

# NOTEBOOK OF A RETURN TO THE NATIVE LAND PDF, EPUB, EBOOK



Aime Cesaire | 100 pages | 24 Sep 2001 | University Press of New England | 9780819564528 | English | Hanover, United States

## **Notebook of a Return to the Native Land a book by Aimé Césaire, Annette Smith, and Clayton Eshleman**

But it was the distance to his 'native land' that allowed him to get closer to his roots apparently. A term which turned into a synonym for the celebration of shared black identity and self-confidence as a counter to French colonialist racism and a legacy of consequential self-hatred. I don't

think I've ever quite read anything alike. It is an angry attack on colonialism, a comment on identity shaped through the experience of slavery and oppression yet at times it is also playfully gentle and stunningly beautiful in the way it evokes a landscape - inner and outer, the way it plays with language and let's the words be driven forward by a hypnotic rhythm that at times has the strength of a tidal wave. I want to rediscover the secret of great speech and of great burning. I want to say storm. I want to say river. I want to say tornado. I want to say leaf, I want to say tree.

I want to be soaked by every rainfall, moistened by every dew. As frenetic blood rolls on the slow current of the eye, I want to roll words like maddened horses like new children like clotted milk like curfew like traces of a temple like precious stones buried deep enough to daunt all miners. The poem brims with a wondrous catalogue of geographical, zoological, biological terms like noctiluca, coccinella, syzygy, uvula and holothurian to just name a few, which must have been a challenge for any translator I believe. John Berger and Anne Bostock, both language artists who translated this beautifully often decided to replace those terms with more familiar, less alienating synonyms, if available.

It certainly helps making the text more approachable. I wonder whether by doing so, they've risked for those passages to lose some of their strange appeal and their deliberate? But this is a minor question mark. What remains is a sense of having discovered a poetic treasure, and the certainty to be picking this up time and time again. I would certainly suggest anyone interested in this get the bilingual edition, even in your french is as bad as mine An important-and-still-powerful yell of anger and love and frustration and sorrow Notebook of a Return to My Native Land was hard to rate. I would rate the poem itself 3 stars but since this particular edition had a brilliant and extensive introduction that I highly appreciated and from which I took so much, I had to rate it 4 stars.

Her analysis added much to my comprehension of the text. Rosello took upon a very hard task: How does one commemorate the spirit Notebook of a Return to My Native Land was hard to rate. Rosello took upon a very hard task: How does one commemorate the spirit of resistance of a poem that may no longer be representative of what Martinicans want today? When we read the Notebook we need not remember it nostalgically as the birth of Caribbean literature, a founding moment that no criticism should ever tarnish, nor do we have to forget it altogether on the grounds that the debate has shifted.

Rosello did a fantastic job at balancing her analysis — her words of praise were just as fair and founded as her harsh criticism. It is the story of a colour and of an island. Until the 19th century, Caribbean voices were predominantly white and racist and when the first Black and mixed writers appeared, they were often imitators who hoped that their skin colour would be forgotten if they wrote like French people. His departure was not caused by unemployment or poverty but rather by the recognition granted to him by the metropolitan French educational system: having received a scholarship.

He was born on what he thought was some second-hand motherland, an island peopled by slaves uprooted from Africa often with the complicity of Africans themselves. When he met Leopold Senghor in Paris, both men had the same enemy in common: a dominant ideology which claimed that 'Black' meant inferior and that the only solution for a Black person was to be or to become as white as possible, to pass.

For a whole generation of Black students exiled in Paris, reclaiming their African heritage became a first positive step towards cultural liberation. This attempt went against the prevalent policy of assimilation, which was viewed as the only viable solution for colonised people. The word 'black' helped colonised people to unite and to build a sense of solidarity and political identity defined by common suffering. Constituted of isolated communities with nothing in common but a past of slavery and colonisation, these English-speaking, French-speaking, American, European and African people whom history had called Blacks started pooling their resources in an attempt to 'decolonise the mind'. He was a very good nigger, poverty had hurt his chest and back, and they had stuffed into his poor brain that a fatality no one could trap weighed on him that cannot be grabbed by the throat, that he was powerless over his own destiny; that a malicious Lord had for all eternity written prohibition laws into his pelvic nature, that he must be a good nigger, that he must sincerely believe in his baseness, with no perverse curiosity to ever check the fateful hieroglyphics.

