

Hughes, Langston

Dudley Fitts papers

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Dudley Fitts Papers
YCAL MSS 296
Box 1, Folder 29

Series I. Correspondence

Hughes, Langston / 1941-1942

(no caption)

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Hollow Hills Farm,
Monterey, California,
October 25, 1941.

Mr. Dudley Fitts,
Adams Hall,
Andover, Mass.

Dear Mr. Fitts,

Maxim Lieber has sent me your recent letter and list of slight changes on the Guillen poem, WAKE FOR PAPA MONTERO. Save one, they are all entirely acceptable to me, especially in the light of the line to line translation you are seeking, with the Spanish on an opposite page. I am afraid my translations were really adaptations. I certainly took liberties with the texts for, as I felt, the sake of the ear and smooth reading. Unfortunately, all my Guillen books are in New York but, as I wired you, I'm sure your changes are O.K.

The line y tu melena planchada, I think instead of "ironed-out" I would use the word "straightened" which is the common American term for Negro hair dressed in that fashion. It is often said to be "shinning like patent leather". So we might say it in one of the following ways:

your glossy straightened hair
your gleaming straightened hair
your shinning straightened hair
your shinny straightened hair

Also I really like better the present tense of the verb "to bring" in next to the last line, thus:

and I bring it tonight
to be your pillow.

It seems to make quite immediate the tragedy of the poem--- something that is happening now and still going on. For smooth reading the last lines might go thus:

Some kids picked it up
and washed its face.
so tonight I bring it
to be your pillow.

instead of a pillow for you. I merely indicate this as another possible rendering of the lines. These are the things I think that make translating fascinating.

I wonder if you ever saw any of my translations of Lorca's ROMANCERO GITANO? I did them all when I was in Madrid. Guillen and I stayed at the Writers' Club there, where lived also Rafael Alberti, a friend of Lorca's who aided me no end in the transla-

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tions.

If you are ever planning to do anything with prose, I translated some twenty or more Cuban and Mexican short stories one winter that I was in Mexico. Only a few of them ever appeared in magazines here---as their short story form is so different from our own---really more often like a poetic sketch.

Do you happen to know a marvellous short story by the Cuban, Lino Novás Calvo, called AQUELLA NOCHE SALIERON LOS MUERTOS?

And are you acquainted with any of the translations of Cuban poetry by Ben Carruthers of the Spanish Department at Howard University in Washington? He has just gotten his PH.D. at Illinois for a thesis on the LIFE WORK AND DEATH OF PLACIDO, and has recently spent much time in Cuba where he put into English a number of the poets there, including Guillen. I thought that, putting our various translations together, he and I might some day do a book of Guillen in English.

In your last letter you mention Luis Palés Matos. You know, I suppose, that he is not a Negro poet, but a white Puerto Rican who writes largely about Negroes. His poems are indeed interesting and amusing, but I think Guillen is much the better poet. Matos is a kind of Latin Dubose Heyward writing with sympathy and charm, but leaning more toward the decorative than the real. "El cielo se ha decorado de melón y calabaza...." I like him, though, and hope to try translations of some of his poems some day.

When does your anthology appear?

With all good wishes,

Sincerely,

Langston Hughes
Langston Hughes

PRESERVATION PHOTOCOPY: ORIGINAL MATERIAL RESTRICTED

FURTHER CHANGES IN LH'S TRANSLATION OF GUILLEN

WAKE FOR PAPA MONTERO

OLD READING: juice of the sweet cane / in the gourd of your warmflesh
NEW READING: juice of the sweet cane in the gourd / of your dusky quick
flesh [de tu carne prieta y viva]

OLD READING: the blood you / lost down the drain / of a knife wound?
NEW READING: the blood you've lost, / gone down the black / drain of a
knife-wound [la sangre que te hace falta / si se te fué
por el caño / negro de la puñalada]

OLD READING: But brighter than the candles / lighting your body / is the
red shirt / that lighted your songs / and the salt of your
music / and your black gleaming hair.

NEW READING: But brighter than the candles / is the red shirt / that
lighted your songs, / the dark salt of your music, / your
glossy ironed-out hair [¡Y aún te alumbran, más que velas, /
la camisa colorada / que iluminó tus canciones, / la prieta
sal de tus sones / y tu melena planchada]

'Black gleaming hair' doesn't really get 'melena planchada' — the i-
dea of glossiness and plastering-down-with-grease, or something. OK?

OLD READING: The children picked it up
NEW READING: The kids picked it up [Los muchachos la cogieron]

OLD READING: Tonight I bring it / to put under your head / like a pillow
NEW READING: and I brought it tonight / to be a pillow for you! [y la
traje esta noche / y te la puse de almohada!]

