

# Entangled Caribbean rewriting, C.L.R. James, Aimé Césaire, and their books as postcolonial *lieux de mémoire*

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This article argues that books such as C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins* (1938) and Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939) can be important postcolonial *lieux de mémoire* (sites or realms of memory). Examining where memory is crystallized in book form, the article explores the entangled genealogies and rewriting of both key Caribbean works. Both James's history and Césaire's poem were rewritten repeatedly over the decades. My argument is that these two Caribbean foundation stones are themselves key Caribbean sites of memory in their own right. Césaire's *Cahier* becomes a crucial new element in James's rewritten history. The article tracks the ongoing and layered process of memory as palimpsest through which James's 1963 revised edition of *The Black Jacobins* is itself constituted. James's creative translation and 'misreading' of Césaire's poem is analysed as the means through which the Trinidadian Marxist makes the poem his own. This article explores a range of postcolonial memory sites including the 1968 Cultural Congress in Havana, Cuba, where both writers met, and the 1969 London performance of *Cahier* readings. Finally, the article considers the writers' gravestones to see how the writers' words have been used to memorialize James, Césaire, and their writing.

**Keywords:** *lieux de mémoire*, C.L.R. James, Aimé Césaire, 1968 Havana Cultural Congress, monuments, rewriting, epitaphs

Cet article soutient que des livres tels que *The Black Jacobins* de C.L.R. James (1938) et *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* d'Aimé Césaire (1939) peuvent être des lieux de mémoire postcoloniaux importants. En examinant où la mémoire est cristallisée sous forme de livre, l'article explore les généalogies enchevêtrées et la réécriture des deux œuvres caribéennes clés. L'histoire de James et le poème de Césaire ont été réécrits à plusieurs reprises au fil des décennies. Mon argument est que ces deux pierres angulaires caribéennes sont elles-mêmes des lieux de mémoire caribéens à part entière. Le *Cahier* de Césaire devient un nouvel élément crucial dans l'histoire réécrite de James. L'article retrace le processus continu des couches de la mémoire en tant que palimpseste à travers lequel l'édition révisée de 1963 est elle-même constituée. La traduction créative de James et la « mauvaise lecture » du poème de Césaire sont un moyen pour le marxiste trinitarien d'appropriier le poème lui-même. Cet article explore une gamme de lieux de mémoire postcoloniaux, y compris le Congrès culturel de 1968 à La Havane, Cuba, où les deux écrivains se sont rencontrés et la représentation à Londres en 1969 des lectures du *Cahier*.

Enfin, l'article examinera les pierres tombales des deux écrivains pour montrer comment leurs mots ont été utilisés pour commémorer James et Césaire.

**Mots clés:** lieux de mémoire, C.L.R. James, Aimé Césaire, le Congrès culturel de la Havane de 1968, monuments, réécriture, épitaphes

This article argues that two foundational Caribbean works of the twentieth century and their authors – C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins* (1938) and Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939) – are profoundly interconnected. It is my contention here that books can be important postcolonial *lieux de mémoire* (sites or realms of memory). Pierre Nora has suggested that particular sites become the locus of collective memory.<sup>1</sup> Nora's edited multi-volume publication (1984–92) has been recognized as one of the most influential studies of memory in late-twentieth century France. While Nora does refer to literature and certain books, including Proust and *Le Tour de la France par deux enfants*, there is not much detail about how these actually operate as *lieux de mémoire*. This article builds on recent attempts (2009 and 2020) to decolonize Nora's problematic idea, test it in a range of postcolonial situations, and fill in some blind spots.<sup>2</sup> My argument here is that collective memory has coalesced around these two key entwined Caribbean books. These books have entered collective memory repeatedly and there are cycles of return as in Césaire's title.<sup>3</sup>

Rewriting is one place where *The Black Jacobins* and the *Cahier* converge forcefully: the two texts become one when James translates sections of Césaire's poem, incorporating them into the new Appendix – the most visible of the 1963 additions to his history. This complex layering creates a palimpsestic structure, which superimposes elements of the *Cahier* on top of *The Black Jacobins*, transforming both works. Next the article explores the profound interconnection of James, Césaire, and their most famous works across a range of postcolonial sites of memory where leading anglophone Caribbean writers including James came together with Césaire. Key sites of intersection investigated include James and Césaire's meeting in Cuba at

1 Pierre Nora (ed.), *Les Lieux de mémoire*, 3 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1984–92).

2 Indra Sengupta (ed.), *Memory, History and Colonialism: Engaging with Pierre Nora in Colonial and Postcolonial Contexts* (London: German Historical Institute, 2009); Etienne Achille, Charles Forsdick, and Lydie Moudileno (eds), *Postcolonial Realms of Memory: Sites and Symbols in Modern France* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020).

