

'Paule Constant captures the subtle colors of loneliness in black and white colonial Africa, inviting the reader into a beautiful and dangerous landscape where savanna and forest confront unsurpassable obstacles. Miller's translation provides a unique entry for English-language readers into the extraordinary reaches of contemporary French literature.'

—Annie Dillard

'With a fine grasp of human nature, Paule Constant's novel OUREGANO explores the human condition from a fascinating perspective, French Africa in the 1950s, through characters that resonate with familiarity. Margot Miller's exceptional translation allows the reader to move into that world with no hesitation at all.'

—Jean M. Auel

'Margot Miller's sensitive translation deftly renders Constant's shrewd and intense physical and moral observation, communicating the crisp, ironic tone and free-flowing interpenetration of thoughts in this warped society without confusing the reader. Miller has made an invaluable contribution in bringing OUREGANO to the English-language audience that admired Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible*.'

—Julie Edelson, author of *The Fat Friend*

'Paule Constant dissects bigotry with cynical precision. OUREGANO is a sharp and corrosive portrait, a dark but lucid view of human emotions and obsessions—and, in passing, a chronicle of the rape and murder of a continent. Margot Miller delivers a translation full of local color, as literary as it can be without betraying her own language.'

—Pablo Dal Monte, Translator, member of the American Translators Association  
Paule Constant's OUREGANO, originally published in France in 1980, received the Prix Valéry Larbaud and was a finalist for the prestigious Prix Goncourt. The novel is a scathing indictment of the self-absorbed consciousness responsible for individual and collective social failure in 1950s central Africa. The narrative threads through the minds of its diverse characters French and African, young and old with a sharp needle, skewering the contradictions between intent and action. At its heart is Tiffany Murano, who with her parents arrives at this fictional French colonial outpost where her father is named the hospital's chief medical officer. Bitter, sometimes hilariously funny, and ultimately achingly sad, the novel not only traces seven-year-old Tiffany's development of identity, loss, and memory, but also serves as a massive critique of colonialism.

OUREGANO was Constant's first novel. Since its publication she has gained fame in France for her disturbing, anticolonial, and feminist writing. Her characters do not just represent the particular condition of the feminine; in fact, Constant insists on the value of female characters to express the full human condition. OUREGANO is essential to an appreciation of Constant's oeuvre as it lays out themes and establishes key scenes she develops in later novels, and it introduces characters who reappear in subsequent books (some of which are available in translation). In this first English-language edition of OUREGANO, Claudine Fisher provides a concise introduction to Constant, including biographical details, literary influences, and key themes. With her elegant and poetic translation, Margot Miller renders the novel accessible to all readers, adding helpful annotation to explain unfamiliar or untranslatable terms.

Paule Constant is an acclaimed French writer. Her novels express anticolonialist and feminist sentiments and have been awarded several prestigious awards.

Margot Miller is the author of *In Search of Shelter: Subjectivity and Spaces of Loss in the Fiction of Paule Constant*. She teaches at the School for Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University.

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