



Langston Hughes, 1927

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COLORED DISPATCHES FROM THE UZBEK BORDER Langston Hughes' Relevance, 1933–2002

by David Chioni Moore

Like most all the contributors to this special *Callaloo* section commemorating the centennial of Langston Hughes, I began composing these words some time ago. More specifically I began writing before September 11, 2001, a significant date for this essay, since prior to that date it concerned the almost wholly *unknown* world of Central Asia. Then, of course, in September all that changed, and what also changed was the obligation of American writers—even those, like me, who focus mainly on the Afro-diasporic world—to better understand the Central Asian sphere. Interestingly, on December 17, 2001, at the height of the U.S. campaign in Afghanistan, the *New York Times* attempted to connect Central Asia with the Afro-diasporic world. On page B-8 it printed an article by Amy Waldman about American soldiers from New York City stationed in Afghanistan's turmoil. The article featured a photograph of two infantrymen, one African-American and the other Bangladeshi-American, smiling but with weapons at the ready, patrolling a U.S. airbase just north of Kabul. The *Times'* main and, I might add, ideological point was to describe how the streetwise multi-ethnic New York soldiers were actually quite comfortable in their new location. Indeed one of them is quoted as saying, "who knew I'd be here drinking tea with them?"

Of course, neither the *Times* writer nor the soldier knew that colored folks from New York City *do* have a history of drinking tea with Central Asians, a history that extends at least as far back as 1932 and Langston Hughes. Thus, in this essay I'll attempt not only to shed light on the travels and writings of Langston Hughes in Central Asia in the 1930s, but also to supplement the current Washington-inspired axis of suspicion with a Hughes-based bridge of understanding, in attending not only to Hughes and the 1930s, but also to the Central Asia of today, from what I'll call a Hughesian perspective. I'll begin by outlining Hughes' Central Asian sojourn, and will offer brief background on Central Asia itself. After discussing the two decades of writing Hughes did on Central Asia, I'll turn to the editorial challenges I face in assembling a volume of that writing for audiences today. I will touch briefly on six Hughes poems recently discovered to exist *only* in Uzbek translation, and finally I will recount key moments from my own recent travels on Hughes' trail, in the suddenly important Central Asia of today.

Those familiar with Langston Hughes' career will know that through the 1920s and the early 1930s the young poet steadily increased both his international and his left-wing commitments. By January 1, 1932, when he was not yet thirty, he had already traveled to four continents—unprecedented for an African-American writer of his

CALLALOO

time—and had been translated into at least four languages. Politically, the more he learned about the United States and the broader black Atlantic world, the more he shifted towards a radical account of that world's injustices. Then on March 10th of that year, while in California on the last leg of a national poetry-reading tour, Hughes received the following telegram from Louise Thompson, writing from New York:

JAMES FORD HERE FROM MOSCOW AUTHORIZED SECURE NEGRO TO MAKE RUSSIAN FILM ON NEGRO LIFE IN AMERICA NECESSARY RAISE FUNDS HERE FOR FARES AS RUSSIA LACKS VALUTA FOR SAME SPONSORING COMMITTEE WITH CHARLES WALKER ROSE MCCLENDON WALDO FRANK AND OTHERS BEING FORMED WILL YOU JOIN COMMITTEE ALSO WILL YOU CONSIDER GOING WITH GROUP TO LEAVE AROUND MAY FIRST WIRE COLLECT LETTER FOLLOWS.

Thompson's telegram had been prompted by the plans of the quasi-Soviet film agency Meschrabpom to make a film, "Black and White," that would depict the terrible conditions of African Americans in the USA and would therefore form a part of the Soviet Union's broader strategy to portray itself, and not the United States, as the champion of oppressed and colored peoples around the world. Hughes rapidly agreed to join both the support committee and the traveling group. Thus in mid-June 1932 he left New York on the ocean liner *Europa* with a group of twenty-two fellow Negroes, who were supposed to be actors and musicians but who in fact were mainly young adventurers and aficionados of the left. Hughes' role was that of screenwriter, hired to make sure the film accurately represented the realities of American Negro life. Upon arrival, Soviet Socialist Moscow was a revelation for Hughes and his compatriots, since they became minor celebrities as *Amerikanski Negrochanski tovarishi*—or American Negro comrades.¹

After two months, however, the film project fell apart. One cause of its demise was its entirely improbable Germano-Russian script, which, among other things, featured black Alabama steelworkers being rescued from industrial brutality by a combination of northern white union members and the Soviet Red Army. A second cause was apparently the Soviet Union's hopes that the United States would finally, after some fifteen years of Soviet rule, extend diplomatic recognition to the USSR—and thus the Russians were wary of any films that might offend American officials.² During a mid-August hiatus, the entire Negro artists group ventured to the resort areas on the Black Sea coast. But once the film project collapsed, in mid-September about half of the group returned to the U.S.A, and the other half embarked upon a short, overprogrammed tour of a few Central Asian cities, from which they would return via the Caspian Sea and Volga region to Moscow and ultimately home. Langston Hughes, however, abandoned the touring group in dusty Ashkhabad, today the capital of Turkmenistan, and remained for months in Central Asia.³

Hughes had first learned about the Soviet Union while in his multicultural Cleveland high school, where he heard about the ongoing Russian Revolution through Russian-Jewish classmates who were the children of émigrés. Hughes'

interest was re-awakened by his arrival in the USSR, and more specifically his interest shifted two thousand kilometers south and east: that is, to Soviet Central Asia.⁴ Central Asia—now the independent nations of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan—lies at the center of the Eurasian landmass. The region is bounded on its east by China, its south by India, Pakistan, and Iran, its west by the Caspian Sea, the Caucasus, and eventually Turkey, and on its north by deserts, the great Russian steppe, and Siberia.

Central Asia has long been a global crossroads. Alexander the Great rode as far as Samarkand in his far-flung travels of the 4th century BCE, and in the 13th century the Mongol warrior Chingiz (Genghis) Khan made Central Asia the heart of his empire, which extended from the Danube to the Chinese Pacific. Tamerlane, more properly known as Timur the Great, was one of the first indigenous Central Asian conquerors, and the Indian Mughal dynasty was begun in Central Asia by one of Timur's descendants. For centuries Central Asia was a global heartland as the center of the Silk Road, the legendary trade and information superhighway of the medieval world, which extended from Beijing to Marrakech. Globally speaking, it was not until the European maritime expansions of the 16th century, which now linked the planet in different, more efficient ways, that Central Asia began a long decline.