3 On books as *lieux de mémoire*, see Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de mémoire*', in *History and Memory in African-American Culture*, ed. by Genevieve Fabre and Robert O'Meally (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 284–300 (p. 297); Petra James, 'Contemporary Literary Texts of Central European Authors as *Lieux de mémoire*', *Central Europe*, 12.1 (2014), 62–68.

the 1968 Cultural Congress of Havana, the 1969 London performance of *Cahier* readings in English and French by the Caribbean Artist Movement, and the 1989 performance after James's death at Piarco airport, Trinidad for the ceremony of return for his body. We will see how the *Cahier* has been used to memorialize James, and how he, Césaire, and their works have been treated as monuments.

Parallels and connections between James, Césaire, *The Black Jacobins*, and the *Cahier* have been discussed by Christian Høgsbjerg, Charles Forsdick, Philip Kaisary, Mariana Past, Jackqueline Frost, Jorge Lefevre Tavárez, John La Guerre, and Laura Winkiel.<sup>4</sup> This article seeks to develop these previous insightful observations by exploring the actual points of intersection where *The Black Jacobins* meets the *Cahier*, and where James and Césaire converge. Not enough attention has been paid to James's own translation work, nor to how the books themselves act as *lieux de mémoire*. My case is that both books are palimpsests composed of different places and sites. Both books function, the article argues, as complex 'text-networks' of echoes and reverberations across space and time.<sup>5</sup> This article tracks a palimpsestic sedimentation of memory as James, ever the attentive reader, reads Césaire across the long genesis of *The Black Jacobins*.<sup>6</sup> There is less evidence of Césaire as a reader of James in the other direction. In Césaire's biography *Toussaint Louverture; la Révolution française et le problème colonial* (originally published in 1961), there are only a couple of references to *The Black Jacobins*. In the 1963 revised edition of his history, James

- 4 See Christian Høgsbjerg, 'Globalising the Haitian Revolution in Black Paris: C.L.R. James, Metropolitan Anti-imperialism in Interwar France and the Writing of *The Black Jacobins*', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 48 (2020), 491–519; Charles Forsdick, 'The Black Jacobin in Paris', *Journal of Romance Studies*, 5 (2005), 9–24; Philip Kaisary, 'Human Rights and Radical Universalism: Aimé Césaire and C.L.R. James's Representations of the Haitian Revolution', *Law and Humanities*, 6 (2012), 197–216; Philip Kaisary and Mariana Past, 'Haiti, Principle of Hope: Parallels and Connections in the Works of C.L.R. James, Derek Walcott, Aimé Césaire, and Édouard Glissant', *Atlantic Studies*, 17 (2019), 260–80; Jackqueline Frost and Jorge Lefevre Tavárez, 'Tragedy of the Possible: Aimé Césaire in Cuba, 1968', *Journal of Historical Materialism* 28.2 (2020), 25–75; John La Guerre, 'The Social and Political Thought of Aimé Césaire and C.L.R. James: Some Comparisons', in *Dual Legacies in the Contemporary Caribbean: Continuing Aspects of British and French Dominion*, ed. by Paul Sutton (Abingdon: Routledge, 1986), pp. 201–22; Laura Winkiel, *Modernism, Race and Manifestos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
- 5 I am borrowing the term 'text-network' from Susan Gillman via Dan Selden. Susan Gillman, 'Black Jacobins and New World Mediterraneans', in *Surveying the American Tropics: A Literary Geography from New York to Rio*, ed. by Maria Cristina Fumagalli and others (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp. 159–82 (pp. 171–72).
- 6 Here I am developing the genetic criticism perspectives from my book. Rachel Douglas, *Making 'The Black Jacobins': C.L.R. James and the Drama of History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019).

grudgingly called Césaire's biography of Louverture 'extremely competent' but described it as lacking 'the fire and constant illumination' of other writing.<sup>7</sup> I agree with Madison Smartt Bell's assessment that this was the only biography that could have rivalled James's own and given it 'a run for its money'.<sup>8</sup> As for the 2014 edition of Césaire's literary works, there is no index entry for 'James, C.L.R.' My readings of Césaire's *Cahier* are particularly guided by A. James Arnold's genetic criticism of the various incarnations of Césaire's *Cahier* as it evolves over the decades.

