SELECTED POEMS OF NICOLAS GUILLEN AND LANGSTON HUGHES: THEIR USE OF AFRO-WESTERN FOLK MUSIC GENRES

DISSERTATION

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By

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INTRODUCTION

Nicolás Guillén (b. 1902 in Camagüey, Cuba) and James Langston Hughes (b. 1902 in Joplin, Missouri; d. 1967 in New York) are two black poets of prolific literary activity who wrote within the larger context of various early twentieth-century movements. According to Adriana Tous, World War I broke up the European cultural tradition, a disintegration evident in the cult of "ismos" in the arts.\(^1\) In Europe "primitivismo" was one aspect of the cultural revolution, while its Latin American counterpart was "indigenismo." In the Caribbean the indigenist movement was known as the "tendencia negrista."\(^2\) Furthermore, in the United States the trend called "negrophilism" corresponded with "primitivismo." In short, all these terms referred to a preoccupation with things black, or of African origin, by those European and American artists who felt that Western civilization was declining.\(^3\)

In the Caribbean, especially the Antilles, "negrismo" was associated with an interest in folkloric tradition. For example, in Cuba writers like Marcelino Arizañares, Emilio Ballagas, Alejo Carpentier, Nicolás Guillén, Ramón Guirao and José Z. Tallet were all part of the movement.
called Afro-Cubanism, which is said to have "... combined primitivism—a celebration of the spontaneity and vitality of the Cuban negro—with sencillismo of language." Like the other poets, Nicolás Guillén expresses the mood of the era by utilizing the rumba and the son, two dance forms of the African-based oral tradition in Cuba, as poetic genres. Although initially thrilled with experimentation, Guillén eventually transforms the son into a polished literary vehicle of social protest. Consequently, the son becomes the expression of Cuban as well as universal attitudes, sentiments, and aspirations. In this study we shall focus on selected poems from three of Guillén's collections: Motivos de son (1930), Sóngoro Cosongo (1931), and West Indies Ltd. (1934). Specifically, the poems will be examined in light of their illustration of various African-derived musical elements.

In the United States Harlem was the main focal point of the black arts. The "Harlem Renaissance," or the "Negro Renaissance," is the term used to define the flowering of creative energy among the black writers of the 1920's. Also related to it is the designation the "New Negro," one coined by Dr. Alain Locke in The New Negro (1925), a kind of cultural manifesto of black artists and scholars. The oral culture that had evolved from the time of slavery provided the inspiration for numerous authors of the period, among them Sterling Brown, Countee Cullen, Jessie Fauset, Langston Hughes, Zora
Neale Hurston, Claude McKay, Jean Toomer and James Weldon Johnson. Langston Hughes, the second poet which we shall consider in this dissertation, began writing during the Harlem Renaissance. Hughes captures the mood of the "Jazz Age," as the 1920's were called, by reproducing the blues and jazz, vocal and instrumental counterparts of the African-inspired oral tradition, in poetic form. Like Guillén, Hughes's initial endeavors are more or less euphoric experiments. Nevertheless, he gradually refines the genres and would also employ them as universal instruments of social protest. In Hughes's case, we shall consider selected poems from The Weary Blues, (1926), Fine Clothes to the Jew (1927), and Montage of a Dream Deferred (1951). Again the focus will be on the presence of African-based musical components in the poems.

There are several reasons why a comparison of Guillén and Hughes is worthwhile. The first and most obvious is their similar use of the above-mentioned oral forms as poems. While the incorporation of folk material into literature is not in itself an innovation, the emphasis on an African-inspired oral tradition is. In fact, the attention given to the systematic study of African cultures had not occurred on such a large scale before the early twentieth century. Thus, the works of Guillén and Hughes are excellent literary and historical expressions of this newly developing consciousness.
The second reason for a comparative study involves the state of criticism on the two writers. With respect to Guillén, there are portions of several literary histories and numerous articles commenting on his place as a poet of the Afro-Cuban movement as well as on the international scene. There are two book-length works: Martínez Estrada's *La Poesía afro-cubana de Nicolás Guillén* (1966) is a general study of Guillén's poetics and its relationship to the Hispanic peninsular tradition; Adriana Tous's *La poesía de Nicolás Guillén* (1971) discusses the Afro-Cuban folk-culture and the literary-historical precedents for the movement. In addition, one M.A. thesis and three Ph.D. dissertations have been written on Guillén. Francis M. De Gaetani's "Nicolás Guillén: A Study of the Phonology and Metrics in his Poetry," M.A. Columbia, 1940, examines the phonological and metrical aspects of four poems in an attempt to establish Guillén's significance in the development of Spanish and Spanish American versification. Wilfred Cartey's dissertation, Ph.D. Columbia 1967, compares Guillén with two other writers of Afro-Antillian Poetry. Moreover, the sub-title provides the gist of his work: "Three Antillian Poets, Emilio Ballagas, Luis Palés Matos, and Nicolás Guillén: Literary Development of the Negro Theme in Relation to the Making of Modern Afro-Antillian
Poetry and the Historic Evolution of the Negro." Joseph R. Farrell's "Nicolás Guillén: Poet in Search of Cubanidad," Ph.D. Univ. Southern Cal. 1969, illustrates the poet's quest for a national identity called "cubanidad," and has an historical-political slant. Mary Castán de Pontrelli's work, Ph.D. Yale 1958, is called "The Criollo Poetry of Nicolás Guillén" and analyzes the syncretic stylistic elements of his poetry from 1930 to 1947. All these studies stress themes and the literary devices of the Hispanic and western tradition; but none seems to delve into the African-oriented musical basis of Guillén's poetry or to examine the latter from the perspective of folklore analysis. In other words, I intend to look more closely at the Africanisms of the folk-music tradition and illustrate how their use in Guillén's early poetry marks the definitive stage of his aesthetic.

Most critics tend to regard Motivos de son as nothing more than pure rhythms. Yet if one does not understand the nature of these rhythms, it is difficult to appreciate the subsequent works of the poet.

The amount of criticism on Langston Hughes is limited to numerous book reviews (that is, of his collections of poetry), biographies, and general articles citing his importance as a poet of the Harlem Renaissance. Moreover one M.A. thesis and two dissertations have been
done. Inez Johnson Babb's "Bibliography of Langston Hughes, Negro Poet," M.A. Thesis at Pratt Institute Library School 1947, is a survey of the criticism of the poet up through 1947. James A. Emanuel's "The Short Stories of Langston," Ph.D. Columbia 1962, studies several collections of prose works by Hughes. And Lucia S. Hawthorne's _A Rhetoric of Human Rights as Expressed in the "Simple Columns" by Langston Hughes_, Pennsylvania State Univ. Ph.D. 1971, studies one aspect of the character of Jesse B. Semple, created by Hughes in a series of four prose works. To this date no extensive analysis of any of Hughes's blues and jazz verse has been carried out.

In short, no comparative analysis has been done in English of the African-derived musical basis of Guillén's rumba and son poetry and Hughes's blues and jazz poetry. While many commentators allude to their use of African-based rhythms, none actually show how the latter function in the poems. It is also important to see how this heritage is manifest in the works of two poets of apparently different backgrounds. That is, Guillén has roots in the Latin Roman Catholic culture, while Hughes is a product of an Anglo-Saxon Protestant society. Yet by comparing the two writers, it becomes easier to understand the extent and depth of the African influences in
the Americas and to perceive the underlying cultural unity of black people in the New World.

The final reason for an analogy between a black Cuban and a black American poet is the contribution it makes to the fields of Black Studies and Caribbean Studies. Before the advent of Black or African Studies, Afro-Americans viewed their cultural situation as isolated. It never occurred to many of us that we might have something in common with non-English speaking blacks in other American nations. On the other hand, the Caribbean area, which has the highest degree of Africanisms in New World cultures, has been a relatively neglected area in Latin American literature. It is hoped that this dissertation is an inroad into both fields.

A word must be said on the organization of this study, which consists of four main sections. Part I discusses the nature of folklore and the West African background of African-American folk music. Part II focuses on Guillén's expression of the Afro-Cuban oral tradition through the *rumba* and *son* poems. Part III presents Hughes's poetic interpretation of Afro-American folk culture through the blues and jazz genres. And Part IV compares the approaches, techniques and individual styles of these poets as well as their use of these forms as instruments of social protest. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the main points of the thesis.
NOTES TO INTRODUCTION


CHAPTER I

FOLKLORE: SOME BASIC DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS

The written literature of most societies bears some relationship to folklore and oral tradition. If one considers the very beginnings of literary criticism in Western tradition, this is acknowledged by Aristotle in his approach to studying Greek literature. The latter writer was very aware that "the Odyssey and the Iliad were originally folksongs, performed by minstrels whose main function was to preserve the heritage of oral tradition."¹

Folklore as a discipline began in those Western nations where a chasm developed between the learned and unlettered members of society. However, Johann Gottfried von Herder, a German philosopher, historian, and a pioneer in folk studies, did not conceive of folklore and literature as two mutually exclusive spheres. In his study of the German Volkslied (folksong), a term that he coined in 1771, Herder sought to illustrate that the formal literature of a country should be built on the creative accomplishments of its folk, no matter how crude the raw material might seem to the aristocracy.² This was a revolutionary idea in eighteenth-century Europe, which
was heir to the Renaissance and dominated by the Enlight-
ment. For while the intellectual elite in Europe held
that literature and culture flowed downward from them-
selves to the masses, Herder's major assumption was that
the basic literary values of a nation are determined by
the lowest echelons of the national culture. In the
same vein Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, two German philolo-
gists, gathered and published various "household tales"
(Kinder- und Hausenmärchen) in 1812.

The choice of an English word to describe the con-
cept is attributed to William Thoms, a member of the
English gentry, who first used "folklore" in 1846 in a
letter to The Athenaeum. According to Thoms, "folklore,
a less awkward term than "Popular Antiquities" or "Popu-
lar Literature," was the study of the manners, customs,
observances, superstitions, ballads, and proverbs among
the lower classes, who seemed to have a culture alien to
the upper classes. Thoms also believed that folklore
contained survivals from a distant past culture and this
idea is evident in his constant reference to "neglected
custom," "fading legend," and "fragmentary ballad."

Between 1850 and 1900 the discipline of folklore
began to evolve toward its present state. In addition,
folklore study became associated with the romanticist
and nationalist movements of nineteenth-century Europe,
a period when "the glorification of the common man included a nostalgic interest in his speech and manners which were believed to be dying out." The ethnic, nationalist slant of Thoms's attitude is evident in his desire to select "a good Saxon compound . . ." to describe folklore. In the United States writers like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman used a similar approach to Herder's in defining the relationship between folklore and American literature. And while the Wars of Independence disrupted literary activities in Latin America during much of the nineteenth century, the interest in folklore as potential literary material can still be seen in the portrayal of the noble savage in the Caribbean novel and in the gaucho literature of Argentina.

As in other disciplines, there is a lack of consensus on the nature of folklore and the use of this word to denote its subject. If one consults Funk and Wagnalls' Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend, at least twenty-one definitions are provided under the entry "folklore." In relation to this study, however, an "operational definition" of folklore is sufficient. Francis Lee Utley provides such when he describes folklore as " . . . orally transmitted literature wherever found, among primitive isolates or civilized marginal cultures, urban or rural societies, dominant or
subordinate groups." While oral transmission in and of itself is not the sole factor in identifying folklore, Utley feels that it is a crucial one. For although much folk material is eventually written down and printed, it was at one time conveyed by word of mouth through "active tradition-bearers."

Folklore has long been associated with a peasant or rural society that preserves the cultural elements of the past. This viewpoint is often called the "antiquarian perspective" and is a carry-over from the approach used by the English folklorists of the nineteenth century. Yet Herder saw folklore as contemporaneous with modern society. Alan Dundes is one of many present-day folklorists who share this concept of folklore with Herder. Dundes asserts that

The term "folk" can refer to any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is—it could be a common occupation, language, or religion—but what is important is that a group formed for whatever reason will have some traditions which it calls its own.

Thus we see that the concept of folklore has been broadened to include a diversity of expressions other than ethnic and regional manifestations.

When Utley refers to "active tradition-bearers," he means that folklore is transmitted anonymously. For there is usually a lack of an identifiable author, or
communal authorship. The range of folklore is quite extensive, but a sampling of its forms gives some idea of the kinds of materials it contains. According to Dundes, folklore includes myths, legends, folktales, jokes, proverbs, riddles, chants, charms, blessings, curses, oaths, insults, retorts, taunts, teases, toasts, tongue-twisters, and greeting and leave-taking formulas (e.g., See you later, alligator).\textsuperscript{15}

Folklore also encompasses many forms which are somewhat more tangible:

\[\ldots\text{folk costume, folk dance, folk drama (and mime), folk art, folk belief, (or superstition), folk medicine, folk instrumental music (e.g., fiddle tunes), folksongs (e.g., lullabies, ballads), folk speech (e.g., slang), folk similes (e.g., blind as a bat), folk metaphors (e.g., to paint the town red), and names (e.g., nicknames and place names).}\textsuperscript{16}

Folk poetry covers "\ldots oral epics, autograph-book verse, epitaphs, latrinalia (writings on the walls of public bathrooms), limericks \ldots\textsuperscript{17} and all sorts of children's rhymes and games. In short, folklore is regarded as the huge corpus of oral tradition of any society.

"Folklife," another concept used in conjunction with folklore, is synonymous with this entire panorama of traditional or oral culture. Don Yoder equates folklife with the Swedish \textit{folkliv} and the German \textit{Volksleben}.\textsuperscript{18} "Folklife studies or research," in turn, is analogous to the Swedish \textit{folklivsforskning} and the German \textit{Volkskunde},
which Yoder defines in the following manner:

In brief, folklife studies involve the analysis of a folk culture in its entirety. Folk culture is traditional culture, bound by tradition and transmitted by tradition, and is basically (although not exclusively) rural and pre-industrial. It exists in tension with other aspects of culture in civilization. Obviously, it is the opposite of the mass-produced, mechanized, popular culture of the twentieth-century.19

According to Richard Dorson, there are four basic categories of folklore and folklife studies: (a) oral literature; (b) material culture; (c) social folk custom; and (d) the performing arts.20 Oral literature, also called spoken art, verbal art or expressive literature, is "... spoken, sung, and voiced forms of traditional utterance that show repetitive patterns."21 Its subdivisions are folk narrative, folksong or folk poetry, anecdotes, rhymes, riddles, and proverbs. Material culture, referred to as physical folklife, is "... the visible rather than the aural aspects of folk behavior that existed prior to and continue alongside mechanized industry."22 It deals with the techniques, skills, recipes, and formulas handed down through generations "... and subject to the same forces of conservative tradition and individual variation as verbal art."23 Social folk custom is an intermediate stage between oral literature and material culture in which the focus is on group interaction instead of on individual skills and
performances. The English antiquaries entitled "custom and usage" all the "... community and family observances connected with villages, manors, landmarks, households, churches, holidays, and such rites de passage as birth, initiation, marriage, and death."\(^{24}\) And finally the performing arts comprise traditional music, dance, and drama, "... more casual in nature than the conscious presentation of these arts by individuals or groups with folk instruments, dance costumes, and scenario props."\(^{25}\) Thus, Dorson attempts to neatly order all the manifestations of folklore. But many are so fluid they belong to several of the groups he delineates.

Dorson is one scholar who conceives of folklore and literature as opposing forces because to him the creative power of the common people is less than that of the aristocracy of elite artists.\(^{26}\) Fortunately, most folklorists are not that rigid. For example, Cohen aptly points out the ambivalence between the two:

The relationship between the folklore and the literature of any country is subtle and complex, for folklore and literature both attract and repel each other. Literature nourishes folklore, and folklore nourishes literature. But literature is fundamentally associated with literacy, a fixed text and a printed page, and folklore is associated with illiteracy, a fluid text and word of mouth.\(^{27}\)
Since we are examining genres of the oral tradition of African-derived societies in the Americas, it is interesting to note some observations on African oral culture. In *Spoken Art in West Africa* Jack Berry attempts to classify the types of oral literature he finds in several West African societies (Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia). This author's uncertainty about oral forms is evident in his use of "folklore" "verbal art" and "literary art" interchangeably. Yet Berry does recognize these forms as literary ones. Folklore and literature are identical in this case. On the other hand, Herskovits reevaluates oral forms and concludes that all are not folklore. Moreover, he justifies the rejection of the term "folklore" in dealing with African societies first because the "folk-élite" cultural dichotomy does not exist in traditional societies, and second because the word has pejorative overtones.

Echeruo, an African-born scholar, provides an insider's perspective of African literature. In "Traditional and Borrowed Elements in Nigerian Poetry," he examines the extent of Western influences on indigenous models and how much the latter affect works of modern Nigerian poets (that is, those who use European as well as traditional conventions). Technique is the first element considered. According to Echeruo, the contemporary Nigerian poet, unlike the traditional bard, does not choose his
creative material from a format determined by custom. In delivery, the second component, the traditional poet has the advantage because gestures, voice inflection, music and other factors all comprise an integral part of the rendition of the poem. The modern poet is more limited in that he must rely exclusively on the written word. Regarding language resources (the third element), Echeruo asserts that while both oral and written poetry use language for poetic effects (that is, through myth, symbol, allusion and metaphor), modern Nigerian verse has expanded the area of myth and allusion by including Western material.

Finally, in her assessment of African oral tradition, Ruth Finnegans contends that folklore is only a part of oral literature which she views as part of the larger domain of literature. In addition, she holds that the difference between oral and written works is one of degree not kind. One might even perceive them as points on a continuum where the various stages flow into one another, merge, interact, separate and recombine.

There are as many approaches to the study of folklore as there are definitions. The purpose of this study is not to analyze folklore per se or to entertain arguments about its nature. Instead I shall illustrate how certain poetic forms composed by Nicolás Guillén and
Langston Hughes are intentional literary imitations or reproductions of specific folk music genres of their respective cultures. Guillén employs the rumba and the son, dance genres from the Afro-Cuban oral tradition, and Hughes utilizes the blues and jazz, vocal and instrumental counterparts that have a basis in Afro-American oral culture. Nevertheless, it is very helpful to resort to some of the techniques used by folklorists in identifying and interpreting folk material. The most applicable concept is the contextual school proposed by Roger Abrahams, Daniel Ben-Amos, and Alan Dundes. These scholars conceive of folklore as a three-dimensional entity—that is, as texture, text, and context.

Dundes feels that oral transmission is an external factor of folklore and that it should be viewed in conjunction with internal elements. Moreover, since the triadic scheme is a basic approach in Euro-American culture, he advocates the tri-partite method mentioned above. Texture refers to the actual language used in folklore, and includes elements like stress, pitch, juncture, tone and onomatopoeia.34 "The text of an item of folklore is essentially a version or a single telling of a tale, a recitation of a proverb, a singing of a folk-song."35 And "the context of an item of folklore is the specific social situation in which that particular item
is actually employed.\textsuperscript{36} Context also includes function, which refers to the use or purpose of a given folklore event. The event itself is the context. In essence, the contextual method enables the researcher to understand and highlight the fundamental characteristics of oral literature in a given society.

**Characteristics of African Oral Literature**

Here we shall only consider several basic traits of West African oral tradition which reappear in New World African folk cultures. The first basic feature of oral literature is the significance of the performance of a work. According to Finnegam,

oral literature is by definition dependent on a performer who formulates it in words on a specific occasion—there is no other way in which it can be realized as a literary product.\textsuperscript{37}

In written literature a work may be captured in a tangible, independent form even in one copy; for matters pertaining to format, number and the publication of additional copies, while relevant, are secondary. On the other hand, in oral literature there is a more intimate link between transmission and the actual existence of a work. In this respect, Finnegam views oral transmission as a prime ingredient of oral literature, for "... without its oral realization and direct rendition by
singer or speaker, an unwritten literary piece cannot easily said to have any continued or independent existence at all." 38 For this reason she feels that oral literature corresponds more closely to music and dance than to written works.

There are several contextual factors making up an integral part of the performance of an oral work. The first includes the use of facial expressions, body gestures and movements, and voice modulation. Second, tone is employed (in tone languages) as a structural element in certain oral poetic forms similar to the use of rhyme and rhythm in European genres. Third, a musical setting is very common for the rendition of oral pieces, for musical and verbal elements are interdependent in the oral tradition. Fourth, visual effects achieved through the use of costume and through the performer's bearing are important. For these reasons, Finnegans compares the rendition of an oral work in African literature to the opera in Western literature as a result of the combination of dance, instrumentation, song and speech. 39

Improvisation is the second fundamental characteristic of oral literature. As we shall see, improvisation does not necessarily mean spontaneous inspiration lacking in art consciousness. For in order to avoid the mere transmission of memorized information, the innovative
performer may have recourse to many techniques among which are the altering of the wording of a particular selection, the use of asides and imaginative figures of speech (metaphors, alliteration, mythical allusions, etc.), a change in the plot or the order of episodes within the plot, or a variation in the solo line. Because of the different versions of a given theme which may result from improvisation, the notion of a "correct" or "authentic" version is not common in African oral literature.\textsuperscript{40}

The interaction of reciter and audience is a third vital aspect of oral literature. In essence, the audience constitutes a kind of "active presence" in the execution of an oral selection, for its members participate in the recitation by commenting on, criticizing, or challenging the information as well as the skills conveyed by the performer. Moreover, the composition of the audience, that is, whether there are children, women or strangers present, also determines the way in which the performer carries out his art.\textsuperscript{41}

Finally, occasion is of paramount importance in the rendition of oral works because certain traditions are only enacted during special events like birth or victory celebrations, festivals, wedding or initiation ceremonies, religious rites or funerals. Others are an intimate part of daily activities.\textsuperscript{42} States Finnegan:
Many oral recitations are in response to various social obligations which, in turn, are exploited by poet and narrator for his own purposes. The performer of oral pieces could thus be said to be more involved in actual social situations than the writer in more familiar literate traditions. 43

Because of the correlation between art and everyday as well as special activities, and because of the co-participation of performer and audience, Senghor generally describes African art as functional and communal. 44 The latter trait does not deny the existence of professional artists. It is just that their contributions are complemented by those of the anonymous community. In addition to the function and collective nature of African oral art, there is also a strong sense of dedication or commitment. Works of art

... commit the person—and not only the individual—by and through the community, in the sense that they are techniques of essentionalisation. They commit him to a future which will henceforth be to him the present, an essential part of his ego ... The craftsman-poet takes up his position, and commits, with himself, his race, his history and his geography. He makes use of the material which lies to his hand, and the daily facts which compose the weft of his life ... 45

Senghor concludes that the craftsman-poet is not preoccupied with creating for eternity, for he realizes that works of art are perishable:

While their spirit and style are preserved, we hasten to replace the ancient work by
modernising it as soon as it becomes out of date or perishes. This means that in Negro Africa "art for art's sake" does not exist; all art is social.46

In making an analogy between oral literature and song and dance. Finnegans touches on a basic inclination of oral tradition--its musicality. Furthermore, folk music is of supreme importance in this study, for our analysis of the four oral genres hinges on our understanding of their musical nature. Consequently, we shall discuss the role of music in Afro-Cuban rumba and son poetry (Chapters III-VI) and in Afro-American blues and jazz verse (Chapters VII-X). First, however, we must consider the origin of New World black music.
NOTES TO CHAPTER I


2 Bluestein, Voice of the Folk, pp. 5-6.

3 Bluestein, Voice of the Folk, p. 6.


5 Thoms, "Folklore," in The Study of Folklore, p. 4.

6 Thoms, p. 4.

7 Thoms, p. 7.

8 Bluestein, Voice of the Folk, pp. 16-64.


15 Dundes, p. 3.
16 Dundes, p. 3.
17 Dundes, p. 3.
19 Yoder, p. 47.
21 Dorson, Folklore and Folklife, p. 2.
22 Dorson, p. 2.
23 Dorson, p. 2.
24 Dorson, p. 3.
25 Dorson, p. 4.
31 Echeruo, p. 142.
32 Echeruo, p. 143.


CHAPTER II

TRADITIONAL MUSIC IN WEST AFRICA

West African Origin

With respect to Africa, distinctions are generally made between those civilizations along the Mediterranean coast in North Africa and those below the Sahara Desert. The latter group is also known as "Black Africa." Before discussing the traditional music of West Africa, it is necessary to elucidate the major cultural areas of the continent.

It is essential, moreover, in any attempt to see African ways of life along broad lines, that the analysis focus on culture without regard to either of the two semi-independent variables, physical type and language. Using the cultural patterns of pre-European Africa as a point of departure (or "base line"), the anthropologist Melville Herskovits divides the Sub-Saharan portion of the continent into six major zones that run northward from the southwestern tip of Africa. They are the Khoisan Area, the East African Cattle Area, the Eastern Sudan, the Congo, the Guinea Coast, and the Western Sudan.

In a similar manner the musicologist Alan Merriam delineates seven musical areas, six of which correspond
roughly to the above cultural zones. From south to north they include the Bushman-Hottentot Area, East Africa, East Horn, Central Africa, the West Coast, the Sudan-Desert (which is divided into the Sudan and the Desert), and the North Coast. Thus we see that Zones Four (the Guinea Coast) and Five (the Congo) of Herskovits's classification are parallel to Area Five (the West Coast and the narrow coastal strip of the Central Region) under Merriam's classification. In addition, Merriam confirms that he regards the West Coast and the Central Area as one unit. Of all these cultural areas the West Coast, particularly the Guinea Region, is the most important in the consideration of the music that Africans brought to the New World. Nevertheless, Paul Oliver contends that the Western Sudan, a transitional zone between Black Africa and the Islamic areas, contributed in varying degrees to the African-American folk music tradition, especially in the United States.

It is the consensus among most Africanists that the majority of African peoples in the New World came from the Guinea Coast of West Africa. In fact, "... partly because of the warfare between the city-states, many of the Yoruba peoples were sold into slavery and became prominent among those groups who settled in the New World ..., especially in Latin America and the Caribbean. Other major
ethnic groups of the region that figured in the slave trade were the Ashanti, Ewe, Fon and Ibo peoples. Jahn establishes a direct connection between the Guinea Coast and the Caribbean by tracing the routes of the slave trade. Furthermore, West African cultural elements were diffused throughout the Americas from the Caribbean. 9

Besides geographical locale, the impact of moving from a familiar to a strange environment is another factor to consider in the evaluation of the African-derived societies of the Americas. Herskovits defines aculturation as the study of "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups." 10 Associated with this concept are the terms "survivals," "retentions," "remnants," "syncretism" and "vestiges," all used in relation to the amount of African influences in New World cultures. 11

In Bastide's opinion the degree of Africanisms in New World societies has been diluted by ethnic fusion, which, in turn, brought about a "double diaspora": "That of African cultural traits, which transcend ethnic groupings, and that of the Negroes themselves, who have lost their original African characteristics through interbreeding and have been absorbed by their social environment--
English, Spanish, French, or Portuguese." At best, then, one can speak of Maroon societies, or those in which African customs successfully resisted the Western influence, Negro communities, or those where acculturation into European-derived traditions occurred to a large extent, and various groups in between. 

Conversely, Herskovits observes that, while specific ethnic identities are not always identifiable (especially in the U.S.), ethnic fusion was a preserving force in the development of black cultures because of the underlying cultural homogeneity of the African nations from which the people came. In other words,

The civilizations of the forested coastal belt of West Africa and the Congo are to be regarded as forming one of the major cultural areas of the continent; which means that they resemble each other to a far greater degree than is recognized if local differences alone are taken into account. Again, in contrast to European custom, the resemblance of these coastal cultures to those of Senegal and the prairie belt lying north of the forested region of the west coast, or in the interior of the Congo, is appreciable.

Thus, the aspects of the West African oral tradition which figure in this study can be applied more or less equally to the specific areas outlined above. With this in mind, it is important to discuss some general features of musical forms of this tradition.
Characteristics of West African Music

The most outstanding feature of West African music is the great emphasis placed on rhythm. In lay terminology rhythm is the regular, recurrent alternation of strong and weak beats in the flow of sound. Moreover, African rhythm is distinguished from European in its higher degree of complexity, which Roberts explains in this manner:

Perhaps the most important formal element of rhythm in African music is that instead of having a single meter, either duple (two or four beats) or triple (three or six), a performance puts two or more different meters together, as if one drummer were playing in waltz-time and another in march time, for example. Rhythm is also based on contrasting recurrent beats with irregular patterns.

Ward agrees with the concept of simultaneous rhythms and meters in African music. Moreover, like many investigators, he identifies the principle of polyrhythms and polymeters with drumming. In his opinion one drum executes rhythms in duple meter with little variation, thus serving as the ordering force of the others in such a complex organization of time.

Hornbostel adds another dimension to the idea of polyrhythms and polymeters. He views drum playing as a motor as well as a sound-producing action.
Using the principle of simultaneity as a point of departure, Waterman explains the organization of the West African metric scheme in terms of the "metronome sense," which is a subjective, but learned, sensitivity to rhythmic complexity. 20 He asserts:

From the point of view of the listener, it entails habits of conceiving any music as structured along a theoretical framework of beats regularly spaced in time and of cooperating in terms of overt or inhibited motor behavior with the pulses of this metric pattern whether or not the beats are expressed in actual melodic or percussion tones. 21

In short, the metronome sense means that the rhythms of African music are highly adaptable to dance. Furthermore, all music is conceived and executed in terms of this fundamental principle. 22

E.S. Kinney elaborates on the intimacy between rhythmic complexity and dance:

Rhythm is the most striking aspect of African music, with drumming displaying it in its most complex form. African dance responds to this rhythm and makes visible its complexities. The body of the dancer or group of dancers incorporates both the subtleties and the more direct dynamics of expression, translating them into movement which corresponds to music. One dancer can metaphorically duplicate exactly—all the rhythms of an entire drum ensemble by using the several parts of the body simultaneously. Or the dancer can paraphrase the rhythm, by moving in complementary or contrasting rhythms. Frequently paraphrasing and metaphrasing operate concurrently in the dance when the assembly is in the form of leader-chorus.
Then the choreography may also conform to an antiphonal-responsorial style, which is spatially identical to that style of vocal music, the call and response pattern, in which a soloist sings an exclamation and a reiterative chorus responds at regular intervals (the melodic line of the soloist frequently overlapping into the chorus line). 23

While the metronome sense is present in other civilizations, the total dependence on it, as a part of the standard paraphernalia of music making, is an exclusively African phenomenon, in Waterman's opinion. 24

A melodic-rhythmic trait that operates in close association with the metronome sense is the "off-beat phrasing of melodic accents." 25 Simply stated, this refers to the fact that melodic beats, especially the accented ones, are sounded between the normal percussive beats. Waterman uses this phrase in place of the term "syncopation," which he feels is a misleading one. In fact, syncopation is regarded as a simplified form of off-beat phrasing of melodic accents. 26

A percussive approach to musical performance is the second identifiable characteristic of West African music. 27 Moreover, percussion not only refers to beating or striking instruments, which simply reflect this trait, but also to the hitting of body parts, as in hand-clapping or foot-patting. Even instruments that are not normally classified as percussive are played in this manner. 28 This principle also occurs in vocal music, which is rendered
in a dynamic, forceful manner. Melodic accent and unclear tonal qualities are employed extensively to achieve a percussive effect. In its total intent, African music is hard-driving, rhythmic and percussive.\textsuperscript{29}

Antiphony is an outstanding formal pattern in West African vocal music,\textsuperscript{30} but as stated above, the same principle operates in instrumental music and dance. It is a two-part dialogue structure in which a lead soloist alternates with a chorus. The soloist's phrase or part is often improvised while that of the chorus is relatively fixed, thus providing the identifying element of the song.\textsuperscript{31}

The simplest and most common type of antiphony is the repetition of two phrases between soloist and chorus, a pattern known as "call-and-response."\textsuperscript{32} However, in the actual rendition of a song, call-and-response is elaborated on so that a balance is achieved between leader and chorus through repetition.\textsuperscript{33} Another kind of antiphonal collaboration between leader and group is the solo and chorused refrain; but this type lacks the same balanced alternation of regular call-and-response. Here the soloist introduces the song by singing the entire verse through one time and this is subsequently repeated by the chorus.\textsuperscript{34}

A third variation of antiphony is the overlapping of solo and chorus parts.\textsuperscript{35} In this type the chorus
phrase starts regularly while the leader is still singing; the soloist, in turn, commences before the chorus finishes. Waterman explains this pattern in terms of the primacy of rhythm in West African music. That is, "the entrance of the solo or the chorus part on the proper beat of the measure is the important thing, not the effects attained through antiphony or polyphony." In instances where the leader drops out for awhile or periodically, the choral part through repetition becomes the mainstay of the song, and thus, the vital element of its rhythmic structure. Consequently, "the leader, receiving solid rhythmic support from the metrically accurate, rolling repetition of phrases by the chorus, is free to embroider..." at will. A fourth type of antiphony involves an exchange between two lead singers and two choruses, or between two groups where one "calls" and the other "responds." However, West African song also employs the device of contrapuntal duet, which may or may not be accompanied by a recurrent choral phrase. Finally, the dialogue structure is also evident in the relationship between the human voice and instruments, on the one hand, and between two instruments, on the other.