21 X 1941

Dudley Fitts

O.K.
See enclosed
letter
H. H.
your slick straightened
hair
your shenny straightened
hair

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Good Shepherd Community Center
5120 South Parkway
Chicago, Illinois

April 20, 1942

Mr. Dudley Fitts
Adams South
Andover, Massachusetts

Dear Mr. Fitts:

I sent you immediately in answer to your wire, the one copy of a Jacques Roumain poem which I was able to secure here in Chicago. I also suggest that you write either the Crisis or Opportunity in New York for a copy of the one other Roumain poem which I have published in translation. To secure the original French of these poems, I suggest that you write Mr. Roumain directly by Air Mail, addressing him simply: Port au Prince, Haiti.

I would be delighted to let you have my translations without fee since you say that your appropriation is running low.

Have you any translations of ^{Luis Palés}~~the Village Poet~~ Matos in your book? I have done two or three of them. I think he is an amusing but difficult poet to translate -- a kind of Caribbean Carl Van Vechten or Ronald Firbank in verse. I would be happy to send these translations to you should you desire them.

I will be back in New York early in May and it may just be possible that I can find in my several trunks of material translations that might be of interest to you.

Sincerely yours,

Langston Hughes
Langston Hughes

LH:cg

Dear Mr. Fitts,

I am just back from Chicago and, fortunately, was able to lay my hands right on the Jacques Roumain poems that most obligingly turned up in a corner of the book case. I found also quite a few more of my translations of Guillen and Pedrosa, in case you should need any more. Also about thirty Cuban and Mexican short stories I once translated.....I am broadcasting a couple of my poems to Brazil today.

Sincerely,

Langston Hughes
Langston Hughes

634 St. Nicholas Avenue,
New York, New York,
May 4, 1942.

GUINEA
by
Jacques Roumain

It is the long road to Guinea
Death takes you down.
Here the boughs, the trees, the forest.
Listen to the sound of the wind
in the long hair of eternal night.

It is the long road to Guinea
where your fathers await you without impatience.
Along the way they talk.
They wait.

This is the hour when the streams rattle
like beads of bone.

It is the long road to Guinea
where no bright welcome is made for you
into the dark land of dark men:
Under a smokey sky pierced by the cry of birds
around the eye of the river
the eyelashes of the trees open on decaying light.
There, there awaits you beside the water
a quiet village, and the hut of your fathers,
and the hard ancestral stone
where your head will rest at last.

Translated from the French
by Langston Hughes

HAITE

GUINÉE

C'est le lent chemin de Guinée
La mort t'y conduira
Voici les branchages, les arbres, la forêt
Écoute le bruit du vent dans ses longs cheveux
d'éternelle nuit

C'est le lent chemin de Guinée
Tes pères t'attendent sans impatience.
Sur la route, ils palabrent
Ils attendent.
Voici l'heure où les ruisseaux grelottent comme
des chapelets d'os

C'est le lent chemin de Guinée
Il ne te sera pas fait de lumineux accueil
Au noir pays des hommes noirs:
Sous un ciel fumeux percé de cris
d'oiseaux

Autour de l'oeil du marigot
les cils des arbres s'écartent sur la clarté pourrissante
Là, t'attend au bord de l'eau un paisible village,
et la cas de tes pères, et la dure pierre familiale
où reposer enfin ton front.

Jacques Roumain

HAITI

QUAND BAT LE TAM-TAM.....

Ton coeur tremble dans l'ombre, ^W come le
reflet d'un visage dans l'onde trouble
L'ancien mirage se lève ^{du} su creux de la nuit
Tu connais le doux sortilège du souvenir:
Un fleuve t'emporte loin des berges,
T'emporte vers l'ancestral paysage.
^W
^A Etends-tu ces voix: elles chantent L'amoureuse
douleur

Et dans le morne, écoute ce tantam haleter telle
la gorge d'une noire jeune fille

Ton âme, c'est ce reflet ^W dans l'eau murmurante où
tes pères ont penché, leurs obscurs visages
Ses secrets mouvements te mêlent à la vague
Et le blanc qui te fit mulâtre, c'est ce peu ^W
d'écume rejeté, comme un crachat, sur le rivage.

? ✓
Jacques Roumain

HAITI

WHEN THE TOM-TOM BEATS

by
Jacques Roumain

Your heart trembles in the shadows
like a face reflected in troubled water.
The old mirage rises from the pit of the night.
You sense the sweet sorcery of the past:
A river carries you far away from the banks,
Carries you toward the ancestral landscape.
Listen to those voices, singing the sadness of love.
In the mountain, hear that tom-tom
panting like the breast of a young black girl.

Your soul is reflected in the whispering waters
where your forefathers bent obscure faces.
The secret movement of the water
carries you into the darkness,
and the white that made you mulatto
is only a bit of foam thrown away,
like spit, on the face of the river.

Adaptation from the French
(Haiti) by Langston Hughes

The one other poem of Jacques Roumain's that I have translated appeared (with this one, I think) some years ago, in either THE CRISIS or OPPORTUNITY, the former 69 Fifth Avenue, the latter 1133 Broadway, New York. I am sure the editors could send them to you. This translation is slightly changed, and somewhat free. Regretfully, I cannot supply you with the original text. This material is all in New York in storage now, and I won't be there until May.