Where we see James and Césaire converge is particularly in the interstices and the all-important textual outsides. When James revised his history, the most conspicuous addition was the new Appendix with the memorable title 'From Toussaint L'Ouverture to Fidel Castro'.<sup>9</sup> Cuba and especially the Cultural Congress of Havana from late December 1967 until January 1968 represent key sites of memory for James and Césaire. It was there that both writers first met, as James recalls in notes for his unpublished autobiography. Certainly, from James's perspective, this was an influential meeting, and the article examines the significance of this Havana encounter. By comparing James's pronouncements both in the Appendix and in his 1968 Congress paper, we see that James reclaims both Césaire and Cuba for the Caribbean. This runs contrary to the Latin-Americanist positioning of the Havana Cultural Congress itself. Ever since James's 1963 translation of the *Cahier* and his 1968 Cuban encounter with Césaire, the poem remained an influential site of memory for James and other anglophone West Indian intellectuals, including John La Rose, Edward [Kamau] Brathwaite, and their significant Caribbean Artists' Movement in London which performed the *Cahier* in 1969. So influential was the *Cahier* for James that extracts of the poem were chosen and performed for the ceremony of the return of James's body to Trinidad. Likewise, after Césaire's death, the *Cahier* would also be used to memorialize him, as previously it had commemorated James.

### James's translation of the *Cahier* in the 1963 *Black Jacobins* Appendix

Césaire's *Cahier* and James's *The Black Jacobins* were both published on the eve of WWII and would be separately rewritten over the following

7 C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins*, 2nd edn (New York: Vintage, 1963), p. 389.

8 Madison Smartt Bell, 'Afterword to the Italian Edition', *The Black Jacobins Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), pp. 313–21 (p. 318).

9 James, *The Black Jacobins*, pp. 391–418.

decades.<sup>10</sup> James's work has little-known yet important francophone dimensions. In 1930s Paris, James and Césaire came tantalisingly close to meeting when Léon-Gontran Damas – one of Negritude's 'Holy Trinity' – guided James through a maze of archives, libraries, and bookshops.<sup>11</sup> Between the two editions of his history, James read and started translating anarcho-Marxist French writer Daniel Guérin, which prompted James to rethink the dynamics of the French and Haitian Revolutions, turning to the focus to the 'Black Sansculottes' and de-jacobinizing or critiquing the Jacobin leadership.<sup>12</sup> James's history therefore has an important francophone dimension that must be recognized. When *Les Jacobins noirs* was translated into French by James's Trotskyist comrade and early Surrealist Pierre Naville, it travelled with a post-WWII time lag to Haiti, the land of its inspiration, and to francophone readers worldwide, including Césaire.

James himself updated his 1938 history a quarter of a century later. Through his revised 1963 Vintage edition, *The Black Jacobins* became an active text of the 1960s. The new 1963 Appendix titled 'From Toussaint Louverture to Fidel Castro' is centred around James's own translation project involving Césaire's *Cahier*. James selects, creatively translates, and comments on Césaire's poem. Here *The Black Jacobins* and the *Cahier* become one and are henceforth forever linked. As we shall see, James rewrites Césaire's poem through creative translation, making it his own. It is in this prominent added Appendix that James clearly turns towards his own return to his native land and the Caribbean more widely. Here too, he turns from history-writing towards Caribbean literature and identity. This famous essay is a key addition connecting Toussaint and Castro and giving a snapshot of West Indian history from Haitian independence (1804) up to the 1960s. James also turns to literary criticism in his quest for a West Indian identity, sounding West Indian literary voices including Césaire.

10 Aimé Césaire, *Retorno al país natal*, trans. by Lydia Cabrera (Havana: Molina y Cía, 1943). See Katerina Gonzalez Seligmann, 'Cabrera's Césaire: The Making of a Trans-Caribbean Zone', *MLN*, 134.5 (2019), 1037–58; Emily Maguire, 'Two Returns to the Native Land: Lydia Cabrera Translates Aimé Césaire', *Small Axe*, 42 (2013), 125–37. Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal/ Memorandum on My Martinique*, trans. by Lionel Abel and Yvan Goll (New York: Brentano, 1947).

11 See C.L.R. James, 'My Knowledge of Damas Is Unique', in *Léon-Gontran Damas, 1912–1978: Founder of Negritude: A Memorial Casebook*, ed. by Daniel Racine (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1979), pp. 131–34.

12 On James and Daniel Guérin, see Jackqueline Frost, 'Queer Tricontinentalism? Daniel Guérin's "Cuba–Paris"', *Third Text* (2021) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2020.1857547>> [accessed 19 February 2021]; David Berry, 'Rejecting "All the Faces of Subjugation": Daniel Guérin on Direct Democracy, Self-Management and Individual Autonomy', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 24 (2019), 314–36; C.L.R. James, 'Black Sansculottes', in *At the Rendezvous of Victory* (London: Allison and Busby, 1984), pp. 159–62.

