

***** AND THE DOGS
WERE SILENT

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

translated
and with an
introduction
by **Alex Gil**

with a
foreword by
**Brent Hayes
Edwards**

Césaire's
Lost Play
of the
Haitian
Revolution,
a Bilingual
Edition



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Césaire's Lost Play of the Haitian Revolution,
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FOREWORD

Brent Hayes Edwards

The publication of Aimé Césaire's astonishing 1943 drama *And the Dogs Were Silent* is a monumental occasion. The typescript Alex Gil discovered fifteen years ago in the papers of the poet and translator Ivan Goll in a municipal library in eastern France is not simply an early draft of the impassioned and enigmatic "lyric oratorio" included under that title in Césaire's first book, *Les armes miraculeuses* (*The Miraculous Weapons*), which was published in April 1946 by Éditions Gallimard.¹ As will be immediately apparent to readers familiar with the poet's inimitable oeuvre, what Gil has translated here differs so thoroughly from the previously known version—having been disassembled and thoroughly recast in the drastic revisions Césaire undertook for the Gallimard book—that it could be described as an entirely different work. It is not an overstatement to suggest that, as a play that may be Césaire's most overt contribution to what Erroll Hill has called "the revolutionary tradition in black drama," the 1943 *And the Dogs Were Silent* has the potential to transform our understanding of Césaire and of Caribbean literature more broadly.²

The first revelation is that Césaire was so deeply invested in drama so early in his career.³ Although Césaire's plays *La tragédie du Roi Christophe* (1963), *Une saison au Congo* (1966), and *Une tempête* (1969) have received a good deal of attention, scholars have tended to assume that Césaire made a "turn" to the theater in the 1960s. By contrast, the version of "And the Dogs Were Silent" published in *Les armes miraculeuses* has often been described as a sort of hybrid experiment, a "dramatic poem" rather than a work intended for the stage.⁴ Readers have also emphasized the thematic and figurative resonances between it and the poems in the book instead of viewing it as an outlier. For A. James Arnold, in the context of *Les armes miraculeuses*, "And the Dogs

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Were Silent” serves a clear purpose: “The dramatic poem recapitulates and clarifies the overall mythic structure of the whole.”⁵ It is a culmination of the volume rather than a departure from the poems that precede it. Indeed, Arnold makes a case that the “syncretic myth” (linking the Caribbean present to a disparate array of cultural and religious allusions drawn from the African past) elaborated in “And the Dogs Were Silent” is “the most complex and the most complete representation of negritude as a cultural project that [Césaire] ever undertook.”⁶

Even as the ritualistic sacrifice of the Rebel in the version of “And the Dogs Were Silent” published in *Les armes miraculeuses* has resonated as an example of messianic revolutionary commitment, the work has also sometimes been criticized as a failed experiment. Without access to the earlier version translated here, some scholars have assumed that Césaire ended up writing a generic hybrid because he was unable to write a conventional historical play about Haiti. “Faced with the impossibility of reconciling historical events with the mythic consciousness that infused his lyric poetry,” according to this interpretation, “Césaire rewrote ‘Dogs’ after 1943 as an oratorio.”⁷ But more recent biographers such as Kora Véron have shown conclusively that the change in direction was less a writerly impasse than a deliberate choice on Césaire’s part during a period of turmoil and self-questioning occasioned by his 1944 visit to Haiti. As he explained in a letter to the archaeologist Henri Seyrig, Césaire became convinced that “j’ai fait fausse route. Malgré les nombreuses modifications, ma tentative reste encore trop d’ordre historique. Et c’est stupide. Dans mon esprit, elle ne peut être valable que si je la situe hardiment sur le plan du mythe” (I took a false path. Despite the numerous modifications, my effort remains too historical. And it’s stupid. In my mind, it can only be valid if I situate it boldly in the context of myth).⁸ Struggling with problems in his marriage and disillusioned by his surroundings, he pulled away from what had been a play extolling the Haitian Revolution as a historical example. As Véron summarizes it, “Le drame historique a évolué en une tragédie intime, au moment où le séjour haïtien opère une éprouvante confrontation avec la réalité du pays” (The historical drama evolved into an intimate tragedy at the moment when his stay in Haiti brought about a trying confrontation with the reality of the country).⁹

To put it from another angle, the original 1943 version of *And the Dogs Were Silent* is illuminating as one of the key instances of Césaire’s writing during the early 1940s. On the eve of World War II, having returned to Martinique from his graduate studies in Paris, Césaire took a position as a

high school teacher at the Lycée Schoelcher in Fort-de-France. He founded the pivotal literary journal *Tropiques* with his wife Suzanne and a small circle of Martinican poets and intellectuals and continued to revise and expand his masterful long poem *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (*Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*) (an initial version of which had been published in the French avant-garde review *Volontés* in 1939) as well as to write the poems that would be collected in *Les armes miraculeuses*. One of the main reasons Césaire came to feel that the original *And the Dogs Were Silent* was “too historical” was that it was forged in the milieu of wartime Martinique. As he bemoaned in another April 1944 letter to the surrealist writer André Breton, “Né sous Vichy, écrit contre Vichy, au plus fort du racisme blanc et du cléricalisme, au plus fort de la démission nègre, cette œuvre n'est pas sans porter assez désagréablement la marque des circonstances” (Born under Vichy, written against Vichy, at the height of white racism and clericalism, at the height of the Black surrender, this work bears rather disagreeably the mark of the moment).¹⁰ Despite Césaire's subsequent distaste for the way the play had been shaped by its context, this factor makes the original *And the Dogs Were Silent* all the more remarkable: whereas Césaire was forced to proceed with caution in his literary journal due to the watchful surveillance of the Vichy censors, in the unpublished and unperformed play he could give free rein to the liberatory radicalism of his poetic imagination. In this regard, as Alex Gil points out in his introduction, *And the Dogs Were Silent* represents a “stunning counterpoint to the subterfuges and astute misdirection” that were on display in Césaire's “public” writing in *Tropiques*.

It is no surprise that Haiti became the single most significant symbol for Césaire of Black revolutionary self-determination and of the African roots of Caribbean culture. Even in the initial 1939 version of the *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, the speaker links Martinique — “mon île non-clotûre” (my non-closure island) — to “Haïti où la négritude se mit debout pour la première fois et dit qu'elle croyait à sa humanité” (Haiti where Negritude stood up for the first time and stated that it believed in its humanity) and claims as “à moi aussi” (also mine) the vision of Toussaint Louverture lingering in exile at the end of his life, “un homme seul qui défie les cris blancs de la mort blanche” (a lone man defying the white screams of white death).¹¹ But adding the explicit dramatization of the Haitian Revolution in the 1943 *And the Dogs Were Silent* to Césaire's body of work serves as a reminder that Haiti was not only a reference point but also a central literary project that he returned to repeatedly throughout his career. It will be necessary to read the early play

in detail alongside his underappreciated 1961 study *Toussaint Louverture: La révolution française et le problème colonial* (*Toussaint Louverture: The French Revolution and the Colonial Problem*) and his 1963 play *La tragédie du Roi Christophe* (*The Tragedy of King Christophe*) in order to consider the ways that Césaire returned to Haiti from different vantage points at different historical conjunctures.¹²