Although antiphony is not an exclusively African phenomenon, the way in which it is employed is unique to African-derived cultures. European folk music has traces of this pattern in litanies and ballads. However, in the
latter forms the verse is usually self-contained, while in African antiphony the sense of the verse is incomplete without the response.\footnote{42}

A flexible intonation characterizes much of the vocal music of West Africa primarily because of the prevalence of tonal languages. In fact, speech and song are intimately related. For this reason a performance is rarely executed in exactly the same manner no matter how many times it is repeated.\footnote{43} Another trait to be considered is the crescendo effect of West African music, or the rapid building up of tension as a song nears its end. Linked with the accelerando effect is the repetition of words, phrases and rhythms. As a result, the sense of exaltation or excitement which this type of music produces leaves the impression of inconclusiveness to those who are not accustomed to it.\footnote{44}

Another feature of West African music is the use of the diatonic scale where the inclination is toward variable intonation of the third and seventh intervals. This is typical of the blues scale in the United States.\footnote{45} Regarding the type of rhythmic complexity found in West-African tradition, Waterman designates it as the "hot style." By this he means the compelling, exciting force motivating its performance. It is a unique feature which depends on the feelings, values, attitudes and motor-behavior patterns of Black African culture, thus
distinguishing African music from that of other cultural areas. The counterclockwise dance in which the participants function as part of the singing chorus is a West African trait that will carry over into the Americas. Falsetto, or "an artificially produced singing voice that overlaps and extends above the range of the full voice . . ." is omnipresent in African music. Finally, there is little differentiation between sacred and secular usage of musical material.

The qualities of West African music can be summarized in the following way:

an emphasis on rhythmic and metric complexity expressed throughout the musical system; the use of extended syncopation, or off-beat phrasing of melodic accents, as a melodic device; the antiphonal call and response pattern with overlapping between the parts; the presence of two-part formal structures; the use of improvisation; the presence of the simultaneous sounding of two or more pitches; a wide variety of tone colours and ornamental devices, including rising attack, falling release, glissando, and bend and dip; and probably a scale approximating the diatonic.

Finally, several terms will be used to describe the culture of African-American societies: "African-based," "African-derived," "African-inspired," and "African-oriented." They are all synonyms. By them we mean that the ideas of musical function, musical custom, and the concepts of music's social and functional role, although products of the New World experience, are basically West African in perspective.
NOTES TO CHAPTER II


3 The expression "pre-European Africa" refers to "... the indigenous cultures immediately preceding the impact of those elements of European culture that have resulted in the most extensive changes—literacy, urban living, industrialization, new concepts of nature and of the supernatural, a broader outlook on the world at large." (Herskovits, p. 52).

4 Herskovits, Ibid., p. 56.


6 Merriam, Ibid., p. 79.


9 Janheinz Jahn, Muntu (New York: Grove Press, 1961), n. p. This map is at the very end of the book.


11 Herskovits, Ibid., p. 10.

13 Bastide, Ibid., pp. 42-43.

14 Herskovits, Myth of the Negro Past, p. 295.


17 Roberts, Black Music of Two Worlds, p. 11.


21 Waterman, Ibid., p. 87.

22 Waterman, Ibid., p. 87.


25 Waterman, Ibid., p. 88.

26 Waterman, Ibid., p. 88.

28 Merriam, Ibid., p. 15.
29 Merriam, Ibid., p. 15.
30 Merriam, Ibid., p. 16.
31 Merriam, Ibid., p. 16.
33 Finnegan, Ibid., p. 260.
34 Finnegan, Ibid., p. 260.
35 Finnegan, Ibid., p. 261.
37 Waterman, Ibid., p. 90.
38 Waterman, Ibid., p. 90.
39 Waterman, Ibid., p. 90.
41 Fernando Ortiz, Los bailes y el teatro de los negros en el folklore de Cuba (Habana: Ministerio de Educación, 1951), p. 67.
42 Roberts, Black Music of Two Worlds, p. 9.
44 Ortiz, La africana, p. 288.
45 Waterman, "African Influence ...," in Mother Wit, p. 90.


48 Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, p. 301.

49 Waterman, "African Influence . . .," in Mother Wit, p. 90.

50 Waterman, Ibid., p. 90.


52 Roberts, Black Music of Two Worlds, pp. 50-51.
CHAPTER III

AFRO-CUBAN FOLK MUSIC GENRES: THE RUMBA AND THE SON

Although there are two sources of Cuban folkloric music, the Andalusian and the West African song and dance traditions, the latter figures mostly in our discussion of the rumba and the son. Moreover, the first scholar to undertake serious research into the presence of Africanisms in the Cuban oral culture was the ethnologist Fernando Ortiz. In several monumental works Ortiz studies the religion, song and dance of the Afro-Cuban tradition, which he also distinguishes from the Euro-Cuban:

Entendemos por música afrocubana la música que el pueblo cubano recibió de los negros de África, adoptada a veces por aquél con ciertas modificaciones, y la creada después en Cuba bajo la influencia de las tradiciones musicales africanas en combinación con otras de diversas procedencias.  

Roberts asserts that the mixture of African and Hispanic elements began long before Spain colonized the New World since the presence of the Moors in the Iberian Peninsula for eight centuries had led to an interchange of musical custom. Consequently, the Spanish conquerors brought a mulatto music with them to America.  

In agreement with
him, Ortiz implies, in essence, that much of the folkloric music of Cuba is derived basically from the African-oriented oral culture.

Afro-Cuban folk music, in turn, is rooted in the religious practices of various West African ethnic groups, the most salient of which are the Yoruba, Congo, Dahomeyan and Carabalí. Each group is associated with a religious system that is the result of the fusion of West African and European Christian beliefs. Santería, also called Regla Ocha or Regla Lucumí, is related to Yoruba culture and is the most predominant of the four, especially in Havana and the other western provinces of Cuba. Because of its widespread practice, Santería is regarded as the product of a double process of syncretism—that between the creeds of different African ethnic groups, and that between the latter and Roman Catholic beliefs. Ngangulería, Regla de Mayombe or Regla Conga, is found in the eastern parts of Cuba (especially Oriente Province) where Congo or Bantu beliefs prevail. And scattered throughout the Island are areas of Dahomean influence which are evident in the Arará rites (called Arada in Haiti). In short, the popular term for all these cults is "regla." Nañiguismo, a form related to Carabalí religious expression, is a pejorative reference to the activities of the Abakuá Society. Furthermore, Ortiz
cautions that it is not a religious cult proper, but a secret organization along the lines of freemasonry in which only initiated male members participate. 9

Dance, along with song, mime and other forms of rhythmic movement, is an integral part of worship in West African oral tradition. 10 Moreover, the music of sacred dance, or that specifically linked to the cults, is primarily, though not exclusively, devoted to the supplication and praise of the gods. This is achieved by assuming the characteristics of a particular deity and carrying out activities peculiar to him in a ceremony in which the dancers are possessed. For example, one who worships the deity of fertility responds to the particular rhythms associated with the harvest or the reproductive cycle. 11 On the other hand, the masked dances for which the Ṣàngìgolọ (practitioners of Ọlọgbọju) are famous represent the apparition of a mysterious animal, spirit or ancestor of the particular ethnic group. 12 That is, the ileme Ṣàngìgolọ or "diablitos" (names for the specialized group of masked dancers) seek to convince the public that they are the visualization of spiritual forces. 13 The difference between the participants in cult dances to the deities and the "diablitos" is that the former are actually believed to be ridden by the gods during the ceremony while the latter are not possessed, but are merely dramatizing meaningful social institutions and beliefs. 14
Since many of the masked dances of West African tradition are associated with death and resurrection rituals or fertility ceremonies, they correspond to the pre-Christian practices which gave rise to the carnival celebrations of Western Europe, held between the beginning of the winter solstice, or Christmas Eve, and the advent of the spring equinox, or Lent. However, with the gradual inclination of European Christianity toward a theological emphasis, the original significance of such festivities was lost. Only their external expressions, seen in the gay riotous abandon and catharsis of ambulatory rites, were maintained.\textsuperscript{15}

In Cuba one of the most colorful festivals is the "Día de Reyes," traditionally held on January 6 in Havana, which Ortiz describes in this manner:

En esa bulliciosa fiesta de los "negros de nación," éstos salían a las calles y plazas para llevar a cabo las ceremonias tribales que ellos realizaban en Africa una vez al año y que aquí solo les eran permitidas públicamente en ese u otro día señalado, con el beneplácito y auxilio de las autoridades, como una catarsis de sus peligrosas tensiones sociales. Cada "nación" sacaba sus procesiones con sus reyes, sus cortejos, sus dignitarios y sacerdotes, sus músicas y cantos, sus bailes, sus ritos y sus figuras con los atavíos ceremoniales.\textsuperscript{16}

Although the "Día de Reyes" celebration was officially banned in 1880, certain masked dances of the "diablitos" associated with it continued into the early twentieth century.
Closely linked to the tradition of masked dances in Cuba are the *comparsas*, or itinerant processions celebrating carnival according to the customs inherited and syncretized from the various racial and ethnic groups making up Cuban society. One of the most renowned is the *comparsa habanera*, or Havana procession:

La *comparsa habanera* consiste, simplemente, en una compañía de mascarados con un plan común para representar conjuntamente un tema colectivo, como un episodio folklórico, un acto de teatro ambulante o un paso de procesión.

In essence, these meanderings are spectacles on the order of bullfights, cockfights, dogfights, boxing or other kinds of activities that are carryovers from pagan eras. However, the *comparsas* are not violent as a general rule. Instead they may range from vulgar exhibitionism to subtle artistry in their myriad dances, songs and costumes.

Concurrent with the religious and masked dances of oral tradition in Cuba are various secular forms. However, the use of the term "secular" in relation to African-derived folklore is often misleading, as Jahn astutely observes:

On the basis of African philosophy there can be no strict separation of sacred and profane. Since everything is force or energy, the orisha as well as the human being, the sacred drum as well as the profane, and all force is the embodiment of a single universal life force, the boundary between sacred and profane cannot be drawn as it is in Europe. Everything sacred has . . . a secular
component, and everything secular a relevance to religion. There are infinitely many gradations, depending on whether a dance symbolizes more or less of the universal life force, whether it contains more or less nommo.20

In short, the dances of the African-based oral tradition can be thought of as belonging to one of three general categories. In the first are circular dances, which are usually ritualistic in nature. They may either be executed in one large circle or in several concentric circles. The second group contains the linear dances, or those in which two lines of men and women dance opposite one another. And finally there are the ambulatory processions, or "train dances," which we have previously discussed.21

The Rumba

The bamboula, calinda (or calenda), chica, juba and yuka are several closely related types of African-derived "secular" dances which are found in many Caribbean nations.22 Of them the yuka is of special interest since it is considered to be the precursor of the rumba. The term "yuka," of Congolese origin, refers to a set of musical rhythms, called toque de yuka, which are played on three drums, one of which bears the same name.23 According to Ortiz, it is also a two-part dance in Cuba:
Yuka en Cuba es también nombre de un baile que se efectúa en dos partes: una a 2 por 4 y otra rápida, a 6 por 8. Su sentido es esencialmente erótico y su coreografía deja cierta libertad a los bailadores, dentro de un riguroso encuadramiento rítmico, para lucirse en la estrategia sexual, que constituye la trama del baile. La primera parte es simplemente un cortejo de la mujer por el hombre; él insiste con su mimica lúbrica y sus floreos de galán y ella lo esquiva con excitante coquetería. En la segunda parte, los pasos y las vueltas, ajustadas siempre al ritmo sensual de los tambores, se precipitan hasta llegar al episodio final, que puede ser afirmativo o negativo.24

Moreover, as the yuka was adopted into European-oriented Cuban society, it was gradually westernized, going through several stages called the rumba brava, the rumba picaresca and the rumba de salón.25 It is the latter form that became internationally popular and which is known simply as the rumba. In short,

La rumba es esencialmente pantomímica, la simulación del cortejo amoroso hasta su peripecia orgásmica, y siempre se desarrolla estilizando con crudeza o con sutil comedimiento ese diálogo de los sexos.26

That is, the rumba is the direct pantomimic representation of human courtship.

Roberts adds that the early rumba consisted of several movements that were part of a series of carnival festivities, and that its music was percussive, illustrating "... the common African and neo-African feature of a lead drum (the cajoncito de velas) improvising
over constant rhythmic patterns from the cajón . . . "27 which is accompanied by piano, claves, maraccas and quinto drum, or large drum. He continues: "Sometimes it was just one incident in the course of events, sometimes there would be several dances linked together under the general name of rumba."28 Like other African-inspired forms, the rumba began with a solo song, which might have one vocalist or two alternating singers, performed according to a call-and-response pattern. Roberts' description of the dance situates it within the general class of circular dances:

The dancing itself took the common African form of a couple (or solo) dance inside a ring of singer-watchers. In some rumba dances, like the yambú, there was—as in many African dances—a large element of mime, in the case of the yambú itself, imitating old age.29

The guaguanco, an attraction-repulsion courting dance " . . . with a long solo vocal passage in narrative form, often with a topical or personal subject . . . "30 is the kind of rumba described by Ortiz. A third form is the columbia, danced by a single person who makes joking or satirical allusions to the lucumí and abakwá ceremonies, in which the soloist becomes embroiled in a rhythmic "argument" with the lead drummer.31 In short, these various types of rumba " . . . continue the strong song-dance-visual-aural-performer-spectator continuum that is
fundamental to African aesthetic concepts." Jahn concludes that the rumba, like the son and other Caribbean dances, are all variations of the same concept, "... in rhythm the 'partly stylized and thus somewhat lame, direct imitation of West African percussion rhythm,' in choreography fragments of the African religious fertility pantomime reduced and stylized to the point of unrecognisability." 

Finally, a word is in order on the structure of the rumba:

The RUMBA consists usually of only one theme of eight measures' duration, indefinitely repeated. In some cases it has two themes, the second being only a variation of the first, always keeping the same character and structure. This dance is fully African in origin; in it, rhythm is the leading quality. Its melody serves merely as a superficial cloak to the rhythm. In the same manner, the text usually consists of meaningless phrases and syllables whose only reason for existence is to follow faithfully the accents of the rhythm.

Ordinarily the rhythms, which are carried by the response section, or estribillo, are in 2/4 meter although they vary with each rumba. The choreography of this dance involves a series of movements of the hips, bust and shoulders in time with the rhythms of the music. It is a very sensual dance and one with great significance due to its representation of fertility rites. Only when the latter meaning is lost does the rumba become "obscene" in the European or Western sense.
The Son

The second Afro-Cuban "secular" dance which we will consider is the son, a form of the classical rondo. Moreover, it consists of an introduction, or several verses, and these alternate with a repeated couplet, or estribillo. 37 Carpentier asserts that the son is similar to the contradanza (or danzón), a "society" dance introduced into Cuba in the nineteenth century when Haitian slaveholders sought refuge from the revolution in their country. The son originated in the bárreones (slave quarters) of rural Eastern Cuba and had gradually spread to the barrios (lower class districts of the cities) by the early twentieth century (around 1917). 38

During the colonial epoch the son was performed with a regular guitar and a smaller, three-stringed guitar called a tres. However, eventually the bass . . . came to be filled in by the marímbula, the big descendant of the African marimba hand piano, and the botija, a jug blown into to give a booming bass note . . . The presence of these instruments, especially the marímbula, suggests a black origin for the son, which is not invalidated by the early use of the guitars, for there is evidence that black Cubans took to the guitar much earlier than blacks in North America . . . 39

Other instruments of the son ensemble are the güiro, ". . . a long smooth gourd from the back of which strips are cut, and which is scraped with a sharp-pointed
implement . . ."⁴⁰ the maracas, two hollowed-out round gourds containing seeds which are rattled rhythmically, the claves, a set of resonant sticks of different pitches that are hit together, and the bongó, a set of linked twin drums.⁴¹ This is the usual format of the son orchestras that became popular in Havana. Furthermore, while they generally have five or more players, the bongosero, or bongó drummer, is very important because he coordinates the other instruments, the singers and dancers.⁴²

In structure the son is composed of "... an exposition of undetermined length for solo voice and a four measure contrasting refrain called 'montuno' sung twice by the chorus."⁴³ Carpentier refers to the initial recitative or exposition as the 'largo,' which utilizes the Spanish romance form.⁴⁴ This is the antiphonal structure characteristic of most African-derived music. In Cuban tradition the dialogue assumes two basic forms: the call-and-response in which the latter element is a commentary on the solo verses, and the call-and-response in which the refrain is repeated as an estribillo.⁴⁵ Sometimes the response becomes the tune.

In conclusion, the son is basically an instrumental ensemble geared to dancing which constitutes a link between Cuban rural folk music and urban popular styles.⁴⁶

In this chapter we have examined two dance forms that stem from the religious-based West African musical
tradition in Cuba. Both genres reveal several outstanding features of this folklore. First, the rumba and the son both consist of polyrhythms and polymeters in that the estribillo, or refrain section, sustains the binary rhythm (in 2/4 meter) while the melodic verses carry the counterrhythms, or syncopated accents. In addition, a crescendo effect is achieved with the concatenation of repeated rhythms toward the end of each form. Second, there is a prevalence of percussive instruments—claves, maraccas, drums—and, although the guitar represents an Hispanic influence, it and the piano are often played percussively, thus illustrating a fundamental principle of West African music. Third, the antiphonal structure of both dances is strongly rooted in African musical concepts. Finally, the combination of song, dance and pantomime, with special emphasis on instrumentation, is a salient feature.

The intimate relationship of music and verse gave rise to the traditional son in Cuban folklore, the earliest extant version of which is the Ma Teodora (1580). However, in many of the traditional sones, Cubans of African lineage figured only as subject matter, many times stereotyped. The Camagüeyan poet Nicolás Guillén would be one of the first African-descended Cuban artists to utilize traditional forms by transposing them into written literature.
NOTES TO CHAPTER III


2 Fernando Ortiz, La africanía de la música folklórica de Cuba, (Habana: Ministerio de Educación, 1950), p. 3. See also Los bailes y el teatro de los negros en el folklore de Cuba, (Habana: Ministerio de Educación, 1951), chapters II and III. And for details of Afro-Cuban religions see Hampa afrocubana: Los negros brujos, (Madrid: Librería F. Fe, 1906).


9 Ortiz, Los bailes y el teatro . . . . , p. 375.

10 Ortiz, Ibid., pp. 103-130.

11 Ortiz, Ibid., p. 141.

12 Ortiz, Ibid., p. 333.

13 Ortiz, Ibid., p. 334.


17 Ortiz, "Las comparsas . . .," *Estudios Afro cubanos*, p. 132.


32 Roberts, Ibid., p. 96.

33 Jahn, Muntu, p. 90.


35 Duran, Ibid., p. 32.

36 Jahn, Muntu, p. 90.


39 Roberts, Black Music of Two Worlds, p. 97.


41 Cowell, Ibid., p. 46.

42 Ortiz, Los instrumentos . . ., IV, p. 430.

43 Durán, Recordings of Latin American songs . . ., p. 32.

44 Carpentier, La música en Cuba, p. 191.


46 Roberts, Black Music of Two Worlds, p. 98.

47 Boti, "La poesía . . .", Revista Bimestre Cubana, 348.

CHAPTER IV

MOTIVOS DE SON (1930)

The Genesis

Nicolás Cristóbal Guillén y Batista, the eldest child of Nicolás Guillén y Urra and Argelia Batista y Arrieta, was born on July 10, 1902 in the city of Camagüey, Camagüey Province, Cuba. The family was of mulatto origin. The poet came into the world in the same year that Cuba became a Republic. In fact, the major historical and political developments on the island from 1902 on would find personal echoes in Guillén's life and affect his art.¹

Guillén's father, a prominent political figure in the conservative Camagüeyan society, fought untiringly against political corruption, racial discrimination and social injustice, early instilling in his son a sense of dignity, integrity and militance. For this reason, the younger was constantly moved from one school to another because of somewhat nonconformist inclinations. This factor is important in understanding the development of a temperament closely linked to his aesthetics.²
Young Guillén showed great aptitude for literature, especially poetry, and he would avidly read all that he found in the family library. He was also very close to his father with whom he would converse for hours on end. During his adolescence Guillén's father edited a local newspaper, La Libertad. But his political stance finally brought tragedy to the family, for in March of 1917 he was assassinated by government troops and his office burned. As a result, young Nicolás and his brother Francisco had to assume the responsibility of caring for the family, that included their mother, two sisters, a younger brother and themselves. The older boys did manage to receive the bachiller degree and went to work in local offices to support the family.\(^3\)

It had been his father's dream that young Nicolás become a lawyer. Thus, his mother urged him to enter Law School at the University of Havana in 1920 although the young man's inclinations were elsewhere. Dissatisfied with the constraints and false intellectuality of his education, Guillén left after completing one year. It was 1921.\(^4\)

Guillén began writing poetry during his adolescence. In 1922 he decided to gather the poems which he had previously written into Cerebro y Corazón, a chronological grouping of his works up to the age of 20. This collection, heavily influenced by romanticism and modernism,
reveals an adolescent sensibility filled with the anxieties and yearnings for selfhood. In them are portrayed the conflicting emotions of love and hate, hope and disillusionment, faith and disbelief, altruism and misanthropy. 5 Displeased with the general drift of these compositions, the poet stopped writing for five years (1922-27) during which time he led a bohemian life. Yet he did keep abreast of the literary activities of the period. 6

The kind of verse that Guillén would compose upon emerging from limbo springs from two main tendencies of the Latin American literary tradition—militancy, or the alliance of art with a social cause, and localism, or the preoccupation with immediate types and settings. The latter trend is also closely tied up with the search for a national identity. 7 During the nineteenth century militancy and localism were evident in the cultivation of certain genres, for example the Indian novel in the Caribbean and other Spanish American nations. In Cuba the anti-slavery novel was more significant because the black man was the most appropriate literary element for the localist-nationalist cause. That is, the Cuban intellectuals used the theme of the oppressed "noble savage" to foster social and political changes through literature. The intent was to stir up revolutionary fervor against the corrupt colonial regime. 8
The emphasis on the black man as a literary theme continues into the twentieth century when it merges with the primitivist movement imported from Europe between 1914 and 1920. The ideology for this fashion was formulated by many scholars, among them Leo Frobenius, a German scientist, and Oswald Spengler, a German philosopher-historian. The cult of the primitive also coalesced with surrealism, one of the vanguardist movements that was promoted by the school of French writers after World War I. Nevertheless, Bell feels that the efforts of African-American academicians and artists to identify the strengths of their respective folk cultures and investigate the artistic possibilities of the latter goes back to Herderian folk ideology, in spirit if not in letter.

In Cuba Fernando Ortiz was the precursor of the indigenist trend, called "negrismo," although his activities were on a scholarly rather than creative level. As a direct result of Ortiz's research, many Cuban intellectuals turned to the rich vein of African-derived folk material for aesthetic consideration. Initially, Cuban indigenism was fostered mainly by white writers who believed that black or African-based art and culture were fundamental parts of Cuban culture. For instance, the poet-critic Juan Marinello asserted that Afro-Cubanism was the path toward a deeper level of national identity.
which would, in turn, contribute to the universal culture.\textsuperscript{11} Thus, Ramón Guirao, Alejo Carpentier, Luis Páles Matos (a Puerto Rican), and José Z. Tallet were among the first writers to experiment with the new aesthetic. Except for Carpentier's novel, \textit{Ecua-Yamba-O}, Afro-Cubanism was primarily oriented toward poetry, one of the most effective instruments for infusing African rhythms into European language and literature.\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Motivos de son} (1930) represents the early efforts of a black Afro-Cuban poet to bring about such a transposition.

\textbf{The Poems}

\textit{Motivos de son}, a group of eight poems which appeared in the \textit{Ideales de una raza} section of the \textit{Diario de la Marina} (April 20, 1930), constitutes the first stage in the development of the new spirit in contemporary Cuban literature. The original collection included: (1) "Negro bembón," (2) "Mi chiquita," (3) "Búcate plata," (4) "Sigue," (5) "Ayer me dijeron negro," (6) "Tú no sabe inglés," (7) "Si tú supiera," and (8) "Mulata." In addition, Guillén submitted three more selections under the same title on July 6, 1930: (9) "Curujey," (10) "Me bendo caro," and (11) "Hay que tener voluntad." "Hay que tener voluntad" replaces "Ayer me dijeron negro," and "Curujey" and "Me bendo caro" are deleted in the definitive version of
Motivos de son. We shall examine four of the poems that are compiled in Guillén's Antología mayor (1964).

The poems depict the types and life styles of the solar environment, the lowest echelon of Cuban rural and urban society during the 1920-30 era. Guillén himself best defines his goals:

He tratado de incorporar a la literatura cubana—no como simple motivo musical, sino como elemento de verdadera poesía—lo que pudiera llamarse poema-son, basado en la técnica de esa clase de baile tan popular en nuestro país. Los sones mios pueden ser musicalizados, pero ello no quiere decir que estén escritos precisamente con ese fin, sino con el de presentar, en la forma que acaso les sea más conveniente, cuadros de costumbres hechos de dos pinceladas y tipos del pueblo tal como ellos se agitan a nuestro lado. Tal como hablan. Tal como piensan . . .

I shall apply Dundes's triadic approach to folklore analysis (that is, texture, text and context) as well as the techniques of formal (written) literature in examining the selections.

The texture of the poems in Motivos de son is first the language that Guillén employs. Ortiz refers to it as the "lenguage mulato," or the popular Cuban speech which has been significantly influenced by Africanisms. The linguists call it dialect. Moreover, Ortiz distinguishes between the "lenguage mulato" and the "lenguage negro," or purely African forms. Afro-Cuban elements predominate in the poems, but Guillén also uses neologisms based
on African sounds. The specific Afro-Cuban linguistic features of Motivos include the following:

1. Seséo, or the assimilation of the "c" and "z" sounds into the "s" sound. Also the loss of final "s";

2. The loss of final "r" or the assimilation of the "r" sound with the consonant following it;

3. The use of the single phoneme "b" for "b" and "v";

4. Yeísmo, or the pronunciation of "ll" like "y";

5. Apocopy of unstressed syllables, especially in words like todo and nada.

6. The loss of other final consonants, e.g., "d", "j", "x", and "z";

7. The simplification of consonantal clusters like "ct" into "t." 15

However, some of these changes are not exclusively Afro-Cuban, for they also occur in other Latin American nations. Nevertheless, Guillén uses them along with African-based words (called "afronegrismos") and with many Spanish words that have taken on new meanings in Cuba. 16

Texture also involves the musical features of the son, the most prominent of which is its rhythmic-metric complexity. The rhythmic patterns in each poem do not depend so much on the alternation or counting of syllables as they do on the marking of stress and unstressed syllables, on strong and weak beats. 17 In addition,
pauses have rhythmical weight. Jahn elaborates on this feature:

The accented syllables are emphasized by rhyme or position and are sharply scanned; but the unstressed syllables in between—one, two, or often three in number—are so articulated that a tension arises between the basic rhythm, whether thought or beaten on the drums, and the secondary rhythm, and the accents frequently fall in the syncope.\textsuperscript{18}

Essentially this is a literary interpretation of the "metronome sense" that Waterman develops in his analysis of African-oriented music. In short, it is a question of rhythmic versification. Furthermore, the verse accommodates itself to the musical form in that its measure is precise, short and has well-marked accents on tones that are usually the length of a syllable.\textsuperscript{19}

The second textural element of the son-poems is their percussive bent, which is achieved through several techniques. Alliteration (also called head rhyme or initial rhyme) refers to "... the close repetition, not ... of the same letter, but of the same sound, usually at the beginning of words."\textsuperscript{20} Examples of this are the rhyme of a hard "c" and "k" or a soft "c" and "s." Onomatopoeia is "the formation of words from sounds which seem to suggest and reinforce the meaning ... When applied to the choice of words in poetry, whereby the sound is made an echo to the sense, onomatopoeia has real value."\textsuperscript{21} And \textit{jitanjáfora} refers to
the emphasis on purely verbal sound apart from any meaning. It can be produced through the use of the former two devices.²² Finally, the crescendo effect brought about by the repetitive rhythms of each poem is a third textural element.

The text of each selection is simply the written imitation of musical sones which were popular during this period. In other words, these written versions are products of Guillén's imagination. However, in Sóngoro Cosongo the poet would use the title and a few portions, for example the refrain, from actual songs and dances of the period.

The last technique of folklore analysis to apply here is context. In Motivos de son the cabaret atmosphere, or a party-like setting, predominates. In short, the poet tries to capture the euphoric mood of the cumbancha during the period 1920-30, especially in the Havana solar. (Cumbancha, of African origin, comes from the Afrocuban term cumbe, an old son dance that black slaves did during various celebrations. Ortiz asserts that it is associated with noise and gaiety.)²³ Furthermore, they occurred inside or outdoors. The first three poems that follow evoke such an atmosphere.
"Negro bembón" is the poem that led to the composition of Motivos de son. Moreover, it has a two-part structure in which the largo, or solo exposition, contains three stanzas (1, 2 and 4) and the montuno, a stanzaic choral commentary, exhibits the simple call-and-response pattern:

¡Po que te pone tan brabo,
cuando te disen negro bembón,
si tiene la boca santa,
negro bembón?

Bembón así como ere
tiene de tó;
Caridá te mantiene,
te lo dá tó.

Te queja todavía,
negro bembón;
sin pega y con harina,
negro bembón,
majagua de drí blanco,
negro bembón;
sapato de do tono,
negro bembón.

Bembón así como ere,
tiene de tó;
Caridá te mantiene,
te lo dá tó.

Like many of the traditional sones, the solo is in interrogative form as indicated by the punctuation of the first stanza. The "questioning" sense is sustained in stanzas two and four. Moreover, the third stanza has a double role. It represents an antiphonal exchange between soloist and chorus; and it responds to the initial question posed in stanza one, thus completing the thought of the entire composition.
If we scan the stanzas we see that terciary rhythms generally occur in the first three lines of each solo verse. For example, in the first stanza the accents have the following arrangement: in line one the main stresses fall on syllables 2, 4 and 7; in line two on syllables 2, 4, 6 and 9; in line three on 2, 6 and 8; but the last line has only two accents, on syllables 1 and 4, which constitute the basic (binary) rhythm of the poem. The accented syllables are highlighted structurally by their position. That is, in line one the stressed syllables are almost equally placed, having at least one unstressed syllable in between. In line two the stress countour shifts toward the end of the verse. However, line three duplicates the rhythms of line one.

In the second and fourth stanzas, which are identical, the terciary and binary rhythms alternate. Line one stresses syllables 2, 3, and 6 while line three accents syllables 3, 5, and 6. Line two emphasizes syllables 1 and 4, while line four stresses syllables 3 and 4. This type of scansion enables us to appreciate the rhythmic complexity of the form. Furthermore, the essential rhythms of the son do not come from the words but from the percussions accompanying the vocalist-dancer.