At the very centre of the Appendix is James's own translation and extended analysis of Césaire's *Cahier*. James's creative translation makes the poem his own. He rephrases the title as 'Statement of a Return to the Country Where I Was Born'. In large part, the Appendix provides us with James's own statement on, and perspectives from, his own return to Trinidad to participate in politics there. 'Statement' brings to mind a political communication or pamphlet, such as James's own political pamphlet *Party Politics in the West Indies* (1962) dealing with his sharp split from Williams and his People's National Movement, as well as James's acute sense of disappointment about the break-up of the West Indies Federation.<sup>13</sup> These are, as well as Césaire's *Cahier*, the signposts that mark the Appendix.

James's strong translations can be interpreted as 'strong readings' in Harold Bloom's sense from *A Map of Misreading*.<sup>14</sup> According to Bloom's theory, 'strong' (mis)readings are what happens when one brilliant writer appropriates work by another equally accomplished writer.<sup>15</sup> This involves, according to Bloom, a misreading or strong reading of the original work, serving to bring out qualities that were previously more latent in other readings. It is in this context of strong Bloomian misreadings that we can map out James's strong reading of Césaire, illuminating the *Cahier*'s complex relations with his own *Black Jacobins*. The Appendix incorporates part of the poem, so that the *Cahier* literally becomes part of *The Black Jacobins* in the 1960s. James's strong reading becomes in fact his strong rewriting of Césaire's poem through which the poem is transformed. When we compare James's version of the poem with Césaire's own, it is then that the extent of James's creative mis/reading and mis/translation emerges strongly. What James completely transforms is the sense of the original poem, creating new meaning.

A large part of the Appendix is devoted to Césaire's poem. James's selection and analysis of extracts is creative. To make the poem his own, James starts and ends his translation in different places from Césaire. Where James chooses to start is about two-thirds of the way into the poem with the 'definition' of what Negritude is not: 'my Negritude is not a stone'. Certain French conventions are not translated, for example 'ni...ni'/neither...nor. Instead, James writes 'my Negritude is *no* tower, *no* cathedral', with the double 'no' reverberating.<sup>16</sup> An entire line is left out as James jumps over to the next lines, 'Hoorah for those who never invented anything / for those

13 C.L.R. James, *Party Politics in the West Indies* (San Juan, Trinidad: Vedic Enterprises, 1962).

14 Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

15 Bloom, pp. 3–4.

16 James, *The Black Jacobins* (1963), p. 399; emphasis added

who never explored anything / for those who never mastered anything'.<sup>17</sup> Sometimes, James proposes something quite different from the original, such as 'for in order to *project myself* [quite different from the original 'me cantonner' – to billet or confine me] into this unique race [the original 'pourtant' meaning 'still' or 'though' is not translated] know the extent of my boundless love'. Boundless is different from 'tyrannique' which literally means 'tyrannical'. Here James projects his own vision onto the *Cahier*.

James initiates a dialogue with Césaire in the Appendix. Speaker pronouns often change as James presents everyone meeting at the 'rendezvous of victory', which James presents as the climax of Césaire's poem. James's rewriting involves breaking up Césaire's long lines of prose into a more traditional poetic verse arrangement. In this way, the *Cahier* is reframed so that the shorter lines now look more verse-like, making the poem's form stand out more against James's prose in the rest of the Appendix. When James recentres the poem, what he identifies as being at its centre and where he finishes his translation is, in fact, right in the middle of a line in the middle of a stanza. James ends by translating 'et il est place pour tous au rendez-vous de la conquête' as 'and there is a place for all at the rendezvous of victory'. In French and English, the equivalent words are 'conquête' = conquest and 'victoire' = victory. If James had sought to translate this more closely, he could have proposed 'at the rendezvous of conquest'. This change of just one word is very significant. While 'conquest' is linked with more negative connotations, 'victory' is more positive: it refers to the winners, while conquest refers to the losers. Thus, James changes his ending of Césaire's poem, which is not the actual ending of the *Cahier* at all, by rewriting it. This – James's own rewriting of Césaire – would later become an important landmark in James's own work. Subsequently, *At the Rendezvous of Victory* would become the title of a whole 1984 volume of James's own selected writings. James always quoted from his own *Cahier* translation, saying 'I prefer that to any others, merely because I did it'.<sup>18</sup>

Edward Said would refer repeatedly to this James via Césaire insight as 'a very important phrase for me' where 'the opportunity for the alternative, what I call liberation' comes into view.<sup>19</sup> This phrase of James's via Césaire sums up 'the spirit of the image' of Said's own 'contrapuntal' method in the context of 'polyphonic work' as outlined in *Culture and Imperialism*