He was a very good nigger and it never occurred to him that he could hoe, burrow, cut anything, anything else really than insipid cane He was a very good nigger. And yet, the poet was ready to write the Notebook. The first version of the long lyrical poem was eventually completed in , and published in I found it particularly interesting what Rosello had to say about the role of gender in the Notebook.

It contains only one allusion to a Black woman working — the narrator's mother. One cannot but regret the remarkable absence of women in the Notebook. One of the prevailing stereotypes about Martinicans is that Black males are irresponsible, unfaithful and typically absent from the household while women assume the responsibility of raising and supporting families alone. Many analysts explain this situation as the consequence of slavery. Slave-owners made no distinction between men and women both were considered free labour , and Black couples were not officially recognised the owner did not hesitate to sell slaves separately. As a result, it is generally acknowledged that Black male slaves found it impossible to protect their partners from being beaten and raped by the White Master. This poem subtly makes the case that linguistic 'incompetence' is a relative notion, indistinguishable, from the cultural. They were not 'scratching' French as the idiom goes , rather, French was 'scratching' their throats, literally, painfully.

The Notebook does not only criticise exotic renderings of Martinique, it also speaks a language, a Martinican-French capable of proposing a new description of the island and of its suspiciously stereotypical palm trees and exotic food. In the Notebook , Caribbean flora and fauna, food and customs are meticulously named, but most of the time, the resulting vision is unexpectedly violent and sordid.

What is good and beautiful and desirable for the coloniser may be a plague for the colonised. The narrator of the Notebook does not marvel at the exotic West Indian cuisine. His allusions to food function as a reminder of the most crucial concern of a poverty-stricken people: hunger. The narrator does not only refute the narratives invented by colonialism about his native land, he also strives to rewrite his own version of History: colonialist history is not simply the opposite of a transcendental truth, it is a selection of events, of heroes which add up to a coherent vision: 'History' is used to justify the coloniser's politics.

It's essential if one wants to understand most Black literature of the early 20th century. Jul 16, Jonathan rated it really liked it Shelves: the-modernists , learning-to-listen. The lack of a full five is simply because you should read the bilingual edition instead, or the unexpurgated one - but, to be honest, anything is better the nothing at this point. View 1 comment. The book's very rich suffusion of cultural and political nuances may be attributed to the Harlem Renaissance and the Negritude movement while its linguistic dexterity and philosophical daring would have to acknowledge some allegiance to French surrealism.

The result is a masterful examination of a soul simultaneously created by and torn between two cultural sensibilities: the European and the African. Like James Baldwin, Albert Camus, and Frantz Fanon in their various works, Césaire in *Return to My Native Land* take racism and class oppression to task at the same time that he delves most deeply into the greater nature of the human condition itself. View all 3 comments. Jun 09, Lauren rated it really liked it Shelves: caribbean-lit , translated-works , poetry , french-language-lit. Shelves: antidote-think-twice-all , antidote-translated , person-of-everything , person-of-translated , translated , french , pure-power-of-gr , r , reviewed , poetry. Yet another super short classic that translators and editors and introduction writers did their best to ruin.

Unlike *On the Abolition of All Political Parties* 3. Unlike *On the Abolition of All Political Parties* , it's more obvious what they're attempting to suppress: the very negritude they take such pains to carefully explain with a two paragraph end note justifying their usage of the "n-word". Contradictory, is it not? I suppose, then, that all the work of Fanon and hooks and Morisson was done for shits and giggles, and the only worth of it all is whatever apolitical strippings can be put into their place.

I'm grateful that I was able to get a copy of this for so cheap, but I could've done with less conflicting trappings. And above all, my body as well as my soul, beware of assuming the sterile aspect of a spectator, for life is not a spectacle, a sea of miseries is not a proscenium, a man screaming is not a dancing bear. Beyond all that, there's the text itself. I wasn't as wowed by it as others have been, but that may be because of I've encountered so many of its descendants and other filterings down the line from past to present.

