

C. L. R. JAMES

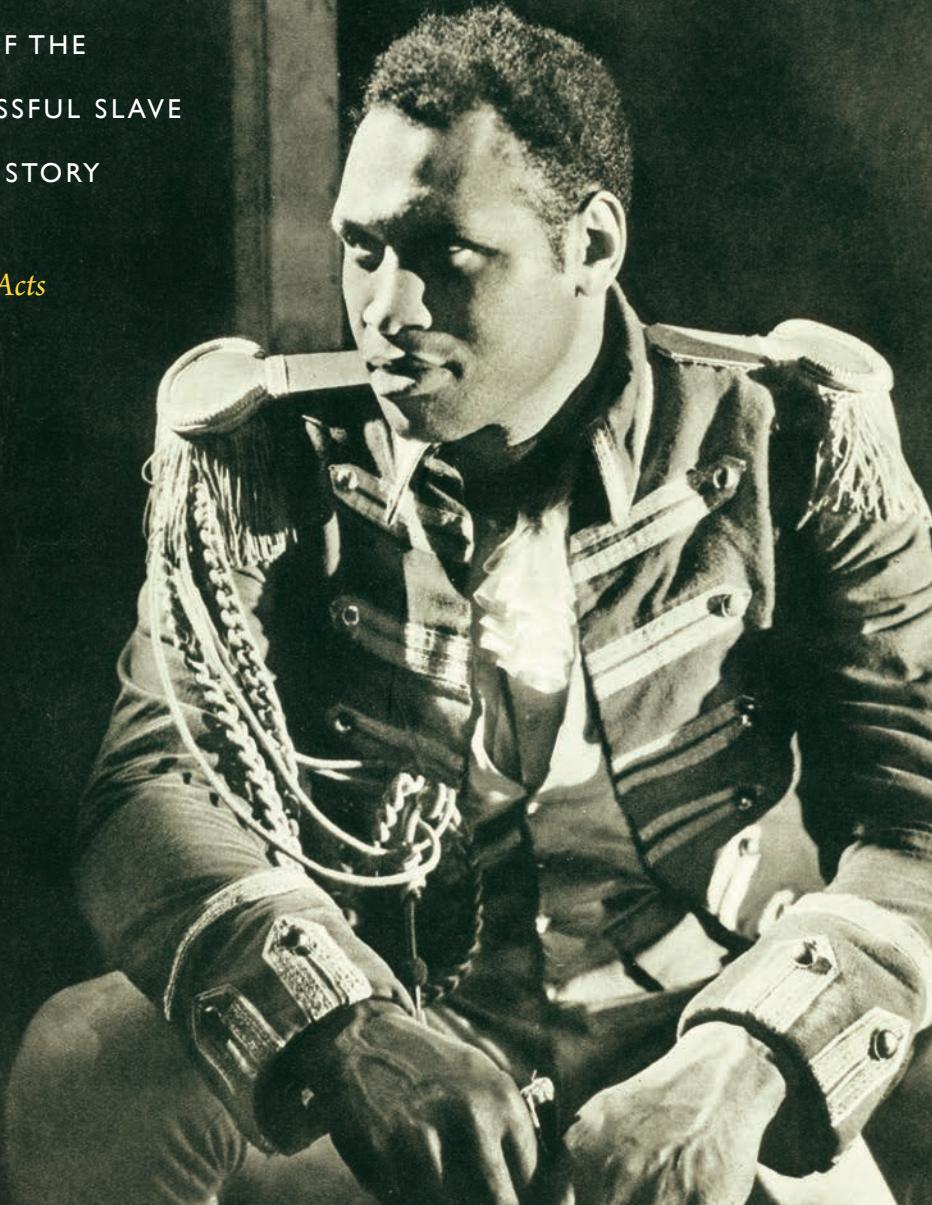
Edited and Introduced by Christian Høgsbjerg

With a Foreword by Laurent Dubois

# TOUSSAINT LOUVERTURE

THE STORY OF THE  
ONLY SUCCESSFUL SLAVE  
REVOLT IN HISTORY

*A Play in Three Acts*



**THE C. L. R. JAMES ARCHIVES**  
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*Robert A. Hill, Series Editor*

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The Story of the Only Successful  
Slave Revolt in History

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

**C. L. R. JAMES**

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**Mr. C. L. R. James, law student  
and writer, is a member of The  
League of Coloured Peoples**

C. L. R. James, 1933 (*Tit-Bits*, 5 August 1933, p. 16). © The British Library Board. All Rights Reserved, 26 March 2012.

“I would have far preferred to write on Toussaint L’Ouverture,” C. L. R. James wrote wearily in 1931. He had, instead, been forced to respond at length to a racist article published by the eminent Dr. Sidney Harland, an English scientist teaching at the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture in Trinidad. The “scientist” had, among other things, ranked Toussaint Louverture in his classificatory scheme as a member of “Class F,” the “lowest of the superior classes.” In other words, James seethed, Harland thought the world was quite full of men like Louverture: “He will pick a Toussaint from every tree.” But, as James insisted in his response—and as he would show in the coming decade within brilliant works of theatre and history—there was really only one Louverture. And there was no way to twist reality around so thoroughly as to make him proof of racial inferiority. Louverture’s story, and those of the events and people who made it, must serve as inspiration—and as a weapon.

It was in this 1931 article (“The Intelligence of the Negro,” reprinted in the appendix), that James first took on a task that in a way became one of his great life missions: wresting the story of Louverture, and of Haiti, away from those in Europe and North America who for too long had distorted it—turning it into a cautionary or ironic tale, using it to create an intriguing whiff of exoticism, or (all too often, as in Harland’s case) employing it as a justification for racism. The achievements of the Haitian Revolution, James insisted instead, were among the most remarkable and important in the history of mankind. He did research in Paris, reading both books and archives from the revolutionary period itself. James largely depended on accounts—often hostile ones—written by white contemporaries and white historians in crafting his own vision of the Haitian Revolution. “All my quotations are from white historians,” James noted in his riposte to Harland. Though he found some accounts that in fact shared his admiration for the successes of

the revolution, in other cases he culled details from accounts with very different intentions and turned them to new ends. Using such tools, he produced what remains the greatest account of the epic of the Haitian Revolution, *The Black Jacobins*.

He wrote this story first, however, not as history but as theatre in his 1934 play *Toussaint Louverture*. That fact has been known for some time among those familiar with James's trajectory. But too many readers of James—including, I must admit apologetically, me—have seen his work of theatre as a kind of unsuccessful prequel to his legendary work of history. That has been a mistake. For as this edition of James's play *Toussaint Louverture* allows us to see, this literary work is as crucial a contribution as *The Black Jacobins* has been. Written in a different register, and to different ends, it nevertheless captures the density and drama of the Haitian Revolution. It bridges time and space, remarkably condensing an incredibly complex period into a series of memorable scenes and characters. It brings together the sense of an epic event with the apt portrayal of historical characters. By offering us, in full, the original play—published here for the first time—Christian Høgsbjerg allows us to fully enjoy James's work of political theatre.

“Oh, Dessalines! Dessalines! You were right after all!” Toussaint Louverture shouts as he dies, alone in prison, in James's play. The words—absorbed by silent walls, lost to history—are imagined into being in *Toussaint Louverture*. Shouted out by Paul Robeson on the London stage in 1936, they must have been impressive. James might have, like many writers before and since, ended his story with the death of Louverture in the cold prison of the Jura. But James returns his audience to Haiti for a final, rousing scene, putting on stage the creation of the Haitian flag out of the French tricolour, the white ripped out and trod underfoot. Though the play is called *Toussaint Louverture*, and many commentators focused in particular on the portrayal of that character by Robeson, it is in fact much more than that: this is a drama that, remarkably, seeks to tell the whole history of the Haitian Revolution, of international imperial rivalry, of the emergence of a revolutionary consciousness, and of the creation of both a nation and a people.

James effectively creates some composite characters in the play. Roume, the French commissioner, for instance, was a historical figure, and his role in negotiating with the insurgents is drawn directly from contemporary accounts. However, in the play, Roume also takes on the role of later French

commissioners and officers, including Léger-Félicité Sonthonax, who abolished slavery in the colony, and Etienne Laveaux, who negotiated with Louverture to join the Republic. The various insurgents—the early leaders Jean-François, Jeannot, and Biassou, along with Louverture’s longtime companions Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henry Christophe—are made to represent different trajectories but also different perspectives on the strategy of revolution, the usefulness of vengeance, and the meaning of freedom and independence. At the same time, James manages to capture the transatlantic dimensions of the revolution, with a curtain opening up behind Louverture to show the dramatic events that led to the abolition of slavery by the French National Convention in February 1794. Later, discussions about the Leclerc expedition in Paris provide the crucial background to understanding the layers of secrecy and treachery at work in Saint-Domingue in 1802 and 1803.<sup>1</sup>

One particularly fascinating figure in the play is General Macoya, inspired by the figure of Macaya, an African-born insurgent leader who clearly caught James’s attention. Macaya is described in one of the most important early accounts of the Haitian Revolution, the memoirs of the French General Pamphile de Lacroix, which James drew on in several places in writing his play (and later *The Black Jacobins*).<sup>2</sup> In particular, Lacroix published a remarkable explanation given by Macaya for his loyalty to “three kings”—those of France, Spain, and the Congo—which James both quotes and then dwells on at length in the play. It is a striking reminder of the fact that, already in the 1930s, James had identified what remains perhaps the key issue in understanding the Haitian Revolution: the role that the African-born majority played in creating and theorizing politics during this period. Macaya’s quote, for instance, is at the center of one of the most important recent articles by the Africanist historian John Thornton about Africans and the Haitian Revolution.<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, this particular theme is actually more foregrounded in the play *Toussaint Louverture* than in *The Black Jacobins*. Perhaps simply because James found so little historical work through which to deepen this question, he ultimately didn’t really take it on fully as an analytical problem in his historical writing. But he was able to foreground it, quite powerfully, in his work of theatre.

As Høgsbjerg notes, during one performance of the play, C. L. R. James was forced to stand in for an absent actor: the one playing the role of Gen-

eral Macoya. So it was that, in London in 1936, the elusive and revolutionary words of a Congo-born insurgent, captured and written down by a French general, were spoken aloud by a man thoroughly inhabited by the story of that revolution. More than anyone else, James made sure that the story of Haiti would be remembered and retold outside of the country, through the twentieth century, and into the twenty-first. As one of the many who owe a massive debt to James for his impassioned and brilliant channeling of this revolutionary history, I am comforted to know that, on that one night, James was able to be among the insurgents in 1793, letting them speak through him. On stage that night, I imagine that in the rousing conclusion of the play, James joined the rest of the chorus in singing “Grenadiers à l’assaut!” (“To the attack, grenadiers!”) — his singular voice at last at home, surrounded by the sound of a revolution without end.

## Notes

1. On Sonthonax’s role in the abolition of slavery, see Robert Louis Stein, *Léger Félicité Sonthonax: The Lost Sentinel of the Republic* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1985), and Jeremy D. Popkin, *You Are All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). For a general history of the revolution, see Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004).
2. Pamphile Lacroix, *La Révolution de Haïti* (Paris: Karthala, 1995).
3. John K. Thornton, “I Am the Subject of the King of Congo: African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution,” *Journal of World History*, 4 (Fall 1993), 181–214.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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In 2005, early in my research for a doctoral thesis on C. L. R. James's life and work in 1930s Britain, I went to inspect the Jock Haston Papers at the Brynmor Jones Library at the University of Hull, in the north of England. Like James, Haston had been a Trotskyist in Britain during the 1930s, and listed among the Haston Papers was a file entitled simply "Toussaint Louverture."<sup>1</sup> Daring to hope to discover perhaps a programme from the original 1936 production of James's play about the Haitian Revolution, a rare enough and valuable find in itself, I decided to save examining this file until the end. After several hours spent wondering at some of the forgotten struggles and squabbles revealed among the minutiae of internal documents relating to the tiny early British Trotskyist movement, I finally rewarded myself by turning to the intriguing folder. Opening it up, I found to my amazement a yellowing mass of thin oilskin paper headed "Toussaint Louverture: The story of the only successful slave revolt in history." All that was missing from what I recognised immediately as the long-lost original playscript was its author's name on the front — C. L. R. James.

At that moment, the extraordinary providence of the find dawned on me in a way that must have eluded those historians of British Trotskyism who over the years had gone through the Haston Papers. It is not clear how James's play about the Haitian Revolution ended up with Jock Haston (1912–86). Haston had broken from the Communist Party in 1934, and he had set up a discussion group sympathetic to Trotskyism. Around 1935–36, Haston's group met for discussions with the three British Trotskyist groups then in existence, including James's Marxist Group, then part of the Independent Labour Party (ILP). It is possible that, during these discussions, James gave a copy of *Toussaint Louverture* to Haston, who may well have seen the play performed.<sup>2</sup>

It is hard to overstate the significance of the discovery of James's original playscript—the last major missing piece of his writing yet to be published. The play should not be seen as an early preliminary work superseded by the publication of James's classic history of the Haitian Revolution, *The Black Jacobins*, in 1938. Rather, as Robert Hill first suggested to me, *Toussaint Louverture* must be seen as the indispensable companion work to *The Black Jacobins*. The play is a literary supplement to the magisterial history and had allowed James to give his imagination full rein. In the play's portrayal of Toussaint, “the first and greatest of West Indians,”<sup>3</sup> it might be argued that James demonstrates the full tragedy and heroism of this world-historical individual in a more powerful way than in both his history and in his later co-written play about the Haitian Revolution, *The Black Jacobins* (1967), which evolved out of *Toussaint Louverture*.