Today Central Asia is dominated by a range of peoples, most of whom are religiously Islamic and ethnically Turkic—that is to say, they speak a range of related languages, such as Uzbek and Kazakh, of which *Turkish* is only the westernmost example. Today the Central Asian nations and the giant and ethnically related Xinjiang Uighur region of northwestern China form Central Asia. Central Asia's total area is over half that of the continental United States, and its total population is roughly sixty million. The region's geography ranges from enormous steppes and deserts, to 25,000 foot mountains on its southern rim, to rich green valleys in its populated center. Today Central Asia's economy mixes industry, agriculture—particularly cotton—and raw materials, most notably petroleum.

Langston Hughes was interested in Soviet Central Asia because it represented, for him, what he called the USSR's own "dusty, colored, cotton-growing South." Indeed and ironically the formerly independent Central Asian emirates and khanates had become Russian colonies and vassal states in the middle 19th century, in part because of the lure of Central Asia's cotton, whose global price had jumped as a result of the U.S. Civil War; the Russian Czar's troops first broke through Tashkent's walls just twenty days after the last Confederate army surrendered in Shreveport, Louisiana. The Russian and then Russo-Soviet control of Central Asia is a chapter in the world's colonial and now *post*-colonial history which has been terribly neglected.⁵

Thus in the fall of 1932, Langston Hughes decided to remain in the Soviet Union and go to Central Asia. Now, ordinarily Central Asia was closed to foreign travelers, but as an honored revolutionary poet and representative of an oppressed class of Americans, Hughes secured official permission. So for about four months, from mid-September, 1932, to late January, 1933, Hughes lived and traveled there, particularly in the legendary cities of Tashkent, Samarkand, Ashkhabad and Bukhara. During this time he had diverse experiences. As an official guest of the Soviet Writers' Union, he was constantly being taken on official tours of hospitals, schools, dams, factories, and

CALLALOO

other Soviet achievements, complete with recitations of health, education, industrial and agricultural statistics. He spent significant time with Central Asian writers and creative artists in the major cities, who received him with enthusiasm. At other times, Hughes visited the Central Asian countryside, particularly the cotton collectives that reminded him—yet differed massively from—the plantations of the U.S. South. Readers of his *I Wonder as I Wander* know that he alternated regularly between discussions with the most elite cultural figures Central Asia had to offer, and humble meals with the humblest of people.

Improbably, Langston spent several weeks of his travels in the company of Arthur Koestler, later to become famous as author of the powerful anti-communist novel *Darkness at Noon*, but in 1932, like Hughes, a wandering young radical fascinated by the Soviet experiment.⁶ In late January, 1933, Hughes finally decided to end his Central Asian stay. He returned to Moscow for another few months, and then in May he took the Trans-Siberian railway to Vladivostok, visited Korea, spent several weeks in China, sojourned in Japan, got thrown out by the Japanese secret police as an agitating radical, and finally passed through Hawaii on his return to the United States, landing in San Francisco on August 9, 1933. He had been away for fourteen months, and though he continued to travel throughout his life, he would never return to the USSR.

Now, of course, more than being a traveler or a radical, Langston Hughes was a *writer*, and so our main interest here is the nearly unknown *writing* that he did, over a twenty-five year period, on Central Asia. Interestingly, Langston's Central Asian travels were not simply given to him by his hosts. Rather, he funded his Central Asian sojourn with his writing. He was paid for the Russian translation rights to his novel *Not Without Laughter* and his small collection *Scottsboro Limited*, and also for the Uzbek-language rights for a book of poems drawn partly from his 1926 *The Weary Blues*.⁷ With this Uzbek volume, *Langston Hyuz She'rlari*, or "Poems by Langston Hughes," Hughes became the first American writer translated into any Central Asian language: a significant achievement, given Central Asia's near-millennium of literary history.⁸ Hughes also wrote articles on Central Asia for the Moscow daily *Izvestia* as a foreign correspondent. During his time in Central Asia he also drafted poetry and worked on assisted translations of Russian and Uzbek poets. In a powerful poem titled "Letter to the Academy," written later that winter in Moscow and published in the Soviet magazine *International Literature*, Hughes wrote, in explicit rebuke to Kipling, that "the twain have met." No doubt Langston was the organizer of that meeting.

After Hughes returned to the United States, his *Izvestia* articles were collected into a small English-language book published in Moscow and Leningrad called *A Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia*, which compared Central Asia with the U.S. South. Since I am currently preparing a revised and expanded edition of this book for publication, I will return to it later in this essay. Some 1,500 copies of the text were printed, but only one of them is known today, and that is Hughes' own, now held in the Hughes archive at Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Searches by colleagues in Moscow and St. Petersburg, and even the personal assistance of the directors of the Alisher Navoi State Library of Uzbekistan and the State Library of

Kyrgyzstan, have not uncovered any other copies even in the former Soviet Union. Thus the mystery of the other 1,499 remains.

Once back in the U.S., Hughes quickly began to write some more. From 1934 to 1938 he placed seven Central Asian items in American periodicals, ranging from a radical extract from his Moscow book in the socialist magazine *New Masses*, to two surprisingly challenging essays in the glossy monthly *Travel*, to a titillating true-life story called "In an Emir's Harem" in the popular and very white *Woman's Home Companion*.⁹ For this latter piece Hughes received an astonishingly hefty \$400 fee, something akin to \$10,000 today. Blessed with rich experiences and notes, in the later 1930s Hughes began work on a Central Asian memoir he titled "From Harlem to Samarkand." Numerous chapters and autonomous unpublished essays lie in Yale's Beinecke archive from this period, though a combination of uncompleted writing, lack of publisher enthusiasm, and other writing projects kept Hughes from finishing this work. Hughes returned to that writing in the later 1940s, reworking old material and composing some afresh, though again he never brought any of this to print.

Finally in 1954 he began his 1956 memoir *I Wonder as I Wander*, a 405-page compendium of his global travels from 1931 to 1938, which included ninety Central Asian pages.¹⁰ These ninety pages from the middle 1950s constitute about the only Central Asian writing known to most Hughes readers, and in one sense, it is a miracle that they exist at all. Having once been an energetic leftist, Hughes became a right-wing target during the McCarthy era. In March 1953 Hughes was forced to testify before McCarthy's Senate Subcommittee on Investigation, and that day he nearly saw his writing life destroyed. Though Hughes named no names, he offered McCarthy an extremely mild presence and admitted only to an early, perhaps misguided flirtation with the Left, and a subsequent return to the center.

