



Notebook of a Return to My Native Land = Cahier D'Un Retour Au Pays Natal (Bloodaxe Contemporary French Poets)

Aime Cesaire, Mireille Rosello, Annie Pritchard

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French-English bilingual edition. Andre Breton called Cesaire's Cahier 'nothing less than the greatest lyrical monument of this time'. It is a seminal text in Surrealist, French and Black literatures - published in full in English for the first time in Bloodaxe's bilingual Contemporary French Poets series. Aime Cesaire (1913-2008) was born in in Basse-Pointe, a village on the north coast of Martinique, a former French colony in the Caribbean (now an overseas departement of France). His book Discourse on Colonialism (1950) is a classic of French political literature. Notebook of a Return to My Native Land (1956) is the foundation stone of francophone Black literature: it is here that the word Negritude appeared for the first time. Negritude has come to mean the cultural, philosophical and political movement co-founded in Paris in the 1930s by three Black students from French colonies: the poets Leon-Gontran Damas from French Guiana; Leopold Senghor, later President of Senegal; and Aime Cesaire, who became a deputy in the French National Assembly for the Revolutionary Party of Martinique and was repeatedly elected Mayor of Fort-de-France. As a poet, Cesaire believed in the revolutionary power of language, and in the Notebook he combined high literary French with Martinican colloquialisms, and archaic turns of phrase with dazzling new coinages. The result is a challenging and deeply moving poem on the theme of the future of the negro race which presents and enacts the poignant search for a Martinican identity. The Notebook opposes the ideology of colonialism by inventing a language that refuses assimilation to a dominant cultural norm, a language that teaches resistance and liberation.

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