The production of *Toussaint Louverture* in 1936 at the Westminster Theatre in London is also of considerable importance for the light it sheds on imperial metropolitan culture in 1930s Britain, or rather the radical counter-culture that has always existed in the “dark heart” of the British Empire. The presence of that gentle giant of stage and screen, the black American star Paul Robeson, alongside other black actors from the Caribbean and Africa, meant that the two performances of *Toussaint Louverture* on 15 and 16 March 1936 were the first time that black professionals had ever performed on the British stage in a play written by a black playwright.<sup>4</sup> Back in 1926, Robeson had told an interviewer that he dreamed “of a great play about Haiti, a play about Negroes, written by a Negro, and acted by Negroes . . . of a moving drama that will have none of the themes that offer targets for race supremacy advocates.”<sup>5</sup> Ten years later, Robeson clearly gave his all in his portrayal of Toussaint. *Toussaint Louverture* was to be “the only play in which Robeson appeared that was written by a writer of African heritage.”<sup>6</sup>

Although James's play has been celebrated as a pioneering production in the history of black British theatre, and an important moment in the history of African and Caribbean theatre, *Toussaint Louverture* also stands as an outstanding contribution to what the late Trinidadian dramatist and scholar Errol Hill once described as “the revolutionary tradition in black drama,” a “tradition of writing and producing plays that deal directly with black liberation.”<sup>7</sup> This revolutionary tradition dates at least as far back as the Haitian Revolution itself, for after Toussaint seized the power to rule as black Con-

sul in Saint-Domingue, James noted in *The Black Jacobins* that “the theatres began to play again, and some of the Negro players showed a remarkable talent.”<sup>8</sup> In the 1820s, William Henry Brown, a West Indian seaman domiciled in New York who seems to have experienced the wider wave of slave revolt and national liberation that swept across the Caribbean during the 1790s, formed the African Company and founded a small theatre for black Americans. In 1822 Brown wrote and produced what was billed as “an entirely new play . . . called *Shotaway*; or the Insurrection of the Caribs,” about the Second Carib War of 1795–96 on St. Vincent, led by the Carib chief Chatoyer. As Shane White notes, “This was the first African American dramatic production,” and *Shotaway* drew from the *New York Spectator* the comment that “it seems that these descendants of Africa are determined to carry into full practice the doctrine of liberty and equality, physically by acting plays, and mentally by writing them.”<sup>9</sup> Though no text of the play has been found, as Errol Hill notes, “in the 1820s, there were over two million black slaves in America,” so “the staging of the struggle of Chatoyer and his tribe could be interpreted as a vivid antislavery statement,” making King Shotaway, the title role, “the first revolutionary hero in black drama.”<sup>10</sup> As James would later insist, West Indians have “straight plays bursting out of our history.”<sup>11</sup>

The wider historic importance of James’s own play *Toussaint Louverture* and its production in Britain in 1936 emerges then not simply from the remarkable talent of its own cast, drawn from across the African diaspora and with Paul Robeson in the title role, nor from its immediate audience, which would have included such Pan-African figures as George Padmore, Jomo Kenyatta, and Eric Williams. For at the heart of James’s play was a pioneering recovery of the collective memory of the historic experience uniting people of the African diaspora: the experience of enslavement and the resistance to it. This introduction will begin by exploring the conceptual and ideological formation that led James to write such a play about the Haitian Revolution, “the most epic struggle to end slavery in the Americas.”<sup>12</sup>

### **Conceiving *Toussaint Louverture***

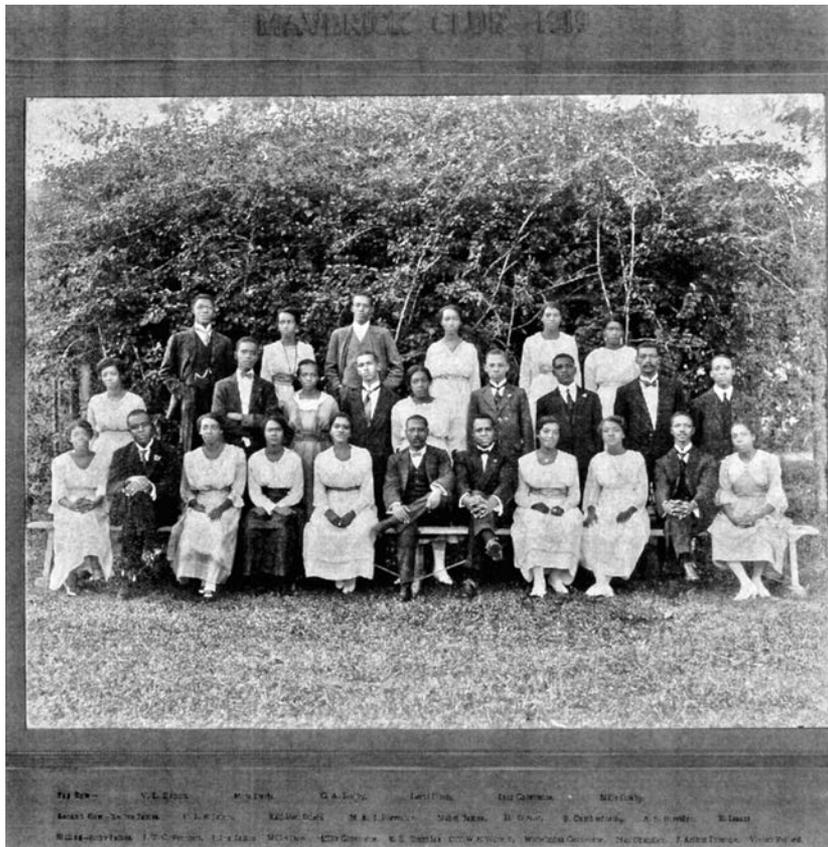
“The play was conceived four years ago and was completely finished by the autumn of 1934,” James writes in his author’s note in the original 1936 programme of *Toussaint Louverture*. In the crucial year of 1932 the thirty-one-year-old aspiring novelist decided to leave his native colonial Trinidad

for the Mother Country of imperial Britain. Unlike the manuscripts James brought with him from Trinidad—a soon-to-be-published biography, *The Life of Captain Cipriani: An Account of British Government in the West Indies* (1932), and the novel *Minty Alley* (1936)—*Toussaint Louverture* was actually composed in Britain. Yet if a play about the leader of the Haitian Revolution therefore stands as the defining literary work born out of James’s experience of the “voyage in,” such a project was fundamentally inspired and shaped by James’s earlier environment, the colonial Caribbean society in which he was born and grew to intellectual maturity.<sup>13</sup>

C. L. R. James was, in the eloquent words of George Lamming, “a spirit that came to life in the rich and humble soil of a British colony in the Caribbean.”<sup>14</sup> Certainly the fact that James wrote a play so soon after leaving would not have surprised those closest to him back home. The young James had involved himself in amateur dramatics soon after leaving the elite school to which he had won a scholarship, Queen’s Royal College (QRC), a place where he recalled “we learned Shakespeare, Goldsmith, Shaw” and other famous dramatists “of high morality.”<sup>15</sup> In 1919, he landed a job at a private school in Port of Spain as an English teacher, and he took his passion for drama into the classroom. A friend from QRC, William Besson, recalled:

Nello told me he was going to stage “The Merchant of Venice” in a cinema in Port of Spain; and he actually got his pupils to learn Shakespeare and put on the show. But unfortunately the people of Port of Spain had not reached the stage to appreciate that. . . . I took a young lady . . . to see the play and there was just a sprinkling of people in this huge cinema. But Nello pressed on. The play was staged in front of the curtain and his pupils performed the whole of “The Merchant of Venice.” So there you see, when Nello read Shakespeare it wasn’t just a book he was reading but he saw life behind it, and he had to present that life.<sup>16</sup>

In the 1920s, James became secretary of the Maverick Club, a social club independent of the white colonial elite; he later recalled how “for the most part we were Black people and one brown . . . we would give concerts.”<sup>17</sup> Kent Worcester notes that “at the age of 21, he directed an operetta, *Gypsy Rover* (and played a jester); at the age of 28, he directed Molière’s *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* for the Maverick Club.”<sup>18</sup> Paul Buhle has described how after James returned to QRC to teach English and History, “he staged with his class a



The Maverick Club, 1919. Top row: V. L. Burton, Meta Davis, G. A. Busby, Beryl Davis, Inez Grosvenor, Milly Busby; middle row: Evelyn James, C. L. R. James, Kathleen Davis, M. A. J. Forrester, Mabel James, H. O'Neil, R. Cumberbatch, A. S. Berridge, E. Isaacs; bottom row: Ruby James, J. T. C. Prescott, Ellen James, Millie Davis, Milly Grosvenor, E. S. Berridge, C. T. W. E. Worrell, Wilhelmina Grosvenor, May Chandler, J. Arthur Procope, Vivien Pollard. Courtesy of Christian Holder.

full public version of *Othello*. It drew an enthusiastic response, and James went on to write a now-vanished drama about local life and to produce it with his students, for the public.”<sup>19</sup> James’s cultural activism throughout the 1920s was increasingly accompanied by a growth of political consciousness, expressed in support for the growing nationalist movement around the social-democratic Trinidad Workingmen’s Association (TWA), led by the charismatic self-declared “champion of the barefoot man,” Captain Arthur

Andrew Cipriani. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, James was at the forefront of “the Trinidad Awakening” by contributing implicitly anticolonialist short stories to *Trinidad* and *The Beacon*, both literary journals with nationalist leanings. “My hitherto vague ideas of freedom crystallised around a political commitment: we should be free to govern ourselves,” James later recalled.<sup>20</sup>

While teaching at QRC, James began to research the rich, hidden history of the Caribbean. “I was tired of hearing that the West Indians were oppressed, that we were black and miserable, that we had been brought from Africa, and that we were living there and that we were being exploited.”<sup>21</sup> James remembers he was “one of the pioneers” in introducing “West Indian history” in school, something not then on the official curriculum.<sup>22</sup> One friend from the *Beacon* group, Ralph de Boissière, later recalled James’s early “opposition to colonialism had a solidly grounded historical base, something that none of us possessed” and that “C. L. R. delivered telling blows with history.”<sup>23</sup> No doubt mindful of the plight of Haiti itself—since 1915 under American military occupation—James was soon “reading everything” he could on the Haitian Revolution, including a couple of books written by British writers during the 1850s, including Reverend J. R. Beard’s short 1855 biography of Toussaint. However, he was grievously disappointed not to find any books of “serious historical value” while in colonial Trinidad. James remembered his reaction on reading one “very bad” biography of Toussaint, Percy Waxman’s *The Black Napoleon: The Story of Toussaint Louverture* (1931): “What the god-dam hell is this?”<sup>24</sup>

Insult was added when Dr. Sidney Harland, a “distinguished scientist” from England who was at the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture in Trinidad, “foolishly took it upon himself to write an article proving that Negroes were as a race inferior in intelligence to whites.” James wrote, “I wasn’t going to stand for that and in our little local magazine I tore him apart.”<sup>25</sup> Harland’s 1931 article “Race Admixture” utilized Francis Galton’s *Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry into Its Laws and Consequences* (1869) to assert different classes of intelligence linked to such features as race. Harland had also brought Toussaint Louverture into his discussion, ascribing his intelligence as best befitting Class F, “the lowest of the superior classes.” James sprang to Toussaint’s defence to expose this “absurdity,” and his glorious counterblast to Harland’s racism, “The Intelligence of the Negro,” published in *The Beacon* in August 1931 (and reproduced here in the appendix), stands

as his first written appreciation of Toussaint's astonishing achievements.<sup>26</sup> Robert Hill has rightly emphasised "the over-riding vindicatory nature" of James's discussion of Toussaint in 1931, noting that "in the context of the domination of European colonialism, vindication was . . . a cultural and ideological necessity."<sup>27</sup>

Vindication of black accomplishments in the face of racism then provides the first underlying motivation for James's *Toussaint Louverture*, and David Scott in his important and insightful work *Conscripts of Modernity* has noted that "Haiti has very often played a prominent role" in "black vindicationist discourse." Scott cites as an example an extraordinary lecture given in the 1850s by the black American Reverend James Theodore Holly, "A Vindication of the Capacity of the Negro Race for Self-Government, and Civilized Progress," which hailed the Haitian Revolution as one of the "noblest, grandest, and most justifiable outbursts against tyrannical oppression that is recorded on the pages of the world's history."<sup>28</sup> James's second motivation in conceiving *Toussaint Louverture* was also a vindicatory one, and he was concerned with what he later called (in the title of a pamphlet) "The Case for West Indian Self-Government." He had begun work researching and writing a "political biography" of the TWA leader Captain Cipriani, and in this work James would tear into the British government's line of "self-government when fit for it," demonstrating that the recent growth of the TWA was proof, if proof was needed, that the black majority societies of the Caribbean had always been manifestly "fit" to govern themselves.<sup>29</sup> James's championing of Toussaint in "The Intelligence of the Negro" was critically part of this wider struggle for West Indian sovereignty and self-determination.<sup>30</sup>

