

COMPOSITE COMMENTARY "BARBARIAN", AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

Below, we will comment on the poem ^Balbare^ by Aimé Césaire. Before we will give some details on the biography of Aimé Césaire.

Aimé Fernand David Césaire, is a French poet and politician from Martinique, born June 26, 1913 in Basse-Pointe and died April 17, 2008 in Fort-de-France.

He is one of the founders of the Negritude literary movement and a resolute anti-colonialist.

Aimé Césaire was part of a family of seven children; his father was a civil servant and his mother a seamstress. Her grandfather was the first black teacher in Martinique and her grandmother, unlike many women of her generation, knew how to read and write; she taught her grandchildren reading and writing very early on. From 1919 to 1924, Aimé Césaire attended the Basse-Pointe primary school, where his father was a tax controller, then obtained a scholarship to the Victor Schoelcher high school in Fort-de-France. In September 1931, he arrived in Paris as a scholarship student to enter a hypokhâgne class at the Louis-le-Grand high school where, on the first day, he met Léopold Sédar Senghor, with whom he formed a friendship that would last until the death of the latter.

In contact with young Africans studying in Paris, notably during meetings at the literary salon of Paulette Nardal, Aimé Césaire and his Guyanese friend Léon Gontran Damas, whom he knows from Martinique, gradually discover a repressed part of their identity, the African component, victim of the cultural alienation characterizing the colonial societies of Martinique and Guyana.

In September 1934, Césaire founded, with other West-Guyanese and African students (including Léon Gontran Damas, the Guadeloupean Guy Tirolien, the Senegalese Léopold Sédar Senghor and Birago Diop), the newspaper L'Étudiant noir. It is in the pages of this review that will appear for the first time the term "Negritude". This concept, coined by Aimé Césaire in reaction to the cultural oppression of the French colonial system, aims to reject a part of the French project of cultural assimilation and to promote Africa and its culture, devalued by the racism resulting from colonialist ideology.

Built against the French colonial ideology of the time, the Negritude project is more cultural than political. It is, beyond a vision partisan and racial of the world, of an active and concrete humanism, aimed at all the oppressed on the planet. Césaire indeed declares: "I am of the race of those we oppress."

Having passed the entrance exam to the École Normale Supérieure in 1935, Césaire spent the summer in Dalmatia with his friend Petar Guberina and began to write there. the Notebook of a Return to the Native Country, which he completed in 1938. In 1936 he read the translation of Frobenius' History of African Civilization. He prepares his exit in 1938 from the École Normale Supérieure with a dissertation: The Southern Theme in Black American Literature in the USA. Marrying a student in 1937

Martinican, Suzanne Roussi, Aimé Césaire, associate professor of letters, returned to Martinique in 1939, to teach, like his wife, at the Schoelcher high school.

The situation in Martinique at the end of the 1930s was that of a country prey to profound cultural alienation, with the elites favoring above all references arriving from France, the colonial metropolis. In terms of literature, the rare Martinican works of the time go so far as to take on a good exoticism, pastiching the external view evident in the few French books mentioning Martinique. This cuddliness, including authors such as Mayotte Capécia are the proponents, would clearly fuel the clichés affecting the Martinique population.

It was in reaction to this situation that the Césaire couple, supported by other Martinican intellectuals such as René Ménil, Georges Gratiant and Aristide Maugée, founded the magazine *Tropiques* in 1941. While the Second World War caused the blockade of Martinique by the United States (which did not confidence in the Vichy collaboration regime), living conditions there are deteriorating. The regime established by Admiral Robert, special envoy of Vichy government, is repressive. In this context, censorship directly targets the journal *Tropiques*, which will appear, with difficulty, until 1943.

The world conflict also marked the passage to Martinique of the surrealist poet André Breton (who recounts his adventures in a brief work, *Martinique*, snake charmer). Breton discovered Césaire's poetry through the *Cahier d'un Retour au Pays Natal* and met him in 1941. In 1943 he wrote the preface to the bilingual edition of *Cahier d'un Retour au pays natal*, published in the *Fontaine review* (n° 35) edited by Max-Pol Fouchet and in 1944 that from the collection *Les Armes miraculeuses*, which marks Césaire's embrace of surrealism.

