

Patricia's questions for Robert Hayden's "Homage to the Empress of the Blues" pg. 288

1. What are the connections between the first verse, "Because there was ..." and the second verse, "She came out..."? Similarly, between verses three and four?
2. Hayden's language and word choices are often surprising, sophisticated, even 'highbrow.' Do you see examples in this poem? Do you find the language and more formal structure a plus or a minus?
3. Hayden was accused of "abandoning his racial heritage to conform to the standards of a white, European literary establishment." Do you see any validity in this assessment?

Patricia's questions for Melvin Tolson's "Lambda" pg. 294

1. How do the rhythms (rather than meters) and rhymes of these two verses enhance his subject?
2. Is the incantatory naming effective, powerful?
3. Are these verses both celebration and lament?

Margery's questions about these three poems

"The Art of Benny Carter" by Al Young, p. 296
"Dancers" by Afaa Michael Weaver, p. 295
"Walking Parker Home" by Bob Kaufman, p. 290

1. Of these three poems, which one moves you most in an emotional sense? Why?
2. Which one impresses you most by its craft? Why?
3. Does our background in poetry written primarily by white poets affect our answers to these questions?
4. What do these poems say to you about the power of music?

Jazz Poetry, An Example

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 on 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.

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1. What is the musical genre?
 2. Who is the author?