Amidst the rising movement for West Indian self-government in 1920s Trinidad, James could not have also failed to register the power and inspiration of either the Harlem Renaissance or Garveyism. Marcus Garvey, the Jamaican founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, had played a pathbreaking role in the attempt to develop an indigenous Caribbean theatre. Garvey wrote three plays that were performed on consecutive nights in Kingston, Jamaica, in August 1930: *The Coronation of an African King*, *Roaming Jamaicans*, and *Slavery—from Hut to Mansion*, which "described the horrors of slavery and the slave traffic, the agitation for freedom, emancipation, and progress thereafter."<sup>31</sup>

James was also aware that others had written plays about Toussaint. As

Percy Waxman had noted in *The Black Napoleon*, the great radical French Romantic historian Alphonse de Lamartine had “composed a poetical drama with Toussaint as its hero,” a play that was staged in Paris in 1850. Indeed, despite its weaknesses as a work of historical scholarship, Waxman’s *The Black Napoleon* itself evoked some sense of the dramatic clash of personalities involved and even the Haitian Revolution’s world-historic significance: “For the first time in the world’s history an enslaved people had succeeded in gaining their own freedom.”<sup>32</sup>

After arriving in London in March 1932, James moved in May to the Lancashire cotton town of Nelson to stay with the family of his fellow Trinidadian, the professional cricketer Learie Constantine. Though in Nelson officially to help Constantine write his autobiography, it would be Constantine who first helped James publish *The Life of Captain Cipriani: An Account of British Government in the West Indies*, with a local printing firm in Nelson, Coulton & Co.<sup>33</sup> James recalls how after sending it “back to the West Indies,” he felt “free to get down to my own business. I had a completed novel with me. But that was only my ’prentice hand . . . the real *magnum opus* was to be my second novel.”<sup>34</sup>

However, it was James’s play *Toussaint Louverture* that materialised instead of a second novel; he tells us, “Fiction-writing drained out of me and was replaced by politics.” As a result of his tireless campaigning for West Indian self-government in Britain, West Indian history remained of central importance: as he recalled, “in the back of my head for years was the project of writing a biography of Toussaint Louverture. . . . I had not been long in Nelson before I began to import from France the books I would need to prepare.”<sup>35</sup> By the time James left the Constantines in late March 1933 in order to return to London and work as a cricket reporter for the *Manchester Guardian*, he had begun turning his historical research on the Haitian Revolution into a play.

#### FROM IMPERIAL BRITISHNESS TO MILITANT PAN-AFRICANISM

On 29 May 1933, as part of the commemoration of the centenary of the official abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire, James was invited to give a talk on BBC Radio as part of a series on “Slavery, 1833–1933,” and the broadcast was published in *The Listener* as “A Century of Freedom” (see the appendix).<sup>36</sup> As James remembered, “I visualized my audience as people who

had to be made to understand that West Indians were a Westernized people. I must have stressed the point too hard, in fact I know I did. Colonial officials in England, and others, began their protests to the BBC almost before I had finished speaking.”<sup>37</sup> Despite his active campaigning for West Indian self-government, James’s broadcast gives some insight into his continuing identification with imperial Britain, and abandoning this would clearly not happen quickly, even for someone of James’s intellect. “For a non-white colonial to adjust his sights to England and not to lose focus is the devil’s own job and the devil pays great attention to it,” he later reflected.<sup>38</sup>

In London, James joined the League of Coloured Peoples, a multiracial pressure group formed in 1931. Amidst the rise of fascism in Europe, including the seizure of power by Hitler’s Nazis in Germany, James now increasingly adopted a defiant and more radical transnational identification with black people and their culture. In the summer of 1933, James attended a meeting in London to hear George Padmore, the leading black figure in the international Communist movement, speak. Besides his relentless anticolonialist agitation, Padmore was also a prolific pamphleteer, and his *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* (1931) was already something of a classic. James would not regret going to that meeting, as “George Padmore” turned out to be his boyhood friend from Trinidad, Malcolm Nurse. The two had not seen each other for about eight years, since Nurse had left for America.<sup>39</sup> Hearing the inspirational and authoritative Padmore speak about the “coming African revolution” helped to open James’s eyes to new possibilities and potentialities.

Critical to James’s movement toward Pan-Africanism, however, was to be the six months he spent during the winter of 1933 in France, researching the Haitian Revolution in the archives in Paris.<sup>40</sup> Paris at that time has been described as the “capital of the Black Atlantic” for its apparently enlightened attitude toward race and the fact that black journals such as *La Revue du Monde Noir* and anticolonial organizations such as the Ligue Nationale de Défense des Intérêts de la Race Nègre flourished.<sup>41</sup> It was in Paris that Nancy Cunard finished compiling her monumental eight-hundred-page *Negro Anthology* (1934).<sup>42</sup> James’s six months in France were also critical for his decision to become a revolutionary socialist. In early February 1934, he witnessed a spontaneous general strike erupt in Paris against the threat of a fascist coup. James later paid tribute to “the sure instinct of the Paris workers,” noting

how “the stock of 1789 and the 10th August, 1792, of 1830, of 1848 and 1871, came out in their thousands,” effectively destroying the hopes of those trying to emulate Hitler’s success the year before.<sup>43</sup>

“I had not been in Europe two years before I came to the conclusion that European civilisation as it then existed was doomed,” James later recalled of his early experience of a continent still scarred irrevocably by the horrors of the Great War and then engulfed by the Great Depression and the rise of fascism.<sup>44</sup> After making an independent study of Marxism, on his return to Britain in early 1934, James decided to become an organised revolutionary and to join the Trotskyist movement.<sup>45</sup> As he put it in 1944, “Ten years ago something came into my life and altered its whole course.”<sup>46</sup> James’s embrace of revolutionary Marxism complemented his newfound militant Pan-Africanism, as demonstrated in a lecture on “The Negro” he gave in Nelson in March 1934: he damned the British Empire for the racism it fostered not only abroad but also “at home,” in the metropolis itself. James also stressed the achievements of African civilization, and he was quoted as declaring that “there was going to be a tremendous revolt in Africa someday.”<sup>47</sup>

### **The Playscript: Plot and Politics**

James’s *Toussaint Louverture* is panoramic in its dramatisation of the Haitian Revolution, eleven scenes spread over three acts, ranging from vodou rituals in the forests of colonial Saint-Domingue to a skilful reenactment of the French Convention that passed a decree abolishing colonial slavery in Paris in 1794, and to Napoleon Bonaparte in his apartment declaring his desire to restore slavery. There is music throughout, opening with Mozart’s minuet from the opera *Don Giovanni*, and going on to include African drumming, Toussaint singing a spiritual hymn in captivity, and the armies of former slaves singing “To the Attack, Grenadiers,” to the tune of the Marseillaise, the anthem of revolutionary France. The play is not without humour; some characters seem almost to have been written in to provide an element of comic relief. However, once the Haitian revolt begins, the action becomes faster paced, reflecting the frenzied ecstasy of revolution, and things build to an exhilarating finale as Dessalines declares Haiti independent.

The action begins in 1791, in colonial Saint-Domingue. The play opens in the villa of a wealthy white planter, Monsieur Bullet, the president of the Colonial Assembly, who is entertaining Colonel Vincent, a visiting represen-

tative of the moderate liberal government in France. The French Revolution is in its second year, and the new legislative assemblies in Paris are caught in a contradiction between their professed ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity, and the continuing obscenity of colonial slavery. Such contradictions play havoc in Saint-Domingue among the twenty thousand or so whites, as royalists fight republicans, and with the thirty thousand free mulattoes demanding full political rights. M. Bullet's response to a petition demanding equality for mulattoes is uncompromising — he openly demonstrates that he will defend white supremacy on the island with violence and terror.

James's play shows how the five hundred thousand enslaved blacks on the island were drawn into this conflict. One stormy night in August 1791, at a huge open meeting in the forests of a northern mountain, they decide to strike out for freedom under the leadership of Boukman. Drawing strength and courage from vodou, they pledge to rise in revolt under the slogan "Liberty or Death!" James then moves to 1793, with the rebel army of former slaves at war with both the whites and some of the mulattoes. Unknown to them, however, the revolutionary process in France has risen to a new level of radicalisation under the threat of foreign invasion: the Paris masses have begun to take matters into their own hands. The power of the Bourbon monarchy has been completely smashed and the Girondins now lead the new Republic. The rebel slave army leaders receive Commissioner Roume from France but are not impressed, because the French Republican Convention does not stand for the abolition of slavery and has executed King Louis XVI. They decide instead to accept the offer of an alliance with the Spanish Empire in order to gain arms. By 1794, the rebel slave army, with Spanish help and under Toussaint's leadership, succeeded in taking control of the north of Saint-Domingue. The desperate colonial planters look for support from the British Empire, but Toussaint sees through the British and planters' intrigues.

Meanwhile in France the Jacobins under Robespierre have come to power after leading the defence of the revolution. In February 1794, the Convention in Paris officially abolishes slavery in all French colonies.<sup>48</sup> Though the British fleet prevented material assistance from France reaching the rebel slave army, Toussaint decides to side with the French Jacobins, taking the name "Louverture," "the opening."<sup>49</sup> "I feel that the only European Government which will do its duty by the Negroes is the Government of the Revo-

lution,” Toussaint is quoted as saying, making a personal commitment by sending his two sons to be educated in Paris.

Act II opens five years later, in 1799, by which time Toussaint’s revolutionary armies have fought off the British army of intervention. However, while Toussaint is still loyal to the French Republic, in France the Jacobins have long been swept from power by a tide of reaction. A new French Commissioner, Hédouville, enters the scene as a representative of the government of the conservative Directory. The French plot with their official enemies, the British, to end “black domination” in the colony, to break the power of Toussaint, a man described by the British General Maitland as “this audacious and all-conquering Negro.” Yet Toussaint, after defeating those mulattoes who rebel against him with the backing of the French and British, stands firm with France. By 1801, however, and the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte to power as First Consul in France, there are growing fears that the French will move to restore slavery. Colonel Vincent in vain presents Toussaint’s Constitution, which would leave Saint-Domingue an autonomous part of the French Empire, to Bonaparte. Bonaparte, however, refuses to “abandon the fairest and richest prize of all the colonies to this upstart,” and he orders his brother-in-law, General Leclerc, to mount an expedition to reclaim Saint-Domingue for the old slaveowners.

Act III tells of Leclerc’s attempt to restore slavery on Saint-Domingue in 1802. His promises of coming in the name of “liberty and the happiness of all” appeal to many of Toussaint’s tired generals, and Toussaint is himself eventually forced to the negotiating table, only to be betrayed and captured by the French. His last warning to those who arrest him will be vindicated by the play’s end: “Do with me what you will. In destroying me you destroy only the trunk. But the tree of Negro liberty will flourish again, for its roots are many and deep.” The penultimate scene shows the destruction of Toussaint, defiant to the end, in his prison cell in the Alps. But by the time news of his death reaches Saint-Domingue, Dessalines has already led the black former slaves to victory over Leclerc, before uniting with the mulattoes to proclaim independence for the colony, now renamed Haiti. As Dessalines triumphantly declares, “Haiti, the first free and independent Negro state in the new world. Toussaint died for it. We shall live and fight for it!”

As James notes in his stage directions for Act I, Scene 2, the moment the enslaved of Saint-Domingue gather to plot their uprising in the depths of the

forest, “they, the Negro slaves, are the most important character in the play. Toussaint did not make the revolt. It was the revolt that made Toussaint.” But James’s play was also concerned with the vital question of revolutionary leadership. In the Haitian Revolution, the ideals of the Enlightenment, of liberty, equality, and fraternity, became embodied in the rebel slave army. During their mighty collective struggle for freedom, cherished African beliefs in kingship, rooted in ancient tradition, began to be transcended.