Nicknamed “the fundamental negro”, he would influence authors such as Frantz Fanon, Édouard Glissant (who were Césaire's students at the Schoelcher high school), the Guadeloupean Daniel Maximin and many others. His thought and poetry also clearly marked African and black American intellectuals. in the fight against colonization and acculturation.

In 1945, Aimé Césaire, co-opted by the communist elites who saw in him the symbol of renewal, was elected mayor of Fort-de-France. In the process, he was also elected deputy, a mandate which he retained without interruption until 1993. His mandate, taking into account the economic and social situation of a Martinique, bloodless after years of blockade and the collapse of the sugar industry, was to obtain the departmentalization of Martinique in 1946.

This is a demand which dates back to the last years of the 19th century and which took shape in 1935, the year of the tercentenary of the attachment from Martinique to France by Belain d'Esnambuc. Little understood by many left-wing movements in Martinique already close to independence,

going against the tide of the liberation movements already occurring in Indochina, India or the Maghreb, this measure aims, according to Césaire, to fight against the influence Béké on Martinican politics, its clientelism, its corruption and the structural conservatism attached to it. It is, according to Césaire, as a sanitation measure, of modernization, and to allow the economic and social development of Martinique, that the young deputy takes this decision.

In 1947 Césaire created the journal *Présence Africaine* with Alioune Diop. In 1948 the *Anthology of New Negro and Malagasy Poetry* appeared, prefaced by Jean-Paul Sartre, who established the “negritude” movement.

In 1950, he published the *Discourse on Colonialism*, where he highlights the close relationship which, according to him, exists between Nazism and colonialism. He writes there among other things :

Opposing the French Communist Party on the question of de-Stalinization, Aimé Césaire left the PC in 1956, joining the African Regroupment Party and federalists, then founded two years later the Martinique Progressive Party (PPM), within which he will demand the autonomy of Martinique. He sat in the National Assembly as an unregistered member from 1958 to 1978, then as a socialist member from 1978 to 1993.

Aimé Césaire will remain mayor of Fort-de-France until 2001. The development of the capital of Martinique since the Second World War is characterized by a massive rural exodus, caused by the decline of the sugar industry and the demographic explosion created by the improvement of sanitary conditions. Population. The emergence of working-class neighborhoods constituting a stable electoral base for the PPM, and the creation of plethora of jobs at town hall of Fort-de-France were the solutions found to deal in the short term with the social emergencies of the time.

Aimé Césaire's cultural policy is embodied by his desire to put culture within the reach of the people and to promote local artists. She is marked by the establishment of the first annual festivals in Fort-de-France in 1972, with the collaboration of Jean-Marie Serreau and Yvan Labéjof, then the establishment of a permanent cultural structure thanks to the installation at the Parc Floral de Fort-de-France and in the neighborhoods, for the first time in Martinique of a professional team around Yves Marie Séraline commissioned for this task, from August 1974. In 1976, from the foundations of the provisional culture office team, this will be the official creation of the Municipal Cultural Action Service (SERMAC) led by Jean-Paul Césaire, who through popular arts workshops (dance, crafts, music) and the prestigious Fort-de-France Festival, highlights previously despised parts of Martinican culture. Sermac has been directed for several years by Lydie Bétis.

His Discourse on Colonialism was for the first time on the French literary baccalaureate program in 1994, with the Notebook of a Return to the Native Country.

Aimé Césaire withdrew from political life (and in particular from the town hall of Fort-de-France in 2001, for the benefit of Serge Letchimy), but remains a character essential in Martinican history until his death. After the death of his comrade Senghor, he remained one of the last founders of thought negritudist.