The repetition of the motif “negro bembón” establishes the binary rhythm of the poem, and it is reiterated
in the *estribillo* of stanza three. Around this duple meter are woven the triple-metered counterrhythms of the *largo* portion of the *son*.

The word "*bembón*," the augmentative form of *bembo*, is the most significant element here for the entire poem hinges on this metaphor. According to Ortiz the feminine gender *bemba* is derived from various languages of West-Central Africa where it originally meant "nose." Gradually its meaning became confused by Spanish Americans, who translated it as "lips" or "mouth." 24

In Golden Age Spanish Literature the *bembón* is a literary type, "... a *negro* with pronounced negroid features," ... "black-skinned, blubber-lipped, flat-nosed" ... 25 Moreover, during this period the figure was a caricature developed by certain writers like Gonzaga and Quevedo who depicted their perceptions of Africans in Spanish society. According to Johnson, "what gave the *bozal*'s distortion its peculiar features are perhaps linguistic and artistic interferences from his origins. The Spanish caricaturist developed a fine ear for the consequences of that interference and of oral transmission in the *bozal*'s *disfraces negros*." 26 Thus we see that the Afro-Spanish dialect was not only the result of unfamiliarity with the Spanish language, but also the consequence of superimposing African speaking
patterns on a totally unrelated language. One prominent feature of bozal speech was percussive repetitions, which made it appear that the African was constantly singing. Consequently, the black person is invariably portrayed in this manner. And the "... lexically meaningless negroid percussions, 'jitanjáforas,' became indispensable adjuncts in one-dimensional representations of the Negro. The net result was the emptyheaded but melancholic percussiveness of the bembón, or Orphic buffoon."

Guillén's use of the bembón in Motivos de son is in keeping with Hispanic literary tradition, for this image is a persona or mask which the poet assumes to celebrate the rhythms of Afro-Cuban music. While it has the negative effect of sustaining and validating a stereotype created by whites, the poet's introductions of irony through the "boca santa" image attenuates the distortion somewhat. That is, there is a tolerant, sympathetic kind of self-mockery evident in this poem. The juxtaposition of bembón and boca santa is ironic in that the protagonist, who is a pimp, gets angry ("se pone bravo") when he is insulted with the epithet "negro bembón"; yet his crude and often vulgar language is used to abuse others verbally. Boca santa, which normally means to speak well, implies the opposite of the latter denotation. In short, the bembón's boca santa is the bozal dialect.
Linked with the image of the *bembón* is the abstract noun *carida*, (in stanza two), which has several meanings. The first connotation is that of charity, for the pimp lives regally off someone else's efforts. The second sense conveys the original meaning of charity (*Caritas*), as the highest type of love (*agape*), but only as a foil to the real meaning in the poem—*eros*. In other words, the "love" that maintains the pimp is purely physical. Stanza four repeats this idea for emphasis.

The choral commentary in stanza three sustains the mocking tone of the poem by means of the repetition of "negro bembón." Moreover, by projecting a series of additional images (for example, "sin pega" con harina," "majagua de drí blanco," and "sapato de dó tono"), the poet refers us back to the idea of charity, for all these are concrete representations of the *carida* which supports the man.

The repetitive binary rhythms of the antiphonal stanza build up to a *crescendo* toward the end of the poem. Here the echoes of the *bongo*, a vital instrument in the rendition of the *son*, are reproduced structurally by alliteration (repetition of "b" sounds) and onomatopoeia ("bembón" imitates the sound of the drum). Stanza four is the anti-climax of the poem, which ends abruptly. "Negro bembón" was set to music by the Grenet brothers.
The poem "Mulata is similar in structure to "Negro bembón." It has a recitative of three four-line stanzas, but a montuno of six simple call-and-response lines. Moreover, the solo stanzas are in romance, or eight-syllable form. The antiphonal stanza also functions as the stanzaic commentary to the largo:

Ya yo me enteré, mulata,
mulata, ya sé que dise
que yo tengo la narise
como nudo de cohbata

Y fíjate bien que tú
no ere tan adelanta,
poquelle tu boca e' bien grande,
y tu pasa, colorá.

Tanto tren con tu cueppo,
tanto tren;
tanto tren con tu boca,
tanto tren;
tanto tren con tu sojo,
tanto tren.

Si tú supiera, mulata,
la veddá:
que yo con mi negra tengo,
y no te quiero pa' nás.

The rhythmic pattern of the first stanza is the following: line one emphasizes syllables 1, 5 and 7; line two syllables 4, 5 and 7, although there is an extra beat caused by the repetition of "mulata," which overlaps from the first line and which is heightened by the rhythmic pause immediately following it; line three stresses syllables 2, 3 and 7; and line four introduces the basic (or binary) rhythm by accenting syllables 3 and 7. The poet
conveys these rhythms and counterrhythms graphically through repetitive consonant rhyme (e.g., mulata-mulata-cobbata, dise-narise).

In stanza two, line one accents syllables 2, 5 and 8; line two stresses syllables 1, 3 and 7; line three syllables 4, 6 and 7 and line four syllables 3 and 7, the same as the first stanza. Here the convergence of the stressed syllables with assonant rhyme in "a" (tanadelanta, grande-colora) carries the rhythmic weight.

In the antiphonal (third) stanza the alternation of triple-metered call lines with the duple-metered response lines achieves a crescendo of rhythms and the alliteration of "t" phonemes is a figurative element that enhances them. This stanza is an excellent example of the amalgamation of song, dance and instrumentation characteristic of the son and other Afro-Cuban musical forms. For the phrase "tanto tren" serves as the choral response of the singers; it bears the essential rhythmic weight of the poem (binary meter); and through the latter creates the dance impulse.

The fourth stanza, which is the last part of the largo, functions as the anti-climax of the poem by slowing down the rhythmic furor of the antiphonal stanza. Here line one carries the stress on syllables 2, 4 and 7; line two on syllable 3; line three on syllables 2, 5 and 7; and line four on syllables 2, 4 and 7, a duplication
of the rhythms of line one.

The motif of this sketch involves a male vocalist-dancer who reproaches a woman, the mulata, for acting disdainfully toward him. In addition, the image of the bembón created in the first poem is transferred to this selection through the simile "narise como nudo de cobbata." Moreover, the figure of the mulata not only hints at the idea of miscegenation but also serves as a foil to the bembón, with whom she does not want to be identified. In contrast to his conspicuously Negroid features is her fair skin, implied by the adjective "adelantá." The woman would like to de-emphasize her African-derived traits, which are conveyed by the images "boca grande" and "pasa" (the latter meaning nappy or kinky hair), as a result of the white values she has adopted. In short, the first and second stanzas illustrate the contrasting ideas of the recitative.

The third stanza constitutes a kind of burlesque commentary on the thoughts of the preceding verses. Again the estribillo, in this case "tanto tren" functions in a triple manner—as the vocal response of the chorus, as the rhythmic accents of the bongo, and as the inspiration for the dance. The marriage of sound and motor activity here is especially achieved through alliteration (repetition of "t," or dental phonemes, and of "c," or
velar occlusives). Moreover, the latter also reproduce the high-pitched (or aguda) sounds of the bongo, in contrast to the more grave notes (achieved with the "b" phoneme) of this instrument in "Negro bembón." The alliterative elements also help convey the mocking tone of the son.

"Tren" is an important image in the poem "Mulata." Tous defines it as impertinence. In this sense the mulata is intrusive in that she insists on being considered white in a society that designates her as non-white. On the other hand, "tren" also refers to an elegant life-style, and by association condescension. Guillelén uses it ironically in this poem. The mulata is arrogant toward others of her race, wanting to be better than they. But by contrasting "tren" with several concrete and sensual images (cuerpo, boca, ojos) the implication is that she should be a congenial person since she has such great physical assets. It is an example of double entendre. Using the same tactics as the mulata, that is, disdain and haughtiness, the bembón rejects her in favor of someone who is more personable, la negra.

The final stanza of "Mulata" contrasts the image of the mulata and that of the negra, the female counterpart of the bembón. That is, it is suggested that the bembona is physically closer to the man than the mulata. In essence, this choice is an affirmation of racial pride and
it illustrates Guillén's belief that beauty standards are relative to the culture which defines them. However, it is more an indirect statement than a proclamation. Finally, through the introduction of the phrases "Si tú supiera" and "negra," the poet links this poem with the next one.

"Si tú supiera" is a variation in the son format which Guillén has used thus far. It is a two-part structure composed of an eight-line expository stanza, sung by a male vocalist, and a fourteen-line antiphonal verse of overlapping call-and-response:

Ay, negra,
si tú supiera.
Anoche te bí pasá
y no quise que me biera.
A é tú le hará como a mí,
que cuando no tube plata
te corrites de bachata,
sin accódate de mí.

Sóngoro, cosongo,
songo be;
sóngoro, cosongo
de mamey;
sóngoro, la negra
baila bien;
sóngoro de uno,
sóngoro de tré.
Aé,
bengan a bé;
aé
bamo pa bé;
bengan, sóngoro cosongo,
sóngoro cosongo de mamey.

The largo opens with two binary rhythms—line one stresses syllables 1 and 2, line two emphasizes syllables 2 and 4. It develops mainly through terciary beats—line
three accents syllables 2, 5 and 7; line four syllables 2, 3 and 7; line five, syllables 1, 2, 4 and 7 (the exception); and line six, syllables 4, 5 and 7. And it closes in duple meter--line seven stresses syllables 3 and 7; line eight, syllables 4 and 7. In addition, the overall tendency is for the stress contour to center around the seventh syllable, which is usually the final one. Ortiz calls this masculine stress. The solo is performed in a slow, relaxed manner, a sense which is conveyed by the poet's use of commas and periods to retard the rhythmic movement. Consequently, there is no preparation for the abrupt entrance into the accelerated beats of the second stanza, which seems to be a separate poem.

The montuno is also divided into two parts--the first portion, consisting of eight lines, has invariable stress. Here the call lines accent syllables 1 and 5 while the response lines stress syllables 1 and 2. The second part contains the last six lines of the antiphonal stanza. The first two call lines are monosyllables and the last has three beats; on the other hand, the first and second response lines carry the binary rhythms while the very last one has a triple accent.

The theme or motif of this poem is delineated by four interlaced images: negra, noche (which has the adverbial form anoche), plata and bachata. The negra
represents the bembona, the dancing singing female version of the figure projected on the screen in "Negro bembón." Since night is usually associated with fun and parties, it becomes the milieu or context of the son. In fact, most taverns come alive only at night. Plata, the most concrete of these images, symbolizes a constant preoccupation of the cabaret's habitués—the search for money, which is necessary for survival as well as for having a good time. This last quest is suggested by bachata, a derivative of bacha. Not only does bachata mean to enjoy oneself, it also has the connotation of losing oneself completely in a dionysiac frenzy. As a result, the negra, who is the inspiration for this son-poem, is presented in a sensual light through association with the connotations of bachata.

The antiphonal commentary on the motif of "Si tú supiera" introduces a neologism, sónoro cosongo, which anticipates Guillén's second collection of verse. In fact, this phrase will become the title of the latter work. In the antiphonal stanza, the call lines of the soloist (Sónoro cosongo) are picked up by the response verse of the chorus (songo be), an example of overlapping call-and-response. While these are not really African words they do have phonetic parallels in African languages. The root word "songo" is actually associated
with a town in Oriente province in Cuba and with a village or region around the Congo River in Africa. Furthermore, Jahn asserts that the wealth of short-sounding vowels in the Spanish language facilitated the assimilation of African phonemes and morphemes into Afro-Cuban Spanish.

The first part of the montuno is developed by means of the repetition of parallel sounds (sóngoro) in the odd lines and the last even lines. This parallelism is varied by substituting other phrases for "cosongo," for example, "la negra," "de uno," and "de tre." Unlike the response lines of previous sones, the ones in this poem are variable (songo be, de mamey, baila bien .. .). In short, call-and-response lines, which are executed by vocalist and chorus, by lead dancer and group, and by bongó solo and other ensemble instruments, are interdependent. One aspect cannot convey any meaning without the other.

The second portion of the montuno inverts the melodic order of the son by making the call lines little more than monosyllabic exclamations and the response lines the tune. Here Guillén uses a technique known as holophrasis, short word-like interjections or expletives that condense an entire thought within themselves. The interjection "Aé" may be derived from the expression "Aie,"

which is an African shout found at the end of many Afro-Cuban songs.\textsuperscript{39} Holophrasis usually accompanies the intense expression of religious sentiment. While the intent here may not necessarily be the invocation of a deity, the end result is the same. For the repetition of the interjection plus the acceleration of the rhythms achieve an intoxicating effect similar to what happens in incantation. The lines that read "Áé,/bengan a bé;/ Áé,/bamo pa bé" constitute the climax or highest point of tension of the son. In contrast, the triple-metered counterrhythms of the final two lines retard its movement, achieving a decrescendo.

The mamey is an interesting image in "Si tú supiera." It is a tropical tree bearing tobacco-colored, hard-rind fruit which contain a dry, sweet, reddish pulp filled with black shiny seeds.\textsuperscript{40} There is a constant projection of natural objects, of concrete, immediate things in Guillén's poetry. The succulence of this visual image combines with the sensuality of the aural images evoked by the music, thus bringing about a catharsis. Singers, dancers and instruments relax as they savor the lilting melody of this son.

"Búcate plata" is the last son that we shall consider. It consists of a two-stanza recitative and a ten-line antiphonal stanzaic response. Moreover, the largo extends
into the montuno, where it becomes the call (solo) lines of the antiphonal verse:

Búcate plata,
búcate plata,
poque no doy un paso má:
etoy a arró con galleta,
na má.

Yo bien sé como etá tó,
pero biejo, hay que come:
búcate plata,
búcate plata,
poque me boy a corre.

Depué dirán que soy mala
y no me quedrán tratá,
pero amo con hambre, biejo,
¡qué ba!
Con tanto sapato nuevo,
¡qué ba!
Con tanto reló, compadre,
¡qué ba!
Con tanto lujo, mi negro,
¡qué ba!

The largo begins in duple meter with the first two lines equally stressing syllables 1 and 4. Line three accents syllables 4, 5 and 7; line four syllables 2, 4 and 7; and line five has two monosyllables of equal stress. In the second part of the recitative, line one stresses syllables 3, 6 and 7; line two syllables 1, 3 and 7; lines three and four again have a binary accent on syllables 1 and 4; and line five also has a duple stress on syllables 4 and 6.

In the montuno of "búcate plata" the call lines accent the terciary meter in the following order: 2, 4 and 7; 3, 5 and 7; 2, 5 and 7; 2, 5 and 7; and 2, 4 and 7,
respectively. The invariable response lines have two mono-
syllables of equal accent.

The soloist in this song is a woman who admonishes
her companion for not taking care of his responsibilities.
In the first two stanzas, the repeated phrase "búcate
plata" serves as a thematic and a structural element. In
the first case this estribillo reinforces the idea of
penury that is conveyed by the alimentary images "arró"
(rice) and "galleta" (biscuit). It also expresses her
desire to end the relationship if money is not brought
into the household. With respect to structure, the duple
meter of this estribillo carries the rhythmic accents
of the bongó, which complement the woman's verbal threats.
In addition, the alliteration of occlusive sounds (b-c-t,
p-t) accentuates the percussive attack of the son.

The insistence on leaving is reiterated in the
second stanza, where the binary rhythms shift from an
initial to a medial position. This repetition enhances
the motif of survival which is expressed in the phrase
"hay que comez."

In the antiphonal stanza, the soloist weighs public
opinion against bare facts. This is achieved by contrast-
ing an idealized state (amor) with pressing necessity
(hambre). Moreover, the incongruity between the woman's
poverty and her companion's abundance (tanto zapato, tanto
reló, tanto lujo) conveys the irony of the situation. There is also a discrepancy between the exhilarating rhythms and percussive movements of the dance and the bleak portrait that is depicted. The response estribillo "qué va" also echoes the woman's intent to dissolve the relationship and to search for a better opportunity than she presently has. In short, this sketch depicts the tenuous male-female relationships often associated with a lower class environment.

"In conclusion, the quest for a national identity by the Afro-Cuban poets had to begin with some basic factor of national life, which they found in the African-inspired oral culture. Although the son was only one aspect of this musically-oriented tradition, its widespread popularity made it the perfect instrument for expressing Cuba's essence. By transforming it into a literary genre, Guillén seeks to extend art to all the people. Furthermore, the four poems analyzed in this chapter illustrate the poet's efforts to return in a polished form the raw material provided by a culture shared by all Cubans.

The approach that Guillén takes in Motivos de son is problematic. With regard to aesthetics, many critics felt that it did not meet the literary standards of Hispanic tradition, especially since it dared to use materials from black life. "Art is universal and colorless"
expressed the reaction of this trend of thought. However, Motivos de son was a deliberate rejection of written literary conventions.

Another problem involves the elemental nature of the poems. Since they are sketches, they convey impressions and images at times distorted. The question of stereotypes is especially a controversial one, for the main criticism of the collection is that it presents retrograde images of black people. The projection of the bembón on the literary screen is particularly resented by several of Guillén's fellow black poets. 41

On the other hand, Augier feels that there is latent social protest in Motivos de son because of the portrayal of the underdog, who was primarily but not exclusively black in the Cuba of 1920-30. 42 In agreement with him, Tous also contends that the poet employs a kind of reverse psychology to comment on the bleak social conditions which he observed. 43 That is, if one shows a person a negative picture of himself, he may be moved to improve this image. Of course, if the distortion is gross, one might not recognize himself.

If we weigh Guillén's statement that he seeks realistic portrayal against these reactions, we still are at a loss to understand the full intent. In fact, the manner in which Guillén was inspired to write the poems suggests
that a set of complex forces coalesced in the genesis of Motivos de son. And the only conclusion one can draw is that the young poet was groping for a definite orientation while still subject, although unconsciously, to past molds and self-concepts. This ambivalence is carried into Sóngoro Cosongo.

In terms of Guillén's artistic intent, the son-poems are highly successful in utilizing a colorful and vibrant musical heritage. For the crescendo of rhythms and percussive style of Motivos de son were easily conducive to being musicalized. In fact, several Cuban composers, among them Amadeo Roldán, Emilio and Eliseo Grenet and García Caturla, did set them to music. Consequently, it is easy to perceive the mutual give and take among the various elements of culture. Guillén draws on a musical tradition, transposes the forms into literary genres, and the latter are returned to musical performance only on a formal level.

In Chapter V we shall examine the poet's variations on the son format and the use of the rumba as a literary piece.
NOTES TO CHAPTER IV


2 Augier, Ibid., p. 13.

3 Augier, Ibid., pp. 15-22.

4 Augier, Ibid., pp. 27-34

5 Augier, Ibid., pp. 39-46.

6 Augier, Ibid., p. 60.


8 Coulthard, Ibid., pp. 6-26.

9 Coulthard, Ibid., pp. 27-29.


11 Coulthard, Race and Colour in Caribbean Literature, p. 29.


13 Augier, Nicolás Guillén, p. 115.


24. Ortiz, Ibid., p. 47.


27. Johnson, Ibid., p. 69.


29. In Cuba boca santa also refers to a person whose word comes true, in a prophetic sense. But the meaning does not fit here.


43. Tous, *La poesía de Nicolás Guillén*, p. 66.
CHAPTER V

SÓNGORO COSONGO (1931)

Like the poems of Motivos de son, many of those published in Sóngoro Cosongo first appeared in Ideales de una raza (of the Diario de la Marina) and in La marcha de una raza (of the daily El Mundo) between July 27, 1930 and March 29, 1931.1 In October of 1931 Guillén began a limited circulation of Sóngoro Cosongo, which represents a transitional period between Motivos and West Indies Ltd. In a sense, Sóngoro Cosongo looks back to Motivos in that it is an apology of the latter work. That is, Guillén defends his approach in the earlier collection and tries to answer the charge that he is "... un simple sonero encargado de suministrar cantos a los conjuntos vernáculos ..."2 More important, though, Sóngoro Cosongo indicates that the poet is conscious of discovering the basic stratum of Cuban culture. In fact, the subtitle of this collection, Poemas mulatos, gives a gist of the work's orientation, which Guillén directly explains in its prologue:

Diré, finalmente, que esos son unos versos mulatos. Participan acaso de los mismos elementos que entran en la composición étnica de Cuba, donde todos somos un poco níspero. ¿Duele? No lo creo. En todo caso,
precisa decirlo antes de que lo vayamos a olvidar. La inyección africana en esta tierra es tan profunda, y se cruzan y entrecruzan en nuestra bien regada hidrografía social tantas corrientes capilares, que sería trabajo de miniaturistas desenredar el jeroglífico. Opino, por tanto, que una poesía criolla entre nosotros no lo sería de un modo cabal con olvido del negro. El negro--a mi juicio--aporta esencias muy firmes a nuestro coteo. 3

On the other hand, Sóngoro Cosongo anticipates West Indies Ltd. in that it reveals the poet's need to deepen the perspective of Motivos de son by expressing social awareness through art. Although Sóngoro Cosongo is still very close to Motivos in style and basic outlook, there are indications that Guillén is gradually moving in the direction of polemical-lyricist, or what Augier refers to as the hombre-poeta, 4 that would expand in West Indies Ltd.

The first edition of Sóngoro Cosongo contained fifteen selections plus a reprinting of the eight sones from Motivos de son. In this chapter we shall examine five of the poems from Guillén's Antología mayor (1964) and focus on their illustration of the aesthetic devices that he initiated in Motivos. These poems are "La canción del bongo," "Canto negro," "Rumba," "Velorio de Papá Montero," and "Secuestro de la mujer de Antonio." Of the five only the first selection exhibits any obvious social concerns.
Regarding texture, text and context Sóngoro Cosongo deviates somewhat from Motivos de son. The major textural change is that Guillén transposes the rhythmic complexity and percussive style of the son into the romance, or Spanish ballad form, thus returning to a conventional genre of Hispanic popular literature. Another change is that the language of Sóngoro Cosongo is primarily Cuban Spanish, not the bozal dialect of Motivos, and the poet includes more neologisms based on African derivatives. In fact the title of the collection is a neologism that Guillén used in the son "Si tú supiera" of Motivos. The regular devices such as alliteration, onomatopoeia, and jitanjáfora are still present. As for the text of the poems, only "Velorio de Papá Montero" and "La mujer de Antonio" are glosses from two popular sones of that period.5 The rest are originals. Finally, the context of the five poems analyzed in this chapter is still the cabaret life, since the party-like atmosphere of Motivos is sustained for the most part. By cabaret is meant any festive occasion rather than a strictly tavern setting. Let us now consider the poems.

"La canción del bongo" is the first romance form (here with assonance in "o") that functions like a son:

Ésta es la canción del bongo:

---Aquí el que más fino sea.
responde, si llamo yo.
Unos dicen: ahora mismo,
otros dicen: allá voy.
Pero mi repique bronco,
pero mi profunda voz,
convoca al negro y al blanco,
que bailan el mismo son,
cueripardos o almirietos
más de sangre que de sol,
pues quien por fuera no es noche,
por dentro ya oscureció.

Aquí el que más fino sea,
responde, si llamo yo.

En esta tierra, mulata
de africano y español
(Santa Bárbara de un lado,
del otro lado, Changó),
siempre falta algún abuelo,
cuando no sobra algún don
y hay títulos de Castilla
con parientes en Bondó:
vale más callarse, amigos,
y no menear la cuestión,
porque venimos de lejos
y andamos de dos en dos.
Aquí el que más fino sea,
responde, si llamo yo.

Habrá quien llegue a insultarme,
pero no de corazón;
habrá quien me escupa en público,
cuando a solas me besó . . .

A ése, le digo:

--Compadre,

ya me pedirás perdón,
ya comerás de mi ajiaco,
ya me darás la razón,
ya me golpearás el cuero,
ya bailarás a mi voz,
ya pasaearemos del brazo,
ya estarás donde yo estoy:
ya vendrás de abajo arriba,
¡que aquí el más alto soy yo!

The combination of African and Spanish elements in
this poem is achieved in that the bongo, acting like the
human voice, is the medium through which the tale is sung in an hispanic mode, the romance. That is, it represents a kind of drum language, a highly developed art in Africa and in the Afro-Cuban tradition. The dialogue here is between the two halves of the bongo, one side serving as lead "singer," the other as respondent. In addition, the aguda accent, or stress on the last syllable of each line, suggests that the leader of the dialogue is the "male" side of the drum, which is smaller and thus plays the higher-pitched sound. However, the assonance in "o," which reproduces the lower-pitched tones of the "female" half, would indicate that this part of the drum is the lead vocalist. It really does not matter for the important thing is the antiphonal character of the son-ballad.

The call-and-response pattern is first evident in the estribillo (Aquí el que más fino sea,/responde, si llamo yo.) that begins the romance and is repeated at the end of the first and second solo stanzas. Antiphony is further illustrated in that the first, second and third stanzas are all part of the recitative which is answered by the stanzaic variable response (the fourth verse). The last stanza ends in a variation of the original estribillo. Furthermore, even within the romance form Guillén manages to convey the rhythmic complexity of the son by alternating binary and terciary
accents. And percussive attack is effectuated by the repetition of "o" in conjunction with occlusive, nasal and liquid consonants (e.g., voy, voz, son, sol, Bongo, perdón, dos, cuestión, etc.). In short, the imitation of the dialogal structure of the bongo infuses this romance with son-like qualities.

Cultural miscenegenation is the theme of "La canción del bongo." Moreover, this reality is portrayed or represented as the son dance form. Guillén utilizes several techniques to underscore cultural mestizaje (mixture). The first is contrast of phrases, images and metaphors. For example, in the first stanza "Unos dicen: ahora mismo" is opposed to "otros dicen: allá voy."; "repique bronco" stands opposite "profunda voz"; and "negro-blanco," "cueripardos-almiprietos," "sangre-sol," and "por fuera-por dentro" all are juxtaposed to one another. The second device is parallelism of the binary rhythmic beat, illustrated by the phrases "Pero me repique bronco, / pero mi profunda voz," "cueripardos-almiprietos/ más de sangre que de sol," and "noche-oscurció." The use of neologisms is a third technique employed by Guillén. "Cueripardos" and "almiprietos" refer to the dark skin and dark soul of the Cuban people, respectively. There is a play on words in that "cuero" literally means the leather skin of the bongo; but it
figuratively symbolizes the brown tones of the mulatto color with the addition of the adjective "pardo." In the neologism "almiprietos," the adjectival qualifier "prietos," meaning dark-colored, concretizes an intangible entity, "alma" (soul). This relationship between outer appearance and inner essence is reiterated in the contrast of "sangre" and "sol." The latter metaphor is inverted in terms of the first half of this four-part relationship because "sangre" has "almiprietos" as its referent, while "sol" points back to "cueripardos." The external-internal contrast is completed in the final two lines of stanza one with the use of the "fuera-no noche" metaphor as a foil for "dentro-ya oscureció." In essence, the son has moved beyond its original point of reference. It is no longer just a dance but the symbol of cultural syncretism.

The second stanza focuses on the historical milieu of the son, expressed in the phrase "tierra mulata." Again the poet uses the devices of contrast and parallelism to highlight the bilateral heritage of Cuba. The "africano-español" metaphor is the essential one here because all the other elements constitute reiterations of this generic expression. The first specific instance of the mingling of the two bloodlines is religious syncretism, represented by the juxtaposition of Santa Bárbara,
the Roman Catholic saint who protects soldiers and controls the thunder, and of Changó, the African god of war and thunder. In fact, in the practice of Santería, the two deities are often employed interchangeably, for Changó is androgenous. As a powerful warrior-god he is Changó; as a strong protectress from thunder, she is Santa Bárbara—two aspects of the same deity.

The social implications of miscegenation are exemplified in the parallel contrasts of certain conventions of the Cuban people. That is, the expression "falta algún abuelo" is opposite in meaning to "sobra algún don," and this whole idea stands parallel to "hay títulos de Castilla" versus "con parientes en Bondó": All of this refers to the practice of denying the existence of an African ancestor, while simultaneously producing a Spanish progenitor whose origins no one can account for. The title "don" was reserved for those of the upper class and used exclusively by the criollo (white) Cubans in Guillén's day. However, those criollos who had grown materially successful could quietly buy titles from their local parish church. This discrepancy is conveyed through irony, for Guillén switches the terms of the relationship so that "falta algún abuelo" corresponds structurally with "hay títulos de Castilla" and "sobra algún don" with "con parientes en Bondó": In short, the continuous interlacing of African and Spanish elements has
resulted in an intricate cultural tapestry whose threads are not easily unraveled. The phrases "venimos de lejos" and "andamos de dos en dos" synthesize this idea, which is really a poetic restatement of the one offered in the Prologue to Sóngoro Cosongo--that Cuba is a mulatto nation.

The poet's most effective use of irony is in the estribillo. The bongó, personification of the son, mocks the hypocrites who deny the African aspect of their heritage. Those who consider themselves superior must answer its call. Yet if they respond to the rhythms of this "primitive" instrument, they acknowledge both lineages. Their actions bely their pose. This idea is elaborated on in the third solo stanza in the contrast of "insultarme-no de corazón" and "me escupa en público-cuando a solas me besó... ."

In the last, or response, stanza, incremental repetition is utilized to create the mounting rhythms of the bongó. There is an evocation of Christian or other religious beliefs through the use of key words like "perdón" (pardon), "ajiaco" (a kind of Cuban stew) and "abajo-arriba." That is, by sharing the same meal, music and culture the opposing terms of the social relationship can be reconciled. The "abajo-arriba" contrast suggests that the most humble will become the most esteemed. The bongó, an African-based instrument that plays a mulatto
music, is the best for it represents the synthesis of the two heritages.

"La canción del bongó" is a step in the direction of social protest because it starts with a concern for black people—the lowest group on the social scale. Before the poet could speak for all Cubans the differences among them had to be resolved.

"Canto negro" is composed in the tradition of the classical, or octosyllabic, son:

¡Yambambó, yambambé!
Repica el congo solongo,
repica el negro bien negro;
congo solongo del Songo
baila yambó sobre un pie.

Mamatomba,
serembe cuserembá.

El negro canto y se ajuma,
el negro se ajuma y canta,
el negro canta y se va.

Acuememe serembo,
aé;
yambó,
aé.

Tamba, tamba, tamba, tamba,
tamba, del negro que tumba;
tumba del negro, caramba,
caramba, que el negro tumba:
¡yamba, yambó, yambambé!

In the antiphonal patterns of this poem, which consists of three solo verses and two variable response verses, the instrumental aspect of the solo portions dominates the vocal. There is an attempt to reproduce with words the rhythms and sounds of the bongó in its execution of
a popular song. Guillén constructs the rhythms of "Canto negro" with onomatopoeic sound groupings that are varied and repeated as major themes and which determine the overall contour of the poem. For example, the heavy concentration of nasal phonemes linked with vowels, especially "a," "o" and "u," conveys the sensuality of the rhythms and also achieves an onomatopoeic interplay of words.

In the first stanza the instrumental solo begins with the "am" sound group. Here the root word is yamba, which is a derivative of Mayombe, a region in the Congo Republic. The phrase "yambambó, yambambé" is used for its sound value (jitanjafora), and in the fifth line, yambó is a variation of yambú, a kind of rumba. The "on" sound image is the second in this stanza. Through the use of the neologism "solongo," Guillén links the terms "congo" and "Songo" in an auditory metaphor. Congo alludes to the African nation of the same name while Songo, an eastern province in Cuba of heavy bantu influence also evokes the Congo. And the contrast of the high front vowel "i" in "repica" with the low mid vowel "o" in "congo solongo" represents the shift from the high-pitched to the low-toned side of the bongo, respectively. The "am" and "em" sound blocks predominate in the two response lines between the first and second stanza. In the second stanza, the intoxicating effect of the bongo's
rhythms is illustrated by repeating the same phrase in reverse "canta y se ajuma/se ajuma y canta." Again the "em" and "am" sounds interrupt momentarily in the second response (Acuememe . . .) before the latter leads into the solo in the last stanza.

