



Selected Poems / Poesía Selecta (Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Series)

Luis Palés Matos

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Although today Luis Palés Matos is virtually unknown to most American readers, the eminent U.S. poet and writer William Carlos Williams once praised his younger contemporary as “one of the most important poets out of Latin America.”

Palés Matos was a native, and lifelong resident, of Puerto Rico. Though he was not black, he became one of the Caribbean’s leading advocates of *poesía negra* (black poetry). His landmark 1937 collection *Tuntún de Pasa y Grifería: Poesía Afro-Antillana* (Tom-Tom of Kinky Hair and Black Things: Afro-Caribbean Poetry) joyously celebrated the African aspects and sources of Puerto Rico’s culture and influenced later generations of writers throughout the Western hemisphere.

Translator Julio Marzán has selected the best of Palés Matos’s poems from throughout his career, among them “Prelude in Boricua,” “Danza Negra,” “Buccaneer Winds,” and “Elegy on the Duke of Marmalade.” He also provides a helpful glossary of obscure terms and an introduction that locates Palés Matos in the broader cultural context of his contemporaries and poetic influences—including such North American poets as Walt Whitman, Edgar Allan Poe, and Vachel Lindsay.

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