Hughes began writing *I Wonder as I Wander* just one year later; thus that he chose to write *at all*, and not negatively, about the Soviet experiment is remarkable. However, the price Hughes paid for doing so was evident in the genial and anecdotal tone that kept *I Wonder as I Wander's* politics and rage below the surface. Whereas Hughes' 1930s Central Asian writings bristle—call them "Hughes unplugged"—*I Wonder as I Wander*, though brilliant, is more "Hughes lite." J. Saunders Redding's contemporary review (1956) of Hughes' memoir, indeed, closed by suggesting that "Mr. Hughes, it seems, did more wandering than wondering."

That is, in sum, the totality of Langston Hughes' Soviet Central Asian writings: a tough small book in Moscow in 1934, some U.S. journalism when he returned, two stalled attempts at an autobiography, many draft essays all along the way, and finally a genial memoir in the McCarthy era. The writing consists almost entirely of essays, each treating a different topic, such as Soviet industrial development, the liberation of women, dance, music, the battle against repressive Islam, and more. And of *all* this writing, only the very last phase is widely known today. The reason for this is simple. Some time ago Gayatri Spivak (1988) argued that the subaltern cannot speak. This is only half right, since most subalterns speak just fine. What the subaltern typically cannot do is *print*.

As mentioned some paragraphs above, I am currently in the process, along with my collaborator Jennifer Bouta, of restoring Hughes' little-known and archival Central

Asian writings to the public sphere, in an expanded edition of his Moscow- and Leningrad-published 1934 *A Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia*. The new text will be, in one sense, the politically charged book Hughes could never publish in the U.S. in his lifetime. It will be valuable, then, to make some observations about that restoration here. The first challenge in expanding the core Moscow text is simply making the selection. Those familiar with the Hughes archive know that it is massive. Its 2,500 letters between Hughes and Arna Bontemps, for example, are a small fraction of its total volume. But not all the texts within the archive are equally strong. Some of Hughes' Central Asian writings are, for example, so fragmentary or first-draft that it would be impossible to restore them: just recall the first draft of the last item you yourself have published. In other cases, Yale's Beinecke archive may hold an unpublished essay from the middle 1950s, perhaps cut from Hughes' 1956 memoir, but the tone and tenor of the piece will be too light and anecdotal to place alongside the harder-hitting Moscow text. But even once selections are made, one faces the even larger problem of establishing the texts.

Let me take as a first example a brilliant Hughes essay called "Tamerlane's Samarkand, Samarkand the New," which will be a key chapter in the expanded Central Asian book. The editorial challenge is that "Samarkand the New" exists in no less than *eight* versions written over nineteen years, from 1936 to 1955. In its final form the essay runs like this. Hughes first compares the ancient city's glory with its duller Soviet incarnation. Then he recounts his city tour and discusses the Komsomol-led restoration of the ancient monuments. Then he turns to the *new* hospitals, factories and schools the Soviets have built, and explains the unveiling and liberation of women and the end of oppression by the Czars and Khans. Hughes ends by wandering one evening to Tamerlane's tomb and reflecting on the changes 600 years have brought. Let me offer here the first two, and then the last two paragraphs of the piece:

Samarkand! Green-curled Samarkand! City of Tamerlane, the Earth Shaker; before that, city of Genghis Khan, leader of the Mongols; and ere that the sporting ground of Alexander the Great, who murdered his old friend Clitus within its gates, twenty-four hundred years ago when both were drunk with wine. Samarkand, flourishing center of Arabic culture in the twelfth century; seat of the ancient observatory of the astronomer Ulug Beg; golden name to the Venetian merchants of the Middle Ages when silks came from Cathay; lovely song-city of the Oriental poets; city of the turquoise domes—Samarkand! Green-curled Samarkand.

Now, the express direct from Moscow thunders into a station whose platform is crowded with the belted blouses and high boots of Red Army boys and members of the O.G.P.U. and the white kerchiefs of Russian peasant women—mingling with the robes and turbans of a thousand years ago. Outside the station horse-drawn *droskis*, old Fords, and new auto-buses await the incoming travelers. Samarkand today is a Soviet Samarkand—with a man on the corner selling ice-cream sandwiches against a poster announcing the latest Pudovkin movie from Moscow. The town, as Asiatic towns have a strange habit of being, is several miles from the railroad. Down a long straight street of trees our

CALLALOO

auto-bus sped with a continual horn-honking, out-doing even a Paris taxi. With every bolt rattling, windows shaking, speed never slackening—scattering donkeys, camels, Fords, and human beings to the right and left of it, radiator steaming—the bus drew up to the leading European hotel in the former Russian quarter and stopped with sudden precision, depositing its delegation of *Amerikanski* Negroes come to visit.

It is quite a fast-paced opener, rapidly juxtaposing old and new and depositing its readers, like its subjects, squarely at the start of an adventure. Now here are the two last paragraphs. When reading them, please remember that they were written by a 31-year-old African American in the Jim Crow era, writing with clear if unstated awareness of the awful and uprooted condition of *his* “colored people,” in the southern part of his own country, a land of sharecropping and lynching:

On my last night in Samarkand, I went alone at sunset to the opposite side of the city, to Tamerlane’s tomb with its pale inscriptions in yellow gold, its ancient alabaster and jade. The outer gates were locked, but I looked through into the courtyard that I had often visited before. Birds were nesting in the trees and a little grey lizard scurried across the ground. The red sun gleamed on ancient tiles and the tops of sun-dried walls. I sat near a stream that flowed along the edge of the road outside, and I thought how old this earth is, this city, and this tomb! The wise men have written that in 362 B.C. Alexander came to Samarkand. In 1221, Genghis Khan. In 1369, Tamerlane. In 1886, the Tsar’s General Kauffman. In 1917, the voice of Lenin. And today come the orders of the Communist Party through Stalin of Moscow.