The final instrumental solo is executed through pure sound elements. The alliteration of "t" phonemes creates percussive attack while the repetition of "tamba" and "tumba," an African-derived drum, brings the solo to a crescendo. Furthermore, it is an excellent example of the "hot style" that Waterman speaks of in relation to African and African-inspired music.

In "Rumba" Guillén poetically reconstructs another dance form of oral tradition which had grown popular in the solares of Havana during the 1920's. There are eight stanzas in the poem and they are arranged as follows: an introductory passage (stanza one), the courtship (stanzas two through four), and the vacunao (stanzas five through eight):

La rumba
revuelve su música espesa
con un palo.
Jenjibre y canela . . .
¡Malo!
Malo, porque ahora, vendrá el negro chulo
con Fela.

Pimienta de la cadera,
grupa flexible y dorada:
rumbera buena,
rumbera mala.
En el agua de tu bata
todas mis ansias navegan:
rumbera buena,
rumbera mala.

Anhelo el de naufragar
en ese mar tibio y hondo:
¡fondo
del mar!

Trenza tu pie con la música
el nudo que más me aprieta:
resaca de tela blanca
sobre tu carne trigueña.

Locura del bajo vientre,
aliento de boca seca;
el ron que se te ha espantado,
y el pañuelo como riendas.

Ya te cogere domada,
ya te vere bien sujeta,
cuando como ahora huyes,
hacia mi ternura vengas,
rumbera buena;
o hacia mi ternura vayas,
rumbera mala.

No ha de ser larga la espera
rumbera buena;
ni sera eterna la bacha,
rumbera mala;
te dolera la cadera,
rumbera buena;
cadera dura y sudada,
rumbera mala ...
¡ultimo
trago!
Quiérete, córrete, vámonos ...
¡Vamos!

The dialogue relationship in this poem is evident on several planes. First, the chulo and Fela constitute
the spatial call-and-response elements that metaphrase (duplicate) and paraphrase (complement or contrast) the rhythms of the drum orchestra (the cajón, cajoncito and quinto in the case of the rumba). Moreover, in the execution of the dance, he seeks to interrupt her movements in order to "conquer" her, or achieve the vacunao (final blow). The steps leading up to the vacunao are carried out in an antiphonal manner in which the chulo may initiate a new step before his partner completes the basic movement of the rumba which is played by the cajón. On the other hand, in an effort to avoid pursuit and final conquest, Fela may also counteract her partner's movements with flourishes of her own. In the poem the elaborations are represented by the solo lines of each stanza and the basic beat by the response estribillo "rumbera buena, rumbera mala." On a symbolic level, the male partner can be considered the lead element of the dance-poem since he is seeking to vanquish the woman, who will eventually submit herself (respond). However, she may assume the lead momentarily in order to delay the vacunao until she is ready.

Another manifestation of the two-part structure of the rumba is the antiphonal interplay between the dancing couple and the chorus of potential substitutes for them when they tire. The estribillo carries the weight of the instrumental and the choral response. Furthermore,
as the dance approaches its climax, the rhythms accelerate almost to a frenetic point. Guillén achieves this graphically by dividing the response phrase in half and isolating each element on a line by itself. When the latter is alternated with the longer call lines, this contrast increases the tension and excitement of the dance, thus creating a crescendo effect.

In relation to figures of speech and other poetic devices we can observe the following. In the first stanza the rumba is personified as a conjure woman who concocts a potent brew, represented by the "música espesa," or thick music. The ingredients of the potion, jenjibre and canela, are key words, for in the rituals associated with Santería various herbs, blood and stones are vital elements. According to Lydia Cabrera, canela, or cinnamon, is widely used as a love potion in Cuba since it is believed to possess great powers of attraction. It comes from the canela de monte, or "... el árbol por excelencia de la Venus lucumí." Women usually mix it with their facial makeup and other body powders in order to seduce men. Jenjibre, or ginger, is used in a similar manner by men in order to enhance their virility; for Oggun, the god of minerals (especially iron and iron objects) and of the mountains, utilizes it to increase his bellicose powers. Consequently, the jenjibre and canela symbolize the two opposing forces
in the rumba—the aggressive male and the vulnerable, but enticing female. Furthermore, this combination is ominous (malo) because it represents a kind of danse macabre in which the chulo (pimp) stands to gain everything and Fela, his potential victim, will lose all.

The action of the courtship (stanzas two through four) develops through the interplay of several sensual images and metaphors. In addition, the use of consonant rhymes in "e-a" and "a-a" in stanzas two and three, and of the consonant rhyme "ondo" in stanza four, underscores the sensuality of the dance. In the second verse the mulata Fela is depicted by means of two parallel metaphors: "pimienta de la cadera" and "grupa flexible y dorada." That is, her posterior (la cadera) is first compared to black pepper and then to the haunch of an animal (grupa). In her partner's eyes the vigorous girations of her hips, which possess the strength of an animal's, create the same stinging, burning sensation as pepper. The sensuality of the third and fourth stanzas assumes the form of a nautical metaphor, for water is often regarded as a sex symbol. The folds of the woman's dress are compared to the ripples of waves in the sea on which the man's desires, concretized as ships, sail (En el agua de tu bata/ todas mis ansias navegan). Finally, the slow undulating movement of Fela's body quickens its
pace, and the \textit{chulo}'s desire to lose himself in a grand \textit{cumbancha} (here an orgasm) is suggested by the phrase "naufragar en ese mar tibio y hondo" (which refers to the female sex organ).

In the second part of "Rumba" stanzas five, six and seven lead up to the \textit{vacunao}, which is not realized until the final verse. And although the \textit{rumba} basically involves the coordination of hip, shoulder and bust movements, in the \textit{vacunao} the main emphasis is on synchronizing the lower part of each dancer's body. That is, their navels and genital parts must touch in order for the \textit{rumba} to be complete.\textsuperscript{16} Beginning with stanza five, the coupling of verbal and substantive animal images and metaphors represents the movement of the two dancers toward symbolic copulation. The joining of the verb "trenzar," meaning to cut capers or ties in the execution of dance steps, and the noun "música" gives the impression that Fela is a prancing horse. Moreover, her sheer physical appearance, which is seen only in terms of the contrast between the whiteness of her clothing and the darker tones of her skin, drives the \textit{chulo} to chase her more lustily. The spellbinding effect that she has on him is illustrated by the phrase "el nudo que más me aprieta." The \textit{mulata}'s animal-like resemblance is reiterated and reinforced in stanza six by a three-part
equine-sexual metaphor: "Locura de bajo vientre,"
"aliento de boca seca," and "el ron que se te ha espar-
tado." To the chulo Fela is like a wild horse that needs
to be tamed and ridden, an image that will also figure
greatly in the blues. The very last line of stanza six
substantiates this idea ("el pañuelo como riendas"). For
in the rumba, the male partner sometimes tries to insure
his success at achieving the vacunao by the limiting of
the woman's dancing area with a handkerchief or hat. She
must attempt to pick up the object while dancing. Thus,
the chulo waits to catch her off guard in order to "get"
her.17

In the seventh stanza the rapidly mounting advance-
and-retreat patterns of the rumba can be perceived in the
interplay of the verbs huir, venir and ir. Instead of
submitting (darse), Fela continues to tease the chulo by
interposing her skirt to block his thrust or by giving
the thrust forward alone (hacer un botao) when he is not
in place. But the man is further incited by the battle
that she puts up, and his determination to win is con-
veyed in the expressions "te cogeré domada" and "te veré
bien sujetata."

Essentially stanzas two through seven constitute
the preliminaries of the lovemaking pantomime, which are
drawn out and savored. However, beginning with the last
(eighth) verse, the vacunao approaches the point of fulfillment. The first call line, "No ha de ser larga la espera," reflects the protagonist's anticipation of achieving his goal. The second one, "ni será eterna la bacha," refers to the fact that the end of Fela's pleasurable revelling is near. Finally, the "nalgar" metaphor, a commonplace of Afro-Cuban poetry, is evoked with the phrases "te dolerá la cadera," and "cadera dura y sudada." The repetition of "cadera" emphasizes its elemental traits, which are highlighted by the adjectives "dura" and "sudada." And the final exclamations (Último trago . . . ) signify the success of the chulo in subduing the woman.

Guillén employs three main devices to create or bring about a crescendo effect in the final stanza. Alliteration is evident in the repetition of the occlusive sounds "b," "d" and "k"; vocalic accent is conveyed in assonance of all the vowels; and rhythmic alternation is achieved through the elongation of the call lines and the shortening of the response lines. With these techniques Guillén attempts to reproduce exactly the differently-pitched instruments of the rumba orchestra as well as the vocal interplay between leader (the chulo) and follower (Fela), dancers and audience. In the final analysis, "Rumba" is one of the best examples of the two antiphonal dance forms which are the subject of this study.
"Velorio de Papá Montero," like "La canción del bongó," is an adaptation of the rhythmic structure and format of the son to the romance. Moreover, according to Augier, Guillén's version is a gloss of a popular son written by Eliseo Grenet for the "teatro vernáculo" and is a kind of mock funeral for an imaginary character of the solar environment:¹⁸

Quemaste la madrugada
con fuego de tu guitarra:
zumo de caña en la jícara
de tu carne prieta y viva,
bajo luna muerta y blanca.

El son te salió redondo
y mulato, como un níspero.

Bebedor de trago largo,
garguero de hoja de lata,
en mar de ron barco suelto,
jinete de la cumbancha:
¿qué vas a hacer con la noche
si ya no podrás tomártela,
ni qué vena te dará
la sangre que te hace falta,
si se te fue por el caño
negro de la punalada?

¡Ahora sí que te rompieron,
Papá Montero!

En el solar te esperaban,
pero te trajeron muerto;
fue bronca de jaladera,
pero te trajeron muerto;
dicen que él era tu ecobio,
pero te trajeron muerto;
el hierro no apareció,
pero te trajeron muerto.

Ya se acabó Baldomero:
¡zumba, canalla y rumbero!
Sólo dos velas están quemando un poço de sombra; para tu pequeña muerte con esas dos velas sobra. Y aun te alumbran, más que velas, la camisa colorada que iluminó tus canciones, la prieta sal de tus sones y tu melena planchada.

¡Ahora sí que te rompieron, Papá Montero! Hoy amanece la luna en el patio de mi casa; de filo cayó en la tierra y allí se quedó clavada. Los muchachos la cogieron para lavarle la cara, y yo la traje esta noche y te la puse de almohada.

The first solo stanza is a tribute to Papá Montero's art. Specifically, his music is lauded for its cathartic quality, which is implied in the fire image (Quemaste... con fuego), and for its sweetness, suggested by the sugar-cane sap metaphor (zumo de caña). In addition, the figure of Papá Montero, whose dark, vibrant body (carne prieta y viva) is compared to the jícara, a jar made from the cortex of the güira tree, stands in sharp relief to the pale atmosphere of the dawn, indicated by "madrugada" and "luna muerta y blanca." This is the closest that Guillén has come in depicting an external setting.

The transitional couplet between stanzas one and two are the crystallization of Papá Montero's music--the son, which takes on form (redondo) and color (mulato) through its juxtaposition with the níspero, or crab
apple. Through this vehicle the player expresses Cuba's essence, which springs from the confluence of various racial elements but especially the African and Spanish.

The second stanza continues the exaltation of Papá Montero, but it does so in a mocking vein in that it "praises" the protagonist's cumbancha qualities. By means of two epithets ("Bebedor de trago largo," and "garguero de hoja de lata," and the metaphor of the unmoored boat in a sea of rum ("en mar de ron barco suelto"), Guillén depicts the drinking stamina of Papá Montero. Moreover, the association of rum-drinking with sexual license is established through the metaphor "jinete de la cumbancha," which recalls the rider-wild horse image of "Rumba." The last portion of this stanza directly addresses Papá Montero and alludes to the circumstances of his death (sangre-cañó negro de la puñalada) for the first time. And the refrain "Ahora sí que te rompieron . . ." reinforces the idea of a violent death.

In the antiphonal third stanza the setting of Papá Montero's life and death is suggested by the linking of "solar," "bronca de jaladera" (drunken brawl) and "hierro" (knife). This is the backdrop of the cumbancha whose elements of rum, women and music evoke the image of the bembón. Unlike that of Motivos de son, the bembón figure here is viewed from an historical perspective, that is,
as a slave character. The latter functions as a kind of archetype of the former. Furthermore, the word "ecobio," meaning "friend" or "brother" of a fraternal guild, (the Abakuá Society), goes back to the cabildo, or slave organizations called "naciones" in the colonial epoch. The repeated response phrase "pero te trajeron muerto" also echoes the "Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejía" of García Lorca.

The exclamations of the response phrase that intervenes between the third and fourth stanzas summarize the barracón life-style of the slave era. That is, Baldomero, or the bully, and Papá Montero, the n'er do well, are rival prototypes.

The fourth stanza alludes to the events that gives the poem its title--Papá Montero's wake (velorio). Moreover, it is a static vignette of the sonero (son-player) and contrasts sharply with the vivid scenes drawn of his life in the preceding stanzas. The two candles recapture the fire of Papá Montero's music depicted in the very first stanza of "Velorio de Papá Montero." Furthermore, Guillén joins visual (la camisa roja, melena planchada) and palatal (prieta sal) images to auditory referents (canciones, sones) in a beautiful monument to Papá Montero. The repeated estribillo represents a poignant reminiscence about the life of Papá Montero and it
anticipates the lyricism of the last stanza, where the
fall of the moon from the sky indicates cosmic grief and
sympathy for his death. The last verse also illustrates
the influence of García Lorca's imagery on Guillén.

In reverting to the romance stanza form and in his
use of techniques similar to García Lorca's, Guillén
illustrates his ambivalent attitude toward the innova-
tions of Motivos de son as well as those of Sóngoro
Cosongo. He still seeks to reconcile the African-derived
oral and the Hispanic written traditions.

"Secuestro de la mujer de Antonio" was inspired by
Miguel Matamoros' "La mujer de Antonio," another popular
son of the epoch. It is an example of the danced song
which incorporates into its narration (la letra) the act
or situation being pantomimed. Moreover, Guillén's
version combines elements of the rumba and the son:

Te voy a beber de un trago,
como una copa de ron;
te voy a echar en la copa
de un son.
príeta quemada en ti misma,
cintura de mi canción.

Záfate tu chal de espumas
para que tores la rumba;
y si Antonio se disgusta
que se corra por ahí:
¡la mujer de Antonio tiene
que bailar aquí!

Desamárrate, Gabriela.
Muerde
la cáscara verde,
pero no apagues la vela;
tranca
la pájara blanca,
Y vengan de dos en dos,
que el bongo
se calentó...

De aquí no te irás, mulata,
ni al mercado ni a tu casa;
aquí molerán tus ancas
la zafra de tu sudor:
repique, pique, repique,
repique, repique, pique,
pique, repique, repique,
¡po!

Semillas las de tus ojos
darán sus frutos espesos;
y si viene Antonio luego
que ni en jarana pregunte
como es que tú estás aquí...

Mulata, mora, morena,
que ni el más toro se mueva,
porque el que más toro sea
saldrá caminando así;
el mismo Antonio, si llega,
saldrá caminando así;
todo el que no este conforme,
saldrá caminando así...

Repique, repique, pique,
repique, repique, po;
prieta, quemada en ti misma,
cintura de mi canción!

The motif of this danced song is the suggestive manner of walking of the female protagonist, Gabriela.
Moreover, the structure of the son is basically the octosyllabic pattern of the classical form; however, Guillén uses a few innovative devices here. The first is that there is no one recurring response line or phrase linking the five stanzas of the poem. Except for the first verse, each of the remainder has its own. In the first stanza a three-syllable line interrupts the octosyllabic pattern
and has the effect of highlighting the binary rhythm of the *son*. It is also an example of *enjambement* in that it continues the thought of the preceding line. The stress on the word "son" is similar to that on "ron," and the rhyme of the two terms reproduces the sounds of the *bongo*. Stanza two reverts to the regular eight-syllable arrangement; but in stanza three Guillén employs a kind of "syncopated break," that is, a division of the octosyllable into two lines of two- and six-syllables, to introduce consonant rhyme in the middle of the verse. (Muerde-verde, tranca-blanca). The octosyllabic pattern is sustained for the remainder of the poem.

The *rumba* overtones of this *son* are evident thematically in that there is an attempt to "capture" or "conquer" the *protagonista* through symbolic copulation. In addition, the idea of abduction is related to the latter, for in many cultures mock kidnapping is part of the courtship ritual. Gabriela is the object of the pursuit in "Secuestro de la mujer de Antonio."

The sensual imagery of this danced song begins in the first stanza. Were the ever-present trio of wine, women and song is portrayed with the images ("cuba de ron," "cuba de un son," and "prieta quemada." The woman is conceived of as an element of the man's pleasure to be savored just like a cup of rum. Through association
with "rum," the music is concretized in the phrase "copia de son." Furthermore, the epithets "prieta quemada" and "cintura de mi canción" enhance the woman's desirability, making her the essence of the song. In this stanzaic simile the figure of the bembón is again evoked through the fusion of the above three elements (that is, rum, woman, and son.)

The lovemaking pantomime is further alluded to in the second stanza through the popular expression "torear la rumba," which means to mate a bull with a cow. This is another example of the use of animal metaphor to illustrate the direct, uninhibited display of natural emotions. The phrase "chal de espumas" complements "torear la rumba" in that it conveys the impression of an animal in heat. Furthermore, the command form "Záfate" (tear off) indicates the male dancer's imposition of his will on the female, and this idea is reinforced in the response lines at the end of the stanza (la mujer de Antonio ...).

In the third stanza command verb forms (Desamarrate, Muerde, tranca) again reveal the demanding, aggressive stance of the male dancer as opposed to the submissive position of Gabriela. The "cúscara verde" (green husk or rind) may represent some kind of aphrodisiac (for example, avocados) or it may refer to the girl's virginity. Green
is generally associated with youth and inexperience. On the other hand, the expression "pájara blanca" indicates that the antagonist (the male dancer) seeks to change this state by making the girl his lover (pájara). He intends to capture an innocent little bird. The response phrase "que el bongo se calentó" indicates that the battle is about to start and the line "vengan de dos en dos" refers to the group of couples who will replace one another as one set gets tired.

The fourth stanza of the poem continues the animal metaphor in the linking of "ancas" and "zafría." "Ancas" is the Spanish word for the hips of a female horse. Moreover, in popular speech women are often referred to as "yeguas" (mares), and their physical features are described in horse-like terminology. By connecting it with "zafría," which refers to the sap or juice of a plant and is especially used in relation to sugar cane sap, sexual overtones are intended. This image is in keeping with the idea of the sensuous black and mulatto woman which the Afro-Cuban poets projected in their verse. Furthermore, the pitches of the bongo, conveyed by the onomatopoetic sound group "pique-po," instrumentally reproduce the grinding movements of Gabriel's hips which the man visualizes as he engages her to dance with him.

The last stanza of "Secuestro de la mujer de Antonio" illustrates the antiphonal interplay between
the human and instrumental soloists. There is also an exchange between the vocal lead and vocal chorus (saldrá caminando así). The most important devices here are alliteration, or the repetition of nasal consonants (especially the m), in the sensual play on the words "Mulata, mora, morena"; the alternation of vocalic stress on the final (aguda) and penultimate (grave) syllables in the estribillo (saldrá caminando así); the predominance of terciary rhythms; and the use of the animal image "toro" to refer to the male partner of the dance. The latter technique is employed to indicate the forceful and aggressive stance of the male dancer in the execution of the rumba. Were Antonio to appear on the scene he would have to successfully challenge the intruder, just as a male animal might do, before he could capture, or mate with, female. Finally, the notion of male dominance, called "machismo" in Hispanic countries, is also suggested in the symbolism of the rumba.

Like the poems preceding it (except for "La canción del bongó") "Secuestro de la mujer de Antonio" recreates the cumbancha atmosphere of Motivos de son in which the figures of the bembón, the chulo, the mulata and the negra predominate. However, it is among the last poems in which Guillén would dwell exclusively on the colorful portrayal of folkloric customs. When the latter are depicted again it will be primarily in conjunction with
social concerns.

To summarize, the preceding selections from Sóngoro Cosongo reflect the use of many of the same devices employed by the poet in Motivos de son. This is not surprising since only one year separated the publication of these collections. Yet there are significant differences. The first is that the language of Sóngoro Cosongo is more literary than that of Motivos de son. That is, although many of the expressions and colloquialisms are those of folk speech, Guillén's arrangement of them in the poems is carried out according to written conventions. In the case of the son, whose rhythms and techniques are transferred to the romance form, Guillén seeks less exact duplication of the musical genres than was the case in Motivos de son. On the other hand, the poem "Rumba" does approximate the devices of the danced form more closely than the son poems of Sóngoro Cosongo.

The folkloric types of Sóngoro Cosongo, who are mainly drawn from the barrio (lower-class) districts, are still the one-dimensional, paper figures that represent the perspective of white or European-based society. The male protagonists of these poems are the bembón, chulo, and calavera; the female types are the negra, and mulata, many of whom are referred to as "la mujer de cabaret," "la mulata del rumbo," and "la negra monдон–guera." While Guillén does paint more complimentary
portraits of the black and mulatto female (see, for example, the poems "Madrigal," and "Mujer nueva"), the emphasis on their elemental nature—that is, sensuality, fertility, and earthiness—is disproportionate. Nevertheless, it is in line with the primitivist ideology of the Afro-Cuban school which asserts that traditional Western literature is too cerebral and needs to be replaced with the celebration of the physical, or the body.24

As stated earlier social protest is latent in Sónoro Cosongo since only one of the five poems analyzed has any such inclination. But there are others in this collection although they do not utilize the son or rumba forms. Guillén would move in this direction in West Indies Ltd.
NOTES TO CHAPTER V


7. Ortiz, Ibid., p. 248.


14 Cabrera, Ibid., p. 430.

15 Cabrera, Ibid., p. 430.


17 Ortiz, Ibid., p. 196.

18 Augier, Nicolás Guillén, p. 160.

19 Tous, La poesía de Nicolás Guillén, p. 149.


21 Ortiz, Los bailes y el teatro de los negros en el folklore de Cuba (Habana: Ministerio de Educación, 1951), p. 440.

22 Augier, Nicolás Guillén, p. 144.

23 Ortiz, "Los últimos versos mulatos," Revista Bimestre Cubana XXXV (1935), 324.

CHAPTER VI

WEST INDIES LTD. (1934)

In West Indies Ltd., written three years after Sóngoro Cosongo, Guillén definitely assumes the role of hombre-poeta toward which he had been gradually moving. This position implies that the artist is aware of and accepts his responsibility to foster changes in society through his works.\(^1\) Moreover, the hombre-poeta believes that the human element cannot be lost sight of in the wide array of ideas in literature or the latter becomes meaningless.\(^2\) While reformist literature is not unique to the twentieth century, the upsetting nature of various events during this period has nurtured an ever-increasing preoccupation with social problems in literature as well as the other arts. Thus, Guillén is one of many poets who write from this perspective.

According to Essien-Udom, a "race-man" is one who seeks to uplift his people.\(^3\) He may be writer, politician or educator; the position is not so important as the goal. Race does not imply prejudice or bigotry. Instead it is used in a positive sense to refer to a particular group of people with shared traits (some of which are physical) and a common culture. In relation to Guillén's stance as
spokesman for his people, the concept of "race-man" is not limited to black Cubans but extends to all who suffer from some form of exploitation, especially in pre-revolutionary Cuba. Because of Cuba's social complexity, black and white are not always so easily identifiable. One may be mulatto or mestizo and still be considered one or the other extreme, depending on his social position. Yet in Guillén's era (the period 1920-40) there was a general correlation between the privileged classes and a criollo, or white European, background. Consequently, the term "Black" can be viewed from two perspectives in West Indies Ltd.: to denote the African-derived oral tradition forming the basis of Cuban culture, and to refer to all oppressed people, or the underdog.

This collection of poems vividly reflects the state of Cuban life during the period known as "la política del gran garrote" (guillotine politics), or "la diplomacia del dólar" (dollar diplomacy), which extended from 1920 to 1930. Since 1917 the United States had intervened in Cuban affairs, while the Platt Amendment (1919-1923) insured Cuba's economic vasallage. During the Great Depression (1929-1933), the price of sugar and tobacco, the mainstay of the Cuban economy, plummeted. Conversely, the United States increased its taxes on the sugar imported
into its country, and this move was sanctioned by the Machado dictatorship ruling Cuban at the time. As a result, the Cuban people revolted in 1933.6

In the cultural vacuum following these social disorders, the intellectuals of the nation assumed leadership for reform, creating a new consciousness among the Cuban people. This was achieved through various magazines and newspapers, an example of which is Revista de Avance, in which poetry and other literary genres were used as vehicles of social protest. At this point Guillén too affirms his position as a social poet:

La poesía es una arma. Los poetas de nuestro tiempo debemos emplearla no solo para la defensa, sino también para el ataque.7

It is also during this epoch that he renounces the purely folkloric emphasis of the Afro-Cuban movement and seeks to infuse his poetry with a concern for social improvement. Nevertheless, Guillén does maintain the mannerisms, speech, and musical style of the popular genres that have been discussed in this study and also includes others.8

In short, the "alcohol is wiped from the guitar's mouth so that it might play it full son" (el son entero).9

Essentially Guillén's mission as hombre-poeta can be viewed in terms of his double heritage. On the one side is the Spanish American literary tradition in which militance is a significant feature, and related to it the influence of twentieth-century engagé literature. On the
other side is the concept of the artist as communal spokesman in African-oriented societies, at least the traditional ones. While in the former the focus is on reform, in the latter this may or may not be the case. In fact, the African tradition could well be regarded as conservative since in many West African social units the griot was and still is considered to be the preserver and disseminator of conventional institutions.

As suggested by the title, West Indies Ltd. does not limit itself to Cuba's social problems. There is also a concern for those shared with the other Antillean nations of the Caribbean. The work contains sixteen poems fifteen of which are in the first part; and the lengthy title poem, of eight sections, constitutes the second part. The three sones which we shall examine here come from sections two, five and seven, respectively, of "West Indies Ltd."

As in his earlier collections of poetry, the texture of these poems includes the rhythms, percussive attack and crescendo of the musical son, as well as literary figures of speech and elements of folk expression. In fact, the language of the streets and the cane fields and factories are important textural components of West Indies Ltd. The text of each son-poem is composed by Guillén, but it is incorporated into the charanga, a popular genre. The
latter is a street band consisting of assorted instruments some of which are makeshift. Moreover, percussives are always basic to it, whether bongo, conga or other drum. The charanga is patterned after the Chambelona and the Conga, two street orchestras founded by liberal and conservative politicians, respectively, during the elections of 1908 in Cuba. Furthermore, Ortiz asserts that because of its stress on percussion instruments, the Chambelona, although creole in origin, might well have evoked the idea of the Chambas, drum orchestras in certain bantu cultures in West-Central Africa.13

The context of the son-poems to be examined can be looked at from two levels. The more immediate one is the poem "West Indies Ltd." in which Guillén lambasts imperialist nations, especially the United States, and the leaders of his country for their exploitation of the Cuban and other Caribbean peoples. The indignation which the hombre-poeta feels at witnessing the problems of the poor in his native land and abroad explodes in full fury in this selection. One can say that "West Indies Ltd." represents Guillén's "toma de conciencia," that is, his awareness of global suffering but with Antillean overtones. The first section of this eight-part poem is a caricatur-esque presentation of Antillean political reality. The origin of the body politic called "West Indies" goes back
to the 1933 suppression of the rebellion of the sugar cane workers. The Antilles, the Latin-Spanish name for the Caribbean nations, become the West Indies, the Anglo-American designation for them. With the change of name comes a change of character. Consequently, Cuba and other countries are viewed as little more than North American products. Guillén expresses the bitterness of the Cuban nation at this humiliating predicament in his sarcastic use of the title, which conveys the idea of foreign economic control by representing the West Indies as a corporation. In addition, Guillén re-introduces the figure of the *bambón* who serves as a kind of tourist guide through the land of rum, tobacco, coconuts and poverty. However, he is no longer the dancing, singing, mindless creature of *Motivos de son*. Instead he clamors against injustice. Each of the *son*-poems is introduced by the caption "Cinco minutos de interrupción. La charanga de Juan el Barbero toca un son." Furthermore, they are musical interludes whose liveliness relieves the dramatic tension of the rest of the poem.

The second level of context is simply the rural and urban environment of the proletariat—sugar cane workers, share croppers, factory laborers, etc.

The *son*-poem that constitutes the second part of "West Indies Ltd." commences with the censure of the Cuban leaders whose actions are detrimental to the nation:
--Coroneles de terracota,
políticos de quita y pon;
café con pan y mantequilla . . .
¡Que siga el son!

La burocracia está de acuerdo
en ofrendarse a la Nación;
doscientos dólares mensuales . . .
¡Que siga el son!

El yanqui nos dará dinero,
para arreglar la situación;
la Patria está por sobre todo . . .
¡Que siga el son!

Los viejos líderes sonríen
y hablan después desde un balcón . . .
¡La zafra! La zafra! La zafra!
¡Que siga el son!

The **chambelona** was a device employed by politicians
to gain an audience so that they could express their views
and thus promote their programs. Here the **charanga** also
functions as a political organ with the intent of bringing
the people together to improve life for them. The **charanga** is specifically aimed at disseminating information
to a basically illiterate people, and in this respect,
operates on an oral level in the same manner as a newspaper
would on a written level. Thus, a vehicle of expression
instituted by members of an oppressive regime is used
against them.

The **son** format is regularized in this poem. There
are four three-line solo verses with an invariable response
at the end of each. Moreover, each verse corresponds with
an aspect of the general theme of oppression. Stanza one
portrays the military-political complex (Coroneles de terracota/políticos de quita y pon) that apparently runs the country. Stanza two depicts the confused network (la burocracia) that reinforces the power of the former. Stanza three highlights the powers in actual control of the nation (El yanqui). Stanza four returns to the original point of reference, for the "viejos líderes" are the "coroneles de terracota" and "políticos de quita y pon."

In the first stanza the poet uses irony to portray the country's economic situation. For example, the first line (Coroneles de terracota) illustrates this by juxtaposing the idea of greatness (colonel) with the fact of insignificance (terracota). The same applies to the second line where the notion of leadership (políticos) is incongruous with the irresponsible actions of the latter (quita y pon). The politicians take from the people and put the profits in their own pockets. Their gain is represented by the phrase "café con pan y mantequilla." "Quita y pon" when rhymed with "son" creates a mocking effect. The refrain is also ironical in that it conveys the attitude of the officials, "Let the good times continue as long as we get our share," and that of the people, "Let the son continue to speak the truth."
The second stanza is a kind of submerged metaphor in that the Cuban nation, that is the people, is portrayed as a sacrificial lamb offered by the government to the highest bidder. In place of thirty pieces of silver are $200.00 per month. Again the estribillo reinforces the double meaning of "seguir."

The third stanza expresses the hypocritical view of the leadership that it is acting in the best interest of the country (la Patria está por sobre todo) by permitting foreigners to handle Cuba's internal affairs. Here the epithet "yanqui" is the symbol of the oppressor whom the Cuban government presents to the people as some sort of false saviour. Moreover, the ambiguity of the personal pronoun "nos" is conducive to an ironical play on words. For the politicians give the impression that "nos" means "all of us" when in fact it refers only to themselves.

