

Anthology of Negro Poets

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FL 9791



CONTENTS:

1 LP
1 text (4 p.)

PS
591
N4
A58
1954
c.1

MUSIC LP

EDITED BY ARNA BONTEMPS . . . READINGS BY:
GSTON HUGHES • STERLING BROWN • CLAUDE M^cKAY
NTEE CULLEN • GWENDOLYN BROOKS • MARGARET

University of Alberta Library



0 1620 0577 5935

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FL 9791

SIDE I

LANGSTON HUGHES

(Recorded by Peter Bartok in 1953)

Band 1: I HAVE KNOWN RIVERS

Band 2: I TOO

STERLING BROWN

(Recorded by Moses Asch in early 1940's)

Band 3: LONG GONE

Band 4: MA RAINEY

CLAUDE McKAY

(Recorded in early 1940's)

Band 5: ST. ISAAC'S CHURCH

Band 6: THE TROPICS IN NEW YORK

Band 7: IF WE MUST DIE (Introduction)

Band 8: IF WE MUST DIE

COUNTEE CULLEN

(Recorded in 1930's)

Band 9: HERITAGE

SIDE II

MARGARET WALKER

(Recorded by Moses Asch in 1954)

Band 1: FOR MY PEOPLE

Band 2: OLD MOLLEY MEANS

Band 3: KISSIE LEE

Band 4: STACKALEE

Band 5: JOHN HENRY

GWENDOLYN BROOKS

(Recorded by Moses Asch in 1954)

Band 6: KITCHENETTE

Band 7: SONG OF THE FRONT YARD

Band 8: THE PREACHER RUMINATES

Band 9: THE CHILDREN OF THE POOR
Sonnet No. 2

Band 10: OLD LAUGHTER

Band 11: BEVERLY HILLS, CHICAGO

**Anthology of
Negro Poets**

EDITED BY ARNA BONTEMPS

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

Library of Congress Catalogue Card No. R 55-646

©1966 Folkways Records & Service Corporation,
701 Seventh Ave., New York, New York 10036

Distributed by Folkways/Scholastic Records,
906 Sylvan Ave., Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 07632

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FL 9791

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FOLKWAYS RECORDS Album No. FL 9791
© 1954, 1961 Folkways Records and Service Corp., 701 Seventh Ave., NYC USA

Anthology of Negro Poets



EDITED BY ARNA BONTEMPS . . . READINGS BY:
LANGSTON HUGHES • STERLING BROWN • CLAUDE MCKAY
COUNTEE CULLEN • GWENDOLYN BROOKS • MARGARET WALKER

PS
591
N4
A58
1954
MUSIC LP

LANGSTON HUGHES Recorded by Peter Bartok in 1953

I Have Known Rivers

I Too

STERLING BROWN Recorded by Moses Asch in early 1940's

Long Gone

Ma Rainey

CLAUDE McKAY Recorded in early 1940's

St. Isaac's Church

The Tropics In New York

If We Must Die Introduction

If We Must Die

COUNTEE CULLEN Recorded in 1930's

Heritage

MARGARET WALKER Recorded by Moses Asch in 1954

For My People

Old Molley Means

Kissie Lee

Stackalee

John Henry

GWENDOLYN BROOKS Recorded by Moses Asch in 1954

Kitchenette

Song of The Front Yard

The Preacher Ruminates

The Children of The Poor, Sonnet No. 2

Old Laughter

Beverly Hills, Chicago

SIX VOICES

The voices of Negro poets in America have been heard, now and then, since 1746. Perhaps the first was that of a slave girl named Lucy Terry whose semi-literate, half-humorous, half-tragic "Bars Fight" was a verse account of an Indian raid on Deerfield before the middle of the eighteenth century. The second voice belonged to a Long Island slave named Jupiter Hammon, and the third to a delicate, African-born girl who wrote herself out of slavery while George Washington was commanding the continental armies. Indeed, it was the anti-slavery struggle that first stimulated sensitive Negroes to disciplined, literary expression. And in the decades that followed Emancipation the aftermath of slavery gave the dark singers a theme and a subject matter.

Almost without exception these writers have accepted the poet's role as "spokesman for the human spirit." Seldom have they had the inclination or detachment or even the time to make the niceties of prosody their central concern. By and large, they have written spontaneously out of the well-springs of their own hearts.

A strong sense of melody and rhythm has at all times marked their work. They have, one feels, written for the ear rather than the eye. That was true of Paul Laurence Dunbar's lyrics, and it was true of the verse sermons of James Weldon Johnson. It is also true of the poetry of Langston Hughes, Sterling Brown, Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, Margaret Walker, and Gwendolyn Brooks.