Not only the veins of Creole and Francophone postcolonialism that I've tackled in the classroom, but American Horror Story's "Coven" and The Book of Night Women and Kanye West's "Black Skinhead", all drawing on a hatred that is not their own and bending and breaking it into something that white people can never touch, all are here. This is why, when 'Notebook of a Return to the Native Land' is compared to white works, I can't take such commentary seriously.

Unless one is making a comparison to previous black-written works, I find it hard to suspend my disbelief. Presences it is not on your back that I will make peace with the world. Grad school, if I get it, will require one or two languages outside the Anglo pale, and should that happen, I fully intend to return to this in the bilingual unexpurgated form. This won't guarantee I get all the puns and references and whatnot anyone who tells you it's possible to be completely and utterly fluent as conveyed by all the intersections of race and class and gender and sexuality in a language is lying to you , but it'll be a start.

A little at a time, then. Know this: the only game I play is the millennium the only game I play is the Great Fear Oct 12, meeners rated it really liked it Shelves: colonialism-postcolonialism , translation. I would rediscover the secret of great communications and great combustions. I would say storm. I would say river. I would say tornado. I would say leaf. I would say tree. I would be drenched by all rains, moistened by all dews. I would roll like frenetic blood on the slow current of the eye of words turned into mad horses into fresh children into clots into curfew into vestiges of temples into precious stones remote enough to discourage miners.

Whoever would not understand me would not understa I would rediscover the secret of great communications and great combustions. Whoever would not understand me would not understand any better the roaring of a tiger. Apr 29, Vapula rated it it was amazing. An essential convergence of surrealism and decoloniality upon a guttural, wrenching landscape of poesis Dec 11, D. It is a dream inside a nightmare, a poem in which the very language is breaking the shackles of colonization, a triumphant release from the strangling grammars of oppression: This man is mine a man alone, imprisoned by whiteness a man alone defying the white cries of a white death Césaire rejects violence and hatred. He writes, "do not make of me that man of hate for whom I have only hate.

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Looking to heal the wounds of centuries, Césaire reminds the reader that "no race holds a monopoly of beauty, intelligence and strength. Highly recommended for all readers, not just poets. Sep 15, Tana rated it really liked it. Aime Césaire is brilliant and beautiful. This prose poem shows a trajectory of self acceptance by moving from individual experience to universal experience. It is unpredictable in form, and highlights the varying black experience. Nov 01, Sceox rated it it was amazing Shelves: poetry , race-and-ethnicity. So good. What can I do?

I must begin. Begin what? The only thing in the world that's worth beginning: The End of the World, no less. Know this well: I never play except at the millennium I never play except at the Great Fear At the end of first light, on this very fragile earth thickness exceeded in a humiliating way by its grandiose future—the volcanoes will explode, the naked water will bear away the ripe sun stains and nothing will be left but a tepid bubbling pecked at by sea birds—the beach of dreams and the insane awakening. At the end of first light, the morne crouching before bulinia on the outlook for tuns and mills, slowly vomiting out its human fatigue, the morne solitary and its blood shed, the morne bandaged in shade, the morne and its ditches of fear, the morne and its great hands of wind. And neither the teacher in his classroom, nor the priest at catechism will be able to get a word out of this sleepy little picaninny, no matter how energetically they drum on his shorn skull, for starvation has quicksanded his voice into the swamp of hunger And our idiotic and insane stunts to revive the golden splashing of privileged moments, the umbilical cord restored to its ephemeral splendor, the bread, and the wine of complicity, the bread, the wine, the blood of veracious weddings.

And this joy of former times making me aware of my present poverty, a bumpy road plunging into a hollow where it scatters a few shacks; After August and mango trees decked out in all their lunules, September begetter of cyclones, October igniter of sugarcane, November purring in the distilleries, there came Christmas. It had come in first, Christmas did, with a tingling of desires, a thirst for new tendernesses, a burgeoning of vague dreams, then with a purple rustle of its great joyous wings it had suddenly flown away, and after that its abrupt fall out over the village making shack life burst like an overripe pomegranate.