The last stanza is an allusion to the coup-d'état of 1934 in which Colonel Batista, aided directly by the North American ambassador Jefferson Caffrey, returned Cuba to the semicolonial status quo that existed before the cane workers' revolt.¹⁵ "Los viejos líderes" represent the alliance of rich sugar producers and foreign interests. And the phrase "La zafra" symbolizes the exploitation of the workers by the sugar monopoly.
In short, the government's version of the country's economic situation is that the sugar monopoly is in their best interests. However, the charanga is a parody of this official view, for it implies that the Cuban people, which is really the nation, are the losers. They give all and receive nothing in return.

The tune that Juan el Barbero's orchestra strikes up in the fifth section of "West Indies Ltd." follows a vivid description (in part four) of the starvation, disease and alienation of an oppressed people. It is a musical rendition of this pathetic vignette:

--Para encontrar la butuba
hay que trabajar caliente;
para encontrar la butuba
hay que trabajar caliente:
mejor que doblar el lomo,
tienes que doblar la frente.

De la caña sale azúcar,
azúcar para el café;
de la caña sale azúcar,
azúcar para el café:
lo que ella endulza, me sabe como si le echara hiel.

No tengo donde vivir,
ni mujer a quien querer;
no tengo donde vivir,
i ni mujer a quien querer:
todos los perros me ladran,
y nadie me dice usted.

Los hombres, cuando son hombres,
tienen que llevar cuchillo;
los hombres, cuando son hombres,
tienen que llevar cuchillo:¡yo fui hombre, lo llevé,
y se me quedó en presidio!
Si me muriera ahora mismo, 
si me muriera ahora mismo, 
si me muriera ahora mismo, mi madre, 
¡qué alegre me iba a poner!

¡Ay, yo te daré, te daré, 
te daré, te daré, 
ay, yo te daré, 
la libertad!

The charanga now becomes a personal lament of the worker, who still views himself as an exploited individual rather than as part of an oppressed group. In addition, the dialogal structure of the son assumen a different format in this poem. There are five solo verses; and the first four utilize a technique which is also present in the blues form—the repetition of the first line as the second line followed by a third statement that supplements or comments on the first. The fifth solo stanza repeats its first line in the manner of a refrain before completing the thought. And the stanzaic response at the very end of the poem is a personification of death, who is represented as a liberating force from the worker's miserable state.

In the first stanza the theme of starvation is presented. The term "butuba" which originally meant yams (ñames in the carabalí language and in others of West Africa), represents the food which the exploited laborer is sorely lacking. Moreover, the popular expression "trabajar caliente" refers to the drudgery and difficulty
of harvesting sugar cane as well as the unbearable heat in which it must be realized. The latter statement comments on the first by a play on the meaning of "doblár." The worker has to bend his back, (doblár el lomo) which points back to working hard, and he has to be submissive (doblár la frente) in order to obtain the little that he has. Thus, the physical act of bending and the attitude of submission are parallel thoughts connected with the verb "doblár."

The second stanza can be regarded literally and figuratively. In the first instance, the laborer complains about the fact that the fruit of his labor, the sugar, is used to sweeten someone else's coffee. In the second case, the caña (sugar-cane) symbolizes the worker whose blood, sweat and tears (the azúcar) is slowly drained from him in order to improve another nation's conditions, symbolized by the coffee. Consequently, the coffee is bitter because it employs his own life force, the caña, against him.

The theme of loneliness and the sense of isolation felt by this laborer are explicitly stated in the third stanza. Without companionship or a home, the man is alienated from the rest of humanity, which is poignantly expressed in the last two lines (todos los perros me ladran/ nadie me dice usted).
The growing social consciousness of the cane worker is hinted at in the fourth stanza in the reference to the need to carry a knife. The idea is that any man worthy of the name will defend himself against abuse and exploitation. And the paucity of language in this stanza, especially the last two lines, belies the wealth of connotations behind the image of the knife. Through the use of preterite tense verbs, Guillén summarily portrays the process that leads from initial consciousness of self (yo fui hombre) to action (lo llevé) to the end result (me quedó en presidio). The implication is that when the worker becomes fully aware of his bonds with others in the same position, the consequences will be different.

However, he has not reached that point yet and the only recourse left is to slowly rot in prison. Death would indeed be a blessing, and the man's obsession with leaving this world is dramatically revealed by the repetition of the first line of stanza five (Si me muriera ahora mismo). The response verse promises the worker this type of liberation in a voice which sounds as woeful as his. Through alliteration, here the repetition of occlusives (t-d), and reiteration of the phrase "te daré," the binary rhythmic accents and percussive qualities of the son are conveyed. Furthermore, the crescendo effect is achieved in stanza five through the alliteration of
"m" sounds which are so close that they trip over one another.

The human cost of a revolution is musicalized in the son-poem that makes up the seventh movement of "West Indies Ltd." When the workers threaten to strike for better wages and living conditions, the military dictatorship reacts with violence, proclaiming "habrá zafra o habrá sangre." Again the song that Juan el Barbero plays is a plaintive one, portraying the result of this suppression:

--Me matan, si no trabajo,
y si trabajo, me matan;
siempre me matan, me matan,
siempre me matan.

Ayer vi a un hombre mirando,
mirando el sol que salía;
ayer vi a un hombre mirando,
mirando el sol que salía:
el hombre estaba muy serio,
porque el hombre no veía.

Ay,
los ciegos viven sin ver
cuando sale el sol,
cuando sale el sol,
¡cuando sale el sol!

Ayer vi a un niño jugando
a que mata a otro niño;
ayer vi a un niño jugando
a que mata a otro niño;
hay niños que se parecen
a los hombres trabajando.
¿Quién les dirá cuando crezcan
que los hombres no son niños,
que no lo son,
que no lo son,
que no lo son!
Me matan, si no trabajo,
y si trabajo, me matan:
siempre me matan, me matan,
¡siempre me matan!

This son begins and ends with the same stanzaic choral response, thus illustrating the vicious cycle in which the Cuban cane worker is trapped. The repetition of the cry "me matan" graphically portrays the theme of exploitation and the brutal suppression of any efforts to uplift the underdog. In addition, the use of the adverb "siempre" in connection with "me matan" gives the impression of a timeless situation—that is, one in which the worker is, has always been, and will continue to be. This complements the idea of the endless cycle.

The circular structure of this son is also evident in its near-perfect arrangement. Divided in half, the first part consists of lines 1-15, which are distributed into a four-line refrain, a six-line solo verse and a five-line antiphonal stanza, each separated from the other. The second half, lines 16-30, combines in one large stanza a six-line solo verse, a five-line antiphonal stanza, and the same four-line estribillo that begins the poem.

The refrain emphasizes the theme of exploitation while the solo and antiphonal stanzas elaborate on it through the development of parallel ideas and images. For example, the image of the blind man in the first stanza is contrasted with the notion of a mock battle between
two boys in the second stanza. Moreover, there is a progression from the specific (un hombre . . . que . . . no veía) to the general (los ciegos viven sin ver) so that the idea of the first solo stanza is expanded in the first antiphonal verse. Parallel to this is the contrast of the blind man's gravity (estaba muy serio) with the playful nature of the children (un niño jugando). Again there is a gradual movement from the particular (un niño/otro niño) to the general (hay niños . . . los hombres). The third instance of parallel construction is that of the repeated estribillo of each antiphonal stanza. That is, "cuando sale el sol . . ." completes the meaning of "los ciegos viven sin ver" just as "que no lo son . . ." completes the sense of "Quién les dirá cuando crezcan/que los hombres no son niños."

Essentially this elaboration on the theme is an extended metaphor in which several levels of meanings interact. Through the association of the verb "matar" with the playing children, we perceive that the potential for killing another human being begins at a tender age. By linking "matar" to the image of the "niño-hombre" the implication is that the harsh (killing) labor of the cane fields, the milieu of this poem, is a continuous, endless process which only death can finalize. In other words, the adverbial qualifier "siempre" infers that the
conditions in which the exploited worker finds himself is a life-long death, an idea reinforced by the cyclical structure of the poem. Finally there is the suggestion that grown men are like children in that their blindness, which may assume the form of stupidity, greed or anger, allows them to devalue human life and not feel guilty. In a sense they play games with each other.

In conclusion, each of the above son-poems represents Guillén's skill at condensing numerous ideas and connotations in an abbreviated form. In addition, the key elements in the poems are noun-verb relationships, which are supplemented with various qualifiers. In the overall structure of "West Indies Ltd." the charanga serves as the choral response to the solo portions not discussed individually here. In fact the poet himself can be thought of as the interlocutor with whom the charanga interacts in dialogal fashion. His solo begins in the first section where Antillean problems are depicted. The son that the charanga plays in the second part is a specific comment on the preceding solo. It does so by portraying Cuban reality, that is, the political disorders of the 1933-34 period. In sections three and four of "West Indies Ltd." the poet resumes his projection of Antillean reality on the screen by enumerating the miserable conditions found there—hunger, disease, loneliness. The fifth son is, in turn a musical rendition of
the themes of the preceding sections. And the general theme of exploitation that figures in the seventh son follows a diatribe on the same in the sixth part of the poem. Finally, the eighth portion of "West Indies Ltd." presents a vision of the future when the underdogs of the Antilles and of the world will unite in order to improve their lives. This is achieved by projecting and linking three elements that symbolize the growing consciousness of the Antillean peoples—a hand closing into a fist (puño vengativo), a song of hope (son de esperanza) and the tropical sun highlighting the verdure of the Caribbean islands (el sol habla de bosques con las verdes semillas . . .). In addition, the poet juxtaposes the twin appellations representing these notions:

West Indies, en ingles. En castellano las Antillas.

By placing the Spanish epithet last, Guillén implies that this is the authentic name and character of these Island-nations even though they seem to be otherwise on the surface. (In Spanish syntax it is common to emphasize a word or phrase by placing it last.) Finally, the LÁPIDA, or gravestone memorial, placed at the end of the poem reinforces this idea by suggesting that the past is already a buried entity:

Esto fue escrito por Nicolás Guillén, antillano, en el año de mil novecientos treinta y cuatro.
In short, the future belongs to the Antillean people.

We shall now consider similar Africanisms in the black oral tradition of the United States.
NOTES TO CHAPTER VI


4Adriana Tous, La poesía de Nicolás Guillén, (Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispánica, 1971), p. 79. Regarding the correlation between a white-European background and social status, Charles Wagley observes that while there is a multitude of racial categories in the Caribbean, the societies generally stress the social value of certain phenotypical traits and that the "social race" categories stemming from them are based on the social values for given characteristics. The highest value is placed on the possession of Caucasoid features. See Wagley, "Plantation America: A Culture Sphere," in Vera Rubin (ed.) Caribbean Studies: A Symposium (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1960), p. 7.


6Cartey, Ibid., pp. 260-262.


9Coulthard, Ibid., p. 34.

Fernando Ortiz, Los bailes y el teatro de los negros en el folklore de Cuba (Habana: Ministerio de Educación, 1951), pp. 443-444.

Ortiz, Ibid., pp. 443-444.

Ortiz, Ibid., pp. 443-444.

Augier, Nicolás Guillén, p. 220.

Augier, Ibid., p. 226.

Tous, La poesía de Nicolás Guillén, p. 147.
CHAPTER VII

AFRO-AMERICAN FOLK MUSIC GENRES: THE BLUES AND JAZZ

The problem in studying the black folk music of the United States is that the West African and European influences have been so closely intertwined that it is often difficult to distinguish their respective origins. Although the blues and jazz are the two forms that are considered in the analysis of Langston Hughes's poetry, a general survey of Afro-American folk music is in order so that we might gain a better perspective of the tradition out of which the two emerged.

Henry E. Krehbiel was one of the first scholars to recognize the existence of an original African-based folk music in the United States. However, the attempts of this author to "scientifically" study black oral tradition failed, for Krehbiel relied on the biased observations and opinions of laymen (for example, Lafcadio Hearn and George W. Cable). Furthermore, Krehbiel classified Afro-American folk songs as primarily religious, thus ignoring other genres such as the blues, the field holler and the work-song.
Krehbiel's study did provoke controversy and aroused others to examine the black oral tradition. The point in question was whether or not the pentatonic scale was of West African origin. These disputes raged at a time when little was known of the West African musical culture. Yet "West African music and European folk music are enough alike to blend easily in a seemingly infinite array of hybrids."³ Relying on archaeological findings, Marshall W. Stearns also asserts that West African and European folk music blended so easily because originally the African and European continents were joined.⁴ (Stearns, *The Story of Jazz*, N.Y.: Oxford U. P., 1956, p. 14). Moreover, both use the diatonic scale.

But the main difference is that European folk music is a little more complicated harmonically and African tribal music is a little more complicated rhythmically. They are about equal in regard to melody. At the extremes, modulation from key to key is unknown in Africa and multiple meters are unknown in Europe, but when the African arrived in the New World the folk music that greeted him must have sounded familiar enough, except for the lack of rhythm.⁵

Traditionally it was felt that a study of melodic or scale features sufficed in the assessment of the Afro-American folk tradition. However, Courlander points out other important factors: the style of presentation, harmony and polyphony, canonical elements, relationships between singers, the use of the voice and the accepted standard of what a good voice is, the link between music and motor
activity, the manner of projecting the music, tone requirements as they relate to instruments, the forms of accompaniment, song content, the functions of music, and traditional attitudes toward music.\(^6\)

Guided by these principles, Courlander describes black folk music in this manner: "One of the commonly cited characteristics of the Negro blues song is 'blue tonality,' the partially flatted third and seventh notes (E-flat and B-flat in the key of C)."\(^7\) But it is also found in other genres like the work song, religious music and the field holler. Stearns also includes the fifth tone as a blue note. There is disagreement as to the West African provenience of blue tonality. But Courlander concludes that the frequency of partially flatted or sharped tones in the music of black America is not accidental.\(^8\) A second quality of black folk music is the value placed on a foggy, hoarse, rough or sandy voice, which is felt to have more body than a light, sweet, soft one (as in Western tradition). This feature is also present in much West African singing and that of Caribbean nations. And this folk value has been transferred to art forms, jazz, for example.\(^9\) A third trait is the high esteem placed on the falsetto voice in black oral tradition throughout West Africa and the two Americas.\(^10\) A fourth characteristic is the ubiquity of humming, moaning and groaning in singing
as well as instrumentation. Moreover, moaning and groaning are not necessarily associated with grief or anguish; they may, conversely, represent "... a blissful or ecstatic rendition of a song, characterized by full and free exploitation of melodic variation and improvisation, sometimes with an open throat, sometimes with closed lips to create a humming effect." The alternation or softening of various final consonants is done to produce a certain desired aural effect. For example, r's and l's often become m's and n's (Father-Fathum, steel-steem, somewhere-somewhen, etc.). The dialogue or antiphonal quality of West African music has already been discussed at length. The same feature occurs in the United States, for response is highly valued in black culture.

Another standard of Afro-American folk music is the achievement of percussive effects by handclapping, foot-patting, and tapping other body parts, which maintain the rhythmic pulse for singing and playing. Related to this is the notion that African-inspired music has a strong percussive bent or tendency; and various buzzing, rattling, and vibrating mechanisms are added to instruments to heighten this sense. This feature is especially noted in the playing of instruments like the washtub bass, double bass fiddle, the banjo, drums, the harmonica, and even brass instruments. Finally, black music "swings"; that
is, it possesses a network of offbeats, retarded beats and anticipated beats not found in Euro-American folk music. In short, the "metronome sense" is also a salient feature of Afro-American music, folk, popular and classical.

The Blues

In general, the blues is defined as "folk-songs born out of heartache." Many blues performers substantiate this capsule evaluation of their art. For example, Alan Lomax, famed American folksong collector, describes a similar attitude in conversations with Memphis blues singers during the 1940's. Most agree that the blues relates one's personal troubles and helps to relieve them through song. And according to Courlander,

as a form of expression, blues are certainly much more than a statement of personal misery. At its base, the blues song is a sort of exalted or transmuted expression of criticism or complaint, the very creation or singing of which serves as a balm or antidote. The finer the singing or creative effort, the more effective is the song as a catharsis.

The beginning of the blues form is uncertain; for critics cannot determine when the field holler and other forms preceding it ended and when it crystallized. J.S. Roberts does an interesting bit of speculation. He contrasts the example of field holler,
O-o-o-o-o-oh,  
Going down the river before long

with a rudimentary blues form:

Going down the river before long
Going down the river before long
Going down the river before long

Roberts states: "The man who sang these verses was singing in a tradition still full of African elements—allusive lyrics, presumably (given the lack of development of the words) interest in the music, and repetition as both a musical and a poetic form."¹⁸ (J.S. Roberts, Black Music of Two Worlds, N.Y.: Praeger Publishers, 1972, pp. 179-180)

Oliver establishes the late nineteenth century as the origin and period of gestation of the blues form. But the word "blues" refers to the folk music of the early years of the twentieth which began to be codified into many forms, the most common of which is the twelve-bar, or classic blues.¹⁹

Keil provides the clearest definition of this form:

A blues chorus or verse usually falls into a 4/4 twelve-bar pattern divided into three call-and-response sections with the over-all rhyme scheme of AAB. Occasionally this basic verse unit is contracted to eight bars or expanded to sixteen or even twenty-four...²⁰

In addition, the common method of performance is for the singer to deliver one or two lines in iambic pentameter superimposed on the first eight or nine beats. The
remainder of the four-bar melodic phrase is filled out with complementary instrumental figures that lead into the duplication of the initial lines. The repeated line adds an expletive like "yeah," "Lord, have mercy," or "I said" to give the statement a different twist. And the third line is the resolution of the original idea, attitude or emotion. This structure may also apply to stanzaic relationships.  

The antiphonal structure of the blues is twofold. On the first plane, each sung or spoken statement is balanced by an instrumental response whose message equals that of the preceding words. Patterned after this exchange, the blues verse can be divided into six parts of three overlapping vocal calls and three instrumental responses.  

On the second level, the three vocal lines (statement, its repetition, and counter-statement) engage in a dialogal exchange. The initial statement may present a concrete image, an idiom, or a figure of speech which, in turn, represents a complex set of associations and connotations. These are played off against one another in the repetition and resolution; and in the process they highlight a theme or create a mood which is either sustained throughout the song or shifted from chorus to chorus.  

While no group of people decided on a set form for the blues, the recording of blues lyrics during the
1920's was an influence on its standardization. Consequently, the twelve-bar form is a point of departure, for with improvisation a number of variations can be done. However, Roberts points out that improvisation is also governed by the simple, flexible framework of the blues genre.  

If one considers the wealth of songs included by the term "blues" its domain is broadened. It refers to the verbal expression of a feeling using the classic pattern, sung with an instrumental accompaniment; it means an instrumental rendition adhering to the classic pattern (such as jazz); it encompasses "songs with a rough fluid approximation of the classic form, but with variations from verse to verse in the number of bars, lengths of verbal phrases, and the instrumental breaks between lines, within a verse, and between verses." It has forms such as "talking blues, semi-rhythmic speaking or a mixture of speaking and singing, accompanied by rhythmic guitar." And finally there are selections that do not follow the three unit form, but approach the standard blues in sentiments, language and verbal conventions, as well as instrumental techniques.  

Finally, Oster differentiates between rural and urban blues, but he cautions that there is an overlapping symbiotic relationship between these two points on the
The country blues is characterized by a spontaneous expression of idea and mood, diversified subjects, a fluid use of form and an unaccompanied voice or a solo performer who accompanies himself with a guitar. If a group rendition is done, makeshift instruments are used (guitar, harmonica, country style fiddle, washboard or percussion).

In contrast, the urban blues generally exhibits arranged musical texts, concentrates on love themes, and adheres to the classical (twelve-bar) structure. Moreover, the classic blues singers of the 1920s and 30's like Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith and Clara Smith were accompanied by small bands with formal instruments—a piano, brass (trumpet, trombone or saxophone), and a rhythm (percussion) section. But when the male blues vocalists replaced the classic (female) singers, they brought with them the informal instruments rooted in the country style.

The Blues As Poetry

"It is with the development of the three-line verse that the blues became a distinctive poetic form . . . ." Moreover, like its musical counterpart, the structure of the blues stanza consists of an original statement, repeated with either a slight word change or an added expletive, and a second statement to fill out the first. A blues poem has
several stanzas that elaborate on, develop, or repeat the theme, emotion, or action presented in the first verse. The subsequent stanzas provide details of the action or reflect on the theme or emotion. Oster's comments are even more helpful in considering blues poetry:

In both talking blues and blues which are more rigid in structure most lines are made up of two sections of approximately equal duration with a caesura (a pause) in between, more or less in the middle. Often there is a striking contrast between the first half of a line and the second half, and/or between the opening line of a verse and the last line. The result of these elements in combination is a quotable verse, complete in itself, often aphoristic, rhythmically appealing as the words trip easily off the tongue and readily remem-bered—roughly analogous to the heroic couplet of the eighteenth century, if we disregard the repetition of a line in the blues.

The final line completes the thought initiated by the first, in a way which is clever, witty, dramatic, or strikingly imaginative. Since such a verse or line is a satisfying unit in itself, a singer who is making up a song as he goes along by free association can fit into the mood of what he is saying a stock aphoristic or clever verse which deals with the situation on his mind.

Some degree of rhyming is present in many, not all, blues lyrics. The most common type occurs in the four-line stanza in which the second and last lines rhyme, or the six-line strofe, in which the fourth and sixth lines match. Moreover, rhyme is a flexible technique, for some songs employ it while others ignore it. It also depends on local speech patterns whose rhyme scheme may not always be apparent at first glance (e.g., line-crying).
Regarding the content of blues poetry, the genre is an excellent form for expressing personal dissatisfaction, remorse, or regret, "... to tell the world about your misfortune and the way you feel about it; to air a scandal; and perhaps to point the finger of accusation at someone who has caused an injury or misery." While other forms of black folk music are utilized to the same end, the blues seems especially adapted to this purpose. In addition, it is in keeping with the strong tradition in West Africa (and other folk cultures) of songs of protest and recrimination. Misery, despair, forlornness, weariness, ridicule are present in the blues—the mundane medium of expressing these emotions—as well as work songs, prison songs and other forms. In short, "the blues protest or call attention to real or fancied injustices—commenting on such topics as jail, prison camp, the electric chair, bedbugs, discrimination, sickness, poverty, lonesomeness, unfaithfulness, or bad treatment by one's mate." (Courlander, p. 128; see also Oliver, Meaning of the Blues)

According to Charters, "the blues as a poetic language has still the direct, immediate relationship to experience that is at the heart of all art." (Charters, the Poetry of the Blues, p. 12) Moreover, Charters feels that sincerity and directness of expression are valued
features which are fundamental to the blues, providing emotional release for the singer and his audience. And while the language of the blues is simple, there is still a conscious use of the devices of 'art' poetry: simile, metaphor, imagery, symbolism, personification, metonymy, and contrasts, to name a few. 38

Oster synthesizes the techniques of blues poetry thusly:

The true blues singer improvises as easily as he speaks, sometimes more easily. The musical and poetic structure of the blues, its heavy reliance on standard verses and phrases, and the singer's possession of a mental reservoir of blues verses which flow into consciousness with the fluidity and often disorder of thought, in combination make improvisation a natural and simple act for the singer who has absorbed the tradition since childhood. The result may be simply a melange of traditional verses, inconsistent in combination, or it may be an effective synthesis held together by an emotional logic of association. Most blues singers are essentially imitators; the end product of the improvisation is original primarily in the particular combination of standard parts the singer has hit upon—a patchwork quilt made of already fabricated pieces the maker has put together in a pattern which suits his impulses. 39

In Chapters VIII through X we shall see how the poet Langston Hughes appropriates the traditional forms of the blues in an innovative manner.

Jazz and Jazz Poetry

In The Story of Jazz Stearns provides a working definition of jazz. He regards it as
a semi-improvisational American music distinguished by an immediacy of communication, an expressiveness characteristic of the free use of the human voice, and a complex flowing rhythm; it is the result of a three-hundred-years blending in the United States of the European and West African musical traditions; and its predominant components are European harmony, Euro-African melody, and African rhythm.40

And the jazz critic Nat Hentoff gives as its essentials "... a pulsating (but not necessarily regular) rhythm; a feeling of improvisation ... vocalized instrumental technique and, conversely, instrumentalized phrasing in jazz singing; timbres and polyrhythmic usages that are rooted in the Afro-American folk music of three centuries."41 However, while jazz is firmly rooted in the black oral tradition discussed above, "the folk forms existed independently of, and prior to, the development of what we know as jazz. It is clear that jazz developed out of folk music, primarily Negro, but in some basic ways it has become completely dissociated from folk music."42 There was also a transitional stage called popular music in the development of jazz from a folk to an elite art. Thus, while jazz often "renews" itself by resorting to the folk tradition, it has been considered an "art" music since 1945.43

A few more details concerning the techniques of jazz will aid in our understanding of the poet's attempt to at least approximate them. One of the basic features of jazz is that it "swings," although many players as well as
critics are somewhat hard put to define this term ade-
quately. Essentially, "swing" is associated with the super-
imposition of an African-derived rhythmic approach on the
basic duple, or march time, meter (2/4, 4/4). That is, a
player will render meters of 3/4, 6/8, 4/4 or other combina-
tions simultaneously so that the counterrhythms fall around,
above and below the basic rhythm. Oliver disagrees that
the concept of "swing" is an African-based one, for he did
not find this to be the case in Legon, Ghana where he stud-
ied the music of certain Yoruba tribes. However, Roberts
contends that while African music does not "swing" in the
same sense as jazz, there are definite parallels in this
Afro-American genre and those of certain groups in the
Congo-Angola regions.

Another characteristic ascribed to jazz is syncopa-
tion, or the accentuation of normally weak beats. Roberts
expands on this:

What jazz musicians in fact do with the basic
two-four or four-four beat is much more subtle,
and more in line with African practices: They
play around it, anticipating it, laying back on
it, creating a sort of reverse syncopation by
cutting across a rocking rhythm with a series
of notes of exactly equal value. Basically, the
good jazz musician plays melodic-rhythmic pat-
terns that intermarry (to this extent there is
a resemblance with the drum corps, but only
insofar as the drum corps is a special applica-
tion of a more general principle). The effect
of syncopation is caused by the use in jazz of
an African-descended technique in a context that
contains European material—measured meter, bars,
and so forth.
With regard to structure, "... the most obvious link between jazz and African music--descended through the music of the nineteenth century and the blues--is the call-and-response technique, instrumentalized." 48 A particularly interesting development of antiphony in jazz is the riff, representing the response, over which is played a free solo. 49 Moreover, the antiphonal structure of the riff engendered another melodic form. "The riff alone, used repeatedly to build a tune ... is quite like the technique of short-phrase tunes used in Africa." 50 Thus, the dialogue quality of antiphony is the basis of a phenomenon called the "fours" where two or more musicians in a band ... will trade passages of four bars apiece to construct a single, logical solo line. 51

As in the blues, the blue tonality permeates jazz, where the bending of notes to produce quarter tones (especially at the third, fifth and seventh intervals of the scale) occurs. The last feature of jazz to be considered is the utilization of a variety of tonal or timbre techniques in contrast to the "pure" tone of European music. In short, "the use of a wide range of tonal qualities--sharp, smooth, and piercing--of varied vibratos, and of special effects like growls, shakes, and dirty notes of all sorts is a noticeable part of jazz, to which the use of mutes with brass instruments for special effects is related." 52
During the 1950’s and 60’s jazz poetry was very popular among members of the avant-garde circles in the United States, especially evident in the works of the "Beat Generation." In some cases the writers actually tried to reproduce the techniques of the jazz musician. In others the emphasis was on oral renditions to the accompaniment of a jazz band. In the latter case, the poetry depended less on the structure of jazz per se than it did on the fusion of the poet’s voice with the music. Kenneth Rexroth defines jazz poetry in this way:

What is jazz poetry? It isn’t anything very complicated to understand. It is the reciting of suitable poetry with the music of a jazz band, usually small and very quiet. Most emphatically, it is not recitation with "background" music. The voice is integrally wedded to the music and, although it does not sing notes, is treated as another instrument, with its own solos and ensemble passages, and with solo and ensemble work by the band alone. . . . It returns poetry to music and public entertainment as it was in the days of Homer and the troubadours. It forces poetry to deal with aspects of life it has tended to avoid in the recent past. It demands of poetry something of a public surface—meanings which can be grasped by ordinary people—just as the plays of Shakespeare had something for both the pit and the intellectuals in Elizabethan times, and still have today.54

As we have seen by the above discussion on the West African oral tradition, the fusion of art and life has always been a feature of non-literate civilizations. Consequently, with the experiments in blues and jazz poetry,
the writers of contemporary American literature attempt to bridge the gap between the two created when the poets of a technologically-oriented Western culture reacted by embarking on the path of art for art's sake.
NOTES TO CHAPTER VII


2Krehbiel, Ibid., pp. 37-41.


7Courlander, Ibid., p. 18.

8Courlander, Ibid., p. 21.


10Courlander, Ibid., p. 25.

11Courlander, Ibid., p. 25.


14Courlander, Ibid., p. 30.


35 Courlander, Ibid., p. 128.

36 Courlander, Ibid., p. 128.


38 Charters, Ibid., pp. 31-32.


41 Quoted in Courlander, Negro Folk Music, p. 31.

42 Courlander, Ibid., p. 32.

43 Keil, Urban Blues, p. 132.

44 Stearns, The Story of Jazz, pp. 3-4.


46 Roberts, Black Music of Two Worlds, p. 208.

47 Roberts, Ibid., p. 207.


49 Roberts, Ibid., p. 211.

50 Roberts, Ibid., p. 211.

51 Roberts, Ibid., p. 211.

52 Roberts, Ibid., p. 213.

CHAPTER VIII

THE WEARY BLUES (1926)

Precedents

James Langston Hughes, son of James Nathaniel and Carrie Mercer Langston Hughes, was born February 1, 1902 in Joplin, Missouri. Because he was prevented from taking the bar examination in Oklahoma, Hughes's father left America and relocated in Toluca, Mexico where he established a successful law practice and ranch. The elder Hughes had nothing but disdain for any black person who tolerated racial discrimination. Carrie Hughes also embarked on a personal crusade against racism. Refusing to be satisfied with menial labor, she moved around the country periodically in an effort to improve her situation. As a result of his parents' divorce, Langston Hughes was placed in the care of his maternal grandmother, Mary Sampson Patterson Leary Langston. Most of his childhood was spent with her in Topeka, Kansas, until she died in 1914. After this, young Hughes was shuttled back and forth from his mother and stepfather to other relatives and friends. In general, his early years contained many unhappy experiences.
Langston Hughes's maternal ancestry was a vital element in the formation of his character. His grandmother, who was part Indian and part French, married Lewis Sheridan Leary, a black freedman who died heroically in John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry. Leary's widow then united with Charles Langston, an active participant in the Oberlin station of the Underground Railroad. Langston was a prominent community leader and eloquent speaker. (He was a politician.) Charles's brother, James Mercer Langston was a congressman from Virginia, United States Minister to Haiti and Dean of the first Law School at Howard University. His descendants were well-off and haughty in contrast to the proud but poor side of the family Hughes belonged to. Finally, the maternal line could also trace its ancestry back to Francis Quarles, the seventeenth century Jacobean poet. Consequently, a sense of integrity, militancy and pride was instilled into young Hughes by his grandmother. Furthermore, his mother was artistically inclined, and occasionally wrote poems, presented dramatic recitations and read papers at the Inter-State Literary Society established by her father (Charles Langston). This was an influence that would figure substantially in the development of Hughes's artistic consciousness.
Hughes first began writing when he was elected class poet by the eighth-grade students at a grammar school in Lincoln, Illinois. During this period he also felt the attraction of the entertainment world, frequenting movies, plays and road shows. The high school years in Cleveland, Ohio (at Central High) exposed him to the works of many different writers and some philosophers: Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Carl Sandburg, Charles W. Chesnutt, Theodore Dreiser, W.E.B. DuBois, Edna Ferber, Vachel Lindsay, Amy Lowell, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, De Maupassant and others. Hughes even composed poems in imitation of Dunbar and Sandburg. However, he was still unsure of himself.⁶

The summer of 1919 was spent in Mexico with his father whom Hughes had not seen since early childhood. The elder Hughes tried to persuade his son to emulate him. However, their temperaments clashed and the experience left a distaste in Hughes for all that his father represented. The two would never reconcile their differences.