It was above all Toussaint himself who ensured that the new ideas triumphed over the old, enabling the enslaved themselves to make “the only successful slave revolt in history.”<sup>50</sup> As James stressed in *The Black Jacobins*, Toussaint’s revolutionary leadership was critical, for “it is the tragedy of mass movements that they need and can only too rarely find adequate leadership.”<sup>51</sup> The play ends with a reenactment of the performance of “one of the most revolutionary symbolic and enlightened gestures in the history of the struggle for independence in the Americas. Eager to differentiate the revolutionary army from the French enemy, Dessalines designs a new flag by removing the white from the French tricolore.”<sup>52</sup>

### **Toussaint: A Tragic Hero of Colonial Enlightenment**

Yet if James’s Toussaint was a hero, his ultimate destruction underlines the fact that he was a tragic hero. Robert Hill has drawn attention to “the cultural dilemma of the West Indian intellectual,” rooted in the struggle for national liberation amid material and cultural backwardness, and he notes that “James was the first commentator to recognize the significance of this dilemma for the fate of the Haitian revolution.”<sup>53</sup> Perhaps because James was wrestling with a similar identity crisis in respect of his own “Britishness,” he could so vividly explore Toussaint’s “Frenchness” and his ultimately doomed attempt to overcome the backwardness of Saint-Domingue through a relationship with French culture and capital. This dilemma is made explicit in James’s play through a discussion of Placide and Isaac, Toussaint’s two sons who were sent to study in France, and their different views when they return to Saint-Domingue. In exploring Placide’s and Isaac’s conflicting loyalties, James was following other dramatists of the Haitian Revolution, including Alphonse de Lamartine.<sup>54</sup>

Tragedy was the dramatic form James used to portray the way Toussaint was caught between the barbaric realities of New World slavery and

the modern ideals of the Enlightenment embodied in the French Revolution. “All great tragedies,” as he would later point out with respect to Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, deal with “the confrontation of two ideas of society and they deal with it according to the innermost essence of the drama—the two societies confront one another within the mind of a single person.”<sup>55</sup> James focused on the human personality of Toussaint. As Stuart Hall notes, “James imagined Toussaint as a Shakespearean figure with the tragic form built in” and “had classical Greek tragedy and Shakespeare at the very forefront of his mind at every turn.”<sup>56</sup>

Toussaint is shown from the first to be someone who is torn between the enslaved Africans’ old faith in vodou and kingship and the new revolutionary ideals of the Enlightenment: he is pulled first one way, then the other. Toussaint’s Christianity, thoughtfulness, literacy, hesitancy to participate in the vodou ritual drinking of the blood of a stuck pig, and ability to write clearly mark him out from most of the other rebel slaves in Act I, Scene 2. In Act I, Scene 3, we see him drawing strength from re-reading the Abbé Raynal, the French priest and Enlightenment *philosophe*, and his famous history of French colonialism, *Philosophical and Political History of the Establishments and Commerce of the Europeans in the Two Indies* (1770). As Raynal had warned, for the enslaved to end slavery, “a courageous chief only is wanted. Where is he? That great man whom Nature owes to her vexed, oppressed and tormented children?” James’s Toussaint delivers a soliloquy after re-reading Raynal: “White men see Negroes as slaves. If the Negro is to be free, he must free himself. We have courage, we have endurance, we have numbers. . . . Thou hast shown me the light, oh God! I shall be that leader.”

Yet the barbaric oppressions of colonial slavery mean that for James’s enlightened Toussaint, the mass of black rebel slaves were fit only to be led like “children” into the “light” and were not intellectually mature enough for liberty. Even as late as 1799, after leading the ex-slaves to victory after victory under the slogan “Liberty or Death,” Toussaint still has the comparative backwardness of Saint-Domingue at the forefront of his mind. It is not that James’s Toussaint cannot conceive of the possibilities of independence. “God knows that in my dreams sometimes I see not only an independent black San Domingo. I see all these West Indian islands free and independent communities of black men reaping the reward of the long years of cruelty and suffering which our parents bore.” Yet when Dessalines urges him to strike there and then for complete independence, Toussaint urges caution:

Freedom—yes—but freedom is not everything. Dessalines, look at the state of the people. We who live here shall never see Africa again—some of us born here have never seen it. Language we have none—French is now our language. We have no education—the little that some of us know we have learnt from France. Those few of us who are Christians follow the French religion. We must stay with France as long as she does not seek to restore slavery. (Act II, Scene 1)

Only after he is betrayed and captured by the French, in his last lines of the play, “Oh, Dessalines! Dessalines! You were right after all!” do we see Toussaint acknowledging his tragic failing not to have placed more trust in the black masses and chosen Haitian independence over French civilization at the critical moment (Act III, Scene 4). As James recalled it in 1938,

Toussaint’s error sprang from the very qualities that made him what he was. It is easy to see today, as his generals saw after he was dead, where he had erred. It did not mean that they or any of us would have done better in his place. If Dessalines could see so clearly and simply, it was because the ties that bound this uneducated soldier to French civilization were of the slenderest. He saw what was under his nose so well because he saw no further. Toussaint’s failure was the failure of enlightenment, not of darkness.<sup>57</sup>

Yet because his error “sprang from the very qualities that made him what he was,” Toussaint remains a representative figure, the precursor of the tradition of West Indian intellectual and cultural thought.

The impact of Athenian tragedy on James’s *Toussaint Louverture* can be seen in the way that the black masses of Saint-Domingue function as a kind of Greek chorus. From the very opening of the play, when “there is a faint but insistent beating of drums. In moments of tenseness the drums beat louder and with accelerated rhythm,” the rebellious slaves steadily make their presence felt more and more throughout the play. Act I, Scene II, sees “a great rattle of the drums” as the enslaved Africans take centre stage, meeting in the forest to plan their uprising, drawing strength from vodou. Once fighting for liberation in Act I, Scene III, the chorus of ex-slaves seems almost to be using the drums to comment on the ideas put forward by their leaders, in particular Boukman’s hopes in the King of Congo and then Toussaint’s view that liberation for all would mean “the whole country will be ruined.” The chorus

cheers Toussaint's victory over the mulattoes at Jacmel (Act II, Scene 1) and fights bravely against Leclerc's forces (Act III, Scene 2). Finally, singing "To the Attack, Grenadiers," "Toussaint and his soldiers march in, the band off-stage coming to a great climax" in its playing of the Marseillaise, an anthem appropriated by the black revolution, to meet Leclerc to negotiate peace (Act III, Scene 3).

The final scene of revolutionary history sees what James would in 1963 describe as "the entry of the chorus, of the ex-slaves themselves, as the arbiters of their own fate," making for an ending to a drama that no Greek tragedian or even someone with the far-reaching imagination of Shakespeare could have envisaged.<sup>58</sup> The play's thrilling climax serves to place Toussaint's defeat within the context of the wider collective victory of the Haitian Revolution, so the tragedy of *Toussaint Louverture* paradoxically ends with an act representative of a certain vindication of Enlightenment values, one achieved by the slaves themselves. That it falls to Dessalines to lead this final struggle suggests that, as Paul B. Miller notes, "his resolve to declare Haiti independent qualifies him to a certain extent as *more enlightened than Toussaint*, more eager to throw off the yoke of arbitrary and tyrannical authority. Dessalines merely embodies the same paradox as Toussaint, though now inverted: emancipation achieved through barbarous autonomy rather than civilized tutelage."<sup>59</sup>

### **Black and Radical Theatre in Imperial Britain**

Such an ambitious project as attempting to put the Haitian Revolution on the British stage was something new. For over a century, portrayals of black people on the British stage were, in general, racial mockery — "nigger" minstrelsy, or melodramatic "slave plays" where black people were simply shown as suffering until liberation comes with the arrival of some great white man, usually an English imperial hero such as a naval officer.<sup>60</sup> There seems to have been only one direct attempt to stage the Haitian Revolution in Britain before James. This was by the radical-leaning Victorian writer George Dibdin Pitt, most famous for a drama about Sweeney Todd the Barber, "The Fiend of Fleet Street." Pitt's blackface minstrel play *Toussaint L'Ouverture, or The Black Spartacus*, was performed at the Britannia Theatre in London's East End in 1846. Though only Act I survives, Pitt's play has been described by Hazel Waters as "an uneasy mix of comedy and melodrama" that depicted Toussaint's main concern as "saving his owner's family from the black revolution."<sup>61</sup>

By the 1930s, the representation of black people on the British stage was beginning to be challenged. While James was in France, in November 1933, *At What a Price*, a pioneering production written and directed by the Jamaican feminist Una Marson, the secretary of the League of Coloured Peoples, had been staged in London. With an amateur cast composed of League members, this play about family life in Jamaica then went on to enjoy a brief run at the Scala Theatre in January 1934.<sup>62</sup> Until Marson's play, as Deirdre Osborne has noted, "the presence of black people on the British stage into the early twentieth century remained by and large that of touring African-American individuals and groups," most notably the Shakespearean actor Ira Aldridge, the singer and dancer Florence Mills, and, of course, since the mid-1920s, Paul Robeson.<sup>63</sup>

James recalled that, after his return from France in March 1934, he had had the fortune to meet Robeson, the icon of the American and British stage, "at various places" in London, including "at the houses of English people who were happy to invite Blacks as well as whites to their parties."<sup>64</sup> Born in Princeton, New Jersey, in 1898, Paul Robeson from an early age displayed outstanding talents as a singer, athlete, and actor, though it was as a law student that he moved in 1919 to Harlem, New York, "the Negro capital of the world." There he joined the Amateur Players, a group of black students, and from that moment his phenomenal career on the stage (and screen) took off.<sup>65</sup> As James recalled, Robeson "was not only a very famous man in England but he was very much loved by everybody. . . . To have spent half an hour in his company or to have ten minutes alone with him, was something that you remembered for days, and if I had to sum up his personality in one word, or rather two, I would say it was the combination of immense power and great gentleness."<sup>66</sup> As Robert Hill notes, "At a very profound and fundamental level, Robeson as a man *shattered* James's colonial conception of the Black Physique. In its place the magnificent stature of Robeson gave to him a new appreciation of the powerful and extraordinary capacities which the African possessed, in both head and body."<sup>67</sup>

Robeson had starred in several important productions on the British stage, including Eugene O'Neill's *Emperor Jones* (1925), *The Hairy Ape* (1931), and *All God's Chillun Got Wings* (1933); Oscar Hammerstein's *Show Boat* (1928); and Shakespeare's *Othello* (1930).<sup>68</sup> In May 1935, Robeson starred in *Stevedore*, by the Americans Paul Peters and George Sklar. This play was a dy-

dynamic social realist portrayal of a multiracial dock strike in America begun after a black docker was falsely accused of rape. As Marie Seton, an English actress who had become a theatre and art critic, recalled, “*Stevedore* was an important play: for the first time in the theatre Negroes were shown fighting for their rights and their lives, with white workers joining them in their resistance to a racist mob.”<sup>69</sup> What made it truly remarkable was the cast of West Indian and African amateurs supporting Robeson on the London stage, including Kathleen Davis, James’s friend from the Maverick Club in Trinidad, as Ruby.<sup>70</sup>

Central to assembling such a cast was Amy Ashwood Garvey, the former wife of Marcus Garvey. Amy Ashwood Garvey, also Jamaican and a playwright and theatre producer in her own right, had taken her shows across America and the Caribbean in the 1920s. After moving to London in 1934 she investigated the possibility of taking a company of artists of African descent to West Africa. However, when this plan fell through, she and her partner, the Trinidadian musician and actor Sam Manning, opened the Florence Mills Social Parlour in London’s Carnaby Street, which became “a haunt of black intellectuals.”<sup>71</sup> In London, Manning put on black musical and comic revues with “singers and actors from Liverpool, Cardiff and the West Indies.”<sup>72</sup> The production of *Stevedore* in May 1935 seems to have been a critical and inspiring breakthrough for all concerned. Its talented director, André van Gysegem, who had also directed Robeson in *All God’s Chillun Got Wings*, was soon to leave for South Africa to help establish the Bantu People’s Theatre.<sup>73</sup> Paul Robeson declared that it was his aim to establish a “Negro theatre” in London, possibly on the model of the Negro People’s Theatre being formed in Harlem after the riots of March 1935.<sup>74</sup>

James may well have been aware of a separate shift toward the medium of radical theatre among leading young English intellectuals at this time, who, like him, had radicalized politically amid the economic crisis and a rising threat of fascism. Most notable were the “Left Poets” around W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Cecil Day-Lewis, and Christopher Isherwood, who, while studying at Oxford and Cambridge, embraced a “Marxism of the heart,” which Stuart Samuels has described as “a philosophy of personal action, a moral force for good.” Inspired in part by the Anglo-American poet T. S. Eliot, whose poem *The Wasteland* (1922) captured the imagination of many growing up after the devastation of the Great War, and who had himself

turned to writing religious plays in the 1930s, the Auden Group was attracted to the Group Theatre, founded in 1932. The Group Theatre was closely associated with London's Westminster Theatre, and in February 1934, the Group produced its first big production, Auden's *The Dance of Death*, a satirical attack on bourgeois civilization.<sup>75</sup>

While James was perhaps encouraged by such movements as the Group Theatre and the unapologetically amateur Workers' Theatre Movement around the Communist Party, one suspects his vision of political theatre was on a far grander scale. It was closer to that of a less well-known third artistic current among British socialist playwrights, the Left Theatre group. Formed in 1934, it tried to bring some of the more sophisticated European developments in theatre — pioneered by the likes of Bertolt Brecht and Ernst Toller — to England. The Left Theatre group was searching for creative new forms of political theatre, and it aspired to "Total Theatre," combining dance, music, and drama — and James's *Toussaint Louverture* might be best seen as in this mould.<sup>76</sup>

### **Countercultures of Modernity**

C. L. R. James, having written *Toussaint Louverture*, decided to show his playscript to Marie Seton, "a good friend."<sup>77</sup> In 1935, when James must have passed his script to her, Seton had recently returned from a trip to the Soviet Union with Paul and Eslanda Robeson. The visit had been organised at the behest of the Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, an artistic genius of the twentieth century, whom she had first met in 1932 on a visit to the Soviet Union.<sup>78</sup> Eisenstein was interested in having Robeson star in a proposed film about the Haitian Revolution. The director of such classic films about the Russian Revolution as *Strike* (1924), *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), and *October* (1927), Eisenstein had become fascinated by Haitian history and had purchased a copy of John W. Vandercook's dramatic novel *Black Majesty: The Life of Christophe, King of Haiti* (1928) for a dollar in 1930, while in Hollywood working for Paramount. Eisenstein corresponded with the British socialist filmmaker Ivor Montagu and Paul Robeson about the prospect of filming *Black Majesty* but had no illusions about Paramount's support. As Montagu recalled, the idea of making the film "did not come into the running . . . we knew too much about the Hollywood set-up to imagine for a moment that such a subject could be acceptable to a big Hollywood corporation."<sup>79</sup> The

fact that Haiti itself was under American military occupation at the time hardly helped matters.