17 James, *The Black Jacobins* (1963), p. 400.

18 University of the West Indies, C.L.R. James Collection [Sc 82] (henceforth UWI), Box 14, Folder 309.

19 Edward Said, *Power, Politics and Culture* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), p. 220.

(1993).<sup>20</sup> Rewriting is itself, I would argue, a fundamental contrapuntal method for both James and Césaire who both return to previously written works to create them anew. Said's conception of the contrapuntal usefully frames James and Césaire's practice of rewriting. For Said, the contrapuntal is linked to rereading and reanimating certain works in the present.<sup>21</sup>

Ultimately, when James rewrites the poem, changing its form and content, he presents Césaire's *Cahier* as *the* Caribbean identity poem, and as formally summing up the very strong pattern of that identity James is trying to get at throughout the Appendix. Repeatedly, he describes the Caribbean as 'peculiar', 'sui generis', or what he calls 'of the West Indies West Indian'.<sup>22</sup> This Appendix presents a line of West Indian development running from Toussaint Louverture to Fidel Castro. As James makes clear, he links these two not because of the most obvious reason that they both led revolutions in the Caribbean but because they were both peculiarly West Indian. Here, James's possessive Caribbeanist reclaiming and repositioning of Fidel Castro and his Cuban Revolution as exemplifying peculiar Caribbeanness is clear. James's Appendix is centred around Césaire, his key notion of Negritude, and how the *thing* Negritude has been around much longer than the name.

When James first published *The Black Jacobins* in 1938, he did not yet know Césaire's *Cahier*, which would become such a key intertext for the 1963 revised edition. Yet, at the end of James's *The Black Jacobins* already in the 1938 version, there are strong Césairean overtones of 'upright'. What already drives the 1938 ending is a rebellious image of the colonized's defiant upright revolutionary stance. In the Appendix, James's strong reading focuses on Negritude's inclusivity: this is the rendezvous for all where the real history of humanity will begin after socialist revolution. More than that, this is the rendezvous of *victory*. Seligmann persuasively argues that Cabrera's 1943 Cuban translation 'exacerbates the pessimism in Césaire's text' by focusing on the trope of death.<sup>23</sup> In stark contrast, James's possessive translation exacerbates optimism instead by changing the perspective to focus on victory (winning) instead of conquest (defeat). Brent Hayes Edwards and Seligmann speak of 'décalage' for understanding gaps in translation concerning race and Black internationalism.<sup>24</sup> Disjointedness in the context

20 Said, *Power, Politics and Culture*, pp. 180, 220.

21 See Edward Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 25.

22 James, *The Black Jacobins* (1963), p. 418.

23 Seligmann, 'Cabrera's Césaire', pp. 1045–48.

24 Edwards, p. 14; Seligmann, 'Cabrera's Césaire', p. 1041.



of Caribbean translation and re/making also has a temporal aspect, often as a time lag. There was a considerable *décalage* or time lag between the publication of James's 1963 Appendix and that of its translation into French twenty years later in 1983. Such time lags seriously delayed the reception of James's important extended essay across the francophone Caribbean.

### **Césaire and James's meeting 'At the Rendezvous of Victory' and the influence of the *Cahier* on anglophone Caribbean writers**

James and Césaire's meeting place would be the momentous international gathering of the Havana Cultural Congress, which included more than 470 intellectuals from over 65 different countries. These intellectuals discussed the problems of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.<sup>25</sup> Here James would meet again with his key French counterparts Daniel Guérin and Pierre Naville (the original translator of James's history). Both Guérin and Naville, as well as British writer of Jamaican origin Andrew Salkey and James himself, kept notebooks or diaries of the Congress. These Congress notebook/diary-networks of this important Cuban moment are rhizomatic in their interconnectedness too. Apart from Salkey, there were a number of Black writers of Caribbean origin there, including James, Césaire, La Rose, and Robert Hill, as well as Haitian writer René Depestre who was then resident in Cuba.<sup>26</sup>

Cuba was the 'rendezvous of victory' for Césaire and James. James spoke repeatedly of this key encounter with Césaire.<sup>27</sup> This was on the occasion of James's 67th birthday on 4 January 1968, which was marked by a lunch party for forty guests including Césaire, Depestre, Guérin, and Naville, and a delegation from the American Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee (SNCC). In their private conversation, James and Césaire talked about the similar colonial schools that they had attended and then taught at: the Victor Schœlcher school in Martinique and Queen's Royal College in Trinidad. Césaire recounted learning Latin, Greek, and French literature at elite educational institutions in Martinique and Paris – Louis Le Grand,

25 On this Congress, see Frost and Tavárez, 'Tragedy of the Possible', 25–75; Katerina Gonzalez Seligmann, 'Caliban, Why? The 1968 Cultural Congress of Havana, C.L.R. James and the Role of the Caribbean Intellectual', *The Global South*, 13. 1 (2019), 59–80 (p. 59).