It will likewise be necessary to consider all of Césaire's "Haitian works" in relation to the broader comparative literature of the Haitian Revolution that comprises a major strand in African diasporic drama,¹³ including plays such as Langston Hughes's *Emperor of Haiti* (1936) and *Troubled Island* (1938); C. L. R. James's *Toussaint Louverture* (1936) and *The Black Jacobins* (1967); Derek Walcott's *Henri Christophe* (1949) and *Drums and Colours* (1958); Édouard Glissant's *Monsieur Toussaint* (1961); and Lorraine Hansberry's *Toussaint* (1961).¹⁴ Going back to the figure of the "île non-clôture" (non-closure island) in the *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*—in which the speaker later declares that there is "pas un bout de ce monde qui ne porte mon empreinte digitale" (not an inch of this world devoid of my fingerprint)—one might note that Césaire's poetics is characterized by a persistent comparative impulse.¹⁵ In the 1943 *And the Dogs Were Silent* this impulse reverberates in the ways Haiti is linked in Toussaint's "pensées qui sont des lianes sans contractures" (thoughts, which are creepers without contracture) not only with Martinique but also with Jamaica, Cuba, the United States, and Africa itself, as disparate local nodes within a "fraternité totale" (total brotherhood). In reading the play, we must both attend to the comparative dimension inherent to the way diaspora is imagined in Césaire's text and consider it in counterpoint with the new world literatures of the Haitian Revolution in multiple languages.

The parallels with C. L. R. James are particularly notable. As Kora Véron has observed succinctly, "Césaire suivra doublement l'exemple de James" (Césaire would doubly follow James's example), as both writers were first compelled to depict the Haitian Revolution in drama before turning to historical studies and then revisiting it in drama.¹⁶ This striking shared pattern does not seem to have been the product of direct influence. Although James became close to Césaire's friend and fellow student Léon-Gontran Damas in the winter of 1933 while the Trinidadian was in Paris to conduct research, James and Césaire did not actually cross paths until early 1968, when they met in Cuba.¹⁷ They were certainly familiar with each other's work by the 1960s—when James made a powerful interpretation of Césaire's *Cahier* the

centerpiece of the appendix he added to the revised 1963 edition of his magisterial history *The Black Jacobins*—but it is not clear whether they read each other’s work in the 1930s or 1940s.¹⁸ For instance, there is no conclusive evidence that Césaire would have been aware of the premiere of James’s first Haitian play, *Toussaint Louverture*, which starred Paul Robeson in the lead role for a short run of performances in March 1936 at the Westminster Theatre in London. The play was not available in print at the time. Indeed, like Césaire’s *And the Dogs Were Silent*, the script of James’s *Toussaint Louverture* was discovered and published only recently.¹⁹ And—as with the two versions of Césaire’s drama—some readers had assumed that the 1936 text must have been simply an early iteration of James’s more readily available play *The Black Jacobins*, which the Arts Theatre Group at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria premiered in December 1967 in a performance directed by Dexter Lyndersay.²⁰ However, the belated publication of *Toussaint Louverture* has made it clear that James substantially revised the 1936 drama in preparation for the 1967 performance under the appropriately new title *The Black Jacobins*.²¹

What is intriguing in the parallel between James and Césaire is what one might call the “rhythm” of their repeated attraction to the story of the Haitian Revolution over the course of more than three decades, as well as their provocative oscillation between genres (historiography and drama). Perhaps the most fascinating commonality is the fact that both men approached Haiti through what Rachel Douglas calls “long intertwined trajectories of repeated rewriting,” reconsidering their own previous efforts.²² Douglas describes James’s Haitian texts as a “palimpsest” or a “text-network” (“manuscript inscriptions where new writing is superimposed on top of previous writing, often leaving behind visible traces of the rewriting”),²³ terms equally applicable to the “masterful exercise of cut-and-paste” (as Alex Gil puts it) on display in Césaire’s revision of *And the Dogs Were Silent*.

As they revised their previous texts, both men also revised their visions of Haiti in light of and in response to the political climate at the time; in other words, both James and Césaire seemed compelled to imagine the legacy and contemporary implications of the Haitian Revolution differently in the 1930s than in the 1960s. As James explained in a 1980 interview, “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.”²⁴ In his introduction to the 1936 play, Christian Høgsbjerg describes the ways this factor reshaped the drama when James revised it thirty years later: “If

Toussaint Louverture was about the vindication of national liberation struggles written in the age of colonialism, in *The Black Jacobins* James and Lyn-dersay explored what lessons the Haitian Revolution might hold for national liberation struggles in the age of decolonization.”²⁵

This is not to say that James and Césaire ended up with equivalent representations, of course, even if they turned to Haiti at different moments to think through a similar range of concerns: the politics of liberatory violence; the dynamic between charismatic leaders and masses in revolutionary movements; the dehumanizing atrocity of racial slavery; the universalist legacy of the French Revolution. Instead, it is precisely the divergences between their often nearly concurrent imaginings and historicizations that are worthy of further consideration.

Not surprisingly, like James’s 1963 revised edition of the historical study *The Black Jacobins* as well as the 1967 play of the same name, Césaire’s Haitian works of the 1960s are deeply inflected by the era of postcolonial independence.²⁶ But whereas James’s 1967 play can be described as “a trenchant critique of postcolonial African and Caribbean leadership’s failure to usher in the postcolonial futures that anticolonialism had imagined,”²⁷ Césaire in *La tragédie du Roi Christophe* is particularly concerned with the challenges of governance, modernization, and nation-building in the wake of independence.²⁸ In the historical study *Toussaint Louverture*, Césaire makes a case that because Saint-Domingue was “le premier pays des temps modernes” (the first country in modern times) to confront “le problème colonial” (the colonial problem), the history of the Haitian Revolution is directly relevant to the era of decolonization.²⁹ Toussaint himself is especially significant in this era, according to Césaire, not as a tragic hero who lays the foundation for independence (as he is depicted in the 1943 *And the Dogs Were Silent*) but instead as the statesman who single-handedly demonstrates the universal application of the rights of man:

Quand Toussaint-Louverture vint, ce fut pour prendre à la lettre la déclaration des droits de l’homme, ce fut pour montrer qu’il n’y a pas de race paria; qu’il n’y a pas de pays marginal; qu’il n’y a pas de peuple d’exception. Ce fut pour incarner et particulariser un principe; autant dire pour le vivifier. Dans l’histoire et dans le domaine des droits de l’homme, il fut, pour le compte des nègres, l’opérateur et l’intercesseur. [. . .] Le combat de Toussaint Louverture fut ce combat pour la transformation du droit formel en droit réel, le combat pour la *reconnaissance* de l’homme et c’est pourquoi

il s'inscrit et inscrit la révolte des esclaves noirs de Saint-Domingue dans l'histoire de la civilisation universelle.³⁰

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When Toussaint-Louverture came on the scene, it was to take the Declaration of the Rights of Man at its word; it was to show that there is no pariah race; that there is no marginal country; that there are no excepted peoples. It was to incarnate and particularize a principle; that is to say, to vivify it. In history and in the domain of the rights of man, he was for Blacks the implementer and the intermediary. [. . .] The struggle of Toussaint Louverture was the struggle for the transformation of formal rights into real rights, the struggle for the *recognition* of man, and that is why he inscribed himself and the revolt of the Black slaves of Saint-Domingue within the history of universal civilization.