L. H.

*Langston
Hughes*

May 8, 1942

Dear Mr. Fitts:

Sorry about so many typing errors in the Roumain poems I sent you. You were right about all but L'onde trouble which is on his copy the same as here. (Typed manuscript he gave me, so if error there ~~was~~, it's his.)

Enclosed are two Pedrosa poems from his book Nosotros. "Alarm Clock" appeared in The Poetry Quarterly, 1931. The other, I believe, was in Survey Graphic, but I've lost the record.

Will you need the Spanish of these? Or do you have his book?

Sincerely,

Langston Hughes

(over)

P. S. Sorry, I don't know
Roumain's birth date.
He's in his 30's. Not
in jail at the moment.
Was in exile in Paris
and here for 4 or 5
years. Now back in
Haiti since the
change in government.

Did I ever send you
Francisca's poems?
(Mexican woman, very
good, I think.) Or are
you using Mexicans?

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Dear Mr. Fitts,

Since you are seeking a line by line translation, of course, you may make changes in the Pedroso poem. I am herein returning it to you. Maybe for the white storks, we could say:

"in single line against the screen of an alabaster sky."
"Picturing", however, seems better to me than a literal rendering of "siguiendo"---since poetry, even in its own language, is seldom literal.....Here are the poems of Francisca (Hellie Campobello) of Mexico City. I also have her book, FRANCISCA, YO, *should you wish to borrow it. KINDLY RETURN TO ME THESE TRANSLATIONS as they seem to be the only copy I have on hand. I am also enclosing a letter I wrote Irita Van Doren about them, as it has an interesting remark from a critic about the poems. (Please return also.).....I have never translated Ballagas. His best work depends on rhythms too difficult to put into English, I think.....I do have a few translations of Pales Matos, YUM YUM, etc. in case you haven't enough of him..... Do you have Rebiero Couto of Brazil? I have in mind to do a translation of his charming little poem about San Benedito.

Sincerely,

Langston Hughes
Langston Hughes

634 St. Nicholas Avenue,
Apt. 1-D, c/o Harper,
New York, New York,
June 18, 1942.

* Enclosed.
Please return.

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634 St. Nicholas Avenue,
Apt. 1-D, c/o Harper,
New York, New York,
July 4, 1942.

Dear Mr. Fitts,

I am sure Francisca will be delighted to have you print her poems. When last I was in Mexico she and her sister were conducting dancing classes in Mexican folk dances at a downtown studio. I once had her address, but can't seem to locate it now, but I think she could be reached through the writer and critic whose comments on her poetry I sent you, and who first introduced me to her work and helped me translate it:

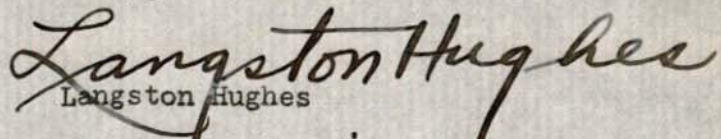
Jose Antonio Fernandez de Castro,
Embajada de Mexico,
Mexico, D. F., Mexico.

He is a Secretary there, First Secretary, I believe.....I am glad you like her poems. You would love her little book of stories of the Mexican Revolution as seen through a child's eyes, CAETUCHO. It is very simple and moving.....I have no more biographical data about her. I've just written Mr. Hayes a letter in answer to his questions about Roumain and Francisca, and given him what leads I could.....Does the book include Eugenio Florit? He's a Cuban poet working in the Cuban Consulate here.....Pablo Neruda of Chile? And Reibero Couto of Brazil? (Terrific jobs for translators!)

I never heard of an "Gukllen". Latin proof readers are somewhat careless. And Latin poets are not the only ones who can't spell.

All good wishes to you on the proofs of this book.

Sincerely,


Langston Hughes

P.S. I believe you sent me a check for the Gukllen poems. Am I to share that with him, or was he paid direct? Kindly let me know, in each case where payment is made.

Dear Mr. Fitts,

I've just written Mr. Hayes further information about Jacques Roumain which Morrisseau-Leroy kindly gave me — namely that he is 36 years old, born in Port au Prince, and has published three books, a novel, "La Montaigne Ensourcellé"; essays & literary criticism, "La Croix et l'ombre"; and a volume of political essays, "Fantoche." At present he is engaged in establishing an anthropological museum for the government of Haiti. He was in New York a year or so ago at Columbia continuing anthropological research in which he had worked at the Trocadero.