Christmas was not like other holidays. It had agoraphobia, Christmas did. What it wanted was a whole day of bustling, preparing, a cooking and cleaning spree, endless jitters, about not-having-enough, about-running-short, about-getting-bored, then at evening an unimposing little church that would benevolently make room for the laughter, the whispers, the secrets, the love talk, the gossip and the guttural cacophony of a plucky singer and also boisterous pals and shameless hussies and shacks up to their guts in succulent goodies, and not stingy, and twenty people can crowd in, and the street is deserted, and the village turns into a bouquet of singing, and you are cozy in there, and you eat good, and you drink heartily, and there are blood sausages, one kind only two fingers wide twined in coils, another broad and stocky, the mild one tasting of wild thyme, the hot one spiced to an incandescence, and steaming coffee and sugared anisette, and milk At the peak of its ascent, joy bursts like a cloud.

And everybody starts pulling the nearest devil by the tail, until fear imperceptibly fades in the fine sand lines of dream, and you really live as in a dream, and you drink and you shout and you sing as in a dream, and doze too as in a dream with rose petal eyelids, and the day comes velvety as a sapodilla, and the liquid manure smell of the cacao trees, and the turkeys shelling their red pustules in the sun, and the obsessive bells, and the rain, the bells ... the rain ... that tinkle, tinkle, tinkle ... At the end of first light, another little house very bad-smelling in a very narrow street, a miniscule house that harbors in its guts of rotten wood dozens of rats and the turbulence of my six brothers and sisters, a cruel little house whose demands panic the ends of our months and my temperamental father gnawed by one persistent ache, I never knew which one, whom an unexpected sorcery could lull to melancholy tenderness or drive to towering flames of anger, and my mother whose legs pedal, pedal, day and night, for our tireless hunger, I am even awakened at night by these tireless legs pedaling by night and the bitter bite in the soft flesh of the night by a Singer that my mother pedals, pedals for our hunger both day and night.

To leave. My heart was humming with emphatic generosities. At the end of first light, the male thirst and the desire stubborn, here I am, severed from the cool oases of brotherhood this so modest nothing bristles with hard splinters this too sure horizon shudders like a jailer. By a sudden and beneficent inner revolution I now honor my repugnant ugliness. I refuse to pass off my puffiness for authentic glory. And I laugh at my former puerile fantasies. And the tower was Poverty. A big unexpected lop-eared bat whose claw marks in his face had scabbed over into crusty islands. Or rather, Poverty was, like a tireless worker, laboring over some hideous cartouche. Poverty, without any question, had knocked itself out to finish him off. It had dug the socket, had painted it with a rouge of dust mixed with rheum. It had stretched an empty space between the solid hinge of the jaw and the bones in an old tarnished cheek.

So, being what we are, ours the warrior thrust, the triumphant knee, the well-plowed plains of the future! My star now, the funereal menfènil. I was hiding behind a stupid vanity destiny called me I was hiding behind it and suddenly there was man on the ground! His feeble defenses scattered, his sacred maxims trampled underfoot, his pedantic rhetoric so much hot air through each wound. There was man on the ground and his soul appears naked and destiny triumphs in watching this soul which defied its metamorphosis in the ancestral quagmire. I say that this is right. I live for the flattest part of my soul.

For the duller part of my flesh! Tepid first light of ancestral virtues Blood! Eia perfect circle of the world and enclosed concordance! Hear the white world horribly weary from its immense effort its rebellious joints cracking under the hard stars its blue steel rigidities piercing the mystic flesh hear its proditorious victories touting its defeats hear the grandiose alibis for its pitiful stumbling Make my head into a figurehead and as for me, my heart, make me not into a father nor a brother, nor a son, but into the father, the brother, the son, nor a husband, but the lover of this unique people.

Make me resist all vanity, but espouse its genius like the fist the extended arm! Make me a steward of its blood make me a trustee of its resentment make me into a man of termination make me into a man of initiation make me into a man of meditation but also make me into a man of germination And see the tree of our hands! But before reaching the shores of future orchards grant that I deserve those on their belt of sea grant me my heart while awaiting the earth grant me on the ocean sterile but somewhere caressed by the promise of the clew-line grant me on this diverse ocean the obstinacy of the proud pirogue and its marine vigor.