26 One folder marked 'Cuba' contains James's own original Congress notes, UWI Box 23, Folder 457.

27 See James's 1978 speech 'Fanon and the Caribbean'. James analyses Fanon as a 'political person' and as a 'man of action'. These qualities have also been extrapolated by James to Louverture, Paul Robeson, and Césaire.

the *École normale supérieure*, and the Sorbonne – before returning to Martinique to teach Latin, Greek, and French literature himself.<sup>28</sup> Always when invoking Césaire and his education, James’s point was that the *Cahier* was ‘one of the most drastic attacks ever made in the 20th century’ on Western civilization. As James puts it, ‘to write that tremendous attack, [Césaire] made himself, by his education for many years, a complete master of the educational and literary and historical aspects of Latin and Greek and French literature which is one of the foundation bases of European civilisation’.<sup>29</sup>

Like Césaire’s poem, *The Black Jacobins* also has significant Cuban afterlives.<sup>30</sup> According to Andrew Salkey’s travelogue *Havana Journal*, Cuban publication of the history had seemed close, with Congress participants already congratulating James.<sup>31</sup> Already in 1961, Depestre had written on behalf of Cuba’s Imprenta Nacional: ‘we would be extremely pleased if you would agree to change, for the Cuban edition, a few political considerations which we estimate of a polemical character’.<sup>32</sup> We do not have James’s reply, but James later observed: ‘I was informed that its publication in Cuba was very near, was in a month or two, but then the [project?] seemed to disappear and I am not surprised, containing as the book does, a not very extensive but unmistakably sharp criticism of the revolutionary policy of the Stalinist state’.<sup>33</sup> In the end, Casa de las Américas published the history in 2010.<sup>34</sup> Previously, a mutilated version of the Appendix had appeared in 1975, edited by Roberto Fernández Retamar – President of Casa de las Américas – and his wife Adelaida de Juan.

As for James’s actual presentation at the Congress, it was just over one page long and contained ten points.<sup>35</sup> James had promised Retamar ‘a bomb’. This ten-point presentation can be thought of as rewriting James’s 1963 Appendix. There are many overlaps between the two documents, with recurring names, notably Césaire, Castro, and also the Cuban-French

28 UWI Box 14, Folder 311.

29 UWI Box 14, Folder 309.

30 I use the term ‘afterlives’ as a metaphorical notion to invoke the relations between source texts and their avatars. See Terence Cave, *Mignon’s Afterlives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); *Pre-Histories and Afterlives: Studies in Critical Method*, ed. by Richard Scholar and Anna Holland (Cambridge: Legenda, 2009). In *Making The Black Jacobins*, I explore this notion of afterlives further in the context of James’s history and its reverberations.

31 Andrew Salkey, *Havana Journal* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971).

32 René Depestre, letter to James, 20 July 1961, UWI Box 7, Folder 183.

33 UWI Box 16, Folder 338.

34 C.L.R. James, *Los jacobinos negros*, trans. by Rosa López Ocegüera (Havana: Casa de las Américas, 2010).

35 See Salkey, pp. 115–17 where James’s paper is reproduced in full.

writer Alejo Carpentier. Here again, we see what an impact Césaire and his poem had on James. James's ten points reclaim Cuba as 'West Indian' for the Caribbean when he draws a similar line of development to the Appendix. James underlines the unprecedented contributions by West Indian intellectuals as '(6) whose climax has been attained in the Cuban Revolution, embodied for our purposes, in the work and personality of Fidel Castro'. What he says about the Cuban Revolution is that it '(7) tells us [...] the remarkable contributions which the West Indian type of intellectual has made to the emancipation of Africa and the development of Western Civilization [...] This unprecedented capacity for creative contributions'. James's Caribbeanist positioning here contrasts with the Congress's Latin-Americanist positioning.<sup>36</sup> James's bomb of a presentation criticizes the Congress: '(9) the population should have been formally represented here [...] because the population's peculiar historical origin and development make its intellectuals what they have been in the past, and indicate the role that they can play in the world in which we live'. James's final point is that '(10) the function of this Congress is that intellectuals should prepare the way for the abolition of the intellectuals as an embodiment of culture'. This 'bomb' met with a mixed reaction. As James would later comment, '[i]t was a congress of intellectuals summoned to Cuba [...] Since this statement was made by an intellectual, they did not pay much attention to it'.<sup>37</sup> James was calling for the intellectuals to abolish themselves and to involve the mass of the population in occasions such as the Congress – almost a contradiction in terms. As Salkey recalled, the group around James was always concerned that ordinary people were literally cordoned off from the Congress events. Salkey recalls that after James's paper, there were few questions and Retamar moved on to the next presentation.

