



**CALL FOR PAPERS**  
***The Langston Hughes Review***  
**"Gil Scott-Heron: A Special Issue"**

In 1966, then-seventeen-year-old Gil Scott-Heron asked Langston Hughes for an interview after Hughes delivered a speech in New York. Hughes graciously agreed. "We talked about his work," said Scott-Heron, "and how he had come to master so many art forms. That, also, was very influential because I like to write many different things myself: poetry as well as longer pieces and music. He'd done the same."

A poet, singer, songwriter, and keyboardist, Scott-Heron is widely remembered as the Godfather of Rap. But while his conceptualization of poetry was unquestionably *sui generis*, his musical palette was as extensive as his organic intellectualism. In the 1970s and early 1980s, Gil Scott-Heron achieved critical acclaim as an eclectic artist whose recordings reflected a potpourri of musical genres, and his social commentaries endeared him to Black youth. Known for such songs as "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised," "Angel Dust," "H2O Gate Blues," Scott-Heron is arguably a consummate organic intellectual.

In addition to *The Last Holiday: A Memoir*, published posthumously in 2012, he published two novels, *The Vulture* (1970) and *The Nigger Factory* (1972), in his early twenties. Inspired by Hughes to attend Lincoln University (PA), Scott-Heron earned an MA in creative writing from Johns Hopkins University, in 1972, and taught creative writing at Federal City College, now University of the District of Columbia.

But the closest connection between Hughes and Scott-Heron is their commitment to Black folk and blues. Scott-Heron referred to himself as a "bluesician." As such, he is arguably Hughes's intellectual progeny. Scott-Heron's collaborations with musicians as well as his use of rhyme, humor, and signifying parallel Hughes more closely than any writer in American history.

*LHR* invites submissions on any aspect of Scott-Heron's artistry and/or biography. Possible topics and questions include but are not limited to:

- The revolution will not be televised—but the counter-revolution certainly *was*. In light of Scott-Heron's famous critique of the Watergate scandal in 1973, which was prescient at the time, how might scholars apply his analysis to the January 6 insurrection? Are there contemporary analogues to his critique?

- In *The Last Holiday*, Scott-Heron seems to use the words poetry and songwriting interchangeably, yet in recordings such as “Jose Campos Torres,” he refers to his writings as “poems.” What are the implications of this slippage? What did these words mean to Scott-Heron? And how should we characterize his aesthetic?
- What is Scott-Heron’s relationship to hip hop? What is the connection between his poetic method and those of emcees? How does his artistic philosophy compare and/or contrast with perspectives in hip hop?
- Scott-Heron first encountered Hughes via Jesse B. Semple while reading *The Chicago Defender*. Though Scott-Heron never created a character quite like Simple, his use of humor in his performances brought great pleasure to his audiences. How might scholars compare Hughes’s and Scott-Heron’s use of humor?
- Scott-Heron’s novels address different aspects of racial capitalism. Published roughly a half-century ago, how do the contradictions he addressed engage with Hughes’s writings or presage the current crisis in which the major political conflict does not concern an omni-democratic agenda but rather conflicting models of racial capitalism itself?

Please submit a 250-word proposal no later than August 1, 2022, that includes your name and Email address. Full essays for accepted proposals are due by February 15, 2023. Send questions, correspondence, and submissions to Dr. Tony Bolden, Editor of *The Langston Hughes Review*, at [lh@ku.edu](mailto:lh@ku.edu).