



The Original 1939 Notebook of a Return to the Native Land

Aimé Césaire

Edited and translated by A. James Arnold and Clayton Eshleman

The first bilingual edition of this radically original work

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 for 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 1956. The original 1939 version of the poem, 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.

Aimé Césaire (1913–2008) was best known as the cocreator of the concept of *négritude*. **Clayton Eshleman** is a professor emeritus at Eastern Michigan University and the foremost American translator of Aimé Césaire. He is the author of *The Grindstone of Rapport / A Clayton Eshleman Reader* and translator of *The Complete Poetry of César Vallejo*. **A. James Arnold** is an emeritus professor of French at the University of Virginia. He is the lead editor of Césaire's complete literary works in French (in progress) and author of *Modernism and Negritude: The Poetry and Poetics of Aimé Césaire*.

"This book re-presents one of the most significant of all pieces of postcolonial writing in its original

Aimé Césaire's masterpiece, *Notebook of a*

version. The scholarship is impeccable; the result of two careers dedicated to Césaire."

—Martin Munro, author of *Shaping and Reshaping the Caribbean: The Work of Aimé Césaire and René Depestre*

"A remarkable and essential contribution to the scholarship on Aimé Césaire, unquestionably the most important and influential black poet writing in French. This is the first time that non-specialists will have access to the original published version of this monument of francophone letters, making it one of the most important publications in francophone studies of recent date. Arnold's introduction argues compellingly for the singularity and importance of this edition in distinction to the familiar 1956 version."

—Nick Nesbitt, author of *Voicing Memory: History and Subjectivity in French Caribbean Literature*

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