The handful of scholars who have considered the study have noted the degree to which Césaire might be said to associate himself—at the time he wrote the book, we should recall, he was not only a famous poet but also the most prominent elected representative of Martinique in the French legislature—with Toussaint as an “implementer” (*opérateur*) and “intermediary” (*intercesseur*) working tirelessly in the service of his people.³¹ Despite the seeming historical incongruity, Césaire’s analysis of the Haitian Revolution in the 1961 study frames it as something of a parable for the conundrums of *départementalisation*, the postwar process (shepherded in large part by Césaire himself) through which Martinique became not an independent nation-state but an “overseas department” or region of France.³²

A direct comparison of the 1943 and 1946 versions of Césaire’s *And the Dogs Were Silent*, like the comparisons of James’s 1936 and 1967 Haitian plays by scholars such as Rachel Douglas and Victor Figueroa, is the best way to appreciate the stark differences between the two texts. Readers familiar with *Les armes miraculeuses* will be surprised by the relative literalism of the earlier version translated here, which—notwithstanding the vertiginous image-work of Césaire’s surrealist poetics—largely follows the chronology of the Haitian Revolution across three acts, concluding with Toussaint’s death in exile in France. In *Les armes miraculeuses*, the “intimate tragedy” (in Véron’s words) unfolds in an agonized series of dialogues between an unnamed revolutionary simply referred to as the “Rebel” and his “Beloved,” seemingly trapped in an indistinct landscape described opaquely in the stage directions as “la barathre des épouvantements, vaste prison collective, peu-

plée de nègres candidats à la folie et à la mort; jour trentième de la famine, de la torture et du délire” (the barathrum of terror, a vast collective prison populated by Black candidates for madness and death; the thirtieth day of famine, torture and delirium).³³ Although many of their lines are recycled, neither of these characters appears in the 1943 version, where the main personage is identified as Toussaint and the first stage direction specifies bluntly that the action “takes place in Saint-Domingue at the time of the French Revolution.”

A few of the most famous passages of the *Les armes miraculeuses* version were added during the process of revision. For example, the Rebel’s memorable checklist declaration of existential rebellion — “Mon nom: offensé; mon prénom: humilié; mon état: révolté; mon âge: l’âge de la pierre” (My name: offended; my given name: humiliated; my profession: rebel; my age: the stone age; AM 220–21) — does not appear in the 1943 *And the Dogs Were Silent*. But more noticeable are the many excisions, especially of each and every explicit reference to the Haitian Revolution. These include the surprising number of scenes depicting physical violence in the 1943 version, which has stage directions calling for explosions, gunshots, and cannon fire, and for onrushing “crowds of insurgents: a mass of men and women armed with cutlasses.” One scene — described as “a sinister and buffoonish session full of vehemence and cruelty” — culminates with the head of the French governor being paraded around the stage on a pike. The two narrators (*récitants*) describe the slaughter of the white planters in gruesome terms: “The cutlasses fall. What a harvest. That is not sugarcane on the ground. These are not banana trunks. The blood streams, the skulls yawn like coconuts. Here is the sun. Here is the blood. Here are the flies.” Even if this could be interpreted as a description of offstage violence, there are a number of scenes that would challenge even the most resourceful theater director. A few pages later there is an eruption of “collective hysteria”: a crowd screams, “Death to the whites. Death to the whites” as “the scent of blood intensifies.”

The editorial cuts have equally important implications for the prophetic aspects of the drama. For instance, there is an extended scene toward the end of the *Les armes miraculeuses* version in which the imprisoned Rebel spars verbally with his contemptuous Jailor. At one point the Jailor predicts, “You will perish, a prisoner of snow, loneliness, and desperation.” The Rebel responds with an oblique dismissal: “Non. Le paysage m’empoisonne des aconits de son alphabet. [. . .] Va-t’en homme, je suis seul et la mer est une manille à mon pied de forçat” (No. The landscape poisons me with the aconites of its

alphabet. [. . .] Go away, man, I am alone and the sea is a shackle on my galley slave foot; *AM* 244–47). This confrontation also appears in the first version of. *And the Dogs Were Silent*. But in the 1943 text, the same words from the Jailor prompt a completely different response from Toussaint, an extraordinary invocation of the complex and inextricable intimacies wrought by slavery and colonialism:

Just like me, your master will bleed one day:
shipwrecked
prisoner of my Africa as I am of his Europe.
Africa is from now on linked to his destiny . . .
Africa is a part of him
Toussaint is a part of him, whether he likes it or not.
I say that Africa will not let him go . . .

In the 1943 version, the “sea is a shackle” line appears in an entirely different section of the text, in a conversation where Toussaint’s son Isaac tries in vain to convince his father to reconcile with the French. This is only a single example. But these sorts of recombinatory effects of Césaire’s process of revision are apparent throughout. Comparing the two iterations of. *And the Dogs Were Silent* involves a constant confrontation with what at times can be baffling echoes, “embedded vestiges” of the first version that resurface in new contexts in the second.³⁴

Although the condemnation of Europe runs through both versions—on the very first page of the revised text in *Les armes miraculeuses*, an “Echo” defiantly addresses a “blue-eyed architect” to say that “si meurt le Rebelle ce ne sera pas sans avoir fait clair pour tous que tu es le bâtisseur d’un monde de pestilence” (if the Rebel dies it shall not be without having made clear to everyone that you are the builder of a pestilential world; *AM* 168–69)—it is much more caustic and overt in the 1943 text. In another passage (cut entirely from the later version) in which Toussaint is confronted by the Holy Virgin herself, he sneers:

They needed my yes, and then they sent you . . . go away, cruel mother . . . I despise you, go away . . . leave empty handed . . . or rather, take this bag of words . . . the words of Toussaint, the last perhaps, the last . . . no doubt, and bring them to your filthy brood:
Oh, white men, my brothers,
our twisted specters will come to haunt your banquets

null and obscene, we will place our scandalous faces in the midst of
your celebration.
our shouts will disturb your victories
and in the nights of defeat, you will see us standing at your cross-
roads, black, terrible, silent . . . and you will be ashamed . . . and you
will be afraid . . .

