



The Art and Imagination of Langston Hughes

R. Baxter Miller

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Langston Hughes was one of the most important American writers of his generation, and one of the most versatile, producing poetry, fiction, drama, and autobiography. In this innovative study, R. Baxter Miller explores Hughes's life and art to enlarge our appreciation of his contribution to American letters.

Arguing that readers often miss the complexity of Hughes's work because of its seeming accessibility, Miller begins with a discussion of the writer's auto-biography, an important yet hitherto neglected key to his imagination. Moving on to consider the subtle resonances of his life in the varied genres over which his imagination "wandered," Miller finds a constant symbiotic bond between the historical and the lyrical. The range of Hughes's artistic vision is revealed in his depiction of Black women, his political stance, his lyric and tragi-comic modes.

This is one of the first studies to apply recent methods of literary analysis, including formalist, structuralist, and semiotic criticism, to the work of a Black American writer. Miller not only affirms in Hughes's work the peculiar qualities of Black American culture but provides a unifying conception of his art and identifies the primary metaphors lying at its heart.

Here is a fresh and coherent reading of the work of one of the twentieth century's greatest voices, a reinterpretation that renews our appreciation not only of Black American text and heritage but of the literary imagination itself.

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