje lírico, amargo y fuerte, de este gran negro poeta” and “el grito de veinte millones de hombres oprimidos implacablemente que, malgrado el Ku Klux Klan y la albura del imperio, ‘son también América.’”
6. The Spanish text reads: “anuncia el ancho destino de su raza, en el que tanto hay de nuestro común destino.”
7. It is important to note that the version of “I, Too” that Pavletich includes in his article does not use Fernández de Castro’s first line (“Yo también honro a América”), but rather the verse that would become the first line of the translation that Mexican poet Xavier Villaurrutia would publish in 1931 in the journal *Contemporáneos* (“Yo también canto a América”).
8. Pavletich writes: “(el) actual desorbitado concepto de superioridad racial que en gran proporción lubrica sus actitudes frente al mundo” (the present [US] excessive concept of racial superiority that in great part lubricates its attitudes toward the world).

9. The Spanish text reads: “Desasimilado del engranaje burgués, el negro en la actualidad constituye un peligroso tóxico para el organismo del Imperio, pese al bárbaro antídoto del Ku Klux Klan.”
10. The Spanish text reads: “Si el regimen agrario norteamericano pudo ensancharse eficazmente gracias—en gran proporción—a la esclavitud brutal de una raza, la dinámica del Imperio se ha producido lubricada por la esclavitud de un continente.”
11. The Spanish text reads: “. . . el mensaje de Langston Hughes habla muy hondo a nuestra conciencia subversiva, oxigenándola y fortaleciéndola. Desde campamentos diferentes—pero convergentes—nuestra voz se enlaza a su voz anhelosa y jadeante.”
12. The Spanish text reads: “Es y se siente ‘también América’ porque él—él son veinte millones de hombres—fue obrero de esta América del Norte, fuerte y arrogante, que en mucho se le debe, que en mucho se nos debe. Cuando sólidas y conjugadas las filas de inconformes, cuando unida nuestra acción revolucionaria a su acción revolucionaria—otras más se sumarán en el trayecto—impongan anchos y nuevos caminos continentales, sí que será el ‘hermano negro’ en una América libertada en que no quepan esclavos ni esclavizadores.”
13. Part of this discussion is based on my previous article “‘We, Too, Are America’: Langston Hughes in Colombia,” published in the *Langston Hughes Review*.
14. The Spanish text reads: “Yo también soy un hombre, como el hombre blanco. Yo también contribuyo con la fuerza de mi espíritu y de mi inteligencia al engrandecimiento de la democracia en que vivo. Yo también soy bello porque tengo un espíritu como el espíritu del hombre blanco. Soy un creador de arte como el hombre blanco. Y un día éste y la casta que él representa, sentirán que mis gentes tienen iguales derechos que los suyos, y que el mundo y el sol y las alegrías de la vida se ha hecho para todos.”
15. The Spanish text reads: “Es un hombre cordial, presdispuestos [sic] para las nobles manifestaciones de la amistad y el compañerismo. Lo conocimos en 1951, habiendo tenido la gentileza extraordinaria de relacionarnos con varios amigos. . . . En su casa de Harlem solíamos departir largamente sobre temas de América, conflictos humanos, ideales políticos. Es un espíritu generoso, sin reservas.”
16. Though they appeared under the title “3 [i.e., Tres] Poemas de Huches Langston [sic],” there are actually translations of five poems: “Proenio” (“Proem”), “A una pequeña amante muerta” (“To a Little Lover-Lass Dead”), “A una bailarina negra de ‘The Little Savoy’” (“To a Negro Dancer of the Little Savoy”), “Joven ramera” (“Young Prostitute”), and “Joven danzarina desnuda” (“Young Nude Dancer”).
17. The article is divided into six separately titled sections: “Negros vagabundos” (Black vagabonds), “La jornada de trabajo” (The work day), “Un boleto para el teatro” (A ticket for the theater), “La lección de la vida” (The lesson of life), “Canto de amor y rebeldía” (Song of love and rebellion), and “El poeta y su raza” (The poet and his race).