Look, now I am only a man no degradation, no spit perturbs him now I am only a man who accepts emptied of anger nothing left in his heart but immense love I accept ... I accept ... totally, without reservation ... my race that no ablation of hyssop mixed with lilies could purify And we are standing now, my country and I, hair in the wind, my hand puny in its enormous fist and the strength is not in us, but above us, in a voice that drills the night and the hearing like the penetrance of an apocalyptic wasp.

And the voice proclaims that for centuries Europe has force-fed us with lies and bloated us with pestilence, for it is not true that the work of man is done that we have no business being in the world that we parasite the world that it is enough for us to heel to the world whereas the work of man has only begun and man still must overcome all the interdictions wedged in the recesses of his fervor and no race has a monopoly on beauty, on intelligence, on strength and there is room for everyone at the convocation of conquest and we know now that the sun turns around our earth lighting the parcel designated by our will alone and that every star falls from sky to earth at our omnipotent command.

Rally to my side my dances and let the sun bounce on the racket of my hands But no the unequal sun is not enough for me coil, wind, around my new growth light on my cadenced fingers To you I surrender my conscience and its fleshy rhythm To you I surrender the fire in which my weakness sparkles To you I surrender the chain gang To you the swamps To you the non-tourist of the triangular circuit Devour wind To you I surrender my abrasive words Devour and encoil yourself And coiling round embrace me with a more ample shudder Embrace me unto furious us Embrace, embrace us But having also bitten us! To the blood of our blood bitten us! Embrace, my purity mingles only with your purity so then embrace!

Like a field of upright filaments at dusk our multicolored purities. And bind, bind me without remorse bind me with your vast arms of luminous clay bind my black vibration to the very navel of the world Bind, bind me, bitter brotherhood Then, strangling me with your lasso of stars rise, Dove rise rise rise I follow you who are imprinted on my ancestral white cornea Rise sky licker And the great black hole where a moon ago I wanted to drown It is there I will now fish the malevolent tongue of the night in its still verticity!

Mar 24, Diane rated it really liked it Shelves: poetry , french. They simply desired freedom. Once you get a feel for the setting, which is very foreign for many, Césaire's words take on new meanings and a cause. It is not difficult to see the similarity in Césaire and Fanon. Their styles differ the sledgehammer of Fanon and the velvet hammer Césaire, but both seek to find identity beyond colonialism. Césaire writes in a mix of prose and poetry all of it lyrical in rhythm and surreal. At times I felt as if I was on a raft in the ocean rocking on the rhythm and intensities of Césaire's voice. The poem has a great feel to it that helps convey the pointed political and cultural messages. The lyrical feel reminded of reading the leaves of grass. You can lose yourself simply in the rhythm on the words. Here though, the message is as important as the art. Césaire is more than just a voice calling for justice or the voice of protest.

He is a Frenchman and captures that particular style that makes French poetry unique. His literary style is classified as *négritude* a rejection of colonial racism and a term developed by Césaire. Sartre said *négritude* is the Hegelian dialectic to racism. This is an interesting and unique look into colonial life and racism in a country other than America.

Césaire's writing is impressive. Berger and Bostock's translation seems to be spot on. Steerforth Press has done a great service re-releasing this translation. The only thing that would have made it better would be a more detailed introduction for those without the historical background. One of the founding texts of Caribbean *négritude*. A must-read for any student or fan of poetry. In fact it's so seminal, and its historical importance and relevance to later generations of writers are so well explained in the textbooks, that it's scarcely ever necessary actually to look at it.

Which is a shame, because as well as being a key moment in literary history, it is an interesting and rewarding poem in its own right. It's a surprisingly modest work in scale: a free-verse poem that takes up about thirty pages in print, so that it's not at all inconceivable that it would fit into an actual "notebook" in manuscript.

And what he sees is not attractive or nostalgic: everything is tainted with dirt and disease and the damage done by slavery and colonialism. He looks back in time to see slaves being tortured by landowners, or Toussaint Louverture in his cell in the Jura surrounded by the "white death" of snow. The "great black hole" he wanted to drown himself in a little while ago is now the place where he can fish out and exploit "the night's malevolent tongue". There is a lot of anger here, but it's expressed in surprisingly beautiful and complex language. You can get a lot of enjoyment out of the sweep and rhythm of his words, and the baffling variety of registers he uses. Unfortunately for us, he was also trained as a classics teacher, and had a habit of pillaging the remotest reaches of the Latin and Greek dictionaries for words that ought to but didn't - as yet - exist in French.

