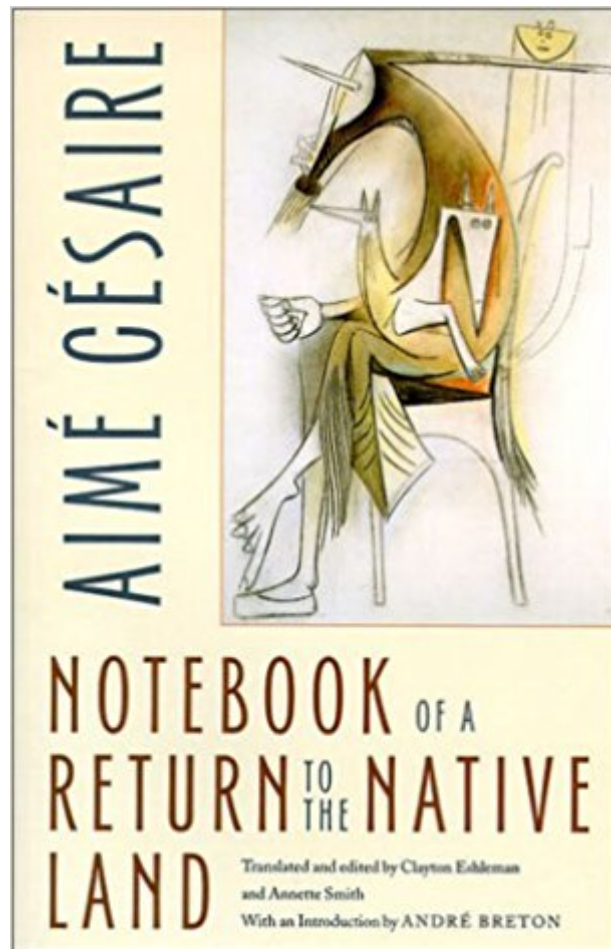




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# Notebook Of A Return To The Native Land (Wesleyan Poetry Series)



## Synopsis

Aimé Césaire's masterpiece, *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, is a work of immense cultural significance and beauty. The long poem was the beginning of Césaire's quest for *Négritude*, and it became an anthem of Blacks around the world. With its emphasis on unusual juxtapositions of object and metaphor, manipulation of language into puns and neologisms, and rhythm, Césaire considered his style a "beneficial madness" that could "break into the forbidden" and reach the powerful and overlooked aspects of black culture. Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith achieve a laudable adaptation of Césaire's work to English by clarifying double meanings, stretching syntax, and finding equivalent English puns, all while remaining remarkably true to the French text. Their treatment of the poetry is marked with imagination, vigor, and accuracy that will clarify difficulties for those already familiar with French, and make the work accessible to those who are not. André Breton's introduction, *A Great Black Poet*, situates the text and provides a moving tribute to Césaire. *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* is recommended for readers in comparative literature, post-colonial literature, African American studies, poetry, modernism, and French.

## Book Information

Series: Wesleyan Poetry Series

Paperback: 66 pages

Publisher: Wesleyan University Press; 1st edition (September 24, 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0819564524

ISBN-13: 978-0819564528

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 0.4 x 8.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 5 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #42,236 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #7 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > Regional & Cultural > European > French](#) #7 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > Regional & Cultural > Caribbean & Latin American](#) #11 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Regional & Cultural > European > French](#)

## Customer Reviews

“Aimé Césaire’s brooding exploration of *Négritude* bristles with the energetic, unique qualities of Walt Whitman’s *Song of Myself* . . .

[Cesaire's] protean lyric, filled with historical allusions, serves to exorcise individual and collective self-hatreds engendered by the psychological trauma of slavery and its aftermath. •San Francisco Chronicle "The greatest living poet in the French language. •American Book Review "One of the most powerful French poets of the century. •The New York Times Book Review "Martinique poet Aime Cesaire is one of the few pure surrealists alive today. 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 1983 translations and given it additional power by presenting Cesaire's unique voice as testament to a world reduced in size by catastrophic events. •Bloomsbury Review "This long poem, which shook the French literary world in 1939, examines the ways home is ruptured •or even prevented from existing •by colonialism. And what, the book asks, does that mean? How can one return to a home that was never built? •Robin Coste Lewis, The Week

Text: English (translation) Original Language: French

Love Aime Cesaire! His works are wonderful to read!