Yet Eisenstein did not abandon his dream. He was able to learn more about Robeson from Marie Seton when they met in 1932, after his return to Moscow. Seton had seen Robeson play the character of Joe in a London production of *Show Boat* in April 1928, though she had not met him until 1930, when he played Othello opposite the twenty-two-year-old Peggy Ashcroft at London's Savoy Theatre.<sup>80</sup> Eisenstein asked Seton "to act as intermediary and persuade Robeson to come to Moscow so that he could discuss the proposed film."<sup>81</sup> It is doubtful that Robeson took much persuading. The son of a former slave, he had brought his father to tears when, at seventeen, he had given an impassioned oration of Wendell Phillips's tribute to Toussaint Louverture in a high school contest. One of his earliest film roles was in O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* (1933), about a black American who, more by accident than design, ends up ruling an unnamed Caribbean island, not unlike Haiti.<sup>82</sup>

The stage was then set for a tremendous meeting of minds when Robeson (with Marie Seton and his wife, Eslanda) made the voyage to meet Eisenstein, arriving in Moscow in late December 1934. Seton described their intense discussions: "After knowing Robeson for twenty-four hours, Eisenstein, who was a sceptical critic of great men, attributed human genius to Robeson because he was without falseness. Six days later Robeson, who had met many of the greatest artists and thinkers of the twentieth century, said that meeting Eisenstein was one of the greatest experiences of his life."<sup>83</sup> There now seemed at least a chance that Eisenstein's film on the Haitian Revolution would finally go ahead with Robeson in the lead. On 6 January 1935, the Robesons and Seton left Russia to return to Britain.<sup>84</sup> Two days later, Eisenstein addressed the All-Union Creative Conference of Soviet Filmworkers, called to celebrate fifteen years of Soviet film. No doubt fully conscious of the hostile bureaucratic forces ranged against him among the Soviet film authorities, Eisenstein himself was now distinctly circumspect in his comments. As he explained in a reflective and retrospective manner, he *had* planned to produce as a film "the *best* episodes from the Haitian Revolution," starring "the remarkable black actor Paul Robeson, whom we welcomed here as our guest not so long ago."<sup>85</sup>

On her return to London from Moscow, and after being presented with a copy of *Toussaint Louverture* by James, Marie Seton took the playscript to the

Stage Society. Once described as a “quasi-Fabian dramatic club,” the Stage Society had been set up in 1899 to circumvent the Lord Chamberlain’s draconian censorship of the British stage by presenting private performances. It successfully established its reputation as a force in the British theatre world after putting on the first performances of plays by George Bernard Shaw and Arnold Bennett. Moreover, it was also committed to “introduce to the English public the best plays of contemporary foreign dramatists,” staging the first productions in Britain of work by world-famous playwrights, including Anton Chekhov, Henrik Ibsen, Somerset Maugham, Eugene O’Neill, Ernst Toller, and Leo Tolstoy.<sup>86</sup> In 1935, the officials of the Stage Society found themselves considering James’s *Toussaint Louverture*, and in keeping with their progressive internationalist tradition they made him an offer. As James recalled, “A very courteous old gentleman at the Stage Society said if I could get Paul Robeson to play the part, they would put it on.”<sup>87</sup>

This was easier said than done. Tracking Robeson down proved difficult. By early 1935, after a tour of concerts across England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, Robeson was not merely the toast of London’s theatre world but a popular singing idol in Britain. Offers for work were pouring in. Jacob (“Jack”) Isaacs of the Stage Society “spent several months trying to reach Robeson by telephone and letter.” Seton explained:

This seeming elusiveness was not because Robeson ranked himself and his talent so high, but that his experience with producers had been discouraging and often exceedingly painful. It was not pleasant to be offered all sorts of inferior material because the outlook of the white world towards black people was reflected in plays with Negro roles that corresponded in no way to reality and were often extremely offensive.<sup>88</sup>

Indeed, in April 1935, Robeson had an “exceedingly painful” experience when Alexander Korda’s film of Edgar Wallace’s *Sanders of the River* was released. Like James, Robeson had “discovered Africa” in London, studying at what is now the School of Oriental and African Studies, and he clearly hoped *Sanders of the River*, in which he played the character of the African chief Bosambo, would for once portray something of the majesty of the African continent for a mass audience.<sup>89</sup> Instead, the film ended up glorifying the British Empire.<sup>90</sup>

### Enter Mussolini, Stage Right . . .

An even more titanic clash of fiction and reality with respect to Africa was by now well under way. In early 1935, the murderous intentions of Mussolini, the dictator of fascist Italy, to conquer the African state of Ethiopia (then called Abyssinia) became apparent. To justify such nineteenth-century-style empire building, in time-honoured fashion, the criminal invasion and occupation of a sovereign nation was declared to be “a war of civilization and liberation.”<sup>91</sup>

Robert Hill has drawn attention to how Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia “marked the turning-point of nineteenth-century and post-war Black nationalism and paved the way for the emergence of an explicitly political Pan-Africanism,” noting that “the contribution of C. L. R. James would prove to be one of the essential factors in clearly establishing the changed outlook.”<sup>92</sup> As Italian war drums beat ever louder, James remembered that Amy Ashwood Garvey and he both “felt that there ought to be an opposition” in Britain to Mussolini’s looming war and that she had “a unique capacity to concentrate all the forces available and needed for the matter in hand.”<sup>93</sup> Together they revived an ad hoc committee formed in 1934 to aid the Gold Coast Aborigines’ Rights Protection Society’s deputation to England.<sup>94</sup> James became the chairman of the resulting International African Friends of Abyssinia (IAFA).<sup>95</sup> The first public meeting of the IAFA held to protest against the looming war was in London on 23 July 1935. *West Africa* described it as “crowded” with “men and women of African descent.” The meeting sent “resolutions of sympathy with Abyssinians in their resolve to maintain independence” and began a fund to either “send an ambulance” or “found a permanent hospital if there is no war.”<sup>96</sup>

On Sunday, 28 July 1935, the IAFA held its second public meeting. As *West Africa* reported, “a crowded meeting of sympathisers with Abyssinia, was held, presided over by Mrs A. A. Garvey, of the West Indies. The speakers represented several African territories.”

The first speaker was Mr C. L. R. James, a West Indian writer and journalist, one of whose short stories was adjudged among the best of a recent year. He surveyed the history of Abyssinia’s intercourse with foreign Powers. His plea may be summarised as follows: Africans and persons of African descent all over the world have always looked with zealous pride

at Abyssinia, which, alone of ancient African kingdoms, still maintains independence. They therefore viewed with alarm and indignation the desire expressed on behalf of Italy, of conquering Abyssinia and the concentration of Italian troops and armaments on the Abyssinian frontiers. . . . Mr James expressed the belief that many Africans would be willing to offer themselves for the frontline, or for any auxiliary form of service in the event of war.<sup>97</sup>

The IAFA did consider organizing an “International Brigade” to go from Britain and fight fascism in Ethiopia.<sup>98</sup> At an IAFA rally in London’s Trafalgar Square on 25 August 1935, James declared “the question of Ethiopia has brought about a union of sentiment between black men in Africa, America, the West Indies and all over the world. . . . Ethiopia’s cause is our cause and we will defend it by every means in our power.”<sup>99</sup> James’s speeches in August 1935 give a sense of how Ethiopia and his study of the Haitian Revolution fired his imagination. Toussaint had defeated the European armies through a ruthless guerrilla war waged from the mountains of Haiti, and the Ethiopians’ victory at Adowa in 1896 had been achieved in a similar manner, through adopting a “scorched earth” strategy and retreating into the mountains, before falling on the cut-off Italian army.<sup>100</sup> James put it to an IAFA public meeting on 16 August 1935 that the Ethiopians should “destroy their country rather than hand it over to the invader. Let them burn down Addis Ababa, let them poison their wells and water holes, let them destroy every blade of vegetation.”<sup>101</sup>

In late August or September 1935, James was at last able to propose the idea of his play to Paul Robeson. “[Jack] Isaacs and I ran him down at some party, told him about it and he agreed to read the script.” Robeson was at the height of his powers and reputation at this time. Martin Duberman notes that “James’s play was one of four on various aspects of the Haitian revolution that Robeson had been considering.” But Robeson, according to James, “read it and with great simplicity and directness said, yes, he would be ready to play the role.”<sup>102</sup> Robeson had just been offered the chance of recreating his character Joe in a film version of *Show Boat*, but he felt that James’s play would “satisfy his political needs.” In September 1935, the Robesons left for Hollywood. “The [*Show Boat*] shoot was condensed into a two-month period so Robeson could get back to London in time for rehearsals of C. L. R. James’s play about Toussaint.”<sup>103</sup> From October 1935, as Mussolini

waged war on the people of Ethiopia, notices about the play began appearing in the British press.

### **The Performance of *Toussaint Louverture***

In order to help prepare *Toussaint Louverture* for the stage, in February 1936 James took a break from an intensive speaking tour across Britain and Ireland. From an examination of the actual 1936 programme and comparison of the scenes described there with the longer 1934 script, it is clear the original script was too long at eleven scenes for a play that would only have two performances by the Stage Society, so cuts were necessary. James removed three scenes (Scenes 1 and 4 from Act I and Scene 1 from Act III) and he made abridgements so that the story still flowed relatively smoothly.<sup>104</sup> One consequence of the revisions however was that some characters (including Toussaint's wife and sons) were completely removed. Any regrets James may have had about cuts were doubtless outweighed by the excitement of knowing his play was going into production with Paul Robeson in the lead.

The director was Peter Godfrey, "a young man . . . who later came to Hollywood and made films," although at times when Godfrey was occupied James himself had to rehearse the cast.<sup>105</sup> As James recalls:

[Paul Robeson] was here, as elsewhere, always the centre of attention, a not easy role to fill. Besides playing the lead, he was his own extraordinary self and not only players but all who were connected with the stages where we rehearsed had their eyes fastened on him and were all ears when he spoke. Yet he continued to be that extraordinary combination of immense power enclosed in a pervading gentleness. Paul listened all the time to what Peter Godfrey or I had to say. I was somewhat naïve then and was always ready to say exactly how I thought the words of the character should be said and what the character ought to do. Paul was always ready to listen and to oblige, far more so than one or two others in the cast.<sup>106</sup>

The weeks in rehearsal with Robeson, whom James regarded as "the most remarkable human being [he had] ever met," must have been one of the most incredible experiences of James's life up to that point.<sup>107</sup> As James, interviewed in November 1983, recalled, "The moment he came onto the stage, the whole damn thing changed. It's not a question of acting . . . the physique and the voice, the *spirit* behind him—you could see it when he was on stage."<sup>108</sup>

The cast assembled around Robeson was remarkable, featuring as it did other black professional actors from throughout the African diaspora, including Robert Adams, who played Dessalines. Adams, born in British Guiana, had, like James, been a distinguished schoolteacher who produced and acted in amateur productions before coming to Britain. He had worked with Paul Robeson in *Sanders of the River* and *Midshipman Easy*, and in 1935 he made his London stage debut in *Stevedore*.<sup>109</sup> Also recruited from *Stevedore* was the Nigerian Orlando Martins, who played the role of Boukman.<sup>110</sup> Black amateur actors—including other veterans of *Stevedore*, such as John Ahuma, Rufus E. Fennell, and Charles Johnson—were included, while the remaining cast was recruited through the Stage Society itself, many of whom were experienced professional actors or rising stars such as Harry Andrews.<sup>111</sup>