What remains of the prophetic rhetoric in the revised text in *Les armes miraculeuses* is loosely apocalyptic, as when the Rebel declares just before his death:

Africa, America Europe, I hide a frenzy beneath the leaves
of my self-satisfaction;
I hold the key to perturbations
sheltered from fury-flanked hearts
and all to destroy
sulfur my brother, sulfur my blood
will spill out in the proudest city centers
its perfumed effluvia
the charisma of its grace (AM 294–95, modified)

In the 1943 version, Toussaint delivers this same promise, but then goes much further (in lines cut from the 1946 version) in describing the coming day of judgment as a specifically *racial* reckoning:

I hear nothing
but disasters eager to replace cities
enclosures of injustice monstrously arranged
radiant cities.
I'll unleash on you my vengeful hounds
and I will awaken thousands of Negroes
my Negroes, of all colors,
carved from fresh butter
carved from achiote
carved, oh joy, from full-on white
and we will not recognize them, poets or Antichrists,
famous executioners
the blackest night is coming
courage.

There remain a few scattered cries of “mort aux blancs” (death to the whites) in the revised *Les armes miraculeuses* version. But they are placed in the mouth of a group of “énergumènes” (zealots), and the exhortation comes across as a ponderous ritualistic parody rather than a realistic social situation. The stage directions place the action where the zealots appear in the same “sinister and buffoonish session full of vehemence and cruelty” mentioned earlier, but adding a sentence that serves to displace the terror: “Loin, très loin, dans un lointain historique le chœur mimant une scène de révolution nègre, chants monotones et sauvages, piétinement confus, coutelas et piques” (Far, very far away, in a historical distance the chorus miming a scene of Black revolution, monotonous and savage chants, confused stomping, cutlasses and pikes; *AM* 192–93, modified).

More than any other single textual change, this revision encapsulates the challenge of this newly translated *And the Dogs Were Silent*. Here we encounter a new and unexpected region in the extraordinary universe of Aimé Césaire. It is a realm still conjured by “magic words,” still announced in a coruscating, elliptical language—“a rumor of chains” rising from the sea—that by turns dazzles and engulfs with its unpredictable tides. But it arrives without the buffer of historical distance or the abstraction of myth. Instead it strives to catch the pulsing drama of revolution on stage, in all its terror and exhilaration.

Notes

1. Césaire himself described the version of “And the Dogs Were Silent” in *Les armes miraculeuses* as a “lyric oratorio” in a 1972 interview with Thomas Hale, quoted in A. James Arnold, introduction to Césaire, *Lyric and Dramatic Poetry*, 1946–82, xiv.

2. Hill, “The Revolutionary Tradition in Black Drama,” 408. On this tradition, see also Christian Høgsbjerg’s introduction to James, *Toussaint Louverture*, 2.

3. This observation has begun to be taken into account in the most recent French-language scholarship, including Kora Véron’s excellent critical biography *Aimé Césaire: Configurations*; A. James Arnold’s comprehensive overview *Aimé Césaire, genèse et transformation d’une poétique*; and Giuseppe Sofo’s study *Les éclats de la traduction*.

4. Arnold characterizes the version of “And the Dogs Were Silent” in *Les armes miraculeuses* as a “dramatic poem” in his introduction to Césaire, *Lyric and Dramatic Poetry*, 1946–82, xii.

5. Arnold, introduction, xii.
6. Arnold, introduction, xix.
7. Arnold, introductory note to *The Miraculous Weapons* (1946), in Césaire, *The Complete Poetry of Aimé Césaire*, 65.
8. Césaire, letter to Henri Seyrig, July 16, 1944, quoted in Véron, “Césaire at the Crossroads in Haiti,” 437 (translation modified).
9. Véron, *Aimé Césaire*, 250.
10. Césaire, letter to André Breton, April 4, 1944, quoted in Véron, *Aimé Césaire*, 437–38.
11. Césaire, *The Original 1939 Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, 18–19, 20–21. This initial short version of the poem was published to little fanfare in *Volontés* 20 (August 1939), before Césaire revised and expanded it for two versions published nearly simultaneously in book form after the war: the bilingual edition *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal / Memorandum on My Martinique*, trans. Lionel Abel and Ivan Goll; and *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* (Paris, 1947).
12. Césaire, *Toussaint Louverture* and *La tragédie du Roi Christophe*.
13. The phrase “Haitian works” is adopted from Figueroa, “Between Louverture and Christophe,” 1017.
14. Césaire’s *La tragédie du Roi Christophe* has already been taken up in the vibrant comparative scholarship on the literatures of the Haitian Revolution. See, for example, Clark, “Haiti’s Tragic Overture”; Collier, “The ‘Noble Ruins’ of Art and the Haitian Revolution”; Forsdick, “Refiguring Revolution”; Jones, “‘We Were Going to Found a Nation . . .’”; Glick, “Bringing in the Chorus”; Graham, “‘It Cancels the Slave Ship!’”; and Kaisary and Past, “Haiti, Principle of Hope.” For Hansberry’s unfinished drama, see “*Toussaint*: An Excerpt from Act 1 of a Work in Progress (1961).”
15. Césaire, *The Original 1939 Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, 20–21.
16. Véron, *Aimé Césaire*, 99.
17. Douglas, *Making “The Black Jacobins,”* 79. See also James, “My Knowledge of Damas Is Unique.”
18. Douglas provides an insightful reading of what she terms James’s “creative translation” of Césaire in her book *Making “The Black Jacobins,”* 126–29.
19. James, *Toussaint Louverture*. At this point, slightly different typescripts of *Toussaint Louverture* have been discovered in no fewer than nine separate archives. For an interpretation of another variant of the playscript, see Sweeney, “The Haitian Play.” Douglas offers a useful overview of the differences among (and a tentative chronology for) the nine extant versions of the playscript; see *Making “The Black Jacobins,”* 34–40.
20. The 1967 play has been available in print for some time: James, “The Black Jacobins”; James, *The Black Jacobins*.

21. See Douglas, *Making "The Black Jacobins,"* 133–77; King, "C. L. R. James, Genre and Cultural Politics"; Sander, "C. L. R. James and the Haitian Revolution"; Rosengarten, *Urbane Revolutionary*; and especially Chetty, "The Tragicomedy of Anticolonial Overcoming."
22. Douglas, *Making "The Black Jacobins,"* 79.
23. Douglas, *Making "The Black Jacobins,"* 6.
24. Dance, "Conversation with C. L. R. James [1980]," 115, quoted in Høgsbjerg, introduction to James, *Toussaint Louverture*, 27.
25. Høgsbjerg, introduction to James, *Toussaint Louverture*, 27.
26. On James's revisions to the 1963 edition of *The Black Jacobins*, see Chetty, "The Tragicomedy of Anticolonial Overcoming"; Douglas, *Making "The Black Jacobins,"* 102–32; and Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*.
27. Chetty, "The Tragicomedy of Anticolonial Overcoming," 85.
28. Nesbitt, "History and Nation-Building in Aimé Césaire's *La tragédie du Roi Christophe*," 132. A number of scholars have noted that the play can be read as a commentary on the dynamics of postcolonial independence in Africa. See, for example, Lagneau-Kesteloot, "*La tragédie du Roi Christophe* ou les indépendances africaines au miroir d'Haïti"; Fuyet et al., "Décolonisation et classes sociales dans *La tragédie du Roi Christophe* d'Aime Césaire"; Munro, "Can't Stand Up for Falling Down"; and Crispin, "Aimé Césaire's Caribbean Crucible."
29. Césaire, *Toussaint Louverture*, 24.
30. Césaire, *Toussaint Louverture*, 344.
31. See Nesbitt, "Troping Toussaint, Reading Revolution"; and Figueroa, "Between Louverture and Christophe."
32. Forsdick, "Haiti and Departmentalization"; Walsh, "Césaire Reads Toussaint: The Haitian Revolution and the Problem of Departmentalization," in *Free and French*, 99–123. On *départementalisation* in general, see Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*; and Nesbitt, "Departmentalization and the Logic of Decolonization."
33. Césaire, "And the Dogs Were Silent (Tragedy)," in *Lyric and Dramatic Poetry, 1946–82*, 170–71. Subsequent page references will be indicated parenthetically in the text with the abbreviation "AM."
34. The phrase "embedded vestiges" is from Douglas, *Making "The Black Jacobins,"* 6.