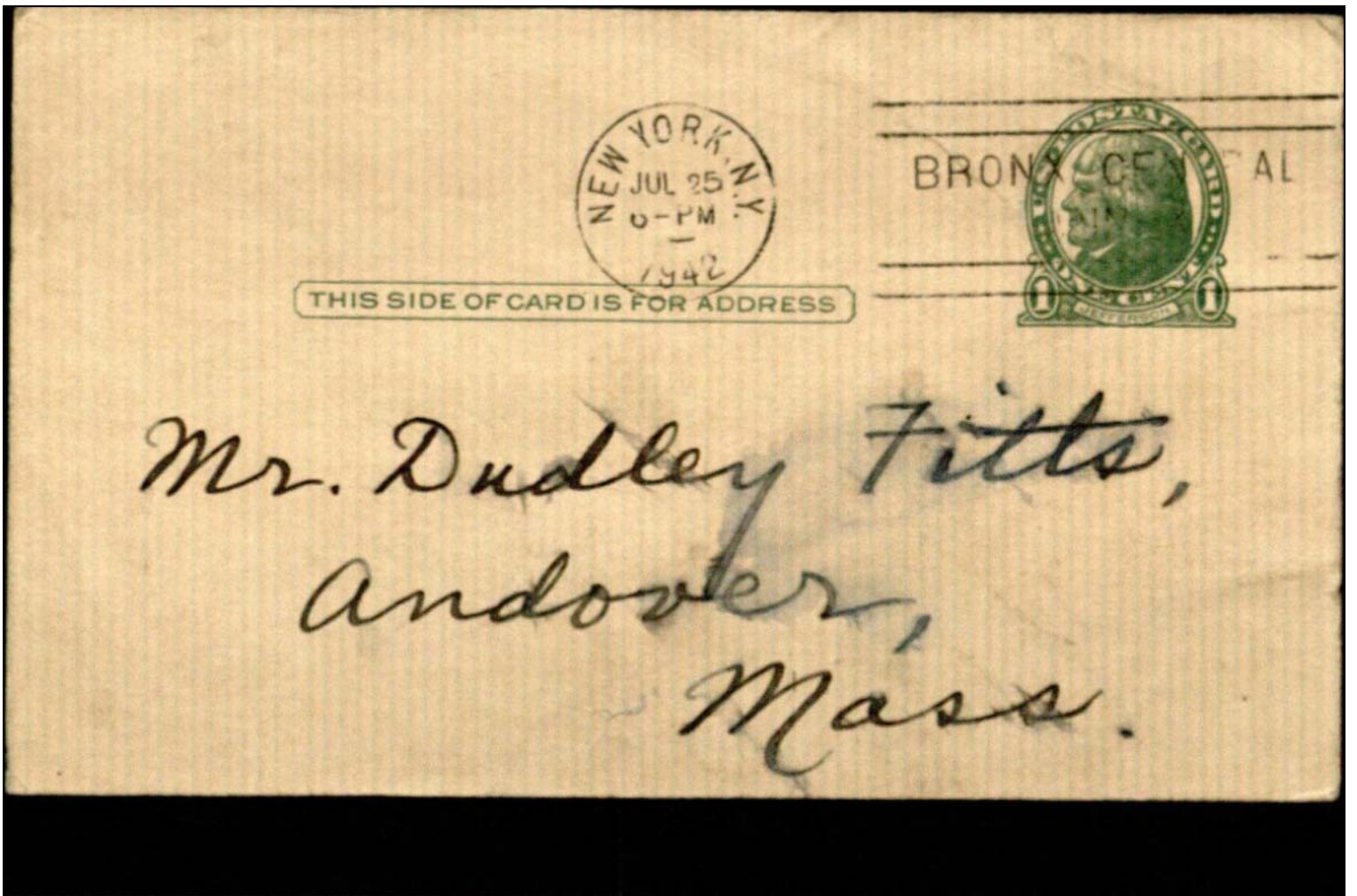
Sincerely,

Langston Hughes

July 13, 1942

Sorry! Fernandez
de Castro's address
is: Embajada de Cuba,
Mexico, D. F. Now, I
guess we're all straight
on every thing.
Sincerely,
Langston Hughes

(no caption)



(no caption)

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DUDLEY FITTS=

ADAMS HALL

ON VACATION LETTER JUST RECEIVED SORRY LATE ANSWERING REGRETS
A SPANISH TEXT IN NEWYORK AND ENGLISH IN CARMEL SO CAN NOT
CHECK UP ON YOU ALTERATIONS BUT WILLING TO ACCEPT THEM FROM
MEMORY AS THEY SEEM OK MY TEXT TAKEN FROM GUILLEN BOOKS AND
TRANSALTIONS MADE WITH HIS AND AND PRESENCE SO JUDGE GUIRAO
MUST HAVE MADE MISTAKEN OMISSION IN BELORIO=

LANGSTON HUGHES.

7 50 A..

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Good Shepherd Community Center
5120 South Parkway
Chicago, Illinois

December 6, 1942

Mr. Dudley Pitts
Andover, Massachusetts

Dear Mr. Pitts:

I saw a copy of the Anthology yesterday, in the Literary Office of the Chicago Sun, and it indeed looked very handsome. I am sure it is quite alright about Francisca as I long ago had her personal permission to publish her poems and I know she will be pleased to have them included in the Anthology. I regret that we could not reach her since she is a very charming Mexican folk dancer. She may very well be on tour in South America, or somewhere else at the moment.