Under the plane trees outside the ancient walls is a small tea house with a raised platform for the customers. Above that platform is a radio amplifier, so that those drinking tea in the shadows of the tomb may listen to their native folk music and the latest decrees from Moscow. Out of the air, a far-off city that Tamerlane never conquered is speaking. From Moscow, a theory Tamerlane never dreamed of is being put into action. The Mighty Earth-Shaker, conqueror of half the Asiatic world, builder of splendid tombs, killer of millions, herder of women and driver of slaves, invincible warrior and ruthless ruler, dying rich and old and full of power and honor. Today Tamerlane lies in his tomb in the heart of Soviet Asia and listens to an electronic voice outside among the trees saying, “Among us, no man shall live on another man’s labor. Marx and Lenin have shown us the way. No more Tzars, Emirs, mullahs, or beys. Workers and peasants, unite! Under the leadership of the International Communist Party, build the proletarian state!”

Whereupon Tamerlane, no doubt, turns over in his tomb.

This is, of course, very beautiful writing, characterized by a complex mix of pastoral and anger, elegy and irony. The editorial problem, however, is that the *complete* essay I’ve been discussing does not exist—or at least it was never produced

in this final form by Langston Hughes. As I have mentioned, the Beinecke Library houses eight different versions of "Samarkand the New." Drafts 1 and 2 are rough, but contain all the elements I have described. Drafts 3 and 4 greatly expand the details on present-day Samarkand, but replace the incantatory opener with mechanical paragraphs on Marx. Subsequently, Hughes decided he'd rewrite the essay for the Soviet-sponsored international public-relations magazine *Soviet Russia Today*. So he restored all of the previous sections, improved the writing overall, but then replaced the Tamerlane-in-his-grave closing with an embarrassing ending extolling the tyrant Joseph Stalin; there Stalin's voice sounded over the radio, ordering new schoolbooks for children. *Soviet Russia Today* never brought the piece to print. Now having written five versions, in the early 1950s Hughes went through three more drafts. Many of his formerly rough metaphors and images spring into life, but the essay also loses immediacy with a shift from present tense to past, and much of the trenchant politics get replaced with charm. None of the eight versions was ever published.

Thus the editor of "Tamerlane's Samarkand, Samarkand the New" faces a complex situation: how to present an astonishing sequence of eight draft essays, written over nineteen years, when none of them is final and none of them is full? The present editorial project has responded by first setting up five editorial principles, and then letting those principles guide individual decisions. The five principles are readability, transparency, maximal literary richness, inclusivity, and middle-1930s historicity. By "readability" I refer to an overriding priority for Langston Hughes, who never wrote a single word of poetry or prose that could not be understood by a very ordinary reader. To be sure, the scholarly field of textual criticism has developed elaborate protocols for handling multi-versioned texts, such as the many versions of the works of Shakespeare or Spenser.¹¹ Typically a dizzying array of footnotes, typefaces, or most recently of hyper-links on Web- or CD-ROM-based variorum editions have guided specialists through multiple versions of Renaissance or medieval texts. But insofar as the present project offers a book in Langston Hughes' name, we cannot transgress Hughes' demotic commitments by offering a thicket of notes or variants to render all the versions.

By "transparency" I refer to an editor's obligation to make clear what he or she has done. Thus a brief essay in the final volume will recount and specify the sources and the editorial changes, allowing future scholars to revisit the archives and judge the changes for themselves. By "maximal literary richness" I mean that whenever Hughes, a writer, has improved the *writing*, I'll work to incorporate those changes. By "inclusivity" I speak of offering, in general, more rather than less. For example, in Draft 3 of "Tamerlane's Samarkand," Hughes refers to the head of the Turkoman Writer's Union as "a small, wiry man." But Draft 4 refers to him as "a man with skin about the color of the Bokhara desert at sunset." Thus the final published version will refer to him both ways, as "a small, wiry man with skin about the color of the Bokhara desert at sunset." By "middle-1930s historicity" I mean that, in cases where multiple versions exist (and most of the texts are not nearly as vexed as the Samarkand essay sampled here), we attempt to produce the charged version Hughes would have produced in the middle 1930s—the voice that has too long lain silent, first by means of an almost compulsory self-censorship, and then in the quiet of the archive.

For example, in the Moscow-published *A Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia* Hughes regularly refers to Komsomols—the members of the Soviet youth league who guided him on daily tours. In later revisions he renames the Komsomols more neutrally as “young workers,” a depoliticizing shift that masks Hughes’ middle-1930s experiences and views. Likewise, in the Moscow text he notes that “Ford turns his machine guns on them in Detroit; and in Washington the army is called out against them” (ANLASCA, 28). This refers to the brutal repression of strikers at Henry Ford’s River Rouge plant in Dearborn, Michigan, on March 7, 1932, and to the U.S. veterans’ “Bonus Army” march on Washington in summer 1933. But again in later revisions he crosses out those words. Our edition will, again, work to preserve the more radical middle-1930s voice of Langston Hughes.

I should note, in this regard, that numerous fragments of Hughes’ more radical 1930s Central Asian writings eventually made their way—or did not make their way—into later, different, and less revolutionary texts. Like all prolific authors, Hughes constantly reworked old material and incorporated it in later publications. Small parts of the “Tamerlane’s Samarkand,” for example, are found on pages 184 and 187 of the 1956 *I Wonder as I Wander*. Even more interesting is the connection between chapter four, “Youth and Learning in Turkmenia,” of *A Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia*, and an essay Hughes later published in the *Crisis*, “Cowards from the Colleges,” which focused exclusively on the black colleges of the United States. A substantial portion of the middle of that *Crisis* essay can be found in an early version in the very differently focused Moscow text. And predictably, Hughes’ most significant alterations quelled the fire. To be sure, “Cowards from the Colleges” has long been counted as one of Hughes’ most trenchant texts; Faith Berry gives it good space in her anthology of Langston’s social protest writings. But even the tough-minded *Crisis* text has nothing like the anger found in this:

What kind of a school is this Hampton staffed by meek teachers educating spineless students? A religious school, of course, a Christian charity school supported by the philanthropy of rich and kind-hearted white capitalists who are willing for them to know how to work, but not to protest; and who are willing for black children to go to a black school, but not to a free white state school; and who therefore support and condone with their philanthropy the vicious color-caste system of America. (ANLASCA 31)

To be sure, I could go on describing the hundreds of editorial choices this project requires, editorial choices of a type commonly faced by textual editors of all kinds. But the examples here offer a good window on the major issues. Thus we turn now to Langston’s Uzbek-only poems, to more observations on Hughes in Central Asia, and finally to the Central Asia of today.