And yet, there are indications that there was a two-way influence, with James's ten-point paper having a major impact on subsequent Caribbean cultural production, especially on Césaire, Retamar, and others not present in Cuba including Edward [Kamau] Brathwaite and their turn towards the Caliban figure, as Seligmann has argued.<sup>38</sup> While Césaire's recollections of meeting James appear less extensive than the other way round, Césaire's whole play *Une tempête* could be read as per Seligmann as responding to James's paper.<sup>39</sup> Depestre's 1968 interview with Césaire shows us how

36 On this, see Seligmann, 'Caliban, Why?'.  
 37 UWI Box 16, Folder 335.  
 38 Seligman, 'Caliban, Why?'.  
 39 Jackqueline Frost and Jorge Lefevre Tavárez have managed to find Césaire's lost Congress paper and also Césaire's interview with Sonia Aratán for *Casa de las Américas* journal.

the Martiniquan poet and James come together.<sup>40</sup> We see the influence of James's history, especially the 1963 Appendix when Césaire argues that Haiti was where he saw Negritude in action, that 'everyone has his own Negritude' and 'I have always thought that the Black man was searching for his identity'. The James-Césaire influence works in two directions simultaneously.

James continued to speak about the great significance of Césaire and his poem. As James and his history were exact contemporaries, these statements also underline by extension the fundamental importance of *The Black Jacobins* too. James would always continue in the vein of the Appendix, chasing 'a certain fundamental characteristic of the West Indian writers'.<sup>41</sup> He would always describe Césaire as 'the man of Negritude', adding that 'Negritude is essentially the creation of Césaire, not of Senghor'. Always James argued that Negritude was a West Indian notion, and not an African one, and downplayed Senghor's contributions.

Cuba was also where La Rose met Césaire for the first time. Throughout 1968, La Rose corresponded directly with Césaire. On 5 April 1968, the Caribbean Artists' Movement (CAM) meeting, chaired by Brathwaite, discussed every aspect of the Havana Cultural Congress.<sup>42</sup> During these CAM sessions, La Rose and other anglophone Caribbeans expressed an urgent need for a translation of the *Cahier* in English. At this time, James's Appendix offers the most easily available English translation. La Rose and CAM organized a successful performance in London of the *Cahier* on 6 June 1969 to mark the poem's thirtieth anniversary.<sup>43</sup> This London performance at the West Indian Student Centre featured an introduction by La Rose and readings in French and English. La Rose's introduction noted Depestre's recent interview with Césaire about possible Cuban and Haitian Negritude connections and Surrealism. La Rose stressed that the entire cast was West Indian including two from Martinique. It was described by one review as a 'definitive performance of the poem'.<sup>44</sup> This event constituted a major English-language performance of the *Cahier*, which carried James's 1963 Appendix translation further with its bringing together of the anglophone and the francophone Caribbean. Again, we see the great impression

40 René Depestre, 'An Interview with Aimé Césaire', trans. by Maro Riofrancos <<https://politicaleducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Interview-with-Aime-Cesaire.pdf>> [accessed 23 August 2020].

41 UWI Box 20, Folder 377.

42 George Padmore Institute (henceforth GPI) CAM/11/2/3.

43 Transcript, 'Reading of the Introduction to the *Cahier*, directed by John La Rose', GPI GB 2904 CAM/5/8/4; audio recording of performance GPI GB 2904 CAM/9/1/2/40-41.

44 Andrew Salkey, GPI 237/4.

that Césaire and the *Cahier* had on James and La Rose. Always, James continued to think about the poem and its author, working on translations and performances.

### **Ceremony of return, *Cahier* readings, and monuments to memorialize James and Césaire**

Césaire, his *Cahier* and the all-important notion of ‘return’ remained important to James in death as in life. Having lived out his last days on the frontline in Brixton, London above the offices of the Race Today Collective on Railton Road, James died on 31 May 1989. As per his wishes, James’s body was returned to his native land Trinidad from London. It was Césaire’s symbolic poem of return and exile that accompanied his body on this journey. La Rose arranged a ‘Ceremony of Return for the Body of C.L.R. James’ and listed the passages to be read out for this occasion, as noted in his copy of the *Cahier*.<sup>45</sup> This was at Piarco International Airport, Trinidad on Thursday 8 June 1989 when the plane bearing James’s body touched down there. As for the three passages, these are also listed on La Rose’s copy where his scribbles make it clear that he selected the passages, while the actor Errol Jones, a founding member of the Trinidad Theatre Workshop, read the passages aloud. Of these passages, the final one is the most significant: ‘And we are standing [...] rendez-vous of victory’.<sup>46</sup> This was the grand finale of the poem according to James’s own translation, and we see here that La Rose had accordingly changed the final word from ‘conquest’ (as it appears in all other published English-language versions) to ‘victory’, which is where James ended the poem mid-line and mid-stanza with a flourish. In 2008, performed readings from the *Cahier* would also memorialize Césaire at his state funeral in Martinique and later in 2011 his Pantheon honour ceremony and plaque.<sup>47</sup>