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D

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And of course, to Obi, the last smile at the end of the world. This whole thing was his idea to begin with. We had even planned to translate it together! Without a doubt, the translation would have been ten times better if his words were involved. Alas, time and paths did not cooperate with us, and here we are. I got new glasses, and I'm ready for the next round, *mon ami*. You pick the city.

—Alex Gil

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INTRODUCTION

Alex Gil

The Making and Remaking of
. *Et les chiens se taisaient*

Key to the Titles

“..... Et les chiens se taisaient” In French, with six preceding dots, in roman and quotation marks: carbon copy of a typescript with Césaire’s handwritten revisions, completed in its current form in November 1943, generally unknown until 2008, and housed today among the Yvan Goll Papers at the Saint-Dié des Vosges municipal library in France. This book offers a reading edition of “..... Et les chiens se taisaient” in French and its translation in English. The original document is also referred to as “the Saint-Dié typescript,” “Césaire’s typescript,” or simply “the typescript.”

..... *And the Dogs Were Silent* In English, with six preceding dots, in italics: the translation and edition of “..... Et les chiens se taisaient” contained in the Duke University Press volume you have in your hands. Whenever I speak of “the play,” “the drama,” or “the text,” I mean the one in this edition and translation, unless otherwise indicated.

Et les chiens se taisaient In French, without preceding dots, in italics, without date: the work in general. In textual scholarship, a “work” is said to be *all* of the different versions or texts implied by a title.

“Et les chiens se taisaient” (1946) In French, without preceding dots, in roman and quotation marks, with date: the heavily revised version published in 1946 by Gallimard as part of Aimé Césaire’s first collection of poetry, *Les armes miraculeuses*. This version, the first to be designated as a “tragédie,” should be considered a substantially different literary text than “..... Et les chiens se taisaient.”

D

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Et les chiens se taisaient (1956) In French, in italics, with date: A slightly revised version of the 1946 Gallimard version, claiming to be “arranged for the theater,” published by Présence africaine in 1956 as a stand-alone volume. Full title: *Et les chiens se taisaient, tragédie (arrangement théâtral)*. A second edition of this text with minor revisions was published in 1962 by Présence africaine.

* * * * *

It is rare that we come across a lost literary work from a major author, and rarer still that we did not even know it existed to begin with. “. Et les chiens se taisaient” —with six distinct preceding dots, and now available in English for the first time in this volume as *And the Dogs Were Silent* —is not to be confused with the similarly titled dramatic poem “Et les chiens se taisaient,” published in Paris in 1946 by Gallimard as part of Césaire’s first volume of poetry, *Les armes miraculeuses* (*The Miraculous Weapons*).¹ No, our text is an earlier and substantially different version of this work. In contrast to the more abstract 1946 version, this earlier version is an explicit historical drama based on the Haitian Revolution and its tragic hero, Toussaint Louverture.

Like most students of literary history working on a major artist, I was having difficulties in the early days of my dissertation research, circa 2007, finding unexamined traces in the well-trodden archives associated with the poet Aimé Césaire. One of my strategies was to familiarize myself with the research on his close associates. This gambit paid off when I began to explore the research on Césaire’s first English-language translator, the Franco-German poet Yvan Goll. An essay by archivist-scholar Albert Ronsin about Goll’s relationship to one of Césaire’s friends and supporters, the poet André Breton, included this innocuous footnote: “32. Fonds Yvan et Claire Goll, Bibliothèque Municipale de Saint-Dié des Vosges, dossier 510.301: *Et les chiens se taisaient* (publication dans *Armes miraculeuses*. Paris: Gallimard 1946).”²

On the first of two trips to the small municipal library in Saint-Dié des Vosges, France, I was received by Albert’s widow Nadine Ronsin—a most wonderful host—who had taken over as the head curator for the Goll collection. On this trip, I only had time to scan all the pages associated with Césaire, not read them. It took me several months, back stateside, to realize that the manuscript of *Et les chiens se taisaient* I had scanned was a substantially different literary text from the Gallimard 1946 edition referenced in the

footnote—despite the ruse of a shared title. Neither of the Ronsins seemed to have recognized this either. I immediately shared news of the find along with copies of my photographs with specialists.³ This was the kind of find that changed what we thought about Césaire. Not only had he started writing for the theater much earlier than we had all assumed, but his first foray was a brazen three-act historical drama based on the Haitian Revolution!

In 2014, working with a distinguished editorial team, I had the opportunity to introduce and produce a diplomatic edition for French-speaking audiences as part of the critical edition of the poet's work, *Poésie, théâtre, essais et discours*, published by Planète Libre.⁴ Since the publication of that diplomatic edition, the text has received important critical attention.⁵ This translation by Duke University Press goes further, and for the first time it makes the text accessible beyond specialists. Not only will English-speaking audiences finally have the opportunity to read this astonishing drama by Césaire; we are also able to offer a critically edited, reading version of the French original for French-speaking general audiences.

* * * * *

The major landmarks of Aimé Césaire's biography are familiar to students of literature and history around the world, but they are always worth rehearsing: Aimé Ferdinand Césaire, poet and statesman, was born and raised on the Caribbean island of Martinique in 1913. After high school, he went to Paris to continue his studies, in line with France's colonial practice of training Black subjects from the Caribbean to serve as professional and bureaucratic middlemen in the administration of their colonial domains. As a young student in Paris in the 1930s, he began to form bonds with Black students from other parts of France's empire. In the third issue of the student journal *L'étudiant noir*, Césaire proposes the neologism *négritude* as an antidote to assimilation and a corrective to orthodox Marxism, with no way of knowing that decades later this idea would become the banner of a major anticolonial cultural movement across the Atlantic world.⁶

While studying at the École Normale Supérieure, he met and married essayist, playwright, and educator Suzanne Césaire (née Roussi). A few months before returning to Martinique in 1939, he published his now famous poem "Cahier d'un retour au pays natal" ("Notebook of a Return to the Native Land") in the journal *Volontés*.⁷ It was on their return, during the energetic and challenging times of World War II, that he began to write ". . . . Et les

chiens se taisaient.” He composed the drama in relative secrecy for a period of about two years (approximately 1941–43), while Martinique was a colony of what we now call Vichy France. The collaborationist administration of Vichy’s head of state, Philippe Pétain, was marked by antisemitism, authoritarianism, and tight control of the media. Martinique was similarly governed at the local level by a navy officer, George Robert. During this difficult period, Césaire was employed as a high school teacher at the Lycée Victor Schœlcher in Fort-de-France, while helping to coproduce the foundational journal *Tropiques* within the regime of censorship and oversight imposed by “l’Amiral” Robert.