Yet these six, whose voices are recorded in this collection, differ among themselves in their writings and in their personalities as much as individuals can. Claude McKay, for example, came to the United States from Jamaica, B. W. I. Born in 1891, he served an apprenticeship as a cabinetmaker and wheelwright after completing elementary school. At the age of nineteen he joined the Jamaica constabulary and a year later published his first book of poems, *SONGS OF JAMAICA*. The following year he migrated to the States in order to attend Tuskegee Institute and later Kansas State University as a student of Agriculture. Two years of this was enough to convince McKay, however, that he was off on the wrong foot. He went to New York and began contributing poetry to American magazines. In 1919 he went to Europe. During a year in London he published *SPRING IN NEW HAMPSHIRE*, 1920 a small volume of verses. On his return to America he became associate editor of the *LIBERATOR* under Max Eastman. *HARLEM SHADOWS*, his most widely known book of poetry, and the one from which the selections in this album are taken, came out in 1922. Thereafter Claude McKay led a literary life, but wrote more prose than poetry. He died in 1948.

Sterling A. Brown, on the other hand, attended elementary schools in Washington, D. C., the city in which he was born in 1901 and where his father had been a member of the faculty of Howard University. Brown went to Williams College and after that to Harvard for graduate study. He then began a teaching career which brought him by easy steps from Virginia Seminary to Fisk University in Nashville to Lincoln University in Missouri and back to Howard in Washington, D. C., where he has now been a distinguished member of the faculty for more than two decades--a connection broken only by occasional leaves, such as visiting professorships at Vassar College or the University of Minnesota. A volume of his poetry, *SOUTHERN ROAD*, appeared in 1932 and led to a Guggenheim Fellowship. Of his subsequent publications *NEGRO CARAVAN*, which he served as senior editor, 1941; is perhaps the best known. It is widely used in schools and colleges.

Langston Hughes, whose intonations suggest at once long experience in public readings of his poetry, had made seven transcontinental speaking tours prior to 1954. Early in his career as a poet, influenced in a measure by Vachel Lindsey no doubt, he succumbed to an urge to take his poetry directly to the kinds of people who do not always frequent bookstores. To do this, he bought a Ford, 1931 model, and hit the road. He has been at it ever since, and he has made friends and found readers in ever increasing numbers along the highways of the nation.

As indicated by the first volume of his autobiography, *THE BIG SEA*, (1940), Hughes has led a literary life of unusual variety and interest. Since the publication of *THE WEARY BLUES*, his first

volume of poetry, 1926, nearly a score of books of all kinds have come from his typewriter. He has written lyrics like *STREET SCENE* for Broadway musicals and librettos for such operas as *TROUBLED ISLAND*. He has written a column for a weekly newspaper as well as books for children, but he has never lost the special touch that makes "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" and "I, too, Sing America" the favorites of so many people.

Countee Cullen's poetry attracted attention while he was still a student at De Witt Clinton High School in New York. Cullen was born in New York City in 1903. While attending New York University he won the Witter Bynner Poetry Prize, and *COLOR*, his first volume of poetry, was published in 1925 while he was still an undergraduate. After graduate study at Harvard and two years in Europe on a Guggenheim Fellowship, he became a teacher in the public schools of the city in which he was born, a position he held until his death in 1946.

Despite the routine requirements of his school teaching, however, Cullen never stopped writing. Half a dozen collections of his poetry appeared in his life time, most of them between 1925 and 1935. *ON THESE I STAND*, published posthumously in 1947, includes Cullen's own selections of the poems by which he wished to be remembered. Cullen's work also includes two volumes of prose fiction. He collaborated with Arna Bontemps in a dramatization of the latter's novel *GOD SENDS SUNDAY*, produced on Broadway in 1946 as *ST. LOUIS WOMAN*.

Margaret Walker was born in Alabama, a minister's daughter. After high school in New Orleans she attended Northwestern University, graduating in 1935. In 1940 she received a master's degree from the State University of Iowa and two years later became an instructor in English at Livingston College, Salisbury, North Carolina. She has since taught at West Virginia State College and at Jackson College, Mississippi. Her poetry came to notice in 1942 when her book *FOR MY PEOPLE* won the Yale University Younger Poets competition. Rosenwald and Ford Foundation fellowships have followed.

Gwendolyn Brooks was born in Topeka, Kansas, though she has lived in Chicago most of her life. She is still there, a busy housewife and mother, whose most pressing problem is trying to find enough time to get her writing done. Educated in Chicago public schools and at Wilson Junior College, she published *A STREET IN BRONZEVILLE*, her first book of poetry, in 1945. For this she was honored by an Academy of Arts and Letters award, and the following year she won a Guggenheim Fellowship which was later renewed. *ANNIE ALLEN*, her second book of poetry, received the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1949, the year of its publication. In 1953 Miss Brooks published *MAUDE MARTHA*, her first novel. A work of prose, *MAUDE MARTHA* is clearly the work of a sensitive poet.