When you read *Cahier*, it is often more difficult to come to terms with these obscure classical coinages than with the handful of specifically Caribbean terms he uses. Rosello mostly translates these words into equally obscure or made-up English terms, to preserve the difficulty of the original. Thus *verritation* becomes "revolution". This is probably a trick you can only get away with in a parallel text: in a standalone translation it would be rather baffling. Eighty years on, it's easy enough to see the blind spots that weren't so evident in when the first version of the *Cahier* appeared. The Bloodaxe edition comes with a very comprehensive introductory essay by Professor Rosello, who also did the parallel text translation. Without taking sides noticeably, she sets out the background to the poem's composition and discusses its reception and current views of its importance, and provides a fairly comprehensive bibliography.

If you can live with that, this edition seems to be a very good way to approach the poem if French isn't your first language. Rosello's translation is fairly literal but by no means plodding, so depending on how good your French is, you can switch back and forth between the original and the translation quite comfortably. Home Groups Talk More Zeitgeist. I Agree This site uses cookies to deliver our services, improve performance, for analytics, and if not signed in for advertising. Your use of the site and services is subject to these policies and terms.

Members Reviews Popularity Average rating Mentions 8 42, 3. The original version of the poem, given here in French, and in its first English translation, reveals a work that is both spiritual and cultural in structure, tone, and thrust. This Wesleyan edition includes the original illustrations by Wifredo Lam, and an introduction, notes, and chronology by A. James Arnold. Top Five Books of Books Read in 1, Best African and African diaspora books Favorite Caribbean Books No current Talk conversations about this book.

English 6 French 2 All languages 8. Haiti where *négritude* rose to its feet for the first time and said it believed in its own humanity; and the comic little tail of Florida where they are just finishing strangling a negro; Africa gigantically caterpillaring as far as the Spanish foot of Europe; the nakedness of Africa where the scythe of Death swings wide. An absolutely astounding poem. Provided by publisher. Groundbreaking for its time but because of my bad French as much as the passing of years it didn't speak to me.

Status Aimé Césaire — primary author all editions calculated Berger, John Translator secondary author some editions confirmed Bostock, Anna Translator secondary author some editions confirmed Kunene, Mazisi Introduction secondary author some editions confirmed Rosello, Mireille Translator secondary author some editions confirmed. Belongs to Publisher Series Wesleyan Poetry.

## Aimé Césaire's Notebook of a Return to the Native Land | Fiction and Film for Scholars of France

Without cookies your experience may not be seamless. Institutional Login. LOG IN. In this Book. Additional Information. Aimé Césaire's masterpiece, *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, is a work of immense cultural significance and beauty. This long poem was the beginning of Césaire's quest for *négritude*, and it became an anthem of Blacks around the world. Commentary on Césaire's work has often focused on its Cold War and anticolonialist rhetoric--material that Césaire only added in Breton was finally granted leave from the prison at Lazaret and was free,

albeit under constant government surveillance, to wander the streets of Fort-de-France while he awaited the next leg of his journey to New York.

Seeking to buy ribbon for his daughter, he wandered into a local shop and came across a pamphlet. Between modest covers was the first issue of a magazine called *Tropiques*, just off the press in Fort-de-France. All those grimacing shadows were shredded and dispersed; all those lies, those sneers fell away in tatters: The human voice was not stifled and broken after all; it rose here like the very staff of light. Starting in April, this group of artists and writers had begun to publish the journal, which focused on the culture, folklore, and history of the Antilles. *Tropiques* became increasingly bold in its attacks on the Vichy regime, and censors finally shut it down in May. At the end of daybreak burgeoning with frail coves, the hungry Antilles, the Antilles pitted with smallpox, the Antilles dynamited by alcohol, stranded in the mud of this bay, in the dust of this town sinisterly stranded. The tone is morbid and suffocating, the only glimpse of levity appearing in reference to a celebration of Christmas and good food shared with family.