Texts inscribed on gravestones are important sites of memory. Both James and Césaire have excerpts from their texts engraved on their tombstones above the grave where their mortal remains are buried. James’s epitaph

45 John La Rose, notes and personal copy of the *Cahier*, GPI GB 2904 LRA (personal papers of John La Rose). See Jacqueline Frost, ‘The Funeral of C.L.R. James’ <<https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4333-the-funeral-of-c-l-r-james?fbclid=IwAR2tPCW34AodZiuE3j96q5z-OdaPaCSzlSSYUdxjm3JpgodU9WEK476REuY>> [accessed 21 August 2020].

46 George Padmore Institute, John La Rose Collection, pp. 138–40.

47 See Daniel Maximin, *Aimé Césaire, frère volcan* (Paris: Seuil, 2013).

is from his famous autobiographical cricket memoir *Beyond a Boundary* (1963):

Time would pass, old empires would fall and new ones take their place. The relations of countries and the relations of classes had to change. Before I discovered that it is not quality of goods and utility which matter, but *movement*, not where you are, or what you have, but where you have come from, where you are going, and the rate at which you are getting there.

James's last word sums up his sense of essential historical and dialectical movement, which is also reflected in the constant rewriting. James's final resting place is Tunapuna cemetery, the place where he was born. James's tombstone is in the shape of an open book. This always-open book is an appropriate way to memorialize James, the author of *The Black Jacobins*. He once commented that 'a closed book' was 'a vile phrase'. In that case, if any closed book is vile, rewriting can be thought of as helping to keep the book of James and also Césaire's Haiti-related works open, like the always-open book tombstone.

According to Césaire's final wishes, one of his later poems *Calendrier lagunaire* was inscribed on his tombstone, which is located near to Fort-de-France in Martinique. The 306 words of the poem are inscribed in two columns around a portrait of Césaire. This arrangement gives the gravestone the look of a book page of poetry. One verb which is repeated twenty times is 'j'habite'. This poem is concerned with dwelling physically on the earth in the physical body and in the sacred native earth.<sup>48</sup> This poem is from his last collection of poetry *Moi lumineaire* – a title which depicts the poet as clinging like algae on a rock. The fixity and linearity of the stone monuments contrasts with the transformation and transience of the physical remains below where the dust and bones intermingle with the vegetal and geological sedimentation and layers of their native lands' history fossilized in the earth.

Both final resting places are verbal tombs handcrafted by each writer during their lifetime. Here the verbal matter of their writing preserves the matter of the body in the unseen tomb space. Homophonic sound play at the end of Césaire's epitaph-poem ties together the sense of 'mes maux' [my pains] and 'mes mots' [my words]. Here words, texts, and books have a clear mnemonic function as *lieux de mémoire*. There is a need to inhabit and connect with the 'blessure sacrée' – plights such as the Middle Passage,

48 See Carrie Noland, *Voices of Negritude in Modernist Print* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

slavery, and colonialism. Both tombstones embed the writers' words and their bodies into the collective past and history of suffering. The thought of commemorating James and Césaire without reference to their writing would be unthinkable.

Over a period of several decades, James and Césaire engaged in a two-way dialogue, even if one side of this conversation is easier to piece together and document. James does not seem to feature as prominently in Césaire's memoirs and writings, and there is relatively little on Césaire as a reader of James. Looking at the constant rewriting of the James-Césaire text-network helps us to explore memory as a process. There are layers of anticolonial struggle and decolonization etched on each work. *The Black Jacobins* and the *Cahier* combine to represent sites of memory which make up the bedrock of the wider Caribbean community's symbolic repertoire. These texts remain central Caribbean anticolonial reference points today. Both Caribbean masterpieces are key for shaping collective Caribbean memories and constituting a sense of Caribbean identity, which is what James's Appendix articulates. Expressions of Caribbean collective memory and identity are shown by both writers to transcend insular boundaries, with their shared symbols including heroes like Louverture. The links that bind together James, Césaire, and their works are multiple and ever evolving. Both writers crafted anticolonial historical, political, and literary narratives. This rhizomatic James-Césaire text-network never becomes static or a fixed repository; both texts continue to inspire and be transformed even after both authors' deaths. This Caribbean text-network is a historically entangled space, and these works and memorials are etched with several layers. Together these works combine into forever entangled and unfinished dialogues. Both works are themselves constituted by an ongoing and layered process of memory as palimpsest.

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