While in Mexico, Hughes wrote several poems, among them "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" and "When Susanna Jones Wears Red." Yet he would not make writing a definite career until several years later.⁷ For one and a half years, Hughes attended Columbia University out of a half-hearted attempt to please his father. Disillusioned
with pursuing a goal in which he had no interest (engineering), he quit school and set out to discover the world. He finally secured work on a ship bound for Africa. The year was 1923.  

The literary tradition that Hughes inherited was relatively new with respect to black writing. For although Paul Lawrence Dunbar (1872-1906) had been a precursor in the sense that he was the first Post-Reconstruction black writer to be recognized as such, the kind of works he produced reveal the ambivalent attitude of a newly-emancipated people.  

That is, Dunbar was impelled to don a grinning mask which represented a slave mentality. He felt that it was the only way of being accepted by a public who had no conception, outside of stereotypes, of the black experience. Yet behind that persona was an extremely sensitive, talented person who sought to reconcile his uniqueness (that is, a black poet) with his passion for writing.  

When the "new negro," the term coined by Alain Locke to describe the growing black consciousness of the early twentieth century, appeared on the scene, the impact he made was greater than anyone could have anticipated. For unlike the Afro-Cuban movement, the "Harlem Renaissance" was more than a passing fashion. On the one side, it coincided with a rejuvenation of American
poetry that was carried out by Lindsay, Frost, Masters, Sandburg, Eliot, Pound and Hart Crane. On the other hand, the "Negro Renaissance" was the artistic and intellectual manifestation of a series of political, social and economic changes in post-World War I America. These forces gave birth to Black nationalism and served as background for the gestation and development of the movement.\(^\text{11}\) In many ways the Harlem Renaissance set the pattern for the Black revolution of the 1960s and 70s.

As in Cuba, there were certain intellectuals whose leadership in the growth of black consciousness established their position as mentors to the artists. One such figure was William Edward Burghardt DuBois, a phenomenal scholar and vociferous advocate of Afro-American nationalism. In *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903), an extremely influential collection of essays, DuBois expresses the idea that black folk music is the foundation on which Afro-Americans must build their formal art. In short, it is an Afro-American interpretation of Herderian ideology to which DuBois was undoubtedly exposed during his studies in Germany.\(^\text{12}\)

"Like DuBois, Alain Leroy Locke was nurtured in high art but had a deep affinity for Afro-American folk art."\(^\text{13}\) *The New Negro* (1925), which Locke edited, is regarded as the landmark of the Negro Renaissance for it synthesizes the achievements of Afro-Americans in all
fields. Furthermore, it illustrates a modified version of Herderian folk concepts in that it stresses the dignity of the common man and the vitality of folk art.\textsuperscript{14}

James Weldon Johnson, a black writer of West Indian background, also collected folk material which he would transform into formal art. \textit{God's Tombones} (1927) is a group of seven sermons based on the antiphonal style of the old school of black preaching.\textsuperscript{15} However, Johnson views folk and high art as opposing forces and attempts to reconcile the two in his argument that "... Afro-American folksongs represent a vast mine of material to be tapped by some genius of the race."\textsuperscript{16} Johnson affirms the cultural validity of the blues and jazz in his Preface to \textit{The Book of American Negro Poetry} (1922). To him folksongs included the sacred and secular genres.

As stated in previous chapters, the early twentieth century was a period when African and African-derived art was discovered by white European and American artists. In the United States, especially in Harlem, the playwright Eugene O'Neill and the novelist Carl Van Vechten were the main advocates of cultural rapprochement between blacks and whites. Like the Afro-Cuban writers, O'Neill is caught up momentarily in the excitement of the primitivist trend, illustrated in his production of \textit{The Emperor Jones} (1920). Van Vechten also exhibits a taste
for the exotic in *Nigger Heaven* (1926) for which Hughes wrote the blues lyrics.\textsuperscript{17} The concern of many American writers is summarily expressed by Carl Van Doren:

What American literature decidedly needs at the moment is color, music, gusto, the free expression of gay or desperate moods. If the Negroes are not in the position to contribute these items, I do not know what Americans are.\textsuperscript{18}

Jazz, or by association the blues, is the instrument of expression for this creed. Besides representing a revolution in the aesthetic of musical rhythm, it also implies an unconventional life style since it broke with the norms and values of the past. Because of its worldwide acceptance, jazz reflected a universal and deeply human value.\textsuperscript{19} Langston Hughes would first utilize this vehicle in *The Weary Blues* (1926).

**The Poems**

*The Weary Blues* (1926) is the first published collection of poems by Langston Hughes. It is a volume that vividly reflects the vibrations of the New Negro Movement which was in full gear during the 1920's. Before considering four of the individual selections, it is helpful to discuss the poet's use of the blues form in general.

Like the "language mulato" of *Motivos de son*, the texture of these poems is the folk speech which is often referred to as "Black English." The latter is especially
conspicuous in its deviation from the phonetic structure of accepted English. According to Ernestine Smith, the musical quality of black speech stems from a predominance of guttural consonants and nasalized elongated vowels derived from the Bantu languages. (For example, the word "break" is pronounced "br Ay:k".) 20 The "ah" and "uh" sound generally replaces "or" and "er" endings for final "r" does not exist in Bantu words. Final and medial "i" are modified or eliminated (e.g., "careful" becomes "cAYuh: fuh"). Since there is no "v" sound in several Bantu languages, "b" is commonly substituted for "v" ("have" is "hab," "river" is "ribuh"). Finally, the absence of the "th" sound has resulted in the substitution of "t" and "d" for "th" ("dis" for "this," "dat" for "that"). 21 Hughes's use of these phonetic elements is ambivalent, for they often alternate with standard forms. In fact, he does not employ them frequently in the four poems from The Weary Blues which we shall discuss shortly.

The texts of the blues genre are either actual lyrics borrowed from the oral tradition or those patterned after oral forms. Moreover, Hughes rearranges the standard twelve-bar verse by dividing the individual lines at the break (caesura). The result is a six-line stanza of twenty-four beats. Sometimes the poet utilizes the divided eight-bar stanza, or one consisting of four lines with sixteen
beats. In addition to using the regular blues verse, Hughes also incorporates the latter into the conventional stanza form, as illustrated by the title poem of the collection.

The context of *The Weary Blues* is also the cabaret atmosphere, just as it is in *Motivos de son*. For the nightclub is the epitome of the urban blues and the jazz world. In fact, this music reputedly originated in "jazz houses," or houses of pleasure. Thus, it was natural for a young man in his twenties to be attracted to the brilliance and excitement of this atmosphere. "The Harlem of *The Weary Blues* became therefore for him 'Jazzonia,' a new world of escape and release, an exciting never-never land . . ." as illustrated by the following excerpt from "Harlem Night Club":

Sleek black boys in a cabaret.
Jazz-band, jazz-band,—
Play, play, play!
Tomorrow. . . . who knows?
Dance today!

But there is another facet of this exuberant "jazzonia"; "it has a certain strident and hectic quality, and there are overtones of weariness and despair." The four selections to be considered here do reflect the contradictory nature of the cabaret world of the 1920's. But we are mainly interested in their relation to the development of the blues and jazz technique.
"The Weary Blues," the poem providing the title for the volume, is probably a generic term that was applied to many songs of the blues tradition.25 (Blues: An Anthology. Edited by W.C. Handy, N.Y.: MacMillan Co., 1972, p. 20). Moreover, in his use of the blues as poetic material Hughes illustrates the aesthetic processes underlying the creation of the genre. Here, the blues functions as the subject of itself in that the figure of the blues musician is utilized to evoke the tavern atmosphere and create the "blue mood." In order to make the setting of the poem authentic, the poet introduces blues lyrics, which are composed by the character:

Droning a drowsy syncopated tune,
Rocking back and forth to a mellow croon,
I heard a Negro play.
Down on Lenox Avenue the other night
By the pale dull pallor of an old gas light
    He did a lazy sway. . . .
    He did a lazy sway. . . .
To the tune o' those Weary Blues.
With his ebony hands of each ivory key
He made that poor piano moan with melody.
O Blues!
Swaying to and fro on his rickety stool
He played that sad raggy tune like a musical fool.
    Sweet Blues!
Coming from a black man's soul.
    O Blues!
In a deep song voice with a melancholy tone
I heard that Negro sing, that old piano moan—
    "Ain't got nobody in all this world,
Ain't got nobody but ma self.
I's gwine to quit ma frownin'
And put ma troubles on the shelf."
Thump, thump, thump, went his foot on the floor.
He played a few chords then he sang some more—
"I got the Weary Blues
And I can't be satisfied.
Got the Weary Blues
And can't be satisfied—
I ain't happy no mo'!
And I wish that I had died."
And far into the night he crooned that tune.
The stars went out and so did the moon.
The singer stopped playing and went to bed
While the Weary Blues echoed through his head.
He slept like a rock or a man that's dead.

The poem is constructed around a series of inter-
locked stanzas which encapsulate two blues verses, the
second of which Hughes remembers hearing as a youth in
Lawrence, Kansas.26(Hughes, The Big Sea, N.Y. Hill and
Wang, c. 1940; 1963 ed. p. 215.) Because it attempts to
reproduce the continuous flow of creative thought, one
cannot easily delineate sections in the poem. Thus, my
divisions are only to facilitate discussion.

The first part consists of lines 1-8, which pro-
vide the setting—a tavern on Lenox Avenue, a thorough-
fare running through the heart of Harlem—and present the
character, a blues singer. The first technique that at-
tracts the reader's attention is the poet's unconventional
use of English prosody in the development of the theme.
That is, Hughes alternates penta- and hexameter lines with
di- and trimeter ones, and this unusual placement approx-
imates the polyrhythms of the blues. The use of allitera-
tion to simulate the various rhythms complements the
former device. For example, the "d" sequence in "Droning
"a drowsy syncopated tune" reproduces the percussive tendency characteristic of the blues, and the "l" sounds of the phrase "pale dull pallor of an old gas light" convey the sensation of swing, also a basic feature of blues. The very language of the poem helps illustrate the "blue" mood—"syncopated tune," "mellow croon." And the rhyme of "u" (tune-croon-Blues) heightens the sense of weariness or melancholy which is developed. Finally, line 6 is repeated as line 7 ("He did a lazy sway"), a technique typical of the blues genre; and line 8 completes the thought of the ones immediately preceding it as well as of the whole "stanza."

The second movement of this poem is made up of lines 9-16, where the poet describes the "how" of blues creation. The rhyme of "key-melody" (lines 9 & 10) projects back to "tune-croon" (lines 1 & 2) and forward to "O Blues" (line 11), "Sweet Blues" (line 14), "O Blues" (line 16). In short, the bluesman uses the instrument (key) to render the music (melody) which he sings (tune). Hughes sets up several parallels: "ebony hands" are contrasted with "ivory key," and "moan" is juxtaposed with "melody" so that opposites are synthesized in "O Blues-Sweet Blues-O Blues." Thus, we see that paradox is expressed structurally as well as thematically (e.g., pain-pleasure, bitter-sweet). Also important is the personification of the piano through the use of the
adjective "poor," for in essence, the instrument func-
tions as a mate to the player in the process that gives
birth to the blues. Furthermore, since pianist and
piano are one, the emotions of the former are transferred
and distilled into the instrument. Thus the piano moans.

Hughes achieves a comic effect in lines 12 and 13
where he pictures the joker (musical fool) producing a
"sad, raggy tune" on a not-too-steady stool. The man
plays like someone possessed, but the underlying frenzy
counteracts the humor. It is one of the many examples
of the poet's effective use of irony. The result of this
crystallization of pain, suggested by "moan," into pleas-
ure, indicated by "music," is ecstatic—dramatically and
concisely stated in the exclamation "Sweet Blues!" More-
over, the spondee accent is especially appropriate here
for it not only emphasizes the idea of the blues as a
joyful expression of sorrow, but also structurally echoes
the basic beat (duple meter) of the genre. "O Blues—
Sweet Blues—O Blues," which alternates with the counter-
rhythms of the other lines, reinforces the basic rhythm.

Lines 17–30 constitute the third portion of "The
Weary Blues" and here the poem reaches its climax. The
"tune-croon" and "key-melody" elements combine with the
"tone-moan" referents (lines 17 and 18) to emerge as the
actual thing—the blues song. The first verse, consist-
ing of four lines of abcb rhyme, is a variation of the
triad verse structure of the "standard" blues form. In it the bluesman sings of his loneliness and his need to find some form of compensation for this state. Here the treatment of an abstraction such as problems like a concrete object which one can put away momentarily is a characteristic metaphorical device of the blues singer. And it is a very good example of the kind of figurative speech employed by the carriers of the blues tradition. In the short descriptive interlude between the two blues stanzas, the poet utilizes onomatopoeia (Thump, thump, thump) to reproduce the bass sounds, and verbal contrasts ("played a few chords . . . sang some more") to highlight the antiphonal quality of the blues. This latter device facilitates the transition into the second blues verse, which is an example of the three-line arrangement of many blues songs. "In order to maintain a closer semblance to poetic form, Hughes breaks the first two lines into two lines each and also divides the final line, creating a six-line stanza."27(Edward E. Waldron, "The Blues Poetry of Langston Hughes," Negro American Literature Forum, Vol. V, No. 4 (Winter, 1971), pp. 141-142). This form is the most common one in Hughes' blues poetry. And this stanza is the epitome of the bitter-sweet mood permeating the poem.
The final part of "The Weary Blues," lines 31-35, provides the anti-climax to the entire selection. Here all the preceding elements are synthesized in the simple narrative statement, "And far into the night he crooned that tune." Here too the blues reaches its logical conclusion. That is, with the cessation of music, troubles or thoughts of troubles return, an unsettling realization that is implied by the approaching daylight. ("The stars went out and so did the moon.") As Davis observes:

There is no daytime in Jazzonia, no getting up and going to work. It is wholly a sun-down city, illuminated by soft lights, spotlights, jewel-eyed sparklers, and synthetic stars in the scenery. Daylight is the one great enemy here, and when "the new dawn/Wan and pale/ Descends like a white mist," it brings only an "aching emptiness," and out of this emptiness there often comes in the clear cool light of morning the disturbing thought that the jazz band may not be an escape, it may not be gay after all. . .28

Thus, the figure of the black piano player is very symbolic in "the Weary Blues" and this is especially brought home in the anti-climax. Sleep, the closest thing to death in the healthy state, is another means of escape, like dancing and singing. However, it is only a temporary evasion. One must eventually wake up and deal with the painful reality of daily living.29

In short, the framework that Hughes employs in "The Weary Blues" is highly effective, and it allows us
to enjoy the blues of the singer while simultaneously perceiving the creation of the genre through a force outside the bluesman—the poet. This enables the reader to become totally involved in the creative blues process.

"Blues Fantasy" (pp. 37-38) is related to "The Weary Blues" in that it also deals with the material of which the blues is composed, in this case the jargon of the blues world. However, it does so in a more indirect manner, for here the poet does not intervene. The first stanza explains a typical slang expression (interjection) used by blues people:

Hey! Hey!
That's what the Blues singers say.
Singing minor melodies
They laugh,
Hey! Hey!

Moreover, the association of laughing and singing illustrates the good times they have and underscores the sense of euphoria typical of the cabaret atmosphere. The next portion of this poem consists of two verses of a blues number which could be sung by anyone in a nightclub setting. In this case the character is a woman:

My man's done left me,
Chile, he's gone away.
My good man's left me,
Babe, he's gone away.
Now the crying' blues
Haunts me night and day.
Hey' . . . Hey!

Weary,
Weary,
Trouble, pain.
Sun's gonna shine
Somewhere
Again.

I got a railroad ticket,
Pack my trunk and ride.

Sing 'em sister!

Got a railroad ticket,
Pack my trunk and ride.
And when I get on the train
I'll cast my blues aside.

Laughing,
Hey! . . . Hey!
Laugh a loud,
Hey! Hey!

The first stanza of the song tells of the heartache
that is the result of a broken relationship and embodies
the characteristic "wounded love" theme of the blues.
The first statement, lines 1 & 2 of this stanza, presents
the situation directly and straightforwardly. The second
statement, lines 3 & 4, attenuates the first somewhat with
the adjective "good." In addition, "good" reveals the
woman's feelings toward her absent lover rather than the
quality of goodness in him. The first two statements of
stanza one also explain the reason for the third, or the
result of the man's abandonment of his girlfriend. Here
the adjective "crying" personifies the blues, which acts
like a ghost who constantly torments the singer ("Haunts
me night and day"). Although the singer does not direct her remarks to anyone in particular, the use of such expressions of endearment as "Chile" or "Babe" give the impression that she is talking to, or maybe confiding in, a female friend. The word "Lord" could easily replace either of the two, but it would be less personal. The use of such expletives is typical of the blues form.

Verses 1 and 2 of "Blues Fantasy" are separated by the interjection "Hey! ... Hey!" and another two-statement stanza (divided into thirds) which echoes the themes associated with loneliness. The interjection is the response of her fellow singers and audience, and it is a direct example of antiphony. Even though the blues is usually performed solo, in any setting where there is an audience there will always be some kind of response. Here it serves to express their sympathy with her predicament. Hughes' arrangement of the interpolated verse is interesting, for it could read: "Weary, Weary, trouble, pain./ Sun's gonna shine somewhere again." However, by breaking up the phrases into thirds, (isolating "weary") he very beautifully conveys the dragging sense of weariness and the sudden force with which problems seem to hit (by coupling "trouble" and "pain"). The placement of "Sun's gonna shine" about midway in the stanza, widens the focus structurally (visually) and suggests the theme of hope which sometimes manages to break through the gloomy mood
of the blues. Yet hope is only a fleeting emotion, as conveyed by the poet's isolation of "somewhere" and "again." This mixture of despair with hope is common, in the blues. Furthermore, it is difficult to determine whether the blues-woman actually sings the words of the intercalated verse or whether they represent the instrumental solo which is also a vital part of the performance.

In the second verse of the song, the singer decides on a plan of action. She too will leave for somewhere. This verse is related to the first in that it provides the solution to the problem stated in the first. Thus, there is another theme related to the blues--travel. The first and second phrases of the stanza, which give the plan, are interrupted by additional encouragement from the ringside ("Sing 'em, sister!"). By separating the two, tension is built up in the verse and the repetition of the first statement has more force. The woman's desire to forget her troubles and her determination to live in spite of them is dramatically demonstrated in the final two lines of the verse. The concrete images "railroad ticket" and "trunk" represent the mobility of the lonely and broken-hearted--another means of escaping the blues. And the poem ends on a seemingly gay note, for the blues singer joins the chorus of the lonely in which laughter is often the antidote for pain.
In short "Blues Fantasy" employs the blues as the subject of itself by presenting the language and themes peculiar to the "jazz house" environment.

"Song For a Banjo Dance" incorporates another variation of the blues form into the framework of a dance where the singer also directs the motions of the participants by calling out the steps:

Shake your brown feet, honey,
Shake your brown feet, chile,
Shake your brown feet, honey,
Shake 'em swift and wil'--
    Get way back, honey,
    Do that low-down step,
    Walk on over, darling,
    Now! Come out
    With your left.
Shake your brown feet, honey,
Shake 'em, honey chile.

Sun's going down this evening--
Might never rise no mo'.
The sun's going down this very night--
Might never rise no mo'--
So dance with swift feet, honey,
    (The banjo's sobbing low)--
Dance with swift feet, honey--
    Might never dance no mo'.

Shake your brown feet, Liza,
Shake 'em, Liza, chile,
Shake your brown feet, Liza,
    (The music's soft and wil')
Shake your brown feet, Liza,
    (The banjo's sobbing low)
The sun's going down this very night--
    Might never rise no mo'.

The antiphonal structure of this dance-poem is apparent in the interlacing of the refrain line (Shake your brown feet, honey) with the verses. Moreover, the poem follows the pattern of children's games and rhymes which
Bessie Jones and Bess L. Howes discuss in *Step it Down*. In fact, the "coonshine," or Coujlaille dance, utilizes the same kind of repetition with a direct address (coonshine, baby, coonshine) as this poem does. However, Hughes's version of this game type is more sophisticated in that it infuses the form with poetic devices.

In the first stanza the blues singer (the lead element) addresses the dancers (the response), whose movements are conveyed through verbs (shake, get back, do, walk and come out), nouns (feet and step), adjectives and adverbs (swift, wil' low-down). His encouragement continues on a more mellow note as he slips into a blues interlude in the second strophe. Punctuation is an important device. The hyphen that divides the phrases into halves suggests that the singer is trying to stop time and thus preserve this fun-filled moment. In addition, the inclusion of the definite article "The" in the repeated phrase increases the sense of urgency. The treatment of the third statement of the blues verse ("So dance with swift feet, honey . . .") is unusual in that it is repeated like the first two and then proceeds to the conclusion. Added to this feature is the inclusion of a parenthetical phrase which links the blues stanza with the dance verses. The lively tune of the banjo, a much-used instrument in the early blues tradition, gently
reminds the dancers that all must end soon. Through its sobbing it too feels the paradox of human existence—birth and death, joy and sorrow, youth and old age. In life both terms of the equation are needed, for each complements the other.

The last stanza combines the two opposing attitudes structurally by employing phrases from the first and second. And this illustrates the union of the two in real life. In short, Hughes contrasts a pleasurable experience (the dance) with a serious thought (death) in his poetic rendition of an ancient theme: "There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labor." This attitude permeated the cabaret world of the 1920's and the dance form aptly captures the paradox.

"The Cat and the Saxophone" is a good example of the poet's early experiments with jazz techniques:

EVERBODY
Half-pint,—
Gin?
No, make it
LOVES MY BABY
corn. You like
liquor,
don't you, honey?
BUT MY BABY
Sure. Kiss me,
DON'T LOVE NOBODY
daddy.
BUT ME.
Say!
EVERBODY
Yes?
WANTS MY BABY  
I'm your  
BUT MY BABY  
sweetie, ain't I?  
DON'T WANT NOBODY  
Sure.  
BUT  
Then let's  
ME,  
do it!  
SWEET ME.  
Charleston,  
mamma!  
!

The poem is arranged in the manner of an orchestra score of two parts—bass and tenor. Moreover, the typography of the work makes it easy to immediately differentiate between the two lines and to tell which proceed together. The bass line is in all capital letters, the tenor line is in upper and lower case alphabets. Furthermore, the bass line represents the text of a popular song. This is the kind of call-and-response pattern Hughes would elaborate on in subsequent collections. In essence, the antiphonal exchange between the bass and tenor sections structurally emulates the conversation between two lovers in a bar, which is printed in the normal way. Thus form and content reinforce one another.

Like Guillén's Motivos de son, The Weary Blues is the beginning of Hughes' search for a medium of expression which would both satisfy his artistic consciousness and communicate his thoughts effectively. There is undoubtedly
a degree of superficiality due to the fashion-oriented attitude of the era. It was difficult not to be affected by the dazzle and excitement of being black and talented in a white-dominated culture that finally acknowledged you. Yet Hughes gradually becomes aware of the emptiness of the jazz-tuned life style and the incomplete, one-dimensional picture it conveys. As Guillén does with the son, Hughes would continue the blues techniques, but he would seek to rework and refine them. And he would reject the tendency to get lost in exoticism for the mere sake of doing so. The next group of poems would begin to focus more on the everyday life surrounding him, which was neither gay nor pleasant.
NOTES TO CHAPTER VIII


2 Emanuel, Ibid., p. 18.

3 Langston Hughes, The Big Sea (New York: Hill and Wang, 1940), pp. 11-38.

4 Hughes, Ibid., pp. 11-13.

5 Hughes, Ibid., pp. 21-26.

6 Hughes, Ibid., pp. 24-28.

7 Hughes, Ibid., pp. 39-56.

8 Hughes, Ibid., pp. 81-98.


10 Wagner, Ibid., p. 149.

11 Wagner, Ibid., pp. 150-151.


13 Bell, Ibid., p. 24.

14 Bell, Ibid., p. 25.

15 Bell, Ibid., p. 28.

16 Bell, Ibid., pp. 29-30.


33 Wagner, Black Poets of the United States, p. 412.
CHAPTER IX

FINE CLOTHES TO THE JEW (1927)

It is with the publication of Fine Clothes to the Jew, Hughes's second collection of poems, that the poet relies extensively on the folk music genres of the Afro-American tradition. However only seventeen of the poems utilize the blues form. Hughes expresses his intent in the following manner:

My second book of poems, Fine Clothes to the Jew, I felt was a better book than my first, because it was more impersonal, more about other people than myself, and because it made use of the Negro folk-song forms, and included poems about work and the problems of finding work, that are always so pressing with the Negro people.¹

In general, the book was well-received by the white literary magazines and press although there was some friction with the Jewish members of the intellectual community. The black writers and critics were especially upset as they felt that the poems reflected unfavorably on the race. Even though he admits the choice of title might have been a poor one, Hughes defends his work for the following reasons:

I called it Fine Clothes to the Jew, because the first poem, "Hard Luck," a blues, was about a man who was often so broke he had no
recourse but to pawn his clothes— to take them, as the Negroes say, to "the Jew's" or to "Uncle's." Since the whole book was largely about people like that, workers, roustabouts, and singers, and job hunters on Lenox Avenue in New York, or Seventh Street in Washington or South State in Chicago— people up today and down tomorrow, working this week and fired the next, beaten and baffled, but determined not to be wholly beaten, buying furniture on the installment plan, filling the house with roomers to help pay the rent, hoping to get a new suit for Easter— and pawning that suit before the Fourth of July— that was why I called my book Fine Clothes to the Jew. 2

This is the context of Fine Clothes to the Jew.

In his remarks one can perceive the kind of social preoccupation that was not present in The Weary Blues. On the one hand, the blues tends to be very personal and in the first person, a device that would appear to make it more appropriate for personal poetry. In this sense, Hughes was not bound by tradition. On the other hand, the poet's break with tradition can be explained by the fact that Fine Clothes to the Jew is not meant to express the personal feelings of the author. In this book Hughes begins to accept the role of "race man," or spokesman for his people, that we discussed earlier in this dissertation (See Chapter VI). In essence, the community speaks through him, for it is in the composite of the individual songs that the poet's voice is heard.

In Fine Clothes to the Jew the basic techniques of a jazz composition are utilized to arrange the whole group
of poems, the blues versions as well as work songs and field hollers. That is, the work opens with the first verse of a blues song and closes with the second stanza of that same number, ". . . so that the sequence of poems making up the collection is, in a sense, a string of variations on the theme announced at the outset." The volume consists of six parts: "Blues," "Railroad Avenue," "Glory Hallelujah," "Beale Street," "From the Georgia Roads," and "Blues." These sections correspond roughly to the blues, shouts, spirituals and work songs of the black oral tradition, and they also constitute the various interludes of a continuous melody. However, we shall limit our focus to eleven blues poems that illustrate this kind of texture and text.

The initial poem, "Hey!" recaptures the flavor and style first introduced in The Weary Blues (See the poem "Blues Fantasy"). Moreover, this exclamation serves to capture the reader's attention immediately:

Sun's a settin'
this is what I'm gonna sing.
Sun's a settin',
This is what I'm gonna sing:
I feels de blues a comin',
Wonder what de blues'll bring?

The first observable technique of this sketch is the association of the setting sun with the advent of the blues, which is a carry-over from the nocturnal atmosphere of the cabaret world depicted in The Weary Blues. The second
device is the author's division of the traditional three-line stanza into six lines of overlapping call-and-response phrases. With few exceptions this stanzaic form is sustained throughout the "Blues" section of the collection.

The elemental language of the piece is typical of a people who is generally not meticulous about "dotting "i's" and crossing "t's." For example, the definite article is deleted in the first and third call lines, and there is a confusion of first and third person verb forms. In addition, Hughes's alternation of standard pronunciation (this) with unlettered pronunciation (de for the) may be viewed as inconsistency on his part in reproducing the language of uneducated people; or it may reflect the carelessness (in terms of educated society) of folk speech. In short, this vignette presents the basic motif of the "Blues" movement—the blues. Furthermore, each composition that is played represents a variation on the main theme.

"Hard Luck" is the first fill length poem of the first "Blues" movement in Fine Clothes to the Jew. In fact, it contains the line which gives the works its title:

When hard luck overtakes you
Nothin' for you to do.
When hard luck overtakes you
Nothin' for you to do.
Gather up yo' fine clothes
An' sell 'em to de Jew.
Jew takes yo' fine clothes,
Gives you a dollar an' a half,
Jew takes yo' fine clothes,
Gives you a dollar an' a half.
Go to de bootleg's,
Git some gin to make you laugh.

If I was a mule I'd
Git me a waggon to haul.
If I was a mule I'd
Git a waggon to haul.
I'm so low-down I
Ain't even got a stall.

In this poem the six-line stanza is developed more extensively. Essentially this type of arrangement illustrates antiphony more clearly than the three-line traditional form. There are three call phrases (lines one, three and five) and three response phrases (lines two, four and six). In written form the dialogue is hard to perceive if one gives only a cursory glance at the poem. For example, in stanza one, there is no punctuation until the end of line two. Thus, lines one and two, a call and a response element, respectively, make up one sentence and one thought.

The poet varies the technique somewhat in stanza two where the addition of a comma at the end of the first line delays the second half of the thought. This helps to underscore the antithesis between "take-fine clothes" and "Gives-dollar an' a half." But in the third stanza Hughes returns to the pattern of the first verse where appeal and response blend into one idea.
The first stanza is a direct statement of the problem: no money. The explanation for this situation is "hard luck," for poor people generally attribute their condition to some intangible force like fate. The singer is resigned to his lot ("Nothin' for you to do") since he is unable to see his predicament as a product of institutionalized racism, and thus, something he can ultimately deal with. The word "Jew" is not an anti-semitic remark, but a figure of speech quite common in the black communities where Jewish people seem to have a high proportion of retail stores. If the term is construed as a symbol of oppression, it is because these are the most easily identifiable representatives of racism for poor people.

The second verse expands the idea of the first. That is, the character chooses a solution ("Gather up yo' fine clothes") in verse one, and relates the consequences of his choice in verse two. Here the elements "Jew," "fine clothes," and "dollar" are related. Expressed as an equation, "jew plus fine clothes equal money." But only enough to buy a moment of forgetfulness. Drinking is a popular way of escaping one's problems, especially for the poor. The term "bootleg" refers to the speakeasies of the 1920's. Thus, in this poem gin and laughter are the twin miracles that seem to make the consequences of hard luck disappear.
The third strophe of "hard Luck" is a poetic restate-
ment of the first verse. That is, the use of animal meta-
phor, characteristic of blues songs, underscores the per-
son's depression. He is so down-and-out--no job, no place
to call his own ("Ain't even got a stall")--that even a
mule is better off than he is. At least the animal can
work ("Git a wagon to haul"); the blues-man cannot. 5 As a
result, the only thing that will relieve his misery is to
pawn his clothing so that he can buy a pint of gin.

The poem "Misery" is an example of the four-line
blues verse form of aaba rhyme which is shorter and moves
more rapidly than the six-line structure:

Play de blues for me.
Play de blues for me.
No other music
'LL ease ma misery.

Sing a soothin' song.
Said a soothin' song,
Cause de man I love's done
Done me wrong.

Can't you understand,
O, understand
A good woman's cryin'
For a no-good man?

Black gal like me,
Black gal like me
'S got to hear a blues
For her misery.

Here overlapping antiphony is evident in that the
chorus, represented by the last two lines of each stanza,
completes the thought of the solo, or the first half of
strophe. In addition, the call lines are relatively fixed while the response phrases vary. This pattern suggests that the response may carry the tune in this song.