I was not familiar with Aime Cesaire before reading this book, but I was entranced with the essays and expanded by the ideas contained within this notebook.

I read this for an English class. I don't remember too much, but I enjoyed all the books I read in college. I don't like to write too much in book reviews because I feel that in order to adequately write a review, I would have to give away information that would be key to plot. I don't like to be the person to give away spoilers. Therefore my book reviews are always very short and only say a few things in order to tell you, book reviews are much too subjective and I never read a book review before I read a book. I read a book based on what the book is about which I don't read a review to get. If you want more information, buy the book and read it. :)

It's hard not to fall in love with this masterpiece. The poetry is just too obscenely good. And with an elaborate praiseworthy introduction appropriately and profusely praising Aime Cesaire by the father of Surrealism, Andre Breton, it's even harder to dislike it. Cesaire began composing this famous

work during his trip to Yugoslavia in 1936, when he was only 23 years old. What were you doing when you were 23? Getting inebriated and roaming Walmart at midnight for 'I Love You Barney' made from China? Sure. Certainly. The only certainty here is Césaire's invention of the conceptual Negritude, which does not mean negligent and attitude. In fact, the concept was born from the negative, ebonic fruit of colonialism and imperialism. Black folks don't get treated right, wherever they go, whether it's in slave ships, in colonized Africa, in various parts of the world. With his high caliber poetic voice, Césaire set out to de-invent the "negritude", "negrillon", and "negraille" of his race. His language and knowledge are incredible and they get showcased in his extended 51 page lyrical upward mobility of botanical politicism and courageous fauna and floral remarks of black injustice. He is uncorrupted in his passion and utterly passionate in his un-idyllic projectile of reasons. His language is sexy and charged and filled with words that probably the hypoglossal nerves struggle to perform. The work is not entirely narrative, but it's politically epic and erratic and nonlinear and shifts in intonation and it cries and chants and shouts and cheers and it rejects form and predictability and it surprises and mocks and it discharges itself, but it ultimately longs and hopes. One of the most intense scenes in Césaire's work is his observation of one degraded black man on the street. The language: animalistic, raw, unrestrained, and almost indigestible. The message hits in our face the reality of perception. How the white world perceives black folks. And, then, it changes its courses. It channels and opens its legs of upward mobility, towards the nautical stars. It's a book one must rereads in one's spare time so that we can be reminded (which we shouldn't need reminding) that "no race has a monopoly on beauty, on intelligence, on strength" (p.44). The thing was that this wasn't the first time I was introduced to Aime Césaire's work. A young pre-med foot doctor-to-be named Ari from Portland, Oregon couchsurfed my home once, when he asked and I invited him to stay with us for a couple of days, and when he departed he quoted me this line "And above all, my body as well as my soul, beware of assuming the sterile attitude 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..." (p.13) And, now, I find myself and my past sandwiched in the memory of this book. This book also symbolizes the gift of certainty for me. Even a minor, insignificant suggestion, a seemingly nugatory morsel from long ago could have a significant impact on one's imagination given the proper time and maturation to manifest and become magnificent. If I hadn't been minorly introduced to Césaire's work several years ago, the arrival of this book and its significant contribution to my life and education wouldn't have been as indicative and meaningful as it is now.

Aime Césaire, from the Caribbean island of Martinique, has written an incredibly powerful poem that

focuses on the sufferings of Black people under colonialism. The poem, surrealist in nature at times, features rich language and detailed poetic pictures of the inequalities, hard labor, and abuse that the Black people endured under the oppression of colonialist rule. But Césaire also infuses the poem, in its final passages, with hope for a brighter day in the struggle against racism where the race will be "standing and free." Césaire was co-creator (with Leopold Senghor) of the concept of Negritude, a literary and cultural movement that emphasized pride in African heritage and culture. His poem is one of the finest examples of 20th century poetry and it demands close reading to unveil its many sparkling diamonds. It is a literary minefield that will enrich all who attend to its beauty and truth.

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