I hear that you are about to go to the army also.

Mrs. ^{at} Ames Yaddo remembered you and sends you her very best regards.

I have been away now for some three or four weeks in the Middle West on an extended lecture tour, but I shall be back in New York City before the holidays, so I would appreciate it if my copy of the Anthology is sent to me there in care of Harper, Apt. 1 D, 634 St. Nicholas Avenue.

Sincerely yours,

Langston Hughes
LANGSTON HUGHES

LH:mjs

P.S. If there is an additional check due me, kindly send it through my agent, Maxim Lieber, 545 7th Avenue,

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LANGSTON HUGHES
Good Shepherd Community Center
5120 SOUTH PARKWAY
CHICAGO, ILL.



Mr. Dudley Fitts
Andover, Massachusetts

(no caption)

The Negro Speaks Of Rivers

Words by **LANGSTON HUGHES** Music by **MARGARET BONDS**

Moderato con moto

Piano *pp* muddy bass

gve haari...

I've... known riv-ers I've...
known riv-ers... An-cient as the world And
old-er than the flow of hu-man blood in hu-man veins

gve haari... gve haari... gve haari...

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THE NEGRO SPEAKS OF RIVERS

MUSIC BY **MARGARET BONDS** WORDS BY **LANGSTON HUGHES**



As Sung By
Etta Moten

PRICE 40 CENTS

Published by **HANDY BROTHERS MUSIC CO., INC.**
1587 Broadway New York, N. Y.

(no caption)



Five Great Negro Creative Artists have combined to produce and introduce to the American public a new Negro song. One is a poet, another a composer, another a singer, another an artist, and the last is both a musician and a publisher. Their names are Langston Hughes, Margaret Bonds, Etta Moten, Richmond Barthe, and W. C. Handy. The song is **The Negro Speaks of Rivers**. It is a song that, in words and melody, reaches down into the Negro soul and seeks to reveal in terms of art the dignity and beauty found there. It is a song that goes far back into Negro history and, in terms of the rivers the Negro has known, reconstructs that history in brief dramatic pictures. The calm rhythmic flow of words and melody is a Negro flow, the heart of the music is a Negro heart-beat, the sweep of the song is the sweep of the great rivers that move through the Negro's past. Handy Brothers Music Company is proud to present this song to the American public, and happy to tell you, in this booklet, about the five persons who are responsible for its being, and who have aided in its creation and publication.

ETTA MOTEN has long been a famous personage of the screen, theatre, and concert stage. She introduced the exciting "Caricoo" in the film, **Flying Down to Rio**. Later she made a South American tour and sang that song to the Latin American public, as well as carrying the Negro Spirituals, and the compositions of colored composers to our Good Neighbors to the South. Etta Moten has made several trans-continental tours of America in concert and is a greatly beloved artist of the Negro schools and colleges of the South where her beauty, both of person and of voice, has captivated teachers and students alike. Now, once more she crosses the country on the leading lady of the famous George Gershwin musical, **Porgy and Bess**, as the nation's leading critics praise her voice, her beauty, and the magnetism of her personality. It was Etta Moten who first sang from manuscript the Margaret Bonds Langston Hughes song, **The Negro Speaks of Rivers**.

LANGSTON HUGHES wrote **The Negro Speaks of Rivers** when he was eighteen years old. It has since become one of his most famous poems, and has been translated in many countries of the world—France, Russia, China, Brazil, Spain. In the meantime, Langston Hughes has published eight books, written a half dozen plays including **Mulatto** which ran for a year on Broadway, and **Don't You Want To Be Free** that played one hundred and thirty-five performances in Harlem and was produced by amateur groups throughout the country. Langston Hughes has also written for the screen and radio. One of his recent radio scripts, **Brothers**, has been chosen by the Writers' War Board as a War Script Of The Month. As a writer of songs, Langston Hughes has been for a decade a member of ASCAP and the Song Writers' Protective Association. His lyrics have been sung by Marian Anderson, Lawrence Tibbett, Roland Hayes, Eva Gauthier, the Hall Johnson Choir, and other famous artists. Etta Moten, star of **Porgy and Bess**, has learned **The Negro Speaks of Rivers**.

MARGARET BONDS who composed the music for **The Negro Speaks of Rivers**, is a distinguished pianist and composer from Chicago. She has played as guest soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Wagoner's Symphony Orchestra and the WHYC Symphony Orchestra. Margaret Bonds is at home in all fields of composition, has been an arranger of orchestral music for Broadway shows, a composer for such productions, a radio artist, and a composer for modern dancers. She is now associated with Colvin Jackson in a two-piano duo. Mrs. Bonds served as accompanist to Etta Moten during the concert tour which introduced her song, **The Negro Speaks of Rivers**, to the public.