At the end of 1943, a few months after the collapse of the Vichy regime in Martinique, Césaire sent a complete carbon-copied typescript of “. . . . Et les chiens se taisaient,” rife with handwritten revisions, to celebrated French surrealist André Breton, who was living in New York at the time. A few months later, Césaire regretted his decision and asked Breton to discard the text as “a draft.” He claimed that he needed to erase history from it, erase its “theme.” But it was too late. Breton had lent the document to the Franco-German poet Yvan Goll; shortly after, Breton and Goll had a falling-out, and Goll neither translated, published, nor returned the typescript. After the war was over, Goll returned to his hometown, Saint-Dié des Vosges, carrying the typescript with him. The document remained among his papers, unremarked and mostly unknown, until I was able to identify it in 2008.

After the war, Césaire was elected mayor of Fort-de-France, and eventually deputy to the French National Assembly for Martinique on the Communist Party ticket. At the behest of his electorate, and not without controversy, he agreed to push for departmentalization. Around this time, he also began to publish regularly in Paris. “Discourse on Colonialism,” perhaps his second best-known title, appears in 1948. In this text, he advances the provocative idea that colonization and Nazism have the same roots: the loss of humanity of the colonizer and the “thingification” of the colonized, and, following from this, the still-resonant idea that the evils of racism and empire have a way of coming back home to hurt or destroy the metropole.⁸

By the 1950s Césaire had become a recognized literary and public figure in francophone circles. In 1956, he was one of the speakers at the epochal First Congress of Black Writers and Artists, held in Paris. Subtle differences aside, he and his lifelong friend, the Senegalese president Léopold S. Senghor, and others at this gathering represented an internationalist and revolutionary notion of *négritude*, famously diverging from the attending US

delegation—including Richard Wright, Horace Mann Bond, John P. Davis, and Mercer Cook, among others—who argued, by contrast, for the singularity of Black American culture.⁹ Despite the American exception, this very broad conception of Blackness arguably served as a reference point for the anticolonial independence movements that would soon sweep through Africa and the Caribbean. That same year, Césaire wrote a letter to the president of the French Communist Party, Maurice Thorez, breaking with the party—partly because of its silence after Nikita Khrushchev’s revelations of the horrors of Stalinism, and partly because the party ignored the particularities of colonized Black people around the world. Soon after, in 1958, along with his friend Pierre Alier, he helped found the Martinican Progressive Party (Parti progressiste martiniquais; PPM), which remains relevant in Martinican politics to this day.

In the 1960s, he “turns” to the theater, composing his most discussed plays: *La tragédie du roi Christophe* (*The Tragedy of King Christophe*), *Une saison au Congo* (*A Season in the Congo*), and *Une tempête* (*A Tempest*). In these plays, we see a mature poet and statesman providing political and cultural guidance at the height of the independence movements in Africa—what we now refer to as their transition from colonies to postcolonial states. Césaire continued to write poetry and serve the overseas department of Martinique for several more decades. Right until the end, he remained one of the world’s most recognized and studied anticolonial voices. In 2005, decades after France’s colonial empire had collapsed, he stood steadfast, famously refusing to meet Nicolas Sarkozy, then French interior minister and future president of France, who had just proposed a law that would recognize the supposedly positive legacies of colonialism. Aimé Césaire passed away in 2008, leaving us to contend with the magnitude of his political and poetic legacy. This lost work surfaced the same year. Had this version been published in the 1940s instead of the heavily revised version published by Gallimard, the drama could have easily become another recognizable landmark in Césaire’s biography.

Comparison with the Other Versions

In a 1969 interview with François Beloux, Césaire described *Et les chiens se taisaient* as “un peu comme la nébuleuse d’où sont sortis tous ces mondes successifs que constituent mes autres pièces” (a bit like the nebula from which

all the future worlds that constitute my other works have come), without specifying which version he meant.¹⁰ I would argue that our text, *Et les chiens se taisaient*, and not its reworked avatars, provides the more convincing nebula for Césaire's future poetry, drama, and certainly his one monograph of historical prose dedicated to these events: *Toussaint Louverture: La Révolution française et le problème colonial* (1960).

In *And the Dogs Were Silent*, readers will find traces of Césaire's surrealist poetry of the 1940s; the explicit anticolonialism of the 1950s; his return to historical drama in the 1960s; and the more accessible poetry of his later career. While surrealism and, arguably, anticolonialism are present in the published versions of 1946 and the 1950s of *Et les chiens se taisaient*, the historical drama, the republican Toussaint, and the more accessible language present in this volume are virtually absent in those other versions. A true history of Césaire's literary trajectory could not be complete without a detailed exploration of the typescript's resonance in his later works. That work remains sadly beyond the scope of this brief introduction.

As we now know, in 1946 Gallimard published a very different version of the work than the one in this volume. Every single explicit historical reference to Haiti and the Haitian Revolution was deleted in the published text. Framed with the newly appended generic designation of "Tragédie," this revised version appears in the poetry collection *Les armes miraculeuses*. Right on its opening page, once the curtain is fully raised, the directions of the Gallimard version lets us know we are in an unrepresentable dreamscape, a "barathre des épouvantements, vaste prison collective" (an abyss of terror, a vast collective prison). Césaire had reduced the named geographies of the Haitian Revolution to an expansive, surreal madhouse. Toussaint Louverture became simply "The Rebel," and his dramatic exchanges became more hermetic and self-absorbed. In fact, an entire third of the original text did not survive in this Gallimard edition, and the seventy or so passages that did survive were completely rearranged by Césaire in a masterful exercise of cut-and-paste. In many cases, the lines assigned to one speaker were re-assigned to another voice—in some cases, even to an antagonistic voice. In short, "Et les chiens se taisaient" (1946) is a significantly different literary text than the ". Et les chiens se taisaient" typescript we translate in this volume.

After the Gallimard edition, Césaire continued to work on *Et les chiens se taisaient* well into the 1950s. Starting in 1953, he helped Jahnheinz Jahn create a new version for a German audience, which was eventually published

in Germany as a volume and, with variations, performed as a radio play. In 1956, *Présence africaine* published an edited adaptation of the 1946 text as a stand-alone volume, billed as the first “theatrical arrangement.” A second edition followed in 1962. A short film adaptation by anticolonial film pioneer Sarah Maldoror produced in collaboration with the poet also deserves mention. These editions played important roles midcentury: the 1946 version, for example, was an inspiration for other radical writers of the period like Jean-Paul Sartre and Frantz Fanon; the 1956 play, in turn, was famously produced at the Sorbonne at the historical First International Congress of Black Writers and Artists (Paris, 1956) and may have inspired many in the independence movements of the 1960s. Most of these—the 1946 Gallimard, the 1956 *Présence africaine*, the Jahn—are readily available today.