One limitation on my own scholarship on Langston Hughes in Central Asia is my incompetence in Uzbek. But border-crossing scholars should not be deterred from important work if it would otherwise go undone. Thus, I have been working with Muhabbat Bakaeva, of the Department of English Philology at the University of

Bukhara in Uzbekistan. As noted earlier in this essay, Hughes funded much of the Central Asian portion of his travels with the rich proceeds from the Uzbek translation of fifty of his poems. In *I Wonder as I Wander* Hughes reports that the book was his 1926 volume *The Weary Blues*. But analysis shows that only the first thirty of the fifty poems in *Langston Hyuz She'rlari*, or "Poems by Langston Hughes," were drawn from Hughes' debut collection. It is likely that Hughes only partially accounted for the Uzbek text in his 1956 memoir to hide the fact that the twenty other poems were revolutionary, focusing on the hoped-for worldwide revolution and its benefits for colored people. Ten of them had been sourced from Hughes' earlier poetry in various U.S. and international periodicals such as the *Crisis*, *Opportunity*, *New Masses* and the *Negro Worker*. An additional three poems appeared in English only after their Uzbek debut, suggesting that they may have been composed while Hughes was living in the USSR. One more poem is found only in typescript in the Beinecke Library archive.

But most importantly of all, after exhaustive searching we have concluded that six of the poems in *Langston Hyuz She'rlari* have no extant English-language equivalent, either in published writings or in the enormous archive. Thus they are, in a sense, newly discovered poems by Langston Hughes. Elsewhere in this issue of *Callaloo* we see the fruits of Kevin Young's (assisted by Muhabbat Bakaeva) creative re-interpretation of these six poems back into English. I say "creative re-interpretation" because it is impossible to accurately recreate an original English-language poem working only from an Uzbek version. Let us take as an example a poem we do know in both languages, "Proem," or "I am a Negro"—the first text in both *The Weary Blues* and *Langston Hyuz She'rlari*. Readers familiar with this famous poem will recall that the narrator in the second stanza says "I've been a slave / Caesar told me to keep his doorsteps clean." In Uzbek, Hughes' translator Sanjar Siddiq translated slave as "qarollar"—but then he also later used qarollar to translate "sharecropper" in a different poem. Thus if you only have an Uzbek text and you see the word "qarollar," it might have been slave and it might have been sharecropper in the original. The distinction is not too fine in Uzbek history, which has seen varieties of both, but the distinction was of course huge to Langston Hughes.

Likewise, Sanjar Siddiq translated Hughes' "Caesar" as "Rum podishosi," or "the king of Rome," because Caesar in the Uzbek tongue would have very wrongly connoted the Russian Czar, whose title comes from the same word. Later in the poem Siddiq also used an approximation for the untranslatable "ragtime," and simply says "skyscraper" for "Woolworth building," which his readers would not have known. Finally, color terms are problematic. Whereas for Hughes the words colored, Negro, African, and black all resonate differently, Hughes' far less racially conscious Uzbek translator generally translated all these terms as "black." In sum, if you only have the Uzbek version of "I am a Negro," you have no sure way of getting back to the original slave, Caesar, ragtime, Woolworth building, and almost any "racial" term. Note that this brief synopsis of the issues has only worked with words, without even getting into issues of prosody or form.

Having offered this brief, and I hope suggestive window onto both editing and translating Langston Hughes in Central Asia, I will now close with further observations on Hughes in Central Asia and on the Central Asia of today.



Langston Hughes and two Soviet Central Asian Writers.

As noted above, while in Central Asia Langston met with a broad range of poets, writers, musicians, artists and other cultural figures, who received him with enthusiasm. This first image (above), like the others in this essay, is reproduced from the small cache of photographs from Central Asia that Hughes brought back to the United States. This small-group photo, taken in a studio very likely in Tashkent in early 1933, portrays a clear intensity as well as a familial comfort between Hughes and those he's with. Unfortunately, neither I nor a range of Uzbek scholars have been able to identify the other persons in these photos. In 1938 a terrible wave of Stalinist repressions liquidated large numbers of Central Asian intellectuals, particularly those who had the courage of independent thought. A great gap in the cultural memory of Central Asia has resulted.¹²

Photo Courtesy of the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Book and Manuscript Library, and the Langston Hughes Estate, represented by Harold Ober Associates.



Langston Hughes with nine Central Asian writers.

The second image (above) reproduced here is remarkable. Permit me to discuss the photo at some length. On the faces of all the gentlemen portrayed, note again the intensity of focus, the “writerly” mien of several of the figures, such as the fellow on the bottom right, and the variety of ethnic types. At the center of the image, note the comfortable entanglement of arms and hands and legs. The elbow of the writerly fellow is resting on Hughes’ knee, and Hughes’ own right arm is comfortably against the chest of his bespectacled companion. Note also the easy tangle of the feet.

Importantly, many Americans to whom I have shown this image in recent lectures have queried whether this photograph in some way speaks to the debates over Langston’s sexuality that have percolated in the past ten years. My own view is that it does not. Protocols of bodily contact and spacing were (and are) quite different in the Central Asian and Islamic worlds, as well as in the world of formal Soviet studio photography. All the Central Asian viewers who have seen the image have been puzzled that a “sexual” interpretation of it could be advanced. In the upper left-hand corner of the photograph there is Cyrillic writing. It reads “Writers of Central Asia / with American Writer / Langston Hughes [Lengstonom Hyuzum] / Tashkent, 1st January 1933.” It was New Year’s Day.

Photo Courtesy of the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Book and Manuscript Library, and the Langston Hughes Estate, represented by Harold Ober Associates.



Langston Hughes and Arthur Koestler picking cotton.

Now, again as noted earlier in this essay, Langston was in part attracted to Central Asia for its cotton, whose existence bore a historical connection with that found in the U.S. South but whose mode of production differed massively from that in the former Confederate zone. At several points Hughes visited Uzbek and Turkmen cotton collectives, and here in a third image (above), along with the twenty-seven-year-old Arthur Koestler, he picks a little cotton for himself.