RICHMOND BARTHE has been called the most famous of American Negro sculptors. He is, regardless of race, one of America's outstanding creative artists, and one who sketches as well as works in clay, marble, and bronze. In sculpture, Richmond Barthe has modeled the heads of many famous people of the theatre including Katherine Cornell, John Gaitard, Maurice Evans, and the late Rose McClenahan. His studies of Negro children, of a mother weeping over a son lynched, of peasant types, are widely known to museums and collectors. From far off India came a commission to do a statue of Lincoln. He has been engaged to create the memorial to the late great poet and statesman, James Weldon Johnson, to be placed where Harlem meets Central Park and New York's two worlds of color come together. For the past few years Barthe has been so busy with sculpture that he has had no time for drawing. His sketch of Etta Moten for the cover of **The Negro Speaks of Rivers** is unique in that it is his only recent drawing, done out of friendship for those who collaborated in the making and publishing of this song.



W. C. HANDY is known as "The Father Of The Blues." He is the dean of American Negro composers and his song, **The St. Louis Blues**, is known and loved throughout the world, heard in theatres and on the air in Europe and South America almost as often as it is here. All the great dance bands and all the great popular singers of the world have played and sung his melody. Other blues by W. C. Handy, **The Memphis Blues**, **The Beale Street Blues**, **The Yellow Dog Blues**, have become equally well-known. Since their composition, thousands of other blues have been written by hundreds of other composers, and the influence of the blues has permeated American music. But W. C. Handy remains the greatest of the blues writers, "The Father Of The Blues." His latest composition in that form, devoted to the war effort, is entitled, **Go and Get The Enemy Blues**. Mr. Handy is the founder of Broadway's largest publishing firm specializing in Negro music, Handy Brothers Music Company, whose offices look out onto that famous thoroughfare which is the center of the amusement world. In published musical notation on the Handy sheet is added the soul of the Negro people in song, **The Negro Speaks of Rivers** is but one more echo of that soul that has given so generously to American music.

(no caption)

Other Handy Bros

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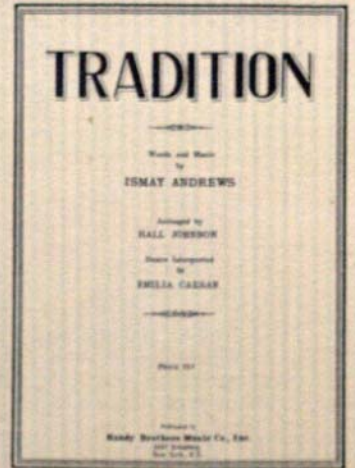
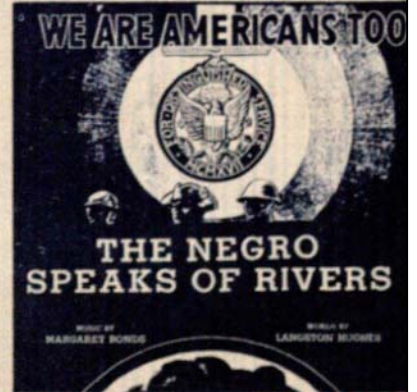
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Dudley Fitts
Adams Hall
Andover, Massachusetts

ALTERATIONS IN THE TEXT OF LANGSTON HUGHES'
TRANSLATIONS FROM NICOLAS GUILLEN

I. DEAD SOLDIER

lines 6 & 7: He was dead in the road / and some other soldiers
saw him
lines 11 & 12: When the Captain comes, / all he says is: Bury him!
line 16: THEY PICKED HIM UP FROM THE STREET.

II. EXECUTION

1124
502
line 1: They're going to shoot
lines 5-9: There are four soldiers / silent, / and they're tied, /
the same as the man they are going to kill is tied.
line 15: They've got six balls of hard lead!
Stanza three: Change the verbs to the preterite, to agree with the
spanish: thus, 'They fired', 'They killed'. Rearrange
the final lines thus: There were four soldiers / silent, /
and an officer gave them a signal, / lowering his sword; /
there were four soldiers / tied, / the same as the man
that the four came to kill was tied.

III. SONG IN AN HAVANA BAR

Title: CANTALISO IN A BAR

STANZA 2, lines 1 & 2: All these red Yankees / are sons of a shrimp.
STANZA 2, last 3 lines: you eat and you drink, / but not I, but not I,
but not I!
STANZA 3, first lines: Though I'm just a poor negro, / I know the
world's going wrong; / and I know a mechanic /
who can fix it up right.
lines 6 ff.: rearrange thus: When you get back / to New York, / send
me some poor folks, / poor like me, /
poor like me, / poor like me! / I'll
give them my hand, / and I'll sing with
them, / because the song that they know /
is the same ~~xxx~~ that I know.

IV. WAKE FOR PAPA MONTERO

line 5: dead, white moon.
STANZA 5: They were waiting for you in a tenement,
STANZA 7: Only two candles / burn away the shadows. / For your
little death
LAST STANZA: Today the moon dawned. . .
SAME, at end: and I brought it tonight / to be a pillow for you!

