Louise Hardwick, *Joseph Zobel: Négritude and the Novel*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018. ix + 275 pp. (Cloth US\$120.00)

In this comprehensive account of Joseph Zobel's life and work, Francophone Caribbean scholar Louise Hardwick delivers a profound commentary on the author of the canonical *La Rue Cases-Nègres*, published in 1950 and translated into English as *Sugar Cane Alley* in 1980. In 1983 a film by Euzhan Palcy, released under the same name, popularized the novel. Yet Hardwick urgently argues for and pursues a complete study and expansive reflection on his other works: "The present study responds to this gap by re-examining Zobel's career, placing his substantial corpus of novels at the center of the investigation, and using these works to generate new insights into his wider activities and roles" (p. 2). Her book's organization is clear: she examines the novels written before and after *Sugar Cane Alley* to demonstrate its centrality in Zobel's career, while also insisting on the novel as one piece of a larger oeuvre that merits further investigation.

The book reconstitutes a solid and extensive resource comprised of several of Hardwick's previously published articles on Zobel as well as discussion of multiple sources that focused exclusively on *Sugar Cane Alley* by scholars such as Hal Wylie, Randolph Hezekiah, and Martin Munro. The introduction unequivocally positions Zobel as a pioneer in many domains, from social justice and Négritude to Martinican postslavery identity and agency. In Chapter 1, Hardwick delves into specific similarities between Zobel's oeuvre and work by authors of the Négritude movement and the Harlem Renaissance. She complexifies Zobel's stance on Négritude, not only through race but also class, a theme that she rearticulates in each chapter. The fact that upper-class Martiniquans were seeing him as a "petit-nègre" (the poorest and darkest class in Martinique at the time) impacted his writing and fed his views on the lower classes.

Chapters 2–5 cover Zobel's novels *Diab'-là* (1945), *Les Jours immobiles* (1946, rewritten in 1978 as *Les Mains pleines d'oiseaux*), *La Rue Cases-Nègres* (1950), and *La fête à Paris* (1953, rewritten in 1979 as *Quand la neige aura fondu*). Chapter 2, "Earth, Ecocriticism, and Economics," a study of Zobel's first novel, *Diab'-là*, is particularly thought-provoking. By creating a parallel between the Martinican land, repository of the trauma of slavery, and the relationship between *Diab'-là* and his lover, Hardwick generates a reflection on ecocriticism, violence, and trauma. She reads Zobel's text as a call for Martinicans to reconsider the beauty of their land, thus suggesting a reconsideration of postslavery relationships. The other chapters follow analogous historical contextualization: a short introduction of each novel, a close reading covering themes

usually pertaining to race and class, an analysis surrounding the production of the novel, and the circumstances in which Zobel wrote or published it. Since *La Rue Cases-Nègres* is the only one of these texts to have been translated, many will value Hardwick's groundwork to democratize Zobel's voice, using numerous excerpts from her own translations into English. In the same vein, her *tour de force* resides in the presentation of previously undiscovered sources such as an anthology entitled *Chants de la Négritude* (*Négritude Songs*), which Zobel worked on in the 1940s, or a journal entitled *Martinique: revue trimestrielle*, published between 1944 and 1946 (to which Aimé Césaire also contributed). Such findings illustrate an excavation process solidly grounded in extensive research on Zobel's scholarly and personal life. Hardwick's book features texts across genres, including numerous excerpts from interviews, private correspondence, and testimonies from fellow authors and family members continuing his oeuvre. Consistently contending that Zobel is a forgotten pioneer in many fields, from Négritude and ecocriticism to subaltern studies and the Harlem Renaissance, she delivers a massive volume that accomplishes its goal to fill the gaps in studies of his personal and professional ambitions.

Hardwick's clear prose and numerous references provide enough context to make this study useful for both Négritude specialists and laypeople with an interest in Caribbean literature. With the encompassing themes of black consciousness, emigration to France, ethnoclass in Martinique, and the unbarred connections to transnational literatures, this book delivers on its promises to widen our understanding of Joseph Zobel.

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