Hughes develops the theme of the poem--misery, caused by an ended love affair--through connecting parallel ideas. Specifically, "Blues" (in stanza one) and "soothin' song" (in stanza two) are synonyms, or different sides of the same equation. In other words, the blues is a soothing song. The third verse presents a question (why sing the blues?) answered by the fourth verse (to soothe one's misery). Together they constitute the explanation of the initial statement. That is, they provide a reason why the character in the poem needs a blues song.

The first and second verses of this poem are connected in that they represent the two-fold request of a female "habitúé" of a nightclub--to have the blues sung and played for her. The repetition of the first line of each stanza maintains the swing rhythm of the poem. In the second verse the repetition of "s" sounds reinforces the therapeutic effect of the blues ("sing a soothin' song"). The third stanza is a direct appeal for sympathy. In addition, it contrasts two substantive phrases: "good woman" and "no-good man." These two adjectives are used so much in relation to the nouns they qualify that they have become part of the nouns. From the female point of view, it is always a "no-good man"; naturally the male perspective is
just the opposite. In the final stanza the phrase "black gal" is employed as a colorful symbol of misery, mistreatment, and abuse. Furthermore, the song is an expression of the female point of view on love. Hughes tended to portray this perspective more often than the male side.

"Suicide," the third complete selection in *Pine Clothes to the Jew*, is related to "Misery" thematically in that despondency over a broken relationship between a man and woman is part of the misery which often brings thoughts of suicide:

Ma sweet good man has
Packed his trunk and left.
Ma sweet good man has
Packed his trunk and left.
Nobody to love me:
I'm gonna kill ma self.

I'm gonna buy me a knife with
A blade ten inches long.
Gonna buy a knife with
A blade ten inches long.
Shall I carve ma self or
That man that done me wrong?

'Llieve I'll jump in de river
Eighty-nine feet deep.
'Llieve I'll jump in de river
Eighty-nine feet deep.
Cause de river's quiet
An a po, po' gal can sleep.

The overlapping dialogue structure of "Hard Luck" is also evident in this poem. Moreover, the apparent disconnection of the stanzas is a technique which underscores the confused and distraught state of mind of a despondent person.
Stanza one presents an antithetical parallel between the vision of the "sweet good man" and the fact that he has gone. In addition, the adjectives "sweet" and "good" are emotional qualifiers that convey the woman's attitude toward her absent lover. A concrete image like trunk is quite frequently associated with the idea of mobility in the blues. Thus, there is incongruity between the idea of permanence, implied by the phrase "sweet good man" and the reality of itinerancy, suggested by the "packed trunk."

And the resolution for this unstable state of affairs is suicide. The colon in "Nobody to love me:" has the effect of stemming the flow of thought momentarily so that the singer can state this emphatically. It is uttered as an unpremeditated thought.

The second stanza is the logical conclusion of deciding to commit suicide--finding a way to achieve it. But as in the first verse, the singer suddenly changes her mind and considers homicide instead ("Shall I carve ma self or/ That man that done me wrong"). In the last strophe a third alternative is given--drowning herself, which is less painful and more peaceful. The reference to the ten-inch knife and a river which is eighty-nine feet deep are concrete ways of capturing and expressing intense feelings which border on violence (evident in the use of the word "carve"). Furthermore, they give the poem a melodramatic twist, for the character hardly intends to carry out her threat.
In conclusion, suicide is a very common theme in blues songs. However, it is because the person sings the blues that he or she is relieved somewhat of the tensions that would drive a person to do this. In this respect it functions as a safety valve in social relationships.

"Bad Man," the fourth whole poem under consideration in this chapter, depicts a character that is present in many folk traditions--the bad man. In Afro-American folklore he may be one of three types: the bully, or one who throws his weight around, the rounder, or one whose exploits depend more on chicanery than courage, and the "ba-ad nigger," the figure who dares to rebel against white society. The character of this poem is a combination of types one and three:

I'm a bad, bad man
Cause everybody tells me so.
I'm a bad, bad man.
Everybody tells me so.
I takes ma meanness and ma licker
Everwhere I go.

I beats ma wife an'
I beats ma side gal too.
Beats ma wife an'
Beats ma side gal too.
Don't know why I do it but
It keeps me from feelin' blue.

I'm so bad I
Don't even want to be good.
So bad, bad, bad I
Don't even want to be good.
I'm goin' to de devil an'
I wouldn't go to heaben if I could.
Since the antiphonal pattern operates in the same manner in the remainder of the poems to be analyzed, we shall curtail discussion on this matter.

The central motif of this poem is braggadocio, or the personification of boasting. Moreover, the repetition of the adjective "bad" in conjunction with the noun "man" reinforces the concept of "badness," and alliteration heightens the idea of physical force. The boast is vitally linked to the image of the "bad man" both in Afro-American tradition (for example, Stagolee, Roscoe Bill, Eddy Jones), and in Anglo-American folklore (John Dillinger, Jesse James). Brearley calls this motif "heroic deviltry" and asserts that the daredevil is a constantly recurring character in the universal folklore tradition. Melnick expands on this idea by assigning the boast a functional value. That is, it serves as an outlet for pent-up masculine steam (known in the vernacular as "ego-tripping"). More important for the blues man, it allows him to get rid of aggressions and frustrations which result from the normal conditions of daily living as well as the abnormal situation imposed by a racist society. Consequently, braggadocio is a subtle instrument of social protest and, at the same time, an affirmation of self. The blues person who employs this approach becomes somebody; that is, he, or sometimes she, gains status in the local community by
bragging. However, the exceptional braggart becomes famous or notorious (depending on people's reactions to this stance) on a wider (i.e., national) scale.

The use of the epithet "bad" depends to a great extent on the tone with which it is uttered as well as the connotations of this slant. For example, if "bad" is pronounced in the usual way (that is, after the manner of Webster's short "a" sound), it means that the person is considered injurious or harmful to the community and may be ostracized. Conversely, if the vowel sound is lengthened (he is ba-a-a-d), it implies that the character is not only admired but is also a hero to his people. This is the case even when the "bad man" is ill-tempered or violent. And the appellation is especially applied to blacks who resist discrimination by "breaking the laws" of white society. The belief that a "good nigger is a dead nigger" still exists even though it is not always stated openly or explicitly.

In this poem the image of the "bad man" represents a reversal of the values which American society is supposed to embrace. The cause-effect relationship is reversed in stanza one in that the result precedes (I'm a bad, mad man), the cause (Cause everbody tells me so). Moreover, the bravado mood is emphasized by the repetition of the idea "I am bad because society tells me I am." The metaphor meanness-licker" is a synonym for personified badness.
That is, the quality of meanness is made more tangible by its association with the word "licker" and both are crutches which the singer depends on to drive away the blues.

In the second stanza, wife-beating is a more concrete manifestation of the "meanness-licker" metaphor. And the fact that he uses all these tactics as a means of escaping the blues is explicitly stated in the last line. However, the character cannot connect his actions with the reasons for his actions. All he knows is that it is a temporary solution to pressing problems.

The poem reaches a dramatic climax in the last verse (stanza three) where the bluesman's reputation of badness is expressed in the superlative degree; for the character revels in his evil thoughts and actions. This is a common persona (mask) assumed by the blues singer. In addition, several antithetical parallels can be delineated. There is a contrast in qualities (bad versus good); there is a contrast in actions (do versus don't, going versus not-going); and the juxtaposition of opposite culminate in the hell-heaven contrast. In short, the singer is thrilled to break two basic rules of conventional morality: a belief in God, suggested by "heaben," and an esteem for marriage, indicated by wife-beating and adultery ("Beats ma side gal too"). In doing so he affirms to himself that he is somebody even if the larger society regards him as an outcast.
"Po' Boy Blues" is the saga of the immigrant who goes North because of adverse conditions in the rural South. The background for this poem is the Great Migration of black people which began around 1915.\textsuperscript{13}

When I was home de
Sunshine seemed like gold.
When I was home de
Sunshine seemed like gold.
Since I come up North de
Whole damn world's turned cold.

I was a good boy,
Never done no wrong.
Yes, I was a good boy,
Never done no wrong,
But this world is weary
An' de road is hard an' long.

I fell in love with
A gal I thought was kind.
Fell in love with
A gal I thought was kind.
She made me lose ma money
An' almost lose ma mind.

Weary, weary,
Weary early in de morn.
Weary, weary,
Early, early in de morn.
I's so weary
I wish I'd never been born.

The theme of this poem is loneliness. In the first stanza Hughes contrasts "home," suggested by the "Sunshine-gold" simile, and a strange land, or the North. This view is ironic since traditionally the black man has looked to the North as a kind of "Promised Land," just the opposite of the South which he feels is a living hell. But the American Dream has turned into a nightmare, for the social
changes occasioned by the movement of blacks in large numbers to large Northern cities also brought great emotional and psychological stress. Consequently, the sense of alienation that this character feels is conveyed in the resolution phrase of the first stanza: "Since I come up North de/ Whole damn world's turned cold." Furthermore, memories of the physical and emotional warmth of home make the singer's loneliness more poignant. At least in the South he had family and friends.

The second and third strophes form one unit in the poem. The narrator contrasts the home environment with that of the new land. Rural simplicity and morality ("I was a good boy") are juxtaposed with the fast, debilitating pace of northern city life ("She made me lose ma money/ An' almost lose ma mind"). Moreover, lines five and six of the second verse take up the theme first expressed in The Weary Blues, "This world is weary/ An' de road is hard an' long." In essence, these words could easily be a part of a spiritual, for they have other worldly overtones. This is not surprising since the spirituals and the blues come from the same artistic repertoire of oral tradition. However, the fourth verse expresses in unmistakeable terms that the sense is not the same. For while the words are very similar to a spiritual, the final line indicates that there is no hope in some other life. Instead of looking
forward to eternal life the singer turns backward in a fit of wishful thinking ("I wish I'd never been born"). The blues caused by being homesick carries over into the next poem.

"Homesick Blues" is related to "Po' Boy Blues" in the travel motif and in the yearning for home:

De railroad bridge's
A sad song in de air.
De railroad bridge's
A sad song in de air.
Ever time de trains pass
I wants to go somewhere.

I went down to de station.
Ma heart was in ma mouth.
Went down to de station.
Heart was in ma mouth.
Lookin' for a box car
To roll me to de South.

Homesick Blues, Lawd,
'S a terrible thing to have.
Homesick blues is
A terrible thing to have.
To keep from cryin'
I opens ma mouth an' laughs.

Hughes captures the emotions associated with homesickness and alienation beautifully in the metaphor of stanza one: the railroad bridge is like a sad song in the air. For the bridge, especially the one along the railroad lines, is associated with the need for escape like singing the blues, drinking, dancing, or wife-beating. While the bridge is built on a solid foundation and faces in two directions, as far as the singer is concerned it leads nowhere. In this respect, the bridge is as evanescent as the melody of
a song. This image concretizes the singer's longing for home.

The second stanza is a more dramatic statement of the desire to return home. This is indicated structurally by punctuating each phrase with a period. Here one can sense the fear of the character who must look out for the authorities since they would prevent him from hopping a train. But he is so desperate that he is willing to risk anything to achieve his goal.

The last strophe provides the reason for wishing to return to the South, a land which holds as little hope for him as the one in which he lives. But it is the lesser of two evils, for at least it is a familiar environment. Of course, the desire to return is only wishful thinking and provides the inspiration for the song. It ends with a very traditional statement of the paradox of human existence: "To keep from crying' I opens ma mouth an' laughs." Like Guillén, Hughes's philosophy of life is that at times laughter is a healthy antidote for suffering.

"Lament Over Love" is another variation on the love motif:

I hope ma chile'll
Never love a man.
I say I hope ma chile'll
Never love a man.
Cause love can hurt you
Mo'n anything else can.
I'm goin' down to de river
An' I ain't goin' there to swim.
Goin' down to de river,
Ain't goin' there to swim
Ma true love's left me, an'
I'm goin' there to think about him.

Love is like whiskey,
Love is like red, red wine.
Love is like whiskey,
O, like sweet red wine.
If you wants to be happy
You got to love all de time.

I'm goin' up in a tower
Tall as a tree is tall.
Say up in a tower
Tall as a tree is tall.
Gonna think about ma man an'
Let ma fool-self fall.

This blues song brings in another dimension—a mother's concern. That is, in the first stanza the singer expresses the desire to protect her little girl from the agony she is experiencing. Of course, the allusion to the child is only a pretext for her story. And the apparent rambling nature of the poem is a structural device that highlights the woman's emotional stress. There is an abrupt transition from the show of maternal concern in the first stanza to the consideration of suicide in the second, but with an underlying connection. That is, love can hurt a person; it has hurt the blues singer; and it will hurt her child. The idea of suicide is followed by a poetic statement on the nature of love in stanza three but the singer returns to this thought in strophe four.
The figures of speech in the poem help emphasize its motif. For example, the river is a place to go (the literal meaning) and a way of forgetting (the symbolic meaning). The suicidal intent is only hinted at in stanza two ("An' I ain't goin' there to swim.../ I'm goin' there to think about him"). However, it is reinforced by the explicit statement in stanza four. The imagery of stanza three is very catchy in its combination of elements. Through the parallel contrast of two similes there is an attempt to explain what love is. To compare love to red wine presents the romantic view. It is sweet, wonderful and exciting. To make an analogy with whiskey offers the realistic side. Many times love burns going down, like whiskey, and becomes unpleasant and depressing. With these concrete images the poet-singer attempts to define an ineffable state or entity. The bittersweet quality that the fusion of these images implies is the essence of love. Furthermore, in order to enjoy life ("If you wants to be happy") one must experience both aspects ("You got to love all de time").

The brief venture into stoic contemplation is left hanging as the singer recaptures the suicide theme in the last stanza. The word "fool-self" indicates that the woman chastizes herself for having fallen for this man. Her remorse is greater since she knows very well that fidelity is rarely practiced in the environment in which she lives.
But she still loves him. The threat to jump from a tall building is very melodramatic since it is only a threat. But it has the effect of counteracting the gravity of the preceding verse (stanza three) and it vividly illustrates the remarks with which Hughes prefaces the book: "The mood of the Blues is almost always despondency, but when they are sung people laugh."  

"Gal's Cry for a Dying Lover" adds a tender note to the continuous melody of Fine Clothes to the Jew:

Heard de owl a hootin',
Knowed somebody's 'bout to die.
Heard de owl a hootin',
Knowed somebody's 'bout to die.
Put ma head un'neath de kiver,
Started in to moan an' cry.

Hound dawg's barkin'
Means he's gonna leave this world.
Hound dawg's barkin'
Means he's gonna leave this world.
O, Lawd have mercy
On a po' black girl.

Black an' ugly
But he sho do treat me kind.
I'm black an' ugly
But he sho do treat me kind.
High-in-heaben Jesus,
Please don't take this man o' mine.

This blues song employs folk beliefs and country turns of phrase to develop the story line. In the first verse the aural image of the "hootin' owl" is a catalyst for the blues and in the second strophe that of the "barkin dawg" parallels it. The singer's association of these signs with death is stated explicitly in two parallel phrases:
"Knowned somebody's 'bout to die' and "Means he's gonna leave his world."

The girl's reaction to her misfortune is developed in a clever manner. The last phrase in stanza one ("Put ma head un'neath de kiver,/ Started in to moan an' cry"), leads directly to that of verse two, ("O, Lawd have mercy/ On a po' black girl"). In the first she relies on her own strength to try to change the situation; in the second she appeals to a force outside herself. The relationship between these two statements is elaborated on in the final verse of the poem. The singer is poignantly aware that to be "black an' ugly" in a society where the norm is "white and beautiful" is to experience mistreatment. Moreover, her lover is unusual in that he has been very considerate to her ("But he sho do treat me fine"). Thus, losing him would be a disaster for she would not only be lonely but also at the mercy of others who may not be as kind. This is the reason she has to appeal to a higher authority, which is expressed in the spiritual metaphor "High-in-heaben Jesus." However, the woman's "prayer" does not necessarily reflect a firm belief in God. Rather it is indicative of a vague passive kind of faith to which many people resort when troubles come. The attitude here is that it's better to be safe. 16
The first half of "Young Gal's Blues," verses one and two, introduces the motifs to be developed in stanza three: old age, death, and loneliness. Stanza one is a touching expression of loyalty to a dead friend. Stanza two seems unrelated at first glance. But it parallels the second verse in showing consideration to someone less fortunate than the singer—an old relative in the "po' house." Of course, the giving of herself is not completely unmotivated, for the singer expects reciprocation.

I'm gonna walk to de graveyard
'Hind ma friend Miss Cora Lee.
Gonna walk to de graveyard
'Hind ma dear friend Cora Lee
Cause when I'm dead some
Body'll have to walk behind me.

I'm goin' to de po' house
To see ma old Aunt Clew.
Goin' to de po' house
To see ma old Aunt Clew.
When I'm old an' ugly
I'll want to see somebody, too.

De po' house is lonely
An' de grave is cold.
O, de po' house is lonely,
De graveyard grave is cold.
But I'd rather be dead than
To be ugly an' old.

When love is gone what
Can a young gal do?
When love is gone, O,
What can a young gal do?
Keep on a-lovin' me, daddy,
Cause I don't want to be blue.

The connection between death ("de graveyard") and old age ("de po' house") is made in the third verse. By
juxtaposing "po' house"/"lonely" with "graveyard grave"/"cold," the poet creates a stunning image. The concreteness of cold is transferred to the emotional state of loneliness. Conversely, the intangible nature of loneliness is transmuted into physical coldness. In short, to be lonely is to be cold, frozen outside the circle of human feeling. This is a kind of death-in-life. No one knows this better than the elderly, who are often put away when their relatives and friends are either unable or unwilling to care for them. The poet carries the point one step further at the end of stanza three. "To be ugly an' old" is to be lonely and cold. One might as well be dead physically, which is what the woman concludes.

Youth is generally not preoccupied with old age and death. However, the reasons for this girl's blues soon become apparent. In the last stanza she expresses fear of losing the one she loves. When this happens, her situation would be similar to old Aunt Clew's. And the implication of the question "When love is gone what/ Can a young gal do?" is "Turn ugly and old." In the harsh environment of the big city, where young girls often age twice as fast as elsewhere, this is a real fear. Thus, the girl tries to escape this realization by singing the blues.
"Midwinter Blues" is an example of what it feels like to be lonely, cold, and growing old:

In de middle of de winter,
Snow all over de ground.
In de middle of de winter,
Snow all over de ground,—
'Twas de night befo' Christmas
Ma good man turned me down.

Don' know's I'd mind his goin'
But he left me when de coal was low.
Don' know's I'd mind his goin'
But he left when de coal was low.
Now, if a man loves a woman
That ain't no time to go.

He told me that he loved me
But he must a been tellin' a lie.
He told me that he loved me.
He must a been tellin' a lie.
But he's the only man I'll
Love till de day I die.

I'm gonna buy me a rose bud
An' plant it at ma back door.
Gonna buy me a rose bud
And plant it at ma back door,
So when I'm dead they
Won't need no flowers from de store.

The first stanza of this poem is the most striking for the device which the poet utilizes gives it an aura of the mock heroic. It is not that the subject is trivial. But the style is incongruous with the mood. To be specific, the opening lines prepare the reader for some kind of nature description. This is unusual since references to the natural world are limited in the blues. The fifth line ("Twas de night befo' Christmas") is the clincher. One expects pleasant thoughts to follow because of the
association of this popular rhyme with a joyous season. However, the last line of stanza one is a let-down. And this is the way love is--sometimes up, sometimes down. Through the allusion to Christmas coming at the beginning of winter, we can infer that the narrator of the poem reminisces about events that happened in the distant past and has forgotten the exact details.

The second verse further reinforces the idea that this is a past experience because of the detached attitude of the singer. She did not mind being left, but no "when de coal was low." This expression refers to fuel as well as money. Yet it could also allude to the undesirability of a middle-aged woman, for one has the impression that this is the story of an experienced person.

In the third strophe there is first an affirmation of love ("He told me that he loved me") followed by its negation ("But he must a been tellin' a lie"), and these are re-emphasized in the next two lines. This note of skepticism contrasts with the willingness to love and be loved expressed by the character in "Young Gal's Blues."

The pathos of the blues woman's situation is quietly but dramatically brought home in the final stanza, and it is bitterly ironic. The rose, a symbol of love and life, represents something she lacks. If she must, she will buy an outer manifestation of love to compensate for the lack
of the real thing. The irony is that one cannot buy love. Furthermore, the use of "rose bud" suggests that the "love" she intends to buy might be a younger man who will stay with her only if she takes care of him.

In "Hey! Hey!" the melody comes to an end with the second verse of the original blues song:

Sun's a risin',
This is gonna be ma song.
Sun's a rising',
This is gonna be ma song.
I could be blue but
I been blue all no night long.

The wee hours have passed and dawn approaches. While daylight is not necessarily welcomed, the blues people are determined to "make it," as the popular expression goes. The important thing is that the blue mood has been lifted, if only for the moment.

In conclusion, Fine Clothes to the Jew differs from The Weary Blues in that it illustrates an almost exclusive use of the six-line blues stanza. Based on the three-unit structure of the traditional blues form, it becomes six by dividing the line at the caesura. In addition, the poet's arrangement of the poems according to a jazz composition anticipates the devices of Montage of a Dream Deferred. For example, the dialogue structure is evident first in the antiphonal interplay between soloist, represented by the
call phrases, and instruments, represented by the response lines. It is also apparent in the fact that several of the poems (for instance, "Young Gal's Blues" and "Mid-winter Blues" or "Po' Boy Blues" and "Homesick Blues") can be construed as conversations between people in parallel circumstances. Furthermore, the blues motif serves as a kind of riff, or repeated response phrase, while the individual poems are solo variations on the same.

In contrast to The Weary Blues, the mood of Fine Clothes to the Jew is not one of gaiety but of quiet despair. In the majority of the poems the characters are in low key, which reflects the poet's acute awareness of the depths of human suffering compressed in that metropolis called Harlem. While Harlem is not mentioned by name in Fine Clothes to the Jew, it is the motivating force behind the work and will become a symbol of the black experience in America in Montage of a Dream Deferred.
Notes to Chapter IX

1 Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1940) p. 263.


4 Hughes, *The Big Sea*, pp. 223-227.


10 Brearley, "Ba-ad Nigger," in *Mother Wit*, p. 580.


CHAPTER X

MONTAGE OF A DREAM DEFERRED (1951)

Montage of a Dream Deferred, which comes about twenty-four years after Fine Clothes to the Jew, expands upon the idea of the American Dream turned into a nightmare, first intimated in "Po' Boy Blues," and it elaborates on the techniques of the jazz composition. Again Hugh is the best explicator of the textural devices he employs in Montage of a Dream Deferred:

In terms of current Afro-American popular music and the sources from which it has progressed--jazz, ragtime, swing, blues, boogie-woogie, and be-bop--this poem on contemporary Harlem, like be-pop, is marked by conflicting changes, sudden nuances, sharp and impudent interjections, broken rhythms, and passages sometimes in the manner of the jam session, sometimes the popular song, punctuated by the riffs, runs, breaks, and disc-tortions of the music of a community in transition.\(^1\)

The text of the poems consists of conversation bits from everyday people, monologues (in the form of a person talking to or with himself), reminiscences, the antiphonal litany of the black church, children's game rhymes and jive, or the language of the jazz world. In short, the ninety odd poems of varying lengths that make up this collection are regarded as one large-scale composition which
develops along the same lines as a jam session. Moreover, the unity of the work stems from the fundamental theme of the "dream deferred." All the frustrated hopes and bitter disappointments of the people of Harlem converge and are sublimated in Montage of a Dream Deferred.

The jam session is the more immediate context of the work. However, it is not limited to a nightclub setting; for any place that people gather, "rap" (or discuss their problems) can be converted into a jam session. This may occur on a street corner, in a bar, at church, on the playground or at the supermarket. The context of Montage of a Dream Deferred is Harlem, the greatest concentration of black life in the United States.

Montage of a Dream Deferred is divided into six sections: "Boogie Segue to Bop," "Dig and Be Dug," "Early Bright," "Vice Versa to Bach," "Dream Deferred," and "Lenox Avenue Mural." Regarding the general theme of the work Wagner observes the following:

As in a jam session, this underlying theme is first indicated . . . then clearly stated, and then developed and picked up as each instrument in the band successively paraphrases it, weaves arabesques around it, and responds one to the other. Here, the instruments are represented by the voices or the awareness of different personages.²

We shall trace the movements of the theme of the "dream deferred" throughout the entire composition by concentrating on the various manifestations of a fundamental motif--
the boogie-woogie rhythm.

"Boogie Segue to Bop," the first section of the collection, is significant in its attempt to capture the changes that were occurring on the music scene around World War II. The word "segue" means to make a smooth transition. Moreover, it is directly related to the opening poem of this movement, called "Dream Boogie." Boogie-woogie developed from ragtime, a blues style of piano-playing popular in the early 1900's which was gradually incorporated into orchestral jazz.  Boogie-woogie was also known as "secondary rag," that is, "a plodding heavy syncopation with no particular flow." In the rendition of boogie-woogie, the left hand sustains the heavy 2/4 steady beat while the right hand executes the syncopated beat (by playing eight beats every interval but accenting every third beat).

Bop is the term used to describe a kind of playing technique of a group of musicians who called themselves the moderns, or beboppers. They were Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and Thelonius Monk, to name a few members. Some musicians explain the word "bop" in terms of the typical sound of the new idiom. Others attribute its origin to the Spanish expletive "Arriba!" or "Riba!" which the Afro-Cuban players used for starting their numbers (it means "Go!"). At any rate the word seems to have gone through a series of changes—first, "re-bop," then
"be-bop," and finally "bop." In short, bop was a reaction of young black musicians who felt that the Afro-American musical tradition had become adulterated by the popular commercialism of mainstream society.

In "Dream Boogie" (p. 3) Hughes experiments with some of the devices characteristic of the bop style:

Good morning, daddy!
Ain't you heard
The boogie-woogie rumble
Of a Dream deferred?

Listen closely:
You'll hear their feet
Beating out and beating out a ---

You think
It's a happy beat?

Listen to it closely:
Ain't you heard
something underneath
like a ---

What did I say?

Sure,
I'm happy!
Take it away!

Hey, pop!
Re-bop!
Mop!
Y-e-a-h!

The basis of "Dream Boogie" is the musical phrase, which consists of a main section and coda, or concluding part. The first such musical statement is composed of stanzas one and two. Here the main theme, the dream deferred, is presented through the auditory image "boogie-woogie
rumble." The salutation is a typical slang expression used by jazz musicians. "Daddy" means one who is aware of the happenings. In short, the theme is indicated in an interrogative form ("Ain't you heard"), which will be restated in declarative and exclamatory forms later on.

Stanza two contains the coda of the musical phrase: "Beating out and beating out a---." This is executed by one "instrument," which in this case is the voice of a musician. And the coda is, in turn, taken up and repeated by a second "instrument," or voice, like an echo, in the response "You think/ It's a happy beat?" In essence the statements of two speakers form the terms of the call-and-response technique so vital a part of the oral tradition in black culture. Stanzas one and two are the call sections; and they are followed by a response, which assumes the form of a question. Through this device Hughes illustrates the antiphonal character of jazz.

Verse three constitutes the second musical phrase of the poem. In addition, its coda is formed of the last two words, "like a---." However, this time there is a "break," instead of the continuation of thought in the response. In musical terms, a break is ". . . a very brief syncopated interlude, usually of two to four bars, between musical phrases--often improvised in unwritten jazz." That is, the response line "What did I say?" does not continue the
the thought began in the stanza preceding it. Instead it introduces another solo, consisting of slang expression used by jazz musicians to encourage their fellow players as the latter "do their thing." The abrupt stopping of one solo and starting the next without previous signals is a feature of the be-bop style. To the younger musicians it was an exciting innovative technique; to the older ones it revealed a lack of coordination.9

The third stanza is also a variation of verses one and two, with the terms expressed in reverse: "Listen to it closely:/Ain't you heard." And the phrase "something underneath/ like a . . . " is left hanging, to be taken up later. The last solo verse, "Sure, / I'm happy! / Take it away!," is like a response to a response. That is, it completes the sense of the interrogative response "You think/ It's a happy beat?" The use of boogie-woogie jargon "Re-bop" and the play on rhymes "Pop" and "Mop" attempt to represent the sounds of the instruments in the jam session. These phrases are also the response to the fourth stanza, and are supposed to illustrate the cool, detached attitude of the participants in the jam session. In the final line of the poem, the work "Y-e-a-h!" signals the end of this solo.

"Figurine" (p. 9) is a simple decorative element devoid of meaning which is a digression from the main theme
of the collection. Through the use of onomatopoeia, the poets echo the instrumental response of "Dream Boogie":

De-dop!

"Easy Boogie" (p. 12) is an example of a basic rhythmic change in bop style: less use of the bass drum, which is kept for explosions or special accents. The string bass replaces it and keeps up a steady, unaccented four-to-a-bar rhythm, which is light, flowing and more subtle than was previously the case in ragtime. In the poem we see this change:

Down in the bass
That steady beat
Walking, walking walking
like marching feet.

Down in the bass
That easy roll,
Rolling like I like it
In my soul.

Riffs, smears, breaks.

Hey, Lawdy, Mama!
Do you hear what I said?
Easy like I rock it
In my bed!

Stanzas one and two constitute the first musical phrase of "Easy Boogie" and represent the string bass of the "orchestra." Hughes achieves this simulation through two devices. The repetition of the first line ("Down in the bass") illustrates the rhythm itself while the use of the gerund form shows its continuity. The lack of commas in the first verse also denotes the ongoingness of the steady beat.
Through the use of simile, "steady beat / like marching feet" the music is personified, thus anticipating the scene which is sketched in the last verse. And the first person point of view prepares us for another solo.

The intervening line between verses two and three is used to convey a sense of the conflicting changes which are characteristic of jazz. A riff is "... a single rhythmic phrase repeated over and over, usually as a background to the lead melody." But it can be employed as a melodic theme itself. The term "smear" probably is an allusion to the dirty tones, or bent notes, that make up the "blue tonality" of the blues and jazz. We have already defined a break. Thus, the phrase "Riffs, smears, breaks," signals an abrupt change in the poem, and a variation in the musical theme.

The last stanza of "Easy Boogie" is not so much a solo as it is a duet in which one "instrument," or voice, plays while the other is played upon. The word "Easy" is a shortened form of the phrase "Easy Rider," a metaphor vitally connected with the language of the blues tradition. It is a figurative expression for the pleasures of love. The male partner is usually the "rider," while the female is referred to as the "pony" or "mare"--the natural extensions of the same animal image. However, the woman partner, by an inversion of the figure of speech, can also become
the "rider"; and she is distinguished from the male by the addition of the adjective "easy." She is the "easy rider" of the sex act. In this verse Hughes merely incorporates an animal image or metaphor into a musical setting. That is, "Mama," a slang term for the female lover, is the "easy rider" in this poem, but only the voice of the male interlocutor is heard as he addresses her. This image is first suggested in the preceding verse "easy roll" and further reinforced in the third stanza with the remark "Easy like I rock it." For in the blues tradition, the expression "rocking and rolling" is also a way of referring to the movements of sexual intercourse. However, the term now refers to a kind of popular music.

In short, the personification of musical rhythms as a function of the sex act is a way of illustrating the overall harmony of human relationships.

"Figurette" (p. 19), which appears in the second movement of the composition called "Dig and Be Dug," is another ornamental device that reinforces the on-going rhythm of the "dream boogie" motif. It is an onomatopoeic approximation of various instruments, such as the cymbals and kettle drums that are used to sustain the basic beat:

\[
\text{De-daddle-dy!} \\
\text{De-dop!}
\]

"Figurette" immediately precedes a sketch called "Motto"
which portrays the "cool" pose of the bebopper musician:

I play it cool
And dig all jive
That's the reason
I stay alive.

My motto
As I live and learn,
is:
Dig and Be Dug
In Return.