This photograph was most likely taken by either a Ukrainian writer, Kolya Shagurin, or the man described earlier in this essay as “a small, wiry man with skin about the color of the Bokhara desert at sunset”: the head of the Turkmenian Writer’s Union Shaarieh Kikilov. In the chapter “A Visit to Turkmenia” of *A Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia*, Hughes reports that during a visit to the Aitakov Kolkhoz (a Russian word, shortening *kollektivnoe khozyaistvo*, or collective farm) near Merv, “in the afternoon, I helped pick cotton, too” (17). One year later Langston reworked this chapter and published it as “White Gold in Soviet Asia” in *New Masses*. On Hughes’ own Beinecke archive copy of “A Visit to Turkmenia,” one can see his handwritten markups as he transforms the chapter. And there, immediately after the printed “cotton, too,” he penned the important emendation “for the fun of it.” No doubt he felt that such a clarification would be necessary for the readers of *New Masses*.

Photo Courtesy of the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Book and Manuscript Library, and the Langston Hughes Estate, represented by Harold Ober Associates.



Langston Hughes holding a copy of "Laughter Through Tears".

Back in Moscow after his months in Central Asia, Hughes saw the appearance of the Russian translation of his 1930 novel *Not Without Laughter*, which he is holding in this fourth image (above). On the cover of the book, we see the Cyrillic title of the translation: "СМЕХ СКВОЗЬ СЛЕЗЫ," or "Laughter Through Tears." This common Russian expression interestingly anticipates the title of Hughes' 1952 short-story collection, *Laughing to Keep from Crying*, which itself evokes a phrase equally common in the African-American tradition.¹³ Even more interestingly, this photo now graces the cover of the 1990 Vintage paperback edition of a *different* book, *The Ways of White Folks*, only with the Cyrillic writing cut away! It is likely that the Vintage editors chose the photo because it is roughly contemporaneous with the initial 1934 publication of Hughes' short-story collection.

We have so far both wondered and wandered much in these pages, but as I noted at the outset I would like to conclude by offering a sense of the Central Asia of today, from a Hughesian perspective. To be sure, at present American media coverage of the Central Asian world is focused on what "realists" term the U.S. "interest." One reads

Photo Courtesy of the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Book and Manuscript Library, and the Langston Hughes Estate, represented by Harold Ober Associates.

of ancient hatreds fuelling warlord-driven tribal warfare, and sees articles detailing the region's massive if isolated petroleum reserves and the power politics and corruption seeking to transport the crude and gas to Western markets. One also reads of Islamic fundamentalists and repressive state apparatuses led by Soviet-holdover presidents-for-life who aim to crush insurgent Muslims. Less frequently one sees accounts of the historical Russian, Russo-Soviet and even British colonial background to the current crises. Readers of *Callaloo*, intimately familiar with the awful and remarkably parallel Western media coverage of the African and diasporic worlds, should be depressingly familiar not only with the realities of such situations, but also with the narrowly tracked Western media which (mis-)present them. Thus in the paragraphs which follow I will *not* discuss Central Asian oil, fundamentalism, despots or "ancient hatreds," but will instead recount from a Hughesian perspective a short set of tales and events from my 1998 research travels in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan on the trail of Langston Hughes.

I began my visit in the region's most important city, Tashkent, and there I went to visit the editors of the Uzbek journal *Jahon Adabiyoti*, or "World Literature," which works to promote global literary links. For most of its modern history Central Asian readers have accessed distant literary traditions—such as those of East Asia, Western Europe, or North and South America—only through the sieve of Russian-language and translations. *Jahon Adabiyoti* looks to make the links direct. Not being certain of the editors' familiarity with Hughes, at the outset of our meeting I decided to review some basics. I said to my brilliant interpreter Kamola Salmetova, "Hughes was angry about the terrible conditions of African Americans in the U.S. South," and Kamola relayed that information to the staff. Then they began a brief discussion in Uzbek. Now, I do not understand a word of Uzbek, but I listened closely and was astonished to hear, in the middle of that flow of Uzbek, the editorial staff use the untranslated English words "Jim Crow" and "lynching," which I myself had never uttered in their presence. In English we borrow words like *zeitgeist*, *esprit de corps*, *kamikaze* and *perestroika*, reflecting attitudes towards Germany, France, Japan and Russia. In Uzbekistan what they know of the U.S., no doubt largely via (entirely truthful, in this case) 1930s Soviet propaganda, is Jim Crow and lynching.¹⁴

The next day I was fortunate to meet the family of Tamara Khanum in Tashkent. Tamara Khanum was a cultural hero in Soviet Central Asia—the first woman who dared to dance unveiled in the 1920s, and who, though not an ethnic Uzbek herself, preserved, popularized, and raised the status of Uzbek folk-dance forms. In his Central Asian writings, Hughes speaks constantly of Tamara Khanum, whom he visited on several occasions. I was honored to be a guest of the Khanums, and in particular to meet Tamara Khanum's now-aged daughter Vansetta. From Hughes' archival writings I knew that Vansetta Khanum was born on August 23, 1927, the day the Italian-American anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti were executed in Massachusetts, and that she was named in the latter's honor. The family was pleased that I made that connection. The day I met her was something akin to Veteran's Day throughout the former Soviet sphere, and to my surprise Vansetta Khanum was wearing her old Soviet military uniform, earned by giving hundreds of USO-type shows to Soviet Central Asian troops during World War II.

The aged woman's uniform was surprise enough, but I was even more surprised to learn that two others of my hosts were named Marat—after the martyred French revolutionist Jean-Paul Marat—and Klara, after the martyred German revolutionary Klara Zetkin. For a time, good Central Asian families named their children after martyred Marxist heroes. Suddenly, a young man of about 22 burst in and, since I was an American, he offered me his resumé. His English was superb, he had just completed an internship with Coca-Cola of Uzbekistan, and he sought a position in the field of marketing. And I wondered: what would Langston Hughes have made of *this* historical transformation? Another surprise developed later in the day, as I was looking through the Khanum family scrapbook and came across a photograph of the diminutive Tamara Khanum and her sister on either side of their extremely large and smiling 1936 visitor Paul Robeson.

