**“Va por el mundo Gustavo siempre adelante, adelante”:
The Politics of Becoming in Langston Hughes’s Translations of Nicolás Guillén**

*Abstract for the 2018 MLA Convention*

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Langston Hughes’s translation practice is dynamically engaged with this question of American-ness. Hughes and Nicolàs Guillén expressed shared ideologies and artistic practices, which challenge the nostalgic motivation behind our current (global) political climate. This paper discusses the role of Hughes’s translations of Guillén’s Cuba Libre and the ways that the former’s translation praxis enacts a materialist mapping of identity positions involved in a state of becoming. To do this, I will integrate Elizabeth Grosz’ notions of becoming and its application to Hughes’s translations of Guillén, which illustrates—via translation—Hughes proclaims the social, cultural, and political impetus of becoming something new, an American project he distinctly critiques. Since the act of translation generates a relationship between two corporeal bodies (two translators, Guillén and Hughes, and two texts), one of which represents the text-to-be-translated while the other represents the translation-to-come, Hughes uses translation’s textual commerce to emphasize a movement forward, a futurity, that welcomes marginalized voices and disrupts the hierarchies and hegemonies which have sought to suppress those voices. This emphasis on becoming as a site of potentiality perpetuates an exhaustible creative potential between both texts and both authors, who as writers politically and socially motivated to resist the forces interested in subjugating the proletariat, share a “commitment to the liberation of the Afro-American peoples of their respective countries.”

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