The play was staged at the 730-seat Westminster Theatre, on the fringes of London's West End in Palace Street. The owner of the Westminster Theatre during this period was A. B. Horne, and it was managed by Anmer Hall. Michael Sidnell notes that Hall learnt that "Sunday performances were a way of getting a hearing for new or neglected plays without going to great expense." With its quite liberal management, it is not surprising that the Westminster Theatre was a home for the radical Group Theatre, and James's *Toussaint Louverture* had followed a series of plays by "the Auden Group," most notably Auden and Isherwood's *The Dog beneath the Skin*.<sup>112</sup> The famous theatre critic Herbert Farjeon noted at the end of the 1930s that "the Westminster Theatre has probably housed during the present decade a higher percentage of interesting plays than any other theatre north of the Thames." In 1955, the Westminster Theatre produced an all-African play, *Freedom*, which toured Europe and was filmed in Nigeria in 1956 with a cast of thousands.<sup>113</sup>

Those wishing to see the performance had to pay at least one guinea, the basic annual membership subscription to the Stage Society.<sup>114</sup> As well as the Sunday evening performance on 15 March, there was a matinee the next day, and for this final performance James himself was called upon to step in for Rufus E. Fennell, the actor playing the "small part" of Macoya. "I was in it by accident. . . . I wanted to sit in the back and watch the play . . . not to be mixed up in it. But I dressed myself up and played it."<sup>115</sup> Overall, though the production went well, James would always remember it was Paul Robeson who stole the show.<sup>116</sup>

## THE AFTERMATH

While James's *Toussaint Louverture* was being performed, the British film *Rhodes of Africa* was just out in cinemas. In the film, Cecil Rhodes is quoted as saying, "I think of the natives as little children who must be educated—and sometimes punished."<sup>117</sup> James's play not only represented a much-needed antidote to such imperial propaganda, but also symbolised in an important sense the Ethiopian resistance to Mussolini.<sup>118</sup> The first review of the play appeared in the *New York Times*, which noted that "although unevenly written and produced, the episodic drama of the rebellion of San Domingo slaves at the end of the eighteenth century nevertheless held an appreciative audience's attention throughout, receiving an ovation at the final curtain."<sup>119</sup> Astute critics such as Ivor Brown grasped some of the real depth of the play, noting that James's "Toussaint was a real tragedy hero, and Mr Robeson bestowed tremendous power on the picture of this tribal hero in victory and frustration."<sup>120</sup> *Toussaint Louverture* was widely regarded as a success, and it must surely stand as the most outstanding anti-imperialist play ever to make it onto London's West End during the interwar period. As the *New Leader* noted:

The whole play cogently puts the problem of empire with its exploitation and slavery of the coloured people. The "civilising" missions of the Capitalist Governments, their promises solemnly made and lightly scrapped, their trickery, makes a pretty picture for an audience whose rulers have the largest empire in the world under their domination. The production, with its minimum of scenery, is excellently done by Peter Godfrey, and the large cast, many of them Negroes, succeeds in convincing the audience that an Empire is nothing of which any white civilisation can be proud.<sup>121</sup>

After the shows in March 1936, Robeson himself was "pleased" with how *Toussaint Louverture* had gone; as James remembers, "We agreed that we should seek ways and means to do it commercially."<sup>122</sup> Indeed, at the time this must have seemed a real possibility, and James had even "received a cable from a Broadway producer asking him to arrange a production in New York."<sup>123</sup>

### **Toussaint Louverture's Place in History**

In 1963, a revised edition of *The Black Jacobins* was published. As well as adding footnotes and an appendix, "From Toussaint Louverture to Fidel Castro," James added six new paragraphs at the start of his last chapter on "The War of Independence," which contain his most concentrated meditations on the nature of Toussaint's tragedy. In David Scott's judgment, "These are magnificent passages . . . among James's most poignant sentences ever. And yet they bear rereading several times over not only for their somber quality of beauty, but for their attempt to refigure our understanding of Toussaint Louverture and the predicament he engaged."<sup>124</sup>

Perhaps as part of this project of refiguring Toussaint, James now helped his fellow Trinidadian, Dexter Lyndersay, adapt *The Black Jacobins* into a new play of that title. James felt the victory of many national liberation movements internationally in the postwar world meant that, as he later recalled, "the idea I was expressing should be differently expressed . . . writing about the struggle for independence in 1956 or 1960 was very different from what it was in 1936."<sup>125</sup> As James told Reinhard Sander, "After twenty-five years the colonial revolution had made great strides so about that time I began to rewrite it [the play] in view of the new historical happenings."<sup>126</sup> The play version of *The Black Jacobins* was first performed at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria in 1967, directed by Lyndersay amid the tumult of civil war to an enthusiastic reception.<sup>127</sup> It has since been staged numerous times, and this later script has necessarily formed the basis of scholarly discussion of "James's play."<sup>128</sup>

The later play essentially followed the same chronological structure as *Toussaint Louverture*. There is the same humour, the lively music, drumming ebbing and flowing into the action, and there are still moments of rare dramatic power. Yet by the 1960s James had experienced for himself, in Trinidad with Eric Williams and in Ghana with Kwame Nkrumah, both the excitement and the disappointment generated by movements for colonial liberation in the Caribbean and in Africa. If *Toussaint Louverture* was about the vindication of national liberation struggles written in the age of colonialism, in *The Black Jacobins* James and Lyndersay explored what lessons the Haitian Revolution might hold for national liberation struggles in the age of decolonisation. While Toussaint and Dessalines were still portrayed as heroic revolutionary leaders, other more radical leaders were developed as charac-

ters. The condemned Moïse castigates Toussaint as a dreamer: “Pitiful old Toussaint . . . you will remain just an old man with a dream of an impossible fraternity.”<sup>129</sup> The play version of *The Black Jacobins* ends with Dessalines portrayed not defiantly leading the Haitian masses to victory but as a corrupt tyrant, toasting his new position as “Emperor,” having personally betrayed Toussaint to the French.

James seems to have had two other concerns in the play of *The Black Jacobins*. First, the role of the ordinary slaves is given even greater emphasis: stage directions specify that “crowds say little but their presence is felt powerfully at all critical moments . . . this is the key point of the play.” Second, James seems more conscious of the experience of women during the Haitian Revolution, whether being sexually abused by cruel slaveowners or engaging in relationships with the likes of Toussaint and Dessalines. Yet the richness of character that defines *Toussaint Louverture* is absent from *The Black Jacobins*. The judgment of the British playwright Arnold Wesker on the play *The Black Jacobins*, expressed in a letter to James in 1968, seems fair. According to Wesker,

Your canvas is enormous and I was fascinated to read the way you handled it. . . . But there is a spark which is missing from the whole work. Forgive me, but there does seem to be something wooden about the play. The construction is dramatic; the dialogue carries the story and the dialectic of what you want to say, but when all the component parts are put together, it doesn't work.<sup>130</sup>

The publication of *Toussaint Louverture*, more than seventy-five years after it was first performed, will now make it possible to compare it to the play version of *The Black Jacobins* as well as to the many other classic plays written about the Haitian Revolution, such as those by Lamartine, Jean Brierre, Langston Hughes, Aimé Césaire, Derek Walcott, and Édouard Glissant.<sup>131</sup> In a short preface written in January 1986 to introduce the London production of *The Black Jacobins*, James himself remained hopeful that an audience still existed for the subject of his play:

The play has been successful with audiences in Europe, Africa, America and in the Caribbean. But nowhere has it swept the audience off its feet. However, it was written fifty years ago. Fifty years is a long time and what did not happen then can happen now. Lift the curtain, gentlemen.<sup>132</sup>

## Notes

1. The fragile playscript was catalogued “Toussaint Louverture [DJH/21]” and located among material dated 1943–45 in the Haston Papers, donated to the University of Hull in 1967. For more on how the historian John Saville secured Haston’s papers for the university archives at Hull, see John Saville, *Memoirs from the Left* (London: Merlin, 2003), 138–39. The Haston Papers, like the university archives themselves, are now located in the Hull History Centre.
2. See Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, *Against the Stream: A History of the Trotskyist Movement in Britain, 1924–1938* (London: Socialist Platform, 1986), 251–52. In the 1940s, Haston became a leading British Trotskyist, the first and only general secretary of the Revolutionary Communist Party, before leaving the movement in 1950. See John McIlroy, “James Ritchie (Jock) Haston,” *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, XII (2005): 124–36.
3. C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London: Penguin, 2001), 326.
4. Deirdre Osborne, “Writing Black Back: An Overview of Black Theatre and Performance in Britain,” *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 26, no. 1 (2006), 21.
5. Martin B. Duberman, *Paul Robeson* (London: New Press, 1989), 105.
6. Colin Chambers, *Black and Asian Theatre in Britain: A History* (London: Routledge, 2011), 98.
7. Errol Hill, “The Revolutionary Tradition in Black Drama,” *Theatre Journal*, 38, no. 4 (1986), 408. See also Chambers, *Black and Asian Theatre in Britain*; Martin Banham, Errol Hill, and George Woodyard, eds., *The Cambridge Guide to African and Caribbean Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 148, 226–27; and Judy Stone, *Theatre* (London: Macmillan Caribbean, 1994).
8. James, *Black Jacobins*, 201. In *Toussaint Louverture* and *Black Jacobins*, James used the anglicised term for Saint-Domingue, “San Domingo,” or “St. Domingo,” almost certainly to make it easier for a British audience to comprehend. The first recorded political play about the Haitian Revolution itself, *La Liberté Général, ou Les Colons à Paris*—“General Liberty, or The Planters in Paris” by an unidentified author, a certain citizen B, “a comedy glorifying abolitionist sentiments expressed by mulatto freedmen,” was written and performed in Saint-Domingue in 1796. See VèVè A. Clark, “Haiti’s Tragic Overture: (Mis)Representations of the Haitian Revolution in World Drama (1796–1975),” in James A. W. Heffernan, ed., *Representing the French Revolution: Literature, Historiography, and Art* (Hanover, N.H.: Dartmouth College, 1992), 242, 255. See also the discussion in Sibylle Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 214–26.
9. Shane White, *Stories of Freedom in Black New York* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 72–73, 86–88.
10. Hill, “Revolutionary Tradition in Black Drama,” 408–9.
11. C. L. R. James, “Introduction,” in Errol Hill, ed., *Caribbean Plays*, Vol. 2 (St. Augustine: University of the West Indies, 1965), viii.
12. Hill, “Revolutionary Tradition in Black Drama,” 414.

13. For more on James's "voyage in," see Nicholas Laughlin, ed., *Letters from London: Seven Essays by C. L. R. James* (Oxford: Signal Books, 2003), which contains articles James published in the *Port of Spain Gazette* in 1932, collected together with a useful introduction by Kenneth Ramchand.
14. George Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile* (London: Michael Joseph, 1960), 150.
15. Chris Searle, "Language and the Seizure of Power: An Interview with C. L. R. James," *Race and Class*, 50, no. 1 (2008), 82. While formal theatre never had popular roots in Trinidad, Selwyn Cudjoe has noted that "open-air, communal theatre in the form of Carnival, ramleelas, and hosay were always an integral part of the society, the product of the non-European people of the culture." See Selwyn R. Cudjoe, *Beyond Boundaries: The Intellectual Tradition of Trinidad and Tobago in the Nineteenth Century* (Wellesley, Mass.: Calaloux, 2003), 336.
16. Jean Besson, ed., *Caribbean Reflections: The Life and Times of a Trinidad Scholar (1901–1986): An Oral History Narrated by William W. Besson* (London: Karia Press, 1989), 55. James was known to friends and family as "Nello," a nickname for Lionel.
17. Richard Small, "The Training of an Intellectual, the Making of a Marxist," in Paul Buhle, ed., *C. L. R. James: His Life and Work* (London: Allison & Busby, 1986), 56.
18. Kent Worcester, *C. L. R. James: A Political Biography* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 248.
19. Paul Buhle, *C. L. R. James: The Artist as Revolutionary* (London: Verso, 1993), 22.
20. See Reinhard W. Sander, *The Trinidad Awakening: West Indian Literature of the Nineteen-Thirties* (London: Greenwood, 1988), and C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (London: Hutchinson, 1969), 119.
21. Stuart Hall, "A Conversation with C. L. R. James," in Grant Farred, ed., *Rethinking C. L. R. James* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 21.
22. Paul Buhle, "The Making of a Literary Life: C. L. R. James Interviewed," in Paget Henry and Paul Buhle, eds., *C. L. R. James's Caribbean* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 58. It was not until 1939 that West Indian history was recognized formally as a subject for a certificate and as part of school curriculum.
23. Kenneth Ramchand, ed., *Life on the Edge: The Autobiography of Ralph de Boissière* (Caroni: Lexicon Trinidad Limited, 2010), 59.
24. See the interview with C. L. R. James in MARHO: The Radical Historians Organization, eds., *Visions of History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 267, and James, *Black Jacobins*, xv, 336. James would later describe Waxman's biography as "superficial."
25. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, 117. The offending article, "Race Admixture" by Dr. Sidney Harland, appeared in *The Beacon*, 1, no. 4 (July 1931) and asserted that "while it is not apparent to what extent the negro is inferior in intelligence to the white man, there is little doubt that on the average he is inferior."
26. James's intellectual demolition of Harland is discussed further in David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 80–81.