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PRESERVATION PHOTOCOPY: ORIGINAL MATERIAL RESTRICTED

Adams Hall
Andover, Massachusetts
7 September 1941

My dear Langston Hughes:

Some weeks ago your agent, Maxim Lieber, wrote me about your translations from Nicolás Guillén, suggesting that I might want to use some of them in the anthology of hispanoamerican verse that I am editing. The manuscript has just arrived, and I am delighted with the poems. I only wish that I could include them all; but my space is limited, and there's an awful lot of material to cover. I should like, then, to use the following poems: DEAD SOLDIER, SONG IN AN HAVANA BAR, WAKE FOR PAPA MONTERO, and EXECUTION.

I hate editors who insist on rewriting my poetry, and I beg your indulgence if I seem to be rewriting yours. My first aim, though, in this book is literal fidelity; after that has been achieved, the english version may be a poem in its own right. The alterations which I propose on the enclosed sheet are all in the interests of getting the english text as close to the spanish as possible. I am printing the spanish text opposite the translation. Will you check these changes against your original text, and, if they seem fair to you, OK them and send them back?

One place in the VELORIO worries me: you have the lines 'Nobody could find the knife, / but they brought you home dead'. My own text (it is not an authoritative one: Guirao's ORBITA DE LA POESIA AFROCUBANA [1938]) omits these lines, and the stanza ends 'dicen que él era tu ecobio, / pero te trajeron muerto. . .' You must have a definitive text; will you, then, when you accept (or reject) my emendations, send me the spanish of these two lines? — In the same poem, the refrain '¡Ahora sí que te rompieron. . .': I wonder if something like 'They certainly got you this time, Papa Montero!' wouldn't be closer than your 'Tonight they got you'. Check?

Finally, in the Cantaliso poem, what is a 'guiro'? You translate it 'souvenirs'. Is that all right in Cuban?

If, in spite of all these changes and general impertinences of mine, you are still willing that I use these four poems, I shall make the financial arrangements with Mr Lieber. I should be grateful, however, for an early reply one way or the other — the book is nearly done, and I want to get it off to the printer as soon as I can.

Faithfully yours,

DF/rg

Dudley Fitts
Committee on Publications

PRESERVATION PHOTOCOPY: ORIGINAL MATERIAL RESTRICTED

Adams Hall
Andover, Massachusetts
21 X 1941

My dear Langston Hughes:

May I trouble you with a few more questions about the Guillén poems? I am enclosing a list of alterations that I shd like to suggest in the VELORIO: they are all in the interests of getting as close to the spanish text as possible, and while they are minor, I don't feel that I have any right to impose them without your permission. Will you OK the new readings and return the yellow sheet to me? Or make on it any further suggestions that you may have? I wrote you about the changes in the other three poems. There may be one or two more, but I don't think so. They're completely swell, in english as in spanish; and I am more than grateful to you for letting me use them.

Sincerely yours,

Dudley Fitts

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Adams South
Andover, Massachusetts
15 April 1942

Dear Mr Hughes:

I wrote to Angel Flores, at the Pan American Union, asking if he could help me in the matter of getting a couple of poems by Jacques Roumain. His letter, this afternoon, told me that you were the one person in the world to get hold of; so I called up Mr Lieber, and he gave me your Chicago address. I apologize for bursting in on your lecture-tour with that telegram; but I'm damned near frantic with this book of mine, want to get it off to the printer as soon as I can, and desperately need your help.

Can you let me have two poems by Roumain? I shall need the French text as well as the translation, because none of his books are in the Harvard or Yale libraries, or, as far as I can discover, the Library of Congress. My wire said 'shortish' poems, not because I want to skimp Roumain, but, frankly, because my appropriation for translations has dwindled almost to the vanishing point.

I must seem to you a cockeyed kind of editor, to be just getting around to Roumain at this late date. I am, also, a very ignorant one. But I do hope that you'll find it possible to let me have some more of your fine translations.

Yours,

Dudley Fitts

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Adams South
Andover, Massachusetts
23 April 1942

Dear Mr Hughes:

Thank you very much for the poem, which I like tremendously. I have written, in my horrible spanish-struck French, to M. Roumain, asking if he can send me the original text; and, in my less horrible English, to the editors of CRISIS and OPPORTUNITY.

It is characteristically good of you to offer me the poem gratis, but as long as the appropriation holds out I want to pay my way, and while the sum I can pay for the poem is absurdly small — five dollars —, I have nevertheless sent the voucher in to HQ.

Yes, I am using five poems by Palés Matos: 'Elegía del Duque de la Mermelada', 'El pozo', 'Lagarto verde', 'Claro de luna', and 'Nófigo al cielo'. He interests me, although I can't get steamed up about him as I can over Guillén or Pedroso or Ballagas. How abt Ballagas, by the way? — I had him down for three poems, but the difficulties he presents have stumped us all and I am afraid that I shall have to leave him out. I particularly wanted his 'María Belén Chacón', but can get nowhere with it. How do you handle the dialect stuff in translation? I can't seem to strike a balance between Uncle Tom, or I guess I mean Remus, and Gilbert Murray.

