

## **A Black Man Talks of Reaping**

by Arna Bontemps

I have sown beside all waters in my day.  
I planted deep, within my heart the fear  
That wind or fowl would take the grain away.  
I planted safe against this stark, lean year.

I scattered seed enough to plant the land  
In rows from Canada to Mexico  
But for my reaping only what the hand  
Can hold at once is all that I can show.

Yet what I sowed and what the orchard yields  
My brother's sons are gathering stalk and root,  
Small wonder then my children glean in fields  
They have not sown, and feed on bitter fruit.

Bontemps, Arna . "A Black Man Talks of Reaping." The Poetry of the Negro, 1746-1970. New York: Doubleday, 1970.

## **Reapers**

by Jean Toomer

Black reapers with the sound of steel on stones  
Are sharpening scythes. I see them place the hones  
In their hip-pockets as a thing that's done,  
And start their silent swinging, one by one.  
Black horses drive a mower through the weeds,  
And there, a field rat, startled, squealing bleeds.  
His belly close to ground. I see the blade.  
Blood-stained, continue cutting weeds and shade.

Toomer, Jean. "Reapers." CANE. New York: University Place Press, 1951