“The Rebel” in these versions—a singular Black man without a clear origin, locked in a Manichean struggle with the colonizer outside any discernible historical period or geographical location—ends in prison because of a failed rebellion, and the question of victory or retribution is left unresolved. Our typescript, on the other hand, closes with the armies of Dessalines on the road to victory. As we know from the vision at the end of act 1 of “. . . . Et les chiens se taisaient” and from history, in our text we are witnessing the birth of Haiti, the first decidedly antislavery nation, and arguably the most egalitarian to be born out of the era of revolutions. This expected victory follows from the typescript’s numerous representations of justified and violent retribution served without apology, and even lusted after. While vengeful violence and the figure of the Black avenger are affirmed in the typescript, future versions of the work will equivocate and elide them.¹¹

Nothing exemplifies this contrast more than the transformation of the refrain “mort aux blancs” (death to the whites), from the unrelenting rallying cry and promise kept of the typescript, to its single occurrence in the 1946 version published in *Les armes miraculeuses*, bracketed as “Loin, très loin, dans un lointain historique” (Far, very far, in the historical distance), in the voice of a rowdy crowd:

DEUXIÈME ÉNERGUMÈNE

Et moi je dis : malheur à ceux qui n'ont pas lu inscrit sur le mur de nos honorables faces délicotées le Mane Thecel Phares de la tyrannie.

et voici, je sais des têtes qui rouleront comme des cabosses de cacao : mort aux blancs.

LE CHŒUR D'ÉNERGUMÈNES

mort aux blancs, mort aux blancs.

SECOND ZEALOT

And I say: woe to those who have not read, inscribed on the wall of our honorable, unharnessed faces, the MENE, MENE, TEKEL of tyranny.

and behold, I know the heads that will roll like cocoa pods: death to the whites.

THE CHORUS OF ZEALOTS

Death to the whites, death to the whites.¹²

In the 1956 theatrical version, a more political, seasoned Césaire would even go as far as to have the Rebel completely disavow the cry:

(On entend dans le lointain des cris de “Mort aux Blancs.”)

LE REBELLE

pourquoi ai-je dit “mort aux Blancs”?

est-ce qu'ils croient me faire plaisir avec ce cri farouche?

(We hear in the distance cries of “Death to the Whites.”)

THE REBEL

Why did I say “death to the Whites”?

Do they think they please me with that wild cry?¹³

DUKE

Composing a Revolutionary Drama in Vichy Martinique

A few days after the publication of *Tropiques*, no. 1, in April 1941, the *Capitaine Paul Lemerle* anchored in Martinique, bringing with it a cadre of intellectuals and artists fleeing the war, including André Breton, Wifredo Lam, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Victor Serge. The Césaires met Breton and Lam soon after their arrival. The oft-repeated legend goes that Breton happened upon the first issue of *Tropiques* in the window of a haberdashery while shopping for a ribbon for his daughter Aube. He knew he had to meet the editors, and the poet he found in its pages. As fate would have it, the shopkeeper's brother was René Ménil, a close friend of the Césaires. A happy meeting was arranged. The new friendships that followed, forged in the matter of a few precarious weeks, became avenues for new collaborations and soon allowed Césaire to begin projecting his art beyond the confines of Vichy Martinique.

Beginning in 1940, and reaching their peak in 1943, British and US naval blockades made transportation to and from the island increasingly difficult, isolating Martinique to a certain extent.¹⁴ The most accessible form of communication with the outside world remained the postal package or letter delivered on the limited number of ships that were allowed passage. Under these circumstances, communication lines to the Americas were more accessible than those to Europe. This phenomenon must be taken into account if we are to understand Césaire's strategies of composition and revision once correspondence began with his famous overseas interlocutors, particularly with Breton in New York. We shouldn't be surprised either that when the time felt right, he sent this ambitious work to the elder sage of surrealism.

During these Vichy years, from 1940 to 1943, Martinique was going through a period of what Martinican writer Édouard Glissant called "intense invention," linked to the political, social, and economic conditions brought on by Petainiste ultraconservative colonial policies.¹⁵ As the historian Eric Jennings argues in *Vichy in the Tropics*, this "form of colonialism [was] steeped in social-Darwinist determinism and rooted in a reductionist, organic understanding of other, usually 'primitive,' societies and 'races.'"¹⁶ Because of its rabid racism, the regime had many unintended consequences on this "intense invention": ideas of hypernationalism and folklorism were quickly repurposed by the colonized; antiuniversalist discourse became the foundation for particularist strands of intellectual activity; and, last but not least, the harsher policies of the regime fueled anticolonialist sentiment across the French colonies. The literary output of Césaire and his circle during these

years confirm Jennings's assertions: the journal *Tropiques*, Césaire's main publication venue during this two-year period, points in the direction of folklorism and nationalism, even as early as its first issue; *Tropiques* became a space to discuss and embrace philosophies of essential difference, such as Leo Frobenius's theory of the two civilizations: the animal-like "Hamitic" (or Europeans) and the plant-like "Ethiopian" (the Africans).¹⁷ The (rather inept) censorship of l'Amiral Robert's administration could be cited as one of the reasons for the journal's camouflage, while the regime's tighter grip on the Black populace can account for much of its fundamental antagonism.

Césaire testified years later that he saw this as a period full of "dangerous circumstances."¹⁸ He complained to Breton as early as 1942 about the "declared hostility towards *Tropiques*," later noting that it had been "mutilated 20 times," until eventually the authorities suspended it on May 10, 1943.¹⁹ Jennings reports that what Césaire perceives as the mutilation of *Tropiques* was comparatively milder than the censorship suffered by other venues during this time.²⁰

These trends offer a glimpse into Césaire's impulses while drafting ". . . . Et les chiens se taisaient." Because the drama was written in the shadow of censorship, its language seems to have been inversely influenced by this unfavorable environment—that is to say, the typescript makes explicit what *Tropiques* cannot afford to. With the refrain "mort aux blancs"—"death to the whites"—scaffolding Césaire's retelling of rebel resistance against the French hunger for slaves, the drama confronts the ruses of colonialism and white supremacy head-on, providing a stunning counterpoint to the subterfuges and astute misdirection of the published material in *Tropiques*. If we still find much poetry that was typical of Césaire's contributions to *Tropiques* in the drama, that poetry is embedded in a Black revolutionary context that makes its import and sense clearer.

The presence of popular songs, the inclusion of practical stage directions, the use of a chorus and reciters for exposition in the case of more difficult-to-stage scenes, and the multiple references to projection technology also suggest that Césaire was writing for an actual stage. During the Vichy occupation, Martinique boasted a few venues that could accommodate such a production, including the Ancien Hôtel de Ville in Fort-de-France, now aptly named the Théâtre Aimé Césaire, which would have been sufficiently grand. Yet given the plot, themes, and explicit language, a staging in Martinique would have been extremely unlikely during the Vichy regime . . . or even afterward, if we're being honest. If at some point the drama was being

written for a stage, that stage would have had to be clandestine, or imaginary, or outside Martinique, or a future one, perhaps.