18. The Spanish text reads: “Me gusta el estilo . . . y el tema se me hace interesante. . . . Creo que descuidas las pasiones humanas en la descripción. En la novela, y particularmente en el cuento, el hombre debe ser el tema central en torno al cual gire la narración. Si no hay sensibilidad humana descifrando el paisaje, no hay vida. Vuélve a escribirlo en función del protagonista central y habrá quien lo compre.”
19. The Spanish text reads: “Langston Hughes, el hombre, mucho más interesante, mucho más sensitivo, mucho más humano que su propia poesía. Comprensivo, para con los jóvenes que aún no han descubierto el misterio de la ecuación del arte, pero que tratan de descifrarlo por imperativos categóricos.”
20. The Spanish text reads: “Habíamos trabado conocimiento seis horas atrás y parecía conocernos desde la infancia. Es la ley de los vagabundos.”
21. The Spanish text reads: “alza su voz de vagabundo que tiene el sabor de las aguas del Mississippi, la sabiduría del Eufrates y la fecundidad del Congo. . . .” Here Zapata Olivella obviously refers to three of the great waterways mentioned in Hughes’s poem “The Negro Speaks of Rivers.”
22. The Spanish text reads: “quienes como él han bebido en las fuentes miserables de los pobres del mundo . . . Hughes no se detiene en paliativos leves, ni se deja arrastrar al odio por el resentimiento, sino que enfoca la realidad con la medida del vagabundo que ha sabido contraer todos los peligros, deseando para su raza y las oprimidas del mundo, la solución económica que las iguale por su base.” Elsewhere Zapata Olivella describes Hughes as “el vagabundo de los siete ríos” (the vagabond of the seven rivers), a possible allusion to the seven sacred rivers of India and thus a poetic representation of Hughes as a world traveler.
23. The Spanish text reads: “Hughes no cree en razas sino en clases antagónicas. Hughes tiene fe en el proletariado que librerá a los oprimidos.”
24. The Spanish text reads: “alza su voz de vagabundo . . . para que ese mismo pueblo norteamericano en su loca carrera hacia el maquinismo, no olvide al aceite, al negro que levanta sobre sus espaldas el milagro de los átomos.”
25. Zapata Olivella’s words as recorded by Captain-Hidalgo are “Tal vez el [poema] que más me influyó en el sentido de entusiasmarme, en hacerme sentir hermano de él fue ‘Yo también soy América.’”
26. See, respectively, Juan Felipe Toruño, ed., *Poesía negra: Antología y ensayo*; Simón Latino [Carlos Henrique Pareja], ed., *Los mejores versos de la poesía negra*; and Ildefonso Pereda Valdés, ed., *Antología de la poesía negra Americana*.
27. See Carlos López Narváez, comp. and trans., *El cielo en el río: Versiones de poemas del francés y del inglés*.
28. See Eugenio Florit, comp. *Antología de la poesía norteamericana contemporánea*.
29. The Spanish text reads: “a nosotros solamente, nos es dado comprender la enorme belleza que se encierra en la dolorosa, profética y eminente humana, poesía negra.”

30. The Spanish text reads: “que han levantado la bandera de la redención total para la raza hostilizada, repudiada, escarnecida.”
31. The Spanish text reads: “está señalando caminos con belleza al futuro anhelado, en que desaparezcan los dolores malditos, que de una manera casi concomitante han ido con el negro hasta ahora” and “en el hemisferio de los poetas que dicen la verdad, en el hemisferio de los poetas comprometidos en sacar una síntesis del dolor actual y la esperanza cierta del mañana.”
32. The Spanish text reads: “resultado lógico y altivo de un estado patético de acciones y circunstancias homicidas en contra de un sector humano al que se ha querido negar la calidad de tal, es, para la juventud de América, un ejemplo luminoso.”
33. The Spanish text reads: “Un ejemplo que invita a la preocupación por que la verdad resplandezca, en cada garganta, en cada pluma, por encima de la adversidad y los intereses que luchan dantescoamente en su contra. Un ejemplo, que nos dé la sed de justicia que toda juventud precisa, para cumplir con la estatura espiritual que le reclama su momento histórico.”
34. The poets are “Nicolás Guillén, Lewis Alexander, Regino Pedroso, Hugo Devieri, [Manuel] Arozarena, [Vicente] Gómez Kemp, Luis Palés Matos, Manuel R. Cárdenas, [and] Emilio Ballagas.” Guillén, Pedroso, Arozarena, Gómez Kemp, and Ballagas were from Cuba; Alexander from the United States; Palés Matos from Puerto Rico; and Cárdenas from Venezuela. Devieri, who was Argentine, had also published a collection of *poesía negra* titled *Versos de piel negra: Antología de la poesía negra* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Mayo, 1945), which included translations of Hughes’s poems “Song for a Dark Girl” (“Lamento de una muchacha negra”), “Cross” (“Cruz”), and “Union” (“Unión”). Kutzinski’s article does not mention Devieri’s anthology.
35. According to Dickinson, “The chief reasons for . . . [Hughes’s international] popularity lie in his exposition of Negro music and American race relations—two topics of interest throughout the world” (117).

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