Faithfully yours,

Dudley Fitts

Yale University Library
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
COORDINATOR OF INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS

NEW YORK OFFICE
444 MADISON AVENUE
NEW YORK, N. Y.

Adams Hall South
Andover, Mass
5 May 1942

Should be
as circled.
L.H.

Dear Mr Hughes:

Thanks ever so much for your help -- I was beginning to despair of getting the Roumain texts, as he has not answered my letter.

There are one or two questions... I don't know the vagaries of Haitian French, and wish to make certain that a few words are right. In Guinée, stanza 2, line 4: you have ~~Ille attend~~ should this be ils attendent? It is attendent in the 2nd line of that stanza. Next to last line: ~~pieere~~ or pierre? And is the general lack of punctuation right? If so, shall I follow suit in your translation?

In Quand bat..., line 3: ~~au creux~~ shd it be sa creux?
Line 2: l'onde trouble: shd it be troubée? Line 1: ~~come~~: comme?
~~Entends-tu ces voix~~: Entends-tu ces voix?

Can you tell me the date of R's birth? I have enough data, otherwise, in your note about him in Pereda Valdés' ANTOLOGIA.*

And finally (a silly request) -- I find that I've forgotten to make a carbon of this letter. Will you return it, please, so that I shall know what I asked you?

Faithfully,

Dudley Fitts

I have one poem by Pedroso, 'Mañana', and should like another. Don't need any more Guillén...probably too many of his already.

DF

*except, Is he still in jail?

Guillen is the best
of the Cubans, most
widely read and
liked, so don't think
you have too many.

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Andover, Massachusetts
3 June 1942

Dear Mr Hughes:

Thank you very much for the two poems by ~~RAY~~ Regino Pedrosco. I've not room for them both, unhappily, so I'm keeping the CONCEPTOS and returning the PERRO.

I enclose a carbon of the CONCEPTOS, with some suggested changes that I hope you will consider. Most of them are made in the interests of getting the english lineation to correspond to the spanish, but there are a few verbal alterations. I am still far from happy about the last 3 lines of the second strophe. I do not even feel that I understand them in spanish: syntactically the sense seems to be 'siguiendo...el looping-the-loop...perfilarse', &c: that is, 'following...the loop-the-loop...as it is traced' &c. How about this?:

following the loop-the-loop
of a flight of white storks at evening
etched against the screen of an alabaster sky.

'Etched' isn't good: say, 'traced upon'. Does this seem all right?

The punctuation of this poem worries me. Pedrosco is prodigal of commas. On page 2, the commas after 'pálidas' and 'siglos' interrupt the thought completely. I'd like to take them out, but hate to establish a text. In one place, though, I have had to emend: in NOSOTROS, the 2nd line of the last strophe has 'la droga del mañana'. Impossible. I have chosen to read 'de mañana', as being the most probable source of the compositor's confusion, but it cd as well be 'de la mañana', I suppose. Three lines later he has 'oblicuos' for 'oblicuos'.

Mexico is certainly being included -- all 21 countries are. I don't know of Francisca. Is she good stuff? Has she published any books? How abt Emilio Ballagas -- have you done any of his poems?

Sincerely yours,

Dudley Fitts

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Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

Andover, 30 June 1942

Dear Mr Hughes

Of Francisca's poems I have chosen four -- all that the space left would permit: AFTER YOU, ROUTE, LOOK MOON, and ON SAND. As I wrote you last week, I have made several minor changes to bring the lineations of poem and translation into accord; but nothing much else, with the following two exceptions: 1] I changed your title LOOK MOON back to I, to correspond with YO at the risk of seeming to write a numeral; and 2] in the same poem, the spanish has 'que ahullen los perros', which is impossible -- it must be 'aullen', which wd sound the same as the non-existent 'ahullen', and I have substituted 'howl' for your 'scamper'. If I am wrong, and if there is a mexican verb 'ahullar', please let me know.

Also, please let me know Francisca's address, if you have it. I am jittery about using poems without the author's authorization, of course; and I want to pay her for hers out of the appropriation for that purpose. -- And have you any biographical data on her, beyond the Havana article that you sent with the poems?

The book is now, I trust, Done. These are the last poems that I shall include. Whatever merit the finished product has will be largely due to you, to whom I am beyond words grateful. Critics are going to deplore the absence of Ballagas and Tallet, of Sara de Ibañez, of so many others. And they are already deploring my putting in so much Guillón and Palés Matos. Nobody loves an anthologist, anyhow. But the book does seem to me representative of the best that's going on down there in our day; and, moreover, that best is something that the best of us may very well admire and envy; and I really don't give many damns what the pundits of the State Department and the profs of spanish letters have to say. . .

Yours with many many thanks,

D. F.