



Castaway

Yvette Christiansë

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In *Castaway* Yvette Christiansë presents an epic yet fragmented poetic story set off the coast of Africa on the island of St. Helena: Napoleon Bonaparte's final place of exile, a port of call for the slave trade, and birthplace of the poet's grandmother. Amid echoes of racialized identity and issues of displacement, the poems in *Castaway* speak with a multiplicity of voices—from Ferñao Lopez (the island's first exile) and Napoleon to that of a contemporary black woman. *Castaway* is simultaneously a song of discovery, an anthem of conquest, and a tortured lamentation of exiles and slaves.

Instead of offering a linear narrative, Christiansë renders the poems as if they were emerging from the pages of imaginary books, documents now disrupted and scattered. An emperor's point of view is juxtaposed with the perspectives of various explorers, sailors, and unknown slaves until finally they all open upon the book's "castaway," the authorial female voice that negotiates a way to write about love and desire after centuries of oppression and exploitation.

Daring and sophisticated, *Castaway* challenges and captivates the reader with not only its lyrical richness and conceptual depth but also its implicit and haunting reflections on diaspora and postcolonialism. It will be highly regarded by readers and writers of poetry and will appeal to those engaged with issues of race, gender, exile, multiculturalism, colonialism, and history.

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