



Complete Poems (American Poetry Recovery)

Claude McKay

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Containing more than three hundred poems, including nearly a hundred previously unpublished works, this unique collection showcases the intellectual range of Claude McKay (1889-1948), the Jamaican-born poet and novelist whose life and work were marked by restless travel and steadfast social protest. McKay's first poems were composed in rural Jamaican creole and launched his lifelong commitment to representing everyday black culture from the bottom up. Migrating to New York, he reinvigorated the English sonnet and helped spark the Harlem Renaissance with poems such as "If We Must Die." After coming under scrutiny for his communism, he traveled throughout Europe and North Africa for twelve years and returned to Harlem in 1934, having denounced Stalin's Soviet Union. By then, McKay's pristine "violent sonnets" were giving way to confessional lyrics informed by his newfound Catholicism.

McKay's verse eludes easy definition, yet this complete anthology, vividly introduced and carefully annotated by William J. Maxwell, acquaints readers with the full transnational evolution of a major voice in twentieth-century poetry.



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