He identifies with the leader of the revolution in Haiti, imprisoned in a cold cell in the Jura. Here, the poem takes a final turn to a new sense of identity, grounded in a valorization rather than a demonization of all that is black. Beat it, evil grigri, you bedbug of a petty monk. This qualitative change has complicated the literary criticism surrounding *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, with some scholars decrying the more political tone of the final version. Favorite Caribbean Books No current Talk conversations about this book.

English 6 French 2 All languages 8. Haiti where negritude rose to its feet for the first time and said it believed in its own humanity; and the comic little tail of Florida where they are just finishing strangling a negro; Africa gigantically caterpillaring as far as the Spanish foot of Europe; the nakedness of Africa where the scythe of Death swings wide. An absolutely astounding poem. Provided by publisher. Groundbreaking for its time but because of my bad French as much as the passing of years it didn't speak to me. Status Aime Césaire — primary author all editions calculated Berger, John Translator secondary author some editions confirmed Bostock, Anna Translator secondary author some editions confirmed Kunene, Mazisi Introduction secondary author some editions confirmed Rosello, Mireille Translator secondary author some editions confirmed.

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## Understanding "Notebook of a Return to the Native Land" by Aime Césaire - Owlcation

All those grimacing shadows were shredded and dispersed; all those lies, those sneers fell away in tatters: The human voice was not stifled and broken after all; it rose here like the very staff of light. Starting in April, this group of artists and writers had begun to publish the journal, which focused on the culture, folklore, and history of the Antilles. *Tropiques* became increasingly bold in its attacks on the Vichy regime, and censors finally shut it down in May. At the end of daybreak burgeoning with frail coves, the hungry Antilles, the Antilles pitted with smallpox, the Antilles dynamited by alcohol, stranded in the mud of this bay, in the dust of this town sinisterly stranded.

The tone is morbid and suffocating, the only glimpse of levity appearing in reference to a celebration of Christmas and good food shared with family. He identifies with the leader of the revolution in Haiti, imprisoned in a cold cell in the Jura. Here, the poem takes a final turn to a new sense of identity, grounded in a valorization rather than a demonization of all that is black. Beat it, evil grigri, you bedbug of a petty monk. This qualitative change has complicated the literary criticism surrounding *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, with some scholars decrying the more political tone of the final version. As a historical text, the *Cahier* poses certain difficulties that would make it challenging to teach in a modern European survey course without considerable elucidation and explanation. Teaching poetry, much less surrealist poetry, in an undergraduate history class is sometimes an uphill battle.

Nevertheless, some of the complications of the *Cahier* might work to bring out important questions of historical and literary interpretation and omissions and additions to a historical text. The current literary dispute about which version of the poem is most authentic or rich sets up an interesting debate about how students should approach the work of an author who might have changed his mind over time. Is it right to privilege either the original or the most recent version of a text, especially if it appears to take up or emphasize different themes?

What criteria should be used to compare the different versions, and how does historical context play a part in word choice and authorial intent? Does the fact that the version seems more political make it less valuable as a work of art? The singularity of our history, constructed out of terrible misfortunes that belong to no one else. The singularity of our culture, which we wish to live in a way that is more and more real. And what, the book asks, does that mean? How can one return to a home that was never built? By this I mean that his work has never compromised its wild universe of double meanings, stretched syntax, and unexpected imagery. This long poem was written at the end of World War II and became an anthem for many blacks around the world. Eshleman and Smith have revised their original translations and given it additional power by presenting Césaire's unique voice as testament to a world reduced in size by catastrophic events.

### **Notebook of a Return to My Native Land by Aime Césaire | LibraryThing**

The speaker of the poem is on a journey to confront history, the negative and the positive, and to find a way to understand the identity both of himself and his people in light of that history. The central metaphor of "Notebook" is that of trying on masks. As the poem's narrator returns to his native town, he is struck by the perceived inertia of the residents. They have become complacent, to poverty, to colonialism, to self-loathing. The speaker of the poem wants to do something that will affect change in the black people of his town. He wants to be the voice that heralds a metamorphosis of belief and identity, but he is not sure how to begin. The rest of the poem is goes through a series of metaphors pertaining to

masks of identities. The speaker tries on first one mask of identity, then another, in hopes of finding a means with which to motivate his people and force the reevaluation so desperately needed.