After departing the Khanum's I was taken without warning by my interpreter Kamola Salmetova for a weekend countryside excursion with her extended family. In all his Central Asian writings, Hughes underscored the amazing hospitality he received, and six decades later it was no different. I was a stranger, but among the Uzbeks "guest is God," and hardly a night went by when I was not invited to a home. In Samarkand the gentleman who sold me a carpet learned during our negotiations that I'd just been married, so that night I attended his neighbor's daughter's gala wedding. Interestingly, one constant in my travels was the very light sense of ethnicity that many modern Central Asians seem to have. Whereas Western media seem fixated on detailing the "tribal" struggles in neighboring Afghanistan—and I have no doubt that to some extent these fights are real—the relative inattention Hughes' writings pay to Central Asian ethnicity was mirrored in my own experience. Ms. Salmetova's extended family group was quite a mishmash. Kamola herself was born of an Uzbek mother and a Tajik father, and thus was raised simultaneously in the Uzbek, Tajik, and Russian tongues. Her little boy Timur, born after the fall of the USSR, unsurprisingly bore the name not of a Marxist martyr but of the ancient Central Asian king the Soviets despised. Vadim, who drove, was half-Russian and half-Korean, a descendent of the one million Koreans from the Soviet Pacific who were deported *en masse* in 1941 to Central Asia, victims of Stalin's fears that they would be disloyal during World War II. Another fellow, Sa'eed, had a brother who drove a taxi in Chicago. And Kamola's good friend and lawyer Ilona was half Russian and half-Tatar. This is the multicultural face of Central Asia.

From Tashkent I traveled to the Samarkand I had grown familiar with in Hughes' print. The city is beautiful beyond compare, with enormous turquoise-domed mosques dating from the 14th to the 17th centuries strewn all about the town. It is easily an aesthetic rival to Marrakech or Istanbul. From Samarkand I took a night train to Bukhara, wanting to replicate the form of transport Hughes most often took. Bukhara was a revelation in 1998 as it was in 1932, housing the most extensive collection of medieval buildings remaining anywhere in the world. Its centerpiece is the Kalan minaret, built in 1127 and for centuries the tallest building in all of Asia. A short ride out of town took me to the Emir's summer palace, which still features the bathing pool so titilatingly described in Hughes' 1934 *Woman's Home Companion* article on a former harem captive turned Soviet model worker.

CALLALOO

After my travels in these cultural heartland cities, I set off to cross to Kyrgyzstan. Since Central Asia's mountain beauty is so compelling, with Kyrgyzstan itself having an *average* elevation of nine thousand feet, I hired a car to take me through the high plateaus that lead to Bishkek. What I did not realize was something also hidden from Langston Hughes: that Joseph Stalin mapped my route. When the Soviets gained control of Central Asia, they quickly installed the standard Stalin-authored Soviet nationality policy, wherein each Soviet ethnicity was allotted a republic or other territorial division. Hence a Ukraine for the Ukrainians, a Tatarstan for the Tatars, and so on down the line.¹⁵ The problem was, of course, that ethnicity then as now was a remarkably fluid concept. Before the Soviets, Central Asian peoples thought of themselves as nomad or settled, Russian Orthodox or Muslim, and at times they gathered around the (often multiple) languages they spoke. But there was certainly no concept of the mono-ethnic "nation." To ease the transition, Stalin and his cadres more or less *invented* the five Central Asian nations that we know today, supplying each with differentiated heroes, literatures, histories, ethnicities and boundaries. At the center of the Central Asian heartland—the large, fertile, and predominantly but not wholly Uzbek-speaking Ferghana valley—Stalin twisted the boundaries of three republics (Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan) into a single physical and ethnic space, not even half the size of Minnesota, leaving, as with the European map of Africa, a checkerboard of sudden "minorities" and "expatriate" ethnic brethren. During my travels Tajikistan was in the middle of a brutal and partly ethnic civil war, and the turmoil in its northern finger had closed the direct Ferghana valley routes from Tashkent. Thus we had to travel by a daunting circuitous mountain road the Uzbeks were furiously building so that the populated eastern fraction of their country would not be cut off.

Later that day, through a valley so pollution-choked my chest began to tighten, we passed a hulking rusting nuclear facility, to me a reminder of Chernobyl, but for Hughes the unknown future of an industrialization he extolled. My destination, Kyrgyzstan, was the poorest and least populated of the Central Asian nations; its capital, called Bishkek, was comfortable and neat, and betrayed a happily relaxed relationship with Soviet history that the Timur-obsessed Uzbek nation lacked. I toured the capital with an appealing guide and came upon Kyrgyzstan's modest national flag and shrine, whose total size is something one might see on an American college campus. But then I turned around, and saw, in front of the State Historical Museum and facing the national flag, an overwhelmingly large statue of the Soviet Union's founder Lenin. A few blocks away was a smaller though equally archaic statue of Felix Derzhinsky, the founder of the KGB, though his nameplate had been chiseled from the plinth. The next day, at lunch with Camilla Sharshkeeva, Dean of the American University of Kyrgyzstan, I reflected on what I felt to be the postcoloniality of Kyrgyzstan and asked if they'd be interested in comparatively teaching Kyrgyz with other postcolonial novels, such as those of Ngugi or Sembène. "That would be totally irrelevant!" she answered, and when I queried why, she confidently informed me that just seven years before, Kyrgyzstan had been a superpower too.

From Bishkek I drove overland to Almaty, which sits at 3,000 feet and is visibly bordered by 10,000-foot mountains to its south. It is the capital of Kazakhstan,

CALLALOO

physically the 9th largest country in the world, and it houses 1.5 million people, almost half of whom are ethnic Russians, hence the prominence of heroic World War II monuments and large Russian Orthodox churches in the city. I spent a few days in Almaty looking for evidence that Hughes, too, had come this far, but examination of old newspapers at the Kazakh Academy of Sciences revealed nothing. Later I visited the offices of my host, Bektur Baizhanov, a prominent Kazakh mathematician. After hearing my frustration at finding no evidence of Hughes, Bektur turned to the blackboard and in his mathematician's style sketched graphs and charts explaining why Hughes didn't travel that far east. Between 1931 and 1935 over half of all the Kazakhs died, victims of an unspeakably brutal attempt by Stalin to sedentarize what was then the largest nomadic population in the world. Murders, famines, Gulags, horse-killing, enemies of the state: and Hughes' handlers, though he was completely unaware, kept him from this part of Central Asia.

