

The  
Collected  
Poetry



# AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

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and  
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CAHIER D'UN RETOUR  
AU PAYS NATAL  
\*  
NOTEBOOK OF A RETURN TO  
THE NATIVE LAND



oh friendly light  
oh fresh source of light  
those who have invented neither powder nor compass  
those who could harness neither steam nor electricity  
those who explored neither the seas nor the sky but those  
without whom the earth would not be the earth  
gibbosity all the more beneficent as the bare earth even more earth  
silo where that which is earthiest about earth ferments and ripens  
my negritude is not a stone, its deafness hurled against the clamor of the day  
my negritude is not a leukoma of dead liquid over the earth's dead eye  
my negritude is neither tower nor cathedral

it takes root in the red flesh of the soil  
it takes root in the ardent flesh of the sky  
it breaks through the opaque prostration with its upright patience

Eia for the royal Caileedra!

Eia for those who have never invented anything  
for those who never explored anything  
for those who never conquered anything

but yield, captivated, to the essence of all things  
ignorant of surfaces but captivated by the motion of all things  
indifferent to conquering, but playing the game of the world  
truly the eldest sons of the world  
porous to all the breathing of the world  
fraternal locus for all the breathing of the world  
drainless channel for all the water of the world  
spark of the sacred fire of the world  
flesh of the world's flesh pulsating with the very motion of the world!

Tepid dawn of ancestral virtues

Blood! Blood! all our blood aroused by the male heart of the sun  
those who know about the femininity of the moon's oily body  
the reconciled exultation of antelope and star  
those whose survival travels in the germination of grass!  
Eia perfect circle of the world, enclosed concordance!

Hear the white world  
horribly weary from its immense efforts  
its stiff joints crack under the hard stars  
hear its blue steel rigidity pierce the mystic flesh  
its deceptive victories tout its defeats  
hear the grandiose alibis of its pitiful stumblings

Pity for our omniscient and naive conquerors!

Eia for grief and its udders of reincarnated tears  
for those who have never explored anything  
for those who have never conquered anything

Eia for joy  
Eia for love  
Eia for grief and its udders of reincarnated tears

and here at the end of these wee hours is my virile prayer that I hear neither the laughter nor the  
screams, my eyes fixed on this town which I prophesy, beautiful,

grant me the savage faith of the sorcerer  
grant my hands power to mold  
grant my soul the sword's temper  
I won't flinch. Make my head into a figurehead  
and as for me, my heart, do not make me 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 any vanity, but espouse its genius as the fist the extended arm!

Make me a steward of its blood  
make me trustee of its resentment  
make me into a man for the ending  
make me into a man for the beginning  
make me into a man of meditation  
but also make me into a man of germination

make me into the executor of these lofty works  
the time has come to gird one's loins like a brave man—

But in doing so, my heart, persevere me from all hatred  
do not make me into that man of hatred for whom I feel only hatred  
for entrenched as I am in this unique race

you still know my tyrannical love  
you know that it is not from hatred of other races  
that I demand a digger for this unique race  
that what I want  
is for universal hunger  
for universal thirst

to summon it to generate,  
free at last, from its intimate closeness  
the succulence of fruit.

And be the tree of our hands!  
it turns, for all, the wounds cut

in its trunk

the soil works for all

ward the branches a headiness of fragrant precipitation!

# FERREMENTS \* FERRAMENTS



## *Hors des jours étrangers*

mon peuple  
quand  
hors des jours étrangers  
germeras-tu une tête bien tienne sur tes épaules renouées  
et ta parole  
le congé dépêché aux traîtres  
aux maîtres  
le pain restitué la terre lavée  
la terre donnée  
quand  
quand donc cesseras-tu d'être le jouet sombre  
au carnaval des autres  
ou dans les champs d'autrui  
l'épouvantail désuet  
demain  
à quand demain mon peuple  
la déroute mercenaire  
finie la fête  
mais la rougeur de l'est au cœur de balisier  
peuple de mauvais sommeil rompu  
peuple d'abîmes remontés  
peuple de cauchemars domptés  
peuple nocturne amant des fureurs du tonnerre  
demain plus haut plus doux plus large  
et la houle torrentielle des terres  
à la charrie salubre de l'orage

## *Out of Alien Days*

my people  
when  
out of alien days  
on reknotted shoulders will you sprout a head really your own  
and your word  
the notice dispatched to the traitors  
to the masters  
the restituted bread the washed earth  
the given earth  
when  
when will you cease to be the dark toy  
in the carnival of others  
or in another's field  
the obsolete scarecrow?  
tomorrow  
when is tomorrow my people  
the mercenary rout  
once the feast is over  
instead the redness of the east in the balisier's heart  
people of interrupted foul sleep  
people of reclimbed abysses  
people of tamed nightmares  
nocturnal people lovers of the fury of thunder  
a higher sweeter broader tomorrow  
and the torrential swell of lands  
under the salubrious plow of the storm