Until his death, Aimé Césaire was always in demand and influential. Note his reaction to the French law of February 23, 2005 on the positive aspects of colonization that should be mentioned in school curricula, a law whose letter and spirit he denounces and which leads him to refuse to receive Nicolas Sarkozy. In March 2006, Aimé Césaire reversed his decision and received Nicolas Sarkozy since one of the most controversial articles of the law of February 23, 2005 has been repealed. He comments on his meeting as follows: "He's a new man. We feel in him a strength, a will, ideas. It's certain This is the basis on which we will judge him. »

During the 2007 French presidential election campaign, he actively supported Ségolène Royal, accompanying her during the last rally of his public life. "You give us confidence and allow me to also tell you hope."

In retrospect, Aimé Césaire's political path appears strangely circumvented, in contrast with the thought of negritude that he developed. Moreover. In turn assimilationist (departmentalist), independence and autonomist (without knowing precisely what he meant by there), Césaire seems to have been more behind the initiatives taken by metropolitan governments (in terms of decentralization while particularly) as a driving force in the emancipation of its people. He will undoubtedly be remembered as the "fundamental Negro" and as one of the great French-language poets of the 20th century, but not as a political leader who truly influenced his era.

On April 9, 2008, he was hospitalized at the Pierre Zobda Quitman University Hospital in Fort-de-France for heart problems. His state of health deteriorated and he died. on April 17, 2008 in the morning.

As soon as his death was announced, many political and literary figures paid tribute to him, such as President Nicolas Sarkozy, the former president Senegalese Abdou Diouf or the writer René Depestre.

Taking up an initiative by the writer Claude Ribbe, Ségolène Royal, Jean-Christophe Lagarde, Christine Albanel, supported by other elected officials, asked his entry into the Pantheon and a petition was posted online for him to be buried in the Pantheon on May 10, 2008.

A national funeral was celebrated on April 20, 2008 in Fort-de-France, in the presence of the Head of State. A great speech was delivered by Pierre Alikér, his former first deputy at the town hall of Fort-de-France, aged 101. The President of the Republic did not give a speech but bowed in front of the remains, in front of several thousand people gathered at Dillon stadium. He is buried in the La Joyaux cemetery near Fort-de-France. On his tomb is inscribed with words chosen by Aimé Césaire himself and taken from his Lagoon Calendar:

“Atmospheric pressure or rather the history
Magnifies my pain immeasurably
Even if it makes some of my words sumptuous”

Other personalities came, such as Dominique de Villepin, Laurent Fabius, Pierre Mauroy, Lionel Jospin, Yves Jégo, Rama Yade, Bernard Kouchner, François Hollande, François Fillon, Lucette Michaux-Chevry, Victorin Lurel, Michèle Alliot-Marie, Patrick Devedjian, Serge Letchimy...

Several new buildings have taken his name since his death.

COMMENTARY ON THE POEM

We can place the poem in the 1947 collection of poems by Aimé Césaire.

The title of the poem indicates a space of violence in relation to the context of the Second World War.

The word "barbar": appears 8 times in the poem, and has different interpretations:

- Link of affinity with historical moments (Reivindication of the 20th century).
- It is a concept of negritude: Negative designation from the poem. Will attract a positive definition.
- In the title, Aimé Césaire, shows us a pejorative value of the term "barbarian" in relation to the term "negro".
- Also, it shows us the historical link between slaves and the metropolis.

The structure of the poem is divided into two parts, which have a direct relationship with the term "barbarian":

In the first part the term "barbarian" is used in a different way than in the second part.
The second part is a response to the first part of the poem.

The poem is divided into four stanzas, where we find references to language:

1st stanza: the author makes a reference to language using the term "word".

2nd stanza: the relationship that exists in the second stanza with language is when he speaks of "summary language".

3rd stanza: also we find as a relation to language in this stanza, "the ears", "the writing",

And finally, in the 4th stanza, the terms which relate to language are: "the article", "spitting snake".

The main themes of the poem are, the call to fight the Negroes, the lexicon that does not belong to the French language and which belongs to the bordering columns, and the use of language in the poem.