At the end of Hughes' *I Wonder as I Wander*, the author finds himself in Paris on New Year's Eve of 1938, it begins to snow, and he shares a drink with the Japanese director Seki Sano. And so I wondered how my own Hughesian wanderings would end. As if on cue, a few hours before my scheduled departure from Almaty back to the United States, it too began to snow. It was 3 a.m., and I got a car to take me to the airport. As we drove down the snow-slicked city streets, I looked out the window and saw a billboard for the TexaKa Bank, whose English-language blurb explained, "The Bank of Texas and Kazakhstan," and whose Latin shield, intertwining American and Kazakh flags, read "viribus unitus," or "with united forces." At 4 a.m. at the airport, Bektur and I ran into a linguistics colleague of his, who was also dropping off some visiting academics. Though it was the dead of night, the linguist insisted on celebrating our departure. He handed money to a nearby boy who returned with a bottle of Kazakh champagne and five plastic cups purchased at an all-night kiosk. The wet snow continued as we stood outside to toast. I handed my camera to a passerby and asked if he would take a photo, and it was only when I got it developed later that I realized that the poster looming behind us featured the craggy Western gaze of Philip Morris's Marlboro Man. What would my 1932 precursor have thought? It was 4:35 a.m., I was heading home, and I said a silent word of thanks to Langston Hughes.

NOTES

Like all scholars of Langston Hughes, I owe a debt to Arnold Rampersad's Hughes biography vastly greater than any footnotes could suggest. Different portions of this essay were given at the Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages; the Faculty of Foreign Philology at Tashkent State University; the American University in Kyrgyzstan; the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for Afro-American Research, Harvard University; the Second Central Asian Studies Symposium in Madison, Wisconsin; and the Yale University Langston Hughes Centennial conference. I owe great thanks to questioners and commentators at all venues. I gratefully acknowledge an American Council of Learned Societies / Social Science Research Council International Postdoctoral Fellowship for general support; an International Research Exchange Board IREX travel grant for research in Central Asia; and a Donald C. Gallup Fellowship at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University. The debt owed by scholars of Langston Hughes to the Beinecke is boundless. Finally, I would like to thank my Uzbek interpreter Kamola Salmetova, and my collaborators in Hughes Central Asian research, Jennifer A. Bouta and Muhabbat Bakaeva.

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1. See Hughes' two 1933 articles on the subject: "Moscow and Me" and "Negroes in Moscow." By far the best general introduction to the centuries-old interchange between Afro-diasporic peoples and the Russian (and then Soviet) empire is Blakely (1986).
2. Hughes discusses the Meschrapbom incident in *I Wonder as I Wander* (73–99). Mark Solomon treats the incident in his book on African Americans and Communism (175–77). Rampersad's discussion is in his (238, 243–51).
3. Hughes treats his split from the group in *I Wonder as I Wander* (102–9).
4. Hughes was not the only African-American writer to be fascinated with the USSR, and particularly Soviet Central Asia. Paul Robeson traveled widely in the USSR, including trips to Central Asia and specifically Tashkent. W.E.B. DuBois, at age 90, was guest of honor at the Afro-Asian writers' conference held in Tashkent in 1958. Audre Lorde, as noted in her chapter in *Sister Outsider* (1984), was also a Soviet guest at a 1976 conference in Tashkent, though her report on the proceedings was equivocal. The visual artist Elton Fax took an unusual tour of Central Asia in the 1970s, as he recounts in his *Through Black Eyes* (1976). See also Harry Haywood's recently reprinted *Black Bolshevik* (1978) and Homer Smith's *Black Man in Red Russia* (1964). Both Haywood and Smith concentrate their writings on the Russian rather than Central Asian portions of the USSR; Smith indeed was initially part of the same actors group as Hughes in 1932. For an account of the Afro-Uzbek descendent of one of the Tuskegee cotton experts who came to Uzbekistan in the middle 1930s, see Khanga (1992). For a consideration of the situation of African Americans in the U.S. South along Marxist terms initially developed in Soviet discussions, see Ralph Bunche's early essay (1929).
5. For a superb account of the Central Asian political, social, and cultural dynamics in the years leading up to Hughes' visit, see Khalid (1998). For an introduction to Central Asia, see Allworth (1994). For a general account of the post-colonial post-Soviet dynamic, see my essay "Is the Post in Postcolonial the Post in Post-Soviet? Notes Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique" (2001).
6. Koestler (1905–1983), who at the time was twenty-seven to Hughes' thirty, briefly discusses his travels with Hughes in his *Invisible Writing*. For a general account of "tourists of the revolution," see Enzensberger.
7. Hughes was also the subject of articles by Soviet critics. See for example Filatova (1933).
8. Central Asia's geocultural location and religious situation has long blessed it with rich Arabic-, Turkic-, and Persian-language literary traditions. But most of the *Western* literature known in Central Asian languages has historically been translated from their Russian versions. At present my Uzbek collaborator, Muhabbat Bakaeva, and I are preparing several articles that will explore the Uzbek translations of Langston Hughes.
9. The texts, all from 1933 and 1934, include "Farewell to Mahomet," "Going South," "In an Emir's Harem," "Tamara Khanum," "The Boy Dancers of Uzbekistan," "The Soviet Theater in Central Asia," and "White Gold in Soviet Central Asia."
10. I have analyzed the Central Asian portion of *I Wonder as I Wander* in my essay "Local Color, Global 'Color': Langston Hughes, the Black Atlantic, and Soviet Central Asia, 1932" (1996).
11. A balanced account of textual criticism is given by Greetham (1992). Among the most provocative statements in this field is Cerquiglini (1999).
12. There is no evidence in the Beinecke archive whether Langston was aware of the eventual liquidation of so many that he knew in Central Asia. Despite the enormous volume of his general correspondence still preserved, the Beinecke houses almost no letters to or from Central Asian correspondents. Hughes' Uzbek translator Sanjar Siddiq was one of those purged by Stalin in 1938, and for decades following Siddiq's death it was forbidden to put his name in print. Hughes' own poetry, however, remained available, and educated Uzbeks of many ages today still recall having read Hughes in translation while in school.
13. For a good outline of the resonances between Russian and African-American literary and folk traditions, see the recent book by Peterson (2000).
14. It is for this reason that Hughes' 1934 Uzbek translator Sanjar Siddiq, when confronted by the line "They lynch me now in Texas," directly transliterates the word "lynch" as "linč" in Uzbek. Even non-Uzbek speakers stop short when they recognize the word while scanning the Uzbek version.
15. See Stalin's own writings on this subject (1955).

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