27. Robert A. Hill, "C. L. R. James: The Myth of Western Civilisation," in George Lamming, ed., *Enterprise of the Indies* (Port of Spain: Trinidad and Tobago Institute of the West Indies, 1999), 256–57.
28. Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*, 83, 85.
29. In this James was following in the footsteps of other Trinidadian nationalists. See Selwyn Cudjoe, "CLR James and the Trinidad and Tobago Intellectual Tradition," *New Left Review*, 223 (1997).
30. James perhaps drew inspiration while taking on Harland from an earlier intervention made by John Jacob Thomas, another black Trinidadian schoolmaster, in response to James Anthony Froude, the famous English "man of letters" and a biographer and friend of Thomas Carlyle. In 1887, Froude had visited the British West Indies, and on his return to Britain he published *The English in the West Indies, or the bow of Ulysses* (1888). Froude's book deployed the most blatant and vicious racism, particularly against the people of Haiti, in order to challenge the increasingly popular argument that the West Indian colonies should now be given Home Rule, or self-government. Thomas, despite his ill health, now travelled to England and published a justly famous riposte to Froude, *Fraudacity: West Indian Fables Explained* (1889). Yet despite the brilliance of *Fraudacity*, Thomas remained strikingly silent about the Haitian Revolution itself, possibly on the grounds that he felt it more important to put a clear case for West Indian self-government by avoiding plunging into complicated historical controversies. It is possible that James felt a certain frustration while in colonial Trinidad because of this. After all, Froude, who would eventually become Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford University, had included a brief "history" of the Haitian Revolution in *The English in the West Indies*, yet as James later demonstrated, "every sentence that Froude writes is absolutely and completely wrong. *Every single sentence.*" See C. L. R. James, "The West Indian Intellectual," in J. J. Thomas, *Fraudacity: West Indian Fables Explained* (London: New Beacon, 1969), 39 (emphasis in original).
31. Errol Hill, "Emergence of a National Drama in the West Indies," *Caribbean Quarterly*, 18, no. 4 (1972), 39–40. See also Kole Omotoso, *The Theatrical into Theatre: A Study of the Drama and Theatre of the English-Speaking Caribbean* (London: New Beacon, 1982), 47, 131.
32. Percy Waxman, *The Black Napoleon: The Story of Toussaint Louverture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1931), 6, 293. James had read some Lamartine while in Trinidad and would read Lamartine's play in the course of his research. See Frank Rosengarten, *Urbane Revolutionary: C. L. R. James and the Struggle for a New Society* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008), 17, and James, *Black Jacobins*, 348. On Waxman, see Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*, 81, 243.
33. See C. L. R. James, *The Life of Captain Cipriani: An Account of British Government in the West Indies* (Nelson: Coulton & Co., 1932). The work sparked extensive discussion in colonial Trinidad, in particular in the pages of *The Beacon*. See Christian Høgsbjerg, "A Thorn in the Side of Great Britain': C. L. R. James and the Caribbean Labour Rebellions of the 1930s," *Small Axe*, 35 (July 2011).

34. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, 119. The completed novel that James carried with him was *Minty Alley*, which he had written in the summer of 1928 and which would be published by Secker & Warburg in the summer of 1936.
35. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, 122, 149. See also James, *Black Jacobins*, xv. On 22 January 1933, James spoke at a local ILP meeting in Nelson on the topic “Coloured Peoples under British Rule.” By this stage, the local ILP could already describe James as “a well-known, intelligent and capable speaker.” See *Nelson Leader*, 22 and 27 January 1933.
36. Other contributors included Sir John Harris, Parliamentary Secretary to the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society and author of *A Century of Emancipation* (1933); Charles Kingsley Webster, Professor of International History at the London School of Economics; and Reginald Coupland, Beit Professor of Colonial History at the University of Oxford and author of works such as *Wilberforce* (1923) and *The British Anti-Slavery Movement* (1933). What these representatives of the great and good had to say was epitomized in a quote from Coupland, who insisted that, after abolishing the slave trade in 1807, “Britain once more led the way in abolishing slavery itself.” See *The Listener*, 26 April 1933, 3; 10 and 31 May 1933.
37. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, 121. James remembers Constantine was “very, very pleased” by the broadcast while Harold Moody of the League of Coloured Peoples also paid tribute to James’s intervention. See *The Keys*, 1, no. 1 (July 1933), 17. James replied to the storm of protest from colonial officials by making sure “A Century of Freedom” was “circulated far and wide,” including publishing it back home in the *Port of Spain Gazette* on 17 June 1933.
38. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, 115.
39. C. L. R. James, “Towards the Seventh: The Pan-African Congress [1976],” in C. L. R. James, *At the Rendezvous of Victory: Selected Writings*, Vol. 3 (London: Allison & Busby, 1984), 240.
40. James would always pay tribute to his good friend Harry Spencer (c. 1894–1965), who with his wife, Elizabeth, ran a bakery and tea room in Nelson, Lancashire, and who funded James’s research visit to Paris. See *Nelson Leader*, 17 February 1933 and an obituary notice in *Nelson Leader*, 23 December 1965. In Paris, James was very proud that, as a black colonial subject from the West Indies, he was able to surprise librarians at La Bibliothèque Nationale with his knowledge of the French language. See Stuart Hall and Bill Schwarz, “Breaking Bread with History: C. L. R. James and *The Black Jacobins*,” *History Workshop Journal*, 46 (1998), 19.
41. J. P. Eburne and J. Braddock, “Introduction: Paris, Capital of the Black Atlantic,” *Modern Fiction Studies*, 51, no. 4 (2005), 733. The Martinican poet Aimé Césaire coined the term “Negritude” in the March 1935 issue of *L’Étudiant Noir*, a French journal. See Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 12.
42. For more on Cunard, see Barbara Bush, “Britain’s Conscience on Africa’: White Women, Race and Imperial Politics in Inter-war Britain,” in Clare Midgley, ed., *Gender and Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), and Maroula Joanou, “Nancy Cunard’s English Journey,” *Feminist Review*, 78 (2004).

43. C. L. R. James, *World Revolution 1917–1936: The Rise and Fall of the Communist International* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1994), 379–81. On the French events of 1934, see Chris Harman, *A People's History of the World* (London: Bookmarks, 1999), 494.
44. C. L. R. James, *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In* (London: Allison & Busby, 1985), 162.
45. Al Richardson, Clarence Chrysostom, and Anna Grimshaw, *C. L. R. James and British Trotskyism: An Interview* (London: Socialist Platform, 1987), 2.
46. Anna Grimshaw, ed., *Special Delivery: The Letters of C. L. R. James to Constance Webb, 1939–1948* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 136.
47. “Racial Prejudice in England,” *Nelson Leader*, 16 March 1934.
48. On 29 August 1793, a new Jacobin Commissioner in Saint-Domingue, Sonthonax, “hemmed in on all sides” and, recognising the fact that “the slaves who had not yet revolted, kindled by the revolutionary ferment around them, refused to be slaves any longer,” had proclaimed emancipation from slavery on the island. See James, *Black Jacobins*, 104.
49. “Polverel is said to have exclaimed at the news of another victory by Toussaint: ‘This man makes an opening everywhere’, whence the new name began. It is not improbable that the slaves called him *Louverture* from the gap in his teeth” (James, *Black Jacobins*, 344). Others have suggested the name relates to Toussaint’s personal voodoo practice.
50. *Toussaint Louverture’s* subtitle was “the only successful slave revolt in history.”
51. James, *Black Jacobins*, 20.
52. Paul B. Miller, *Elusive Origins: The Enlightenment in the Modern Caribbean Historical Imagination* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 78.
53. Hill, “C. L. R. James: The Myth of Western Civilization,” 256.
54. See Clark, “Haiti’s Tragic Overture,” 244–45.
55. C. L. R. James, “Notes on Hamlet [1953],” in Anna Grimshaw, ed., *The C. L. R. James Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 243.
56. Hall and Schwarz, “Breaking Bread with History,” 20–21, 27.
57. James, *Black Jacobins*, 234.
58. *Ibid.*, 237.
59. See Miller, *Elusive Origins*, 78.
60. J. S. Bratton, Richard Allen Cave, Brendan Gregory, Heidi J. Holder, and Michael Pickering, *Acts of Supremacy: The British Empire and the Stage, 1790–1930* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991).
61. Hazel Waters, *Racism on the Victorian Stage: Representation of Slavery and the Black Character* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 118, 122, 190, 214.
62. Delia Jarrett-Macauley, *The Life of Una Marson, 1905–1965* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 54, and Chambers, *Black and Asian Theatre in Britain*, 99.
63. Osborne, “Writing Black Back,” 19, 21.
64. James, “Paul Robeson: Black Star [1970],” in C. L. R. James, *Spheres of Existence: Selected Writings*, Vol. 2 (London: Allison & Busby, 1980), 256. In this incredibly important memoir, first published in *Black World*, James tells us he had not known Robeson

before the publication of Robeson's article "The Culture of the Negro" in *The Spectator*, 15 June 1934.

65. Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, 32, 43.

66. James, "Paul Robeson," 256.

67. Robert A. Hill, "In England, 1932–1938," in Buhle, *C. L. R. James*, 73.

68. Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, 148–49, 165, and Marie Seton, *Paul Robeson* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1958), 63. For a discussion of O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*, see Hazel V. Carby, *Race Men* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 77–79.

69. Seton, *Paul Robeson*, 102, and Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, 192. *The Times* of London described *Stevedore* as "a swift and exciting drama of a race riot seasoned with class propaganda." For the impact of *Stevedore* in Harlem in 1934, see Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem during the Depression* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 152.

70. Seton, *Paul Robeson*, 100. As Ronald Adam, the owner of the progressive Embassy Theatre which staged *Stevedore*, put it, "In assembling a cast of Negroes around Paul, I knew there would be unity of atmosphere in the performance."

71. Marika Sherwood, "Amy Ashwood Garvey," in Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, *Pan-African History: Political Figures from Africa and the Diaspora since 1787* (London: Routledge, 2003), 70; Tony Martin, *Amy Ashwood Garvey* (Dover: Majority Press, 2007); Barbara Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance: Africa and Britain, 1919–1945* (London: Routledge, 1999), 211; and Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, 192. See also Errol G. Hill, "The Caribbean Connection," in Errol G. Hill and James V. Hatch, eds., *A History of African American Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 278–79.

72. *News Chronicle*, 25 February 1935.

73. Seton, *Paul Robeson*, 103, and Colin Chambers, *The Story of Unity Theatre* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), 33. Van Gyseghem later returned to Britain to become the first President of Unity Theatre.

74. *News Chronicle*, 30 May 1935. On black theatre in Harlem, see Naison, *Communists in Harlem during the Depression*, 151, 204–9.

75. Stuart Samuels, "English Intellectuals and Politics in the 1930s," in Philip Rieff, ed., *On Intellectuals* (New York: Doubleday, 1969), 198, 207, 224.

76. Michael J. Sidnell, *Dances of Death: The Group Theatre of London in the Thirties* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 168, 260, and Chambers, *Story of Unity Theatre*, 33–34. The Left Theatre lasted from 1934 to 1937, and members included André van Gyseghem and the playwright and theatre critic Hubert Griffith. Their second production in 1934 was John Wexley's *They Shall Not Die*, a protest at the racism of the Scottsboro case in America.

77. James, "Paul Robeson," 257, and Alex Hamilton, "Profile: An Interview with C. L. R. James," *Guardian*, 25 June 1980.

78. Marie Seton, *Sergei M. Eisenstein* (London: J. Lane, 1952), 251.

79. Ivor Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood* (Berlin, Seven Seas, 1968), 345, and Richard Taylor, ed., *S. M. Eisenstein; Selected Works, Vol. IV: Beyond the Stars: The Memoirs of Sergei Eisenstein* (London: British Film Institute, 1995), 369. Black actors rarely ap-

peared in any films made at this time, and those films in which they did appear the characters they played were in a deeply racist fashion, as they appeared only as servants or savages. See Peter Noble, *The Negro in Films* (London: Skelton, 1948), 48, 56.

**80.** Seton, *Paul Robeson*, 55, and Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, 134.

**81.** Seton, *Paul Robeson*, 79, and Seton, *Sergei M. Eisenstein*, 317. At Seton's suggestion, Eisenstein wrote a letter of invitation to Robeson in March 1934. See Paul Robeson Jr., *The Undiscovered Paul Robeson: The Early Years, 1898–1939* (New York: Wiley, 2001), 213–14.

**82.** Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, 17, 167. It might be noted that criticisms of a residual primitivism in the main character of Brutus Jones persist, making direct connections with the Haitian Revolution in *The Emperor Jones* problematic.

**83.** Seton, *Paul Robeson*, 86, and Yon Barna, *Eisenstein* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1973), 189–90. See also Sergei M. Eisenstein, *Immoral Memories: An Autobiography* (London: Owen, 1983), 213.

**84.** Seton, *Paul Robeson*, 96, and Seton, *Sergei M. Eisenstein*, 329. In Moscow, Robeson told a reporter that “the most important development in Soviet culture I have seen is in the moving picture field.” See Philip S. Foner, ed., *Paul Robeson Speaks: Writings, Speeches, Interviews, 1918–1974* (London: Quartet, 1978), 102.

