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“There is So Much to See in Harlem!”: Tracing the Intersection of Image and Text  
in Langston Hughes’ *Black Misery* and *The Sweet Flypaper of Life*

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In the larger body of scholarship surrounding African-American literature, history, and culture, Langston Hughes has undeniably been one of the more heavily studied, in part due to his lasting impact on the American literary canon with renowned works including “Let America Be America Again.” Despite the growing number of articles and collections examining his works during the Harlem Renaissance and beyond, there are still apparent gaps in Hughes’ criticism, particularly in relation to his interdisciplinary and collaborative endeavors. Focusing primarily on his work with Zora Neale Hurston on the unfinished play, *Mule Bone*, and the unfortunate fissure that emerged between them, past scholarship has neglected equally important works such as his 1955 response to Roy DeCarava’s photographs, *The Sweet Flypaper of Life*, or his final manuscript—the 1969 *Black Misery*, accompanied by the black and white illustrations of Arouni. While *The Sweet Flypaper of Life* predominantly celebrates America’s unique black culture, the lesser known *Black Misery* focuses on the tumultuous time of integration, all through a child’s lens. As a result, readers and scholars alike are offered a valuable opportunity to discover what emerges at that all-important point of collision between artistic forms and creative minds. *Black Misery*, for instance, captures “the turbulent changes of [the 1960s], especially by the civil rights activism and legislation that cracked forever the walls of segregation” (O’Meally). Meanwhile, *The Sweet Flypaper of Life* explores the tearing down of tenements in black neighborhoods and the rise of picket lines as blacks begin to demand new economic and political opportunities. This paper will therefore examine both of these interdisciplinary and collaborative works in order to trace the overarching social and political commentary that Hughes leaves his readers in that vital space between the end of World War II and the end of the Jim Crow era across the United States.