

Title: Langston Hughes's Soviet Writing: Betweenness and Proxy Politics  
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Langston Hughes's elusiveness and betweenness is legendary. He steered a maddeningly middle course on many issues throughout his life, and thereby achieved non-affiliation with an enormous range of entities, not least of which was a sexual orientation. There are at least three Soviet texts in which this becomes clear early in Hughes's career. One is an unpublished essay called "The End of Allah," in which in the company of a translator he listens to propagandists from the Uzbek Union of Militant Atheists vent their views; the Hughes persona in the essay himself takes no stand. A second is an also unpublished essay titled "An Old Song and a New Song," in which Hughes translates (with assistance) a wonderful ancient Uzbek poem and a modern industrial Soviet poem, extolling both. The third is his use of Soviet agricultural practice as a critique of US sharecropping.