The term "dig" is a slang expression that means "to understand, take, see, conceive, perceive, think, hand over" in the language of jive. According to Dan Burley,

Jive is a distortion of that staid, old, respectable English word "jibe" (jibber—Speak fast and inarticularly, chatter; such speech, or sound. Jibberish—unintelligible speech, meaningless sounds, jargon, blundering or ungrammatical talk). On the other hand, Dalby postulates a West African derivation of the word, stating that "'Jive had the original meaning in black American English of 'misleading talk,' which it retains, and can be compared to the Wolof jëv, meaning 'to talk disparagingly.'" Whatever the origin, jive was the peculiar jargon of the jazz world of the 1940's and was quickly embraced by the larger community of Harlem. Furthermore, the twist which Hughes gives the expression "dig" at the end of the poem is a kind of be-bop rendition of the golden rule.

"Boogie: I A.M." (p. 43) is another variation of the original "dream-boogie" motif. It appears in the third
part of the collection entitled "Vice Versa to Bach."

Good evening, daddy!
I know you've heard
The boogie-woogie rumble
Of a dream deferred
Trilling the treble
And twining the bass
Into midnight ruffles
Of cat-gut lace.

The nuance is indicated by a change of time ("evening" replaces "morning" of the original "Dream Boogie" poem) and by a different attitude. That is, the declarative statement "I know you've heard" illustrates greater awareness of the dilemma in which the Harlemite finds himself. The knowledge that his dream will not be realized any time soon produces an anger which gradually builds up. This is illustrated graphically by the lack of punctuation in the sentence, except after the salutation and the conclusion. Thus, a crescendo effect is achieved. And alliteration ("Trilling the treble/ And twining the bass") conveys the monotony of turning broken promises into music.

"Lady's Boogie" (p. 44) is a riff, or repeat, of

"Boogie I A.M."

See that lady
Dressed so fine?
She ain't got boogie-woogie
On her mind——

But if she was to listen
I bet she'd hear,
Way up in the treble
The tingle of a tear.

Be-Bach!
In this tableau there is a contrast between two life styles--the sophisticated, represented by the well-dressed lady, and the rowdy manner of living associated with the boogie-woogie. The black middle class had largely embraced the jazz of the "swing" era, the time when the big dance bands of Duke Ellington and Benny Goodman were popular, because it had been assimilated into the Euro-American tradition. It was acceptable to white society. On the other hand, "swing had no meaning for blues people, nor was it expressive of the emotional life of most young Negroes after the war." The harsh realities of Harlem did not allow them the luxury of viewing life through rose-colored glasses. It is to this group that be-bop made the greatest appeal. The Middle class society was horrified by its deliberately cacophonous, anti-assimilationist sounds.

By combining two symbols of disparate currents, (Be-Bach), Hughes intimates that an eclectic attitude toward culture is worth considering. This phrase also emphasizes a fact of black American life—that much of our culture is a fusion between the African and European elements but one tempered in the American environment. In the final stanza of this poemette, the poet utilizes synesthesia, here the combination of visual and auditory senses ("I bet she'd hear/ The tingle of a tear"), to point to the emotional source of this music. "Be-Bach" also constitutes the
underlying steady beat.

In "Deferred" (pp. 48-50) the main theme is fully developed through the juxtaposition of a series of heterogeneous elements into a composite picture or montage. The components of the collage are twelve voices representing various dreams.

The first voice is that of a high school student who really wants to graduate:

This year, maybe, do you think I can graduate?
I'm already two years late.
Dropped out six months when I was seven,
a year when I was eleven,
then got put back when we come North.
To get through high at twenty's kind of late----
But maybe this year I can graduate.

The repetition of the first line in modified form as the last line and the use of italics in the entire phrase convey the sense of urgency and anxiety felt by the speaker. Moreover, expressions like "two years late," "dropped out," "put back," and "kind of late" are vivid reminders of his deferred dream.

The second "instrumental solo" is that of a housewife whose aspirations are symbolized by the white enamel stove:

Maybe now I can have that white enamel stove
I dreamed about when we first fell in love
eighteen years ago.
But you know,
rooming and everything
then kids,
cold-water flat and all that.
But now my daughter's married
And my boy's most grown----
quit school to work----
and where we're moving
there ain't no stove----
Maybe I can buy that white enamel stove!

Graphically this dream is indicated in the longest portions (lines 1, 2 and 13). As time passes the dream is postponed, represented by the gradual decrease in line lengths, until it reaches its minimum point of realization ("then kids," line 6). From line 7 ("cold-water flat and all that") to the end of this sketch the line lengths are intermittently compressed and expanded, thus approximating the discontinuous movement of hopes and disappointments, successes and failures, expectations and let-downs that are a part of a dream deferred. Furthermore, the reiteration of the "white enamel stove" motif emphasizes the futility of the woman's dream.

The third pose is that of a common laborer who wishes to study French:

Me, I always did want to study French.
It don't make sense----
I'll never go to France,
but night schools teach French.
Now at last I've got a job
where I get off at five,
in time to wash and dress,
so, s'il-vous plaît, I'll study French!

The desire to study a foreign language may arise from the fact that a high value is placed on formal learning in Western society. Or it may stem from a need to escape reality by concentrating on an exotic environment.
Furthermore, since the French language has been traditionally associated with "high culture," the worker's desire to learn it may also indicate his wish to improve his status in the eyes of American society.

The voice of the fourth character is that of any man who wants just a little more of the advantages of American life:

Someday,
I'm gonna buy two new suits at once!

The fifth note in the composition reflects the desire of an alcoholic whose pathetic request informs us that he is bitterly aware of the postponement of the American Dream:

All I want is one more bottle of gin.

The sixth voice is that of a person whose primary goal seems to be a debt-free state of existence. It illustrates a this-worldly preoccupation:

All I want is to see my furniture paid for.

The seventh note is that of an irate husband who may be estranged from his mate:

All I want is a wife who will work with me and not against me. Say, baby, could you see your way clear?
This sketch also portrays a recurring motif in blues poetry—the wish to reconcile man and woman in a harmonious relationship.

In contrast to the sixth voice, the eighth one, represented by the lines of a spiritual, is that of a religious fanatic whose vision is totally otherworldly:

Heaven, heaven, is my home!  
This world I'll leave behind.  
When I set my feet in glory  
I'll have a throne for mine!

The ninth stance reveals the preoccupation of a prospective civil servant:

I want to pass the civil service.

The tenth voice could be that of a child of the ghetto, for whom television is a primary means of escape. It is his passport to the land of fantasies:

I want a television set.

Even the elderly have dreams, as the eleventh voice attests:

You know, as old as I am,  
I ain't never owned a decent radio yet?

The twelfth "human instrument" in the chorus utters the wishes of one seeking to expand his or her cultural horizons. It does not mean that the person rejects his own but that he can appreciate that of other people as well:

I'd like to take up Bach.
In essence, the poem "Deferred" maintains a conversational tone throughout. While on the surface it seems to consist of an array of disconnected notes, there is an underlying unity stemming from the dialogue structure of antiphony. Moreover, the exchange can be viewed from opposite perspectives. On the one side, each voice is a variation on the main solo—the dream deferred. Conversely, each conversant is an instrumental response to the thematic riff ending the poem:

Montage of a dream deferred.

Buddy, have you heard?

The final line returns us to the initial motif presented in "Dream Boogie," only the word "Buddy" replaces "Daddy."

In "Nightmare Boogie" (p. 58) the dream deferred turns sour, a conflicting change in the melody:

I had a dream
and I could see
a million faces
black as me!
A nightmare dream:
Quicker than light
All them faces
Turned dead white!
Boogie-woogie,
Rolling bass,
Whirling treble
Of cat-gut lace.

Lines six through eight constitute the nightmare—one million black faces changing colors could only happen
in a dream. It is disturbing to the dreamer because now
the symbols are inverted. White represents evil and mis-
fortune, an effective reversal of American color symbolism.
Moreover, the nightmare is an impudent interjection be-
tween the two terms ("dream" and "boogie") of the original
melody which enclose it structurally. The snow-ball move-
ment of the "rolling bass" proceeds with increasing veloc-
ity and the treble no longer trills as it did in "Boogie
1 A.M."); it whirls like the blades of a helicopter.

"Chord" (p. 64) is the basic unit of harmony in the
melody of the dream deferred:

Shadow faces
In the shadow night
Before the early dawn
Bops bright.

Moreover, this piece evolves by means of two metaphors.
The "shadow faces" represent the disillusioned, who live
constantly in the "shadow night"—Harlem—or beyond the
pale of the American dream. There is a play on the meaning
of "bop." The first is that the dawn comes dancing in like
a carefree teen-ager; the second is that dawn hits you with
reality like a punch on the jaw.

"Dream Boogie: Variation" (p. 68) ends the fifth
section called "Dream Deferred."

Tinkling treble,
Rolling bass,
High noon teeth
In a midnight face,
Great long fingers
On great big hands,
Screaming pedals
Where his twelve-shoe lands,
Looks like his eyes
Are teasing pain,
A few minutes late
For the Freedom Train.

This poem depicts through a series of images the unity of musician and music. In lines one and two are sound contrasts, in three and four color contrasts. That is, "Tinklin' treble" and "Rolling bass" allude to the sound of the boogie rhythm or music; while "High noon" is a metaphor for the whiteness of the player's teeth, in stark contrast to the blackness of his face (midnight metaphor). In lines five and six the musician's tools are described through parallel hyperbolic phrases: ("Great long fingers/ On great big hands"); and in lines seven and eight the strength of his feet are portrayed by means of allusion (the pedals scream in pain as his size twelve shoe forces the sounds out of the instrument. Finally, the agony of missing the "Freedom Train," symbol of the dream deferred, is reflected in the painful expression in his eyes.

This musical piece takes up the threads of the melody first delineated in "Dream Boogie." That is, the image of the pianist in this poem completes the sense of "Beating out and beating out a---" in the original poem. And the response to "You think/ It's a happy beat?" is negative.
It is a painful one, but the agony is being converted into music, which assuages somewhat the disillusionment of postponing the dream, or missing the Freedom Train.

"Lenox Avenue Mural," the last part of Montage of a Dream Deferred, is the recapitulation of all the motifs, riffs, breaks and smears in the musical composition and has six poems. In the first piece, "Harlem" (p. 71), Hughes poses a logical question which embodies the fears, frustrations and disillusionment of the dream deferred:

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun.
Or fester like a sore——
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over——
Like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

Through a series of pathological similes, Hughes depicts the consequences of the postponement of the American Dream of freedom, equality and justice for everyone. Harlem has become a cancer—drying up, festering, stinking and crust ing over. The second verse is a pause, a break in the rapid succession of images painted in the first stanza. In addition, the use of the subjunctive mood—"Maybe it just sags/ like a heavy load"—implies another alternative. The
"heavy load" could be the dead weight of a body that has ceased to function. This caesura in the thought of the poem is very effective, making the very last image more forceful by the contrast that it presents. The "heavy load" may also be a dormant package of dynamite waiting for its fuse to be lit.

In "Good Morning" (p. 71) the poet picks up the threads extended in "Dream Boogie."

Good morning, daddy!
I was born here, he said,
watched Harlem grow
until colored folks spread
from river to river
across the middle of Manhattan
out of Penn Station
dark tenth of a nation,
planes from Puerto Rico,
and holds of boats, chico
up from Cuba Haiti Jamaica,
in busses marked NEW YORK
from Georgia Florida Louisiana
to Harlem Brooklyn the Bronx
but most of all to Harlem
dusky sash across Manhattan
I've seen them come dark
wondering
wide-eyed
dreaming
out of Penn Station----
but the trains are late.
The gates open----
but there're bars
at each gate.

What happens
to a dream deferred?

Daddy, ain't you heard?
With the initial salutation, "Good Morning" takes up where "Dream Boogie" left off. Here the instrumental solo is rendered by the voice of a bona fide Harlemite. Moreover, it is a kind of biographical vignette, for the individual's birth and development corresponds to that of Harlem. Harlem is like a stream which begins as a trickle and then swells to huge proportions. Penn Station represents the channel through which this human river flows. The various tributaries are the Caribbean nations--Cuba, Haiti, Puerto Rico, and Jamaica--and the Southern states--Louisiana, Georgia, Florida. The river imagery is sustained throughout most of "Good Morning," for the continuous, rapid, swelling movement of Harlem is depicted as a "dusky sash" spread across Manhattan Island. In addition, the relative lack of punctuation graphically illustrates the flow of humanity. It is significant that NEW YORK appears in all capitals. For it is the symbol of the promise which the American Dream holds for all. The adjectives "wondering," "wide-eyed," and "dreaming" vividly capture these people's belief and hope in the promise. However, the late trains and barred gates symbolize the dams, or obstacles, which hold back the human tide. Thus, the final question is really a rhetorical one, for the implications of damming up humanity have already been given in the previous poem "Harlem." And this is the reason for
the sarcastic reply, also in interrogative form, "Daddy, ain't you heard?"

"Same In Blues" (pp. 72-73) skillfully combines the blues verse form with the riff technique of jazz. There are four four-line solo stanzas of abcb rhyme and each is followed with a response in the form of a sardonic commentary. The last solo verse functions as a resume of the preceding ones.

The first stanza reenacts the love scene depicted in "Easy Boogie":

I said to my baby,
Baby, take it slow.
I can't, she said, I can't!
I got to go!

There's a certain amount of traveling
in a dream deferred.

This time the male voice relates the story through his remarks and through the reported statements of the female interlocutor. The response reiterates the theme of rootlessness prevalent in the blues. In fact, the statement "I can't . . . I can't/ I got to go" conveys the desperation of one constantly on the move going nowhere.

The second verse of "Same In Blues" employs the reported dialogue technique characteristic of the ballad:

Lulu said to Leonard,
I want a diamond ring.
Leonard said to Lulu,
You won't get a goddam thing!
A certain amount of nothing in a dream deferred.

In fact the traditional ballad "Betty and Dupre" has a similar stanza. Here the diamond ring represents the wishful thinking of the female voice while the male voice mocks her naivety.

In the third antiphonal exchange a sexual image is projected to portray another nuance of the deferred dream, which is compared to an impotent man:

Daddy, daddy, daddy,
All I want is you.
You can have me baby----
but my lovin' days is through.

A certain amount of impotence in a dream deferred.

In view of conventional attitudes toward sexuality in American society, this is a piercing metaphor.

The fourth dialogue utilizes a telephone image to underscore the confusion inherent in a postponed dream, the response reinforces this metaphor:

Three parties
On my party line----
But that third party,
Lord, ain't mine!

There's liable to be confusion in a dream deferred.
And the final solo strophe summarizes the entire song by personifying the dream as a person who gets kicked around:

From river to river,
Uptown and down,
There's liable to be confusion
when a dream gets kicked around.

In short, "Same In Blues" represents the monotony of the delayed dream. Furthermore, it introduces a note (in the image of parallel rivers) that is restated in the final poem.

In "Comment on Curb" (p. 74) the poet portrays the particular aspect which the theme of frustration assumes—sarcasm and cynicism.

You talk like
they don't kick
dreams around
Downtown.

I expect they do——
But I'm talking about
Harlem to you!

Here "Downtown" is the symbol of the realized dream, but it is reserved for white America only, which the response to the comment recognizes.

"Letter" (p. 74) represents the ties between two worlds which appear to be poles apart, but which are really identical in terms of realizing the American Dream—the North and the South. Neither one holds any promise for those who happen to be black and poor.
Dear Mama,

Time I pay rent and get my food
and laundry I don't have much left
but here is five dollars for you
to show you I still appreciates you.
My girl-friend send her love and say
she hopes to lay eyes on you sometime in life.
Mama, it has been raining cats and dogs up
here. Well, that is all so I will close.

You son baby

Respectably as ever,

Joe

This letter is a testimony of a youth who goes North
to pursue the American Promise. Moreover, the rustic ex-
pressions and turns of speech indicate a Southern origin.
For example, "Time I" for "As soon as I," "lay eyes on,"
for "meet" or "see," and the humorous but authentic closing
"Son baby/ Respectably as ever" illustrate the linguistic
patterns of the Southern black. The poet's use of the
epistle style is simply another variation on the main
theme. Furthermore, it is in keeping with the antiphonal
character of the entire composition because there is an
implied response—that of the mother. To this poignant
declaration of affection and estime, one can add a positive
commentary: "There's still a certain amount of love
despite a dream deferred."

"Island" is the final tune in the overall melody of
Montage of a Dream Deferred:
Between two rivers,
North of the park,
Like darker rivers
The streets are dark.

Black and white,
Gold and brown----
Chocolate-custard
Pie of a town.

Dream within a dream,
Our dream deferred.

Good morning, Daddy!

Ain't you heard?

In the first verse Harlem is situated spatially, its reference points being the Manhattan and Hudson Rivers. In addition, the simile comparing the streets and rivers is a figurative extension of this geographical locale. The streets are not only dark because they reflect the color of their inhabitants; they also lack the light of hope and have grown deep from being contained between the larger two, which represent barriers for them.

In the second stanza the visual and palatal images are evoked in the metaphor of the pie. The bitterness of the frustrated dream here is sweetened, possibly because of the love which the people still manage to feel for a country who treats them like a step-child. For at this point, Harlem, the symbol of a tragic and frustrated nation within a nation, would still like to believe in the promise. The poet captures this seed of faith in a
magnificent metaphor: "Dream within a dream." Nevertheless, the final dialogue indicates that this faith is steadily being destroyed in the face of reality—"Our dream deferred." Thus, it is only necessary to restate the opening question in part, for the answer is yes; the boogie-woogie rumble is not only audible, it is loud and clear.

In conclusion, Montage of a Dream Deferred is a very unique work that skillfully combines the many devices of the jazz composition—riffs, breaks, smears, nuances—in order to elucidate the multi-faceted theme of the broken promise (the American Dream) which the lives of many Harlemites tragically embody. Moreover, it differs from The Weary Blues and Fine Clothes to the Jew in that it is much more complex. There is no guiding principle of a three-line or six-line stanza, as in the former two works, which the reader can use to grasp Montage of a Dream Deferred at first glance. Only after a careful perusal and intensive reexamination can one perceive the basic movements of the collection.

While the mood of The Weary Blues is generally light and that of Fine Clothes to the Jew is basically bleak, the prevalent tone in Montage of a Dream Deferred is tragic. There is a greater sense of pessimism since the people are aware that they have been lied to, put down and pushed back. They now seek solutions. In contrast to
West Indies Ltd., there is no song of hope to end this composition.
NOTES TO CHAPTER X

1Langston Hughes, Prefatory note to Montage of a Dream Deferred (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1951),


4Stearns, Ibid., p. 144.

5Stearns, Ibid., p. 142.


7Stearns, The Story of Jazz, pp. 218-221.


9Stearns, The Story of Jazz, p. 222.

10Stearns, Ibid., p. 231.

11Hughes, The First Book of Jazz, p. 47.


16 David Dalby, "Americanisms That May Once Have Been Africanisms," in *Mother Wit*, p. 138.

17 Jones, *Blues People*, pp. 159-165.


CHAPTER XI

COMPARISON OF NICOLÁS GUILLÉN AND LANGSTON HUGHES

The poetry of Nicolás Guillén and that of Langston Hughes are strikingly similar with respect to the presence of Africanisms in the folk music genres that they utilize. Guillén borrowed the rumba and the son from the vast body of oral tradition which contributed greatly to Cuban culture, while Hughes appropriated the blues and jazz from the black folk tradition in the United States. The Afro-Cuban forms are basically dances, but they are also sung; and the Afro-American genres, although primarily geared to vocal and instrumental performance, are also danced. In more recent times the son, the blues and jazz have evolved to the point where they are listened to in much the same way as art music. In fact, jazz is considered an art music although folk forms of jazz are said to exist.

In the case of each poet, oral tradition provided the forms, musical devices, formulaic patterns and a repertoire of figurative language characteristic of folk speech as working material. But each writer had to rely on his creative genius to recreate these forms in written language, which is more limiting than the spoken language. Thus, it would be helpful to review the triadic scheme, that is,
texture, text and context, to perceive the extent to which oral forms did influence their poetry.

The musical texture of the four oral forms is the first point of comparison. Essentially, this can be viewed in terms of the major dominant values of African-derived music that was discussed in Chapter II of this dissertation. These are overlapping antiphony, rhythmic complexity, the "metronome sense" and a percussive approach to musical performance.

In Motivos de son, Sóngoro Cosongo and West Indies Ltd. overlapping call-and-response is the predominant pattern. This is true whether Guillén uses the traditional son format consisting of largo and montuno (see, for example, the poem "Negro bembón") or whether he employs the more conventional romance stanza (see "La canción del bongó"). In a similar manner overlapping antiphony is present in The Weary Blues, for instance, in the poems "Blues Fantasy" and "The Cat and the Saxophone," and in all of the selections of Fine Clothes to the Jew which are analyzed in this study. Furthermore, the poem "Same In Blues" in Montage of a Dream Deferred is an obvious example of this kind of dialogue in stanzaic form. However, the overall technique of the solo interweaving with the riff exemplifies overlapping antiphony on a broader basis in the work.
The rhythmic structure of the rumba and the son has a different effect on the reader than that of the blues and jazz. For example, in Motivos de son and Sóngoro Cosongo there is a vibrant, intense, ecstatic celebration of the sounds, which are very fast, staccato in quality and almost always move toward a crescendo build-up at the end of the poem. "Si tú supiera" from Motivos de son and "Canto negro" from Sóngoro Cosongo are good examples. On the other hand, the rhythms of the blues and jazz are relatively slower and flow more smoothly than those of the rumba and son. For instance, in The Weary Blues there is a sense of rapture brought on by the excitement of the Jazz Age; however, unlike Motivos and Sóngoro Cosongo, the music has a narcotic-like effect. If we compare the catharsis produced by their music, we could say that the Afro-Cuban modes tend to exorcise feelings while the Afro-American ones tend to anesthetize emotions.

The "metronome sense" is the most difficult musical value to reproduce in written poetry. In fact, unless these verse forms are read aloud to the accompaniment of music, it is almost impossible to feel this off-beat phrasing of melodic accents. Nevertheless, when many of these poems are read orally there is a tendency, sometimes unconscious, to move in time with the beats which can be heard and felt subjectively. In other words, one does not have to go to
the dance floor and actually carry out dance steps. All he needs to do is move head, limbs, shoulders in rhythm and rhyme with the accents that he can subjectively feel. This is what Waterman means when he characterizes African-inspired music as dance music.

The percussive approach to musical performance is more easily reproduced in the written poems of Guillén and Hughes because the poets have recourse to such devices as onomatopoeia, alliteration, jitanjáfora, and scat language (the English equivalent to jitanjáfora). Through utilizing these techniques the sounds and the rhythms of the rumba, son, blues and jazz poems are evoked and become audible when they are read aloud. For instance, in "Rumba" the binary accent of the poem is highlighted through the repetition of "rumbera buena/ rumbera mala." In Montage of a Dream Deferred, phrases like "be-bop," "de-daddle-de," and "de-dop" are sprinkled throughout the collection to indicate the continuity of the underlying bass rhythm. In short, the musical texture of each of the poems in the six works treated come very close to that of their oral models.

Linguistic texture is a second point of comparison in the poems of Guillén and Hughes. In Motivos de son Guillén utilizes exclusively the "lenguage mulato," or a dialectal variant of Cuban Spanish that is mainly associated with black people although whites can understand it. White
society refers to this broken dialect as the *disfraces negros* and the phrase is frequently implemented in a pejorative sense to stigmatize the uneducated people who speak this language. The same kind of speech appears in *Fine Clothes to the Jew* and on a more limited basis in *The Weary Blues*. In *Sóngoro Cosongo* Guillén returns to the regular poetic language but also includes many words and expressions based on an African-derived phonology and morphology. In *The Weary Blues* Hughes's use of regular poetic diction outweighs the inclusion of dialect elements. Finally, in *West Indies Ltd.* the language of the *son* poems discussed is totally in Cuban Spanish. On the other hand, in *Montage of a Dream Deferred*, Hughes introduces the specialized cant of the jazz world and the slang language called jive to complement the jazz devices of the work.

Regarding the text of the poems in the six works examined, many of them are original creations of their authors. In several cases Guillén's rendition of *son* poetry are glosses of songs that were very much a part of the folk tradition of his day (see "Velorio de Papá Montero" and "Secuestro de la mujer de Antonio"). Hughes also appropriated whole stanzas, words, phrases and turns of speech from existing oral forms. For example, the first blues verse which he included in the poem "The Weary Blues" was one he had heard as a youth in Kansas; and the conversational exchange between two characters in "Same In blues"
from *Montage of a Dream Deferred* is very similar to one in the traditional ballad "Betty and Dupree." The major difference between the poet's uses of these oral forms and the manner in which the genres exist in oral tradition is that those of Guillén and Hughes are more tightly constructed and more cohesive with respect to theme, ideas and figurative language.

The context of *rumba, son, blues and jazz* poems of the six works analyzed is almost invariably a musical setting—a cabaret, nightclub, outdoor party or celebration, a street corner jam session, and the like. Moreover, it is here that the poets' efforts to reproduce the environment of these oral forms are severely limited, for it is very hard to convey through written language the gestures, facial expressions, uses of tone and voice modulation, and the visual effects of costuming which are an inherent part of performance. At best the poets can rely on concrete images and metaphors to capture some of these nuances.

Both *Motivos de son* and *The Weary Blues* vividly illustrate the general theme of primitivism popular during the 1920's. In them there is a constant preoccupation with having a good time—singing, dancing, drinking, and making love. As mentioned earlier in this study, the focus on primitivism was based on the notion that man should return to his "primitive" state, that is, his original unsophisticated life style before the advent of technology. This was
part of the same tendency as the surrealist and other vanguardist movements. Furthermore, Guillén continues this trend in Sóngoro Cosongo.

As a result of the emphasis on primitivism, the image of the black man that is projected in Motivos de son, Sóngoro Cosongo, and The Weary Blues is often a retrograde one. To some extent this is also true of Fine Clothes to the Jew. While each writer states explicitly that his intent is to portray the people just as they are, think and act, in doing so he utilizes stereotypes created by white society and validates them. For example, in Motivos de son and much of Sóngoro Cosongo the black Cuban is depicted as a happy-go-lucky, bongo-playing buffoon (the bembón), or as a pimp (chulo, calavera) living off his mother or female friend. The Afro-Cuban woman, the mulata and the negra, are painted as overwhelmingly animal-like and sensuous. Likewise in The Weary Blues the types are shown as carefree and nonchalant, while in Fine Clothes to the Jew the characters come across as irresponsible, violent and sensuous. But these one-dimensional caricatures are the result of a lack of external environment in the works. That is, the poets concentrate on the world of emotions and attitudes in their sketches. Thus, the social conditions giving rise to such intense inner feelings are not evident in Motivos de son and The Weary Blues and are only intimated
in Sóngoro Cosongo and *Fine Clothes to the Jew*. One might also add that these figures may represent the distorted images of the European-oriented dominant society in Cuba and the United States, and that the unconventional life-style associated with them constitutes a rebellion in the extreme opposite direction of the over-rationalized, un-feeling life-style of Western society.

Although Guillén and Hughes were not the first poets to imitate oral forms, the reasons for their choice are related to a view of art that has become prominent in the twentieth century: the belief in social commitment. That is, the motivating force behind much contemporary writing is that art should be an expression of collective feelings, aspirations and perspectives, and that it should be used for social reform. Social art is committed to some belief, cause or ideal that is the point of departure for action, for improving the conditions of the world's oppressed majority. Both Guillén and Hughes have a message to proclaim in their poetry. Furthermore, by utilizing those vehicles of expression which everyone could understand and appreciate the poets were assured of a larger audience than is usually the case for writers. Hence their widespread popularity. And the universality of their message is seen in the fact that both poets' works were translated into many different languages.
Protest is conspicuous in both West Indies Ltd. and in Montage of a Dream Deferred. In both volumes the black man is presented in a dignified manner. For example, the image of the closed fist in West Indies Ltd. and the boogie-woogie rumble of the string bass metaphor in Montage of a Dream Deferred symbolize the revolt of black people against oppressive conditions. The poets differ in that Guillén views the position of the black Cuban within the total context of Cuban and Antillean society. That is, the black Cuban is first poor then black. Thus, it is a question of class struggle rather than racial conflict, although racial discrimination was a reality in the period in which Guillén wrote. On the other hand, while Hughes is certainly aware of the universality of suffering among poor people, he is primarily concerned with resolving the racial aspect of this dilemma first. The Afro-American is seen as black and poor, in that order. This difference is largely the consequence of the different societies in which each poet lived. Mutual acculturation, or syncretism, occurred to a greater degree in Cuba than it did in the United States. Thus, Guillén's artistic intent in the three works examined is not so much a quest for integration into a mainstream literature as it is a validation of the African-derived elements in an already-miscegenated society. Conversely, Hughes seeks acceptance for what is regarded as a separate
"subculture" in the three volumes analyzed in this study. This search is especially evident in Montage of a Dream Deferred where Harlem, the symbol of the postponed dream, is juxtaposed with Manhattan Island, symbol of the American Dream. The two represent separate nations.

Perhaps the life styles of these two writers had a significant effect on the kind of poetry they wrote. Guillén traveled throughout Latin America, the Caribbean, the United States, Europe, the Soviet Union and the Orient. Hughes also visited and lived in these places as well as in Africa. For this reason, each poet is able to capture in his works the black experience in his native land and simultaneously show how suffering is universal in terms of other oppressed peoples. Furthermore, both Guillén and Hughes tended toward a kind of bohemian, or free, way of living, refusing to be fettered by rules they felt were artificial.

Finally, the poetic stance of each writer is worth consideration. Guillén's poetry reveals a dynamic, declamatory, hard-hitting tone while that of Hughes is more subdued, detached and subtle. For example, irony is achieved through forceful statement in "Negro bembón" (from Motivos de son) where the poet plays off the image of the bembón against that of the boca santa. The vituperative quality of Guillén's poetry is very evident in the second son of "West Indies Ltd." where the poet employs
the sarcastic appellations *Coroneles de terracota* and *políticos de quita y pon*. On the other hand, Hughes's irony is brought about mostly through understatement. For instance, in "Same In Blues" each solo phrase represents an individual dream that the sardonic response lines destroys: "there's a certain/ amount of nothing/ in a dream deferred." In their earlier works the poets had a similar attitude toward problems and suffering. That is, laughter is prescribed as a healthy antidote for trouble, a belief that is expressed in the traditional blues phrase "laughing to keep from crying." However, to the extent that the social conditions the poets describe did not improve substantially is to the degree that laughter decreases in their later works. In fact, the gay note is conspicuously absent from *West Indies Ltd.* and *Montage of a Dream Deferred*.

In short, these are the basic similarities and differences between the Afro-Cuban *hombre-poeta* and the Afro-American "race poet." Furthermore, the poems that are treated in this study are outstanding examples of their incorporation of elements from the African-derived oral tradition into Western written literature in the Americas.
CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we have observed that folklore is conceived in a variety of ways depending on the people who read and study it. However, it seems to be the general consensus that folklore is an aspect of oral literature which, in turn, is a part of the larger category of oral tradition. The oral traditions of the African-derived societies of Cuba and the United States are primarily musically-oriented. That is, speech or language, song, dance and instrumentation all combine to create a complex rhythmic expression unparalleled in the more European-based traditions of these countries. This principle operates in the dance forms of the rumba and the son and in the vocal and instrumental genres of the blues and jazz. In essence, in all four forms, rhythmic complexity, a percussive approach and antiphonal or dialogue structure serve as the basis for the more conventional literary devices that the poets employ.

Guillén and Hughes have similar backgrounds (born poor but of proud lineage), life styles, artistic attitudes and intellectual perspectives. Both were well traveled and thoroughly enjoyed mixing with those of all races, classes and beliefs. Both men were also dedicated writers
who were convinced of their mission of social improvement for all peoples.

Guillén still lives; Hughes is dead. More important, their poetry is timeless and universal.
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