From the grandiose role of liberator, of speaker for all the oppressed of the world, to speaker for only the black people of the Caribbean, to descendant of a glorious African heritage, all of the masks are inadequate for the task at hand. The poem alternates between ecstatically hopeful and deep despair as the speaker is enamored, then disillusioned with his various masks. The epiphany or turn in the poem starts to come with the introduction of the concept of negritude. While Césaire explicitly spells out all of the things that negritude are not, he never provides an exact definition for what negritude is, exactly. Upon closer analysis, it appears that negritude is more than a simple state, concept, or theory, but an action pertaining to intense self-analysis and redefinition. The narrator of the poem is unable to create an idea of a people based solely on African heritage and tradition, for as he states:

I may as well confess that we were at all times pretty mediocre dishwashers, shoeblacks without ambition, at best conscientious sorcerers and the only unquestionable record that we broke was that of endurance under the chicote [whip] In order to create a new identity that is more than just fantasy or wishful thinking, the narrator must accept both his African heritage as well as the legacy of slavery, poverty, and colonialism. He will never be able to be a voice for his people or represent an idea of an integrated, whole person if he does not face his very real history. And negritude, more than just a feeling of pride in the color of one's skin, or in one's origins, is to be found within this process of self- and cultural discovery.

At the conclusion of "Notebook," the narrator is humbled and has begun to understand the process of his own negritude. Only then is he finally able to speak for and to the inhabitants of his "native land." It is this confrontation with his own origins, his own insecurities, his own self-hatred and conflicted past that allows the speaker to be a voice to inspire others to transcend their passive and horizontal identities.

Writes Césaire in the final pages of the poem: Thanks Ron! Oct May 8. Jan Oct 2. About us. Awards Donate Archive. Contacts Resources. The Jewish Brigade Marvano. Newsletter For information about cultural events and French language programs near you, sign up for our regional newsletters: For information about cultural events and French language programs near you, sign up for our regional newsletters:.

Enter your email: At the end of daybreak Beat it, I said to him, you cop, you lousy pig, beat it, I detest the flunkies of order and the cockchafers of hope. Beat it, evil grigri, you bedbug of a petty monk. Then I turned toward paradises lost for him and his kin, calmer than the face of a woman telling lies, and there, rocked by the flux of a never exhausted thought I nourished the wind, I unlaced the monsters and heard rise, from the other side of disaster, a river of turtledoves and savanna clover which I carry forever in my depths height-deep as the twentieth floor of the most arrogant houses and as a guard against the putrefying force of crepuscular surroundings, surveyed night and day by a cursed venereal sun. At the end of daybreak burgeoning with frail coves, the hungry Antilles, the Antilles pitted with smallpox, the Antilles dyn- amited by alcohol, stranded in the mud of this bay, in the dust of this town sinisterly stranded.

At the end of daybreak, on this very fragile earth thickness exceeded in a humiliating way by its grandiose future—the volcanoes will explode, the naked water will bear away the ripe sun stains and nothing will be left but a tepid bubbling pecked at by sea birds—the beach of dreams and the insane awakening. At the end of daybreak, this town sprawled-flat, toppled from its common sense, inert, winded under its geometric weight of an eternally renewed cross, indocile to its fate, mute, vexed no matter what, incapable of growing with the juice of this earth, self-conscious, clipped, reduced, in breach of fauna and flora. Used with permission by Wesleyan University Press. All rights reserved. A bit of light that descends the springhead of a gaze twin shadow of the eyelash and the rainbow on a face and round about who goes there angelically ambling Woman the current weather the current weather matters little to me my life is always ahead of a hurricane you are the morning that swoops down on the lamp a night stone between its teeth you are the passage of seabirds as well you who are the wind through the salty ipomeas of consciousness insinuating yourself from another world Woman you are a dragon whose lovely color is dispersed and darkens so as to constitute the inevitable tenor of things I am used to brush fires I am used to ashen bush rats and the bronze ibis of the flame Woman binder of the foresail gorgeous ghost helmet of algae of eucalyptus dawn isn't it and in the abandon of the ribbands very savory swimmer.

National Poetry Month.



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