**85.** Richard Taylor, ed., *S. M. Eisenstein: Selected Works, Vol. III: Writings, 1934–1947* (London: British Film Institute, 1996), 23.

**86.** Ian Britain, *Fabianism and Culture: A Study in British Socialism and the Arts c. 1884–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 174–75, 264, 300.

**87.** Hamilton, “Profile: An Interview with C. L. R. James.”

**88.** Seton, *Paul Robeson*, 76.

**89.** See Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, 171, and James, “Paul Robeson,” 260.

**90.** Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, 178–80, 627. *The Times* of London noted on 3 April 1935 that *Sanders of the River* “will bring no discredit on Imperial authority,” while the *Sunday Times* on 7 April 1935 added that the film provided “a grand insight into our special English difficulties in the governing of savage races.” Korda, an Anglophile Hungarian, had links to the Conservative Party Film Association and was committed to making propaganda films for the British Empire. See John M. Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880–1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 80, 89, 91, and Jeffrey Richards, “Boy’s Own Empire: Feature Films and Imperialism in the 1930s,” in John M. MacKenzie, ed., *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 145.

**91.** This quote from Mussolini is from a speech he gave at Pontinia, 18 December 1935, quoted in *The Times* of London, 20 December 1935. See George Padmore, *Africa and World Peace* (London: F. Cass, 1972), 153.

**92.** Hill, “In England, 1932–38,” 69.

**93.** Richardson et al., *C. L. R. James and British Trotskyism*, 5–6, and James, *Beyond a Boundary*, 250.

**94.** Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance*, 240.

- 95.** Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1987), 340, 345. Amy Ashwood Garvey was the honorary treasurer, and T. A. Marryshow and Jomo Kenyatta were also leading members. For more on other IAFAs members, see George Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism? The Coming Struggle for Africa* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1956), 145. The IAFAs disbanded after “major combat operations” had finished in Ethiopia and after others had formed the Abyssinian Association, active in April 1936.
- 96.** *West Africa*, 27 July 1935. See also Hakim Adi, *West Africans in Britain, 1900–1960: Nationalism, Pan-Africanism and Communism* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1998), 67–70, and Marika Sherwood, “Ethiopia and Black Organizations in the UK 1935–36,” *Black and Asian Studies Association Newsletter*, 43 (September 2005).
- 97.** *West Africa*, 3 August 1935.
- 98.** See C. L. R. James, “Black Intellectuals in Britain,” in Bhikhu Parekh, ed., *Colour, Class and Consciousness: Immigrant Intellectuals in Britain* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1974), 158–59. As James recalled, “We wanted to form a military organisation which would go to fight with the Abyssinians against the Italians. I think I can say here with confidence that it would have been comparatively easy to organise a detachment of blacks in Britain to go to Ethiopia.”
- 99.** *Nottingham Evening Post*, 26 August 1935. In a letter to his friends in the ILP, James explained that he hoped to join the Ethiopian army to make contact with “the masses of the Abyssinians and other Africans” (*New Leader*, 3 June 1936). The letter is reprinted in James, “Black Intellectuals in Britain,” 158–59.
- 100.** As James described in *The Black Jacobins*, “Toussaint, with half his 18,000 troops in the ranks of the enemy, could only delay and harass the advance, devastate the country and deprive Leclerc of supplies, while retiring slowly to the mountains . . . he would raid Leclerc’s outposts, make surprise attacks, lay ambushes, give the French no peace, while avoiding major engagements. With the coming of the rains, the French, worn out, would fall victims in thousands to the fever, and the blacks would descend and drive them into the sea” (248).
- 101.** S. K. B. Asante, *Pan-African Protest: West Africa and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis, 1934–1941* (London: Longman, 1977), 46.
- 102.** James, “Paul Robeson,” 257, and Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, 633. Philip Foner notes that Robeson had “hoped to appear in a play about Dessalines in London in 1935, but the plans for the play were never realized” (Foner, *Paul Robeson Speaks*, 510).
- 103.** Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, 194–96.
- 104.** Until a copy of the final 1936 script is found, we have only one scene from it (Act II, Scene 1, published in the journal *Life and Letters Today*, 14, no. 3 [Spring 1936]) to compare with the original. This scene is included in this book, following the complete original 1934 playscript.
- 105.** James, “Paul Robeson,” 257. Peter Godfrey with his wife, Molly Veness, had founded and run the pioneering Gate Theatre, where he had directed the first British production of *All God’s Chillun Got Wings* in 1926 and his own version of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in 1933

(Chambers, *Black and Asian Theatre in Britain*, 96). For more on Godfrey, see Norman Marshall, *The Other Theatre* (London: Lehmann, 1947), 42–52.

**106.** James, “Paul Robeson,” 257–58.

**107.** C. L. R. James, “The Old World and the New [1971],” in James, *At the Rendezvous of Victory*, 207.

**108.** Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, 197. James even revised his play so that Robeson could sing. “One or two people thought that it would be a mistake for Paul to play and not to sing. I was not too anxious for singing to be injected into what I had written in reality for the sake of hearing a marvellous voice, but I looked at Paul and his attitude was: ‘I am not particular but if you all want me to sing I will sing.’” Lawrence Brown, Robeson’s pianist and assistant and who had previously acted alongside Robeson in *Stevedore*, was already a member of the cast, playing Toussaint’s aide, Mars Plaisir, and so “an opening was made and he sang a song” (James, “Paul Robeson,” 258). See the stage instructions of Act III, Scene 4: “Before the curtain rises Toussaint is heard singing hymns with Mars Plaisir.”

**109.** After *Toussaint Louverture*, Adams’s further stage and screen successes included the films *Song of Freedom* (1936) and *King Solomon’s Mines* (1937) alongside Robeson, but the highpoint of his career was starring in the 1946 film *Men of Two Worlds*. In 1944, Adams, by then Britain’s leading black actor, became the president of the Society for the Prevention of Racial Discrimination in Britain and planned to establish a black theatre company in Britain, the Negro Repertory Theatre; this sadly failed to find enough support to mount more than one production, *All God’s Chillun Got Wings*, in 1944. In 1947, Adams became the first black actor to play a Shakespearean role on British television, the Prince of Morocco in *The Merchant of Venice*. See Stephen Bourne, “Adams, (Wilfred) Robert, (c. 1900–1965), Actor,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

**110.** Martins had left for London in 1917, serving intermittently in the British merchant marine until the end of the war. Aside from an early theatrical appearance in 1920 with the Diaghilev Ballet, Martins took various jobs, including working at Billingsgate fish market, wrestling (as “Black Butcher Johnson”), and snake charming for a circus. From 1926, he again found work on the stage and screen, notably appearing in the play *They Shall Not Die* (1934) and in the films *Tiger Bay* (1933), *Sanders of the River* (1935), and *Song of Freedom* (1936). His performance in the film *Men of Two Worlds* (1946) helped continue his on-screen career into the 1970s. He returned to Nigeria in 1959 and in 1983 was presented with the National Award of Theatre Arts by the Society of Nigerian Theatre Artistes. He later told his biographer, “I am very happy to say that I am one of the pioneers, if not *the* pioneer African film star.” See Stephen Bourne, “Martins, Emmanuel Alhandu [Orlando] (1899–1985),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; Stephen Bourne, *Black in the British Frame: The Black Experience in British Film and Television* (London: Continuum, 2001), 76–79; and Noble, *The Negro in Films*, 127, 177–78.

**111.** Particularly experienced among the group of professional actors were Townsend Whitling (1875–1952), Fred O’Donovan (1889–1952), and Wilfred Walter (1882–1958), who all warranted entries in John Parker, ed., *Who’s Who in the Theatre: A Biographical*

*Record of the Contemporary Stage* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1936). Aside from Harry Andrews (1911–89), who after *Toussaint Louverture* went on to star in many television programmes and films, other rising stars in the cast were Charles Maunsell, Norman Shelley (1903–80), Kynaston Reeves (1893–1971), and Geoffrey Wincott.

**112.** See Sidnell, *Dances of Death*, 47, 76.

**113.** See K. D. Belden, *The Story of the Westminster Theatre* (London: Westminster Productions, 1965), 19–21.

**114.** *The Observer*, 8 March 1936. This worked out as about the going rate for a play admission in London's West End. For the price of a night out at the London theatre around this time, see the letter in the *Sunday Referee*, 22 March 1936.

**115.** *The Era*, 18 March 1936, and Hall, "A Conversation with C. L. R. James," 33. The *News Chronicle* on 17 March 1936 noted "an actor who had played the part of Macoya stepped forward and took the applause as author yesterday afternoon." Fennell was a black West Indian who had been medically trained in America and had served as an attendant in the British army during the Great War before emerging as "an outstanding leader of Cardiff's black community" during the 1919 race riots. Fennell later acted in a number of plays and films, including the 1937 film *Jericho*, also starring Robeson. See Fryer, *Staying Power*, 308–10, and Jacqueline Jenkinson, *Black 1919: Riots, Racism and Resistance in Imperial Britain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 120–23.

**116.** James, "Paul Robeson," 258. Norman Marshall listed the Stage Society production of *Toussaint Louverture* as possibly the "best work" Peter Godfrey ever did—no mean tribute. See Marshall, *The Other Theatre*, 75–76.

**117.** See *Sunday Referee*, 22 March 1936.

**118.** I am indebted to Robert Hill for this last suggestion.

**119.** *New York Times*, 16 March 1936.

**120.** *The Sketch*, 25 March 1936.

**121.** *New Leader*, 20 March 1936.

**122.** James, "Paul Robeson," 259. Martin Duberman's belief that the film rights to James's *Toussaint Louverture* were bought by the *Show Boat* director James Whale is mistaken: this came about because he confused James's play with a proposed film starring Robeson based on Vandercook's novel *Black Majesty*. See Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, 196, 634; Foner, *Paul Robeson Speaks*, 105, 512; and Robeson Jr., *Undiscovered Paul Robeson*, 236.

**123.** *Port of Spain Gazette*, 19 April 1936. James sought to stage *Toussaint Louverture* in New York after his arrival in November 1938. See *New York Amsterdam News*, 5 November 1938, cited in Minkah Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917–1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 223.

**124.** Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*, 152.

**125.** Daryl Cumber Dance, "Conversation with C. L. R. James [1980]," in Daryl Cumber Dance, *New World Adams: Conversations with Contemporary West Indian Writers* (Leeds, U.K.: Peepal Tree, 1992), 115.

**126.** Reinhard W. Sander, "C. L. R. James and the Haitian Revolution," *World Literature in English*, 26, no. 2 (1986), 278. In 1953, after his forced return to Britain from McCarthy-

ist America, James sent a manuscript of *Toussaint Louverture* to the Haitian Embassy in London to discuss the possibility of staging his play in Haiti itself. See the letter from Gerard Jean-Baptiste of the Haitian Embassy to James, dated 15 September 1953, in the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, the Alma Jordan Library, West Indiana and Special Collections, C. L. R. James collection, box 7, folder 190. I am indebted to Raj Chetty for this intriguing reference.

**127.** Hill, "Emergence of a National Drama in the West Indies," 21, and Colin Chambers, ed., *The Continuum Companion to Twentieth-Century Theatre* (London: Continuum, 2002), 399.

**128.** *The Black Jacobins* was produced by BBC Radio in 1971; for the stage by, among others, Rawle Gibbons and the Yard Theatre in Trinidad in 1979; by the Graduate Theatre Company of the Jamaica School of Drama in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1982; by Yvonne Brewster and the Talawa Theatre Company at the Riverside Studios in London in 1986; and by the Theatre Arts Faculty at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, in 1993. See C. L. R. James, "The Black Jacobins," in Grimshaw, *The C. L. R. James Reader*, 67–111, 418, 424; Selwyn R. Cudjoe, "C. L. R. James Misbound," *Transition*, 58 (1992), 127; Nicole King, "C. L. R. James, Genre and Cultural Politics," in Christopher Gair, ed., *Beyond Boundaries: C. L. R. James and Postnational Studies* (London: Pluto Press, 2006), 32; Stone, *Theatre*, 152; Rosengarten, *Urbane Revolutionary*; and Mary Lou Emery, *Modernism, the Visual, and Caribbean Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 259.

**129.** James, "Black Jacobins," 96.

**130.** Grimshaw, *C. L. R. James Reader*, 418.

**131.** Clark, "Haiti's Tragic Overture," 255–56. For a discussion of Glissant's *Monsieur Toussaint* (1961), Césaire's *La Tragédie du roi Christophe* (1963), and Vincent Placoloy's *Des salines* (1983), see Bridget Jones, "We Were Going to Found a Nation . . .": Dramatic Representations of Haitian History by Three Martinican Writers," in Bridget Brereton and Kevin A. Yelvington, eds., *The Colonial Caribbean in Transition* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 1999).

**132.** James's quote is from the programme of *The Black Jacobins*, the 1986 London production by the Talawa Theatre Company, and it suggests he was content for the audience to believe they were seeing essentially the same play that had been performed fifty years before.