The typescript bears witness to several stages of composition. After an initial stage, in which the text revolved around the actions of the people of Haiti, the writing shifted away from the collective to focus instead on Toussaint's tragic role, as you find it in this volume. The temporality of the drama also shifted at some point during composition, and the interplay between the past, the present, and the future became more salient through an increase in prophetic lines, now also recited by Toussaint. Many other historical figures of the revolution, present in the first stage of composition, were marked for deletion with red ink on the typescript; full pages dedicated to their dialogues did not survive either, as is evidenced by skipped numbers in the pagination. In retrospect, Césaire told Breton that he “had already reasonably reduced” historical references from the typescript before sending it to New York.²¹ To be perfectly clear, the text of this volume *already* carries a double reduction in references to the history of the Haitian Revolution—both because the typescript itself had already erased many of its traces and because many lines marked for deletion in the typescript do not make it into the reading edition and translation I prepared for this volume. This shift, from a revolution centered on the rebel collective in the first stage of composition, to a revolution centered on the tragic hero in later ones, tells a fascinating story about Césaire's evolving anticolonial stance—from a revolution born of the people to one guided by a tragic hero; furthermore, it testifies to Césaire's growing identification with the character of Toussaint, as we will see below. The work's evolving poetic and prophetic tone, on the other hand, speaks to the influence of André Breton and surrealism on his writing during the war period.

Césaire's Mission in Haiti

..... *And the Dogs Were Silent* is an edition and translation of the typescript as it was in November 1943, as Césaire sent it to Breton—that is, as it survives today in the municipal library of Saint-Dié des Vosges. What happened after this date only relates to the composition of the first published version, the “tragédie” of the 1946 Gallimard poetry collection *Les armes miraculeuses*. It is worth revisiting these two intervening years, from the time he sent the typescript to Breton until the Gallimard publication, if only because they help us start to answer one of the most immediate questions

the typescript raises for us: Why did Césaire disavow and eventually remove all the historical references, the theatrical trappings, and the liberatory and avenging violence of the original?

Not without irony, the victorious cry of “death to the whites,” the popular voices and forms, along with every direct reference to Haiti and the Haitian Revolution, were most likely excised from the play while Césaire sojourned in Haiti from May to December 1944. We learn from Kora Véron’s study of Césaire’s correspondence with Henri Seyrig that Césaire was “sent to Haiti on a mission of cultural diplomacy aimed at restoring French influence in the world.”²² This political rapprochement begins to provide a tentative answer to our questions. Just shy of five months after sending the “. . . . Et les chiens se taisaient” typescript to Breton, during his preparations for his diplomatic mission to Haiti he sent Breton a letter asking him to discard it: “Né sous Vichy, écrit contre Vichy, au plus fort du racisme blanc et du cléricalisme, au plus fort de la démission nègre, cette œuvre n’est pas sans porter assez désagréablement la marque des circonstances” (Born under Vichy, written against Vichy, during the height of white racism and clericalism, the height of Black surrender, the work rather unpleasantly carries the stain of its circumstances).²³

He asks Breton to treat the document as a mere “draft” that needed to be “modified and completed.” He adds that, in particular, “la part de l’histoire, ou de ‘l’historicité’ déjà passablement réduite, doit être éliminée à peu près complètement” (the historical part, or of “historicity,” already reasonably reduced, should be more or less completely eliminated). The pressures and creative gambits that led from this point in time to the eventual transformation into the 1946 Gallimard edition may be too complex to analyze in detail in the brief space of an introduction. For now, and without too much risk, we can cite the expanded editorial horizons opened up by Césaire’s influential friendships overseas, and the rise of a Free France, made even more immediate for him by his new appointment in Haiti, as important drivers for this shift in creative direction, begun before he arrives in Haiti and most likely finished there.

We could also let Césaire speak for himself. In that same April letter, he suggests that it may be time to embrace a new kind of freedom and leave subject matter—surrealism’s antithesis—altogether behind: “Il n’était plus question de ‘thèse,’ ni de ‘thème.’ Il s’agissait tout simplement d’oser la vie, toute la vie. J’étais libre de nouveau” (It was no longer a question of “thesis” or “theme.” It was simply a matter of daring to live, to live fully. I was free once more). Compounding ironies, Césaire opens the same letter by telling Breton he has just read his text “Un grand poète noir” (“A great Black poet”),

published in numbers 2/3 of *Hémisphères* in November 1943. After decades of vigorous opposition to the idea, Breton had surprisingly reconciled himself with “the theme,” the subject matter, as long as it had “the power of transmutation,” the power to transform the most abject reality into poetry. Césaire had finally shown him the light. Moving in the opposite direction, Césaire had decided to leave behind his theme—the Haitian Revolution. Breton’s about-face, in the twilight of surrealism, did not prove strong enough to dissuade the young poet from his new course.²⁴

By the time Aimé Césaire arrived in Haiti, he was in the throes of marital troubles with Suzanne.²⁵ In a May 26, 1944, letter to Breton, he reported that he had a “très net sentiment que [sa] vie est à un tournant décisif. Deux mois pleins de désarroi et de solitude” (the distinct feeling that [his] life is at a turning point. Two months full of chaos and solitude). He then kindly asked Breton to remove the poem that mentioned Suzanne Césaire from the collection of poems he has just sent him.²⁶ He adds that it was “pathetic” of him to have added her in the first place. All of this would be mere gratuitous detail, if this were not the same letter where he gives clarity to the revisionary direction the play was taking while in Haiti:

Ce drame n'est pas historique. Il m'est personnel (d'une scrupuleuse honnêteté dans l'avertissement). Et je sens bien que cela ne s'arrête pas là. Ceci n'est pas un drame historique ou littéraire—je m'en rends compte. C'est un vrai drame, je veux dire la démarche incertaine et titubante d'un homme qui prend possession de lui-même, de son destin, effrayé encore de ses prophéties et subissant ses voix, dont les chœurs alternés et contradictoires n'ont de cesse qu'ils ne l'aient cerné tout entier.

—
This drama is not historical. It is very personal (of a very scrupulous honesty for all to see). And I'm afraid that's not all. It is neither historical, nor literary—I now realize. It is a real drama, I mean the uncertain and staggering path of a man who is taking possession of himself, of his destiny, still afraid of his prophecies and assailed by his voices, whose alternating and contradictory choirs won't stop until they devour him whole.²⁷

Without a doubt, Césaire had come to overidentify with the character of Toussaint, which at this point was, for all intents and purposes, the Rebel of later versions. The solitude he was experiencing only compounded and intensified the imprisonment and isolation of the Rebel himself—who wanted “to die here, alone.”²⁸ Likely around this time, and perhaps not coincidentally,

Césaire also introduced the other major character of the published text: the Lover. Completely absent from the typescript, it is the Lover whom the Rebel of future versions rejects in order to fulfill his lone destiny.

Césaire's 1944 cultural mission was marked by travels across Haiti and rich encounters with intellectuals and artists, but it was also a time of disillusionment in the face of the political and economic injustices he witnessed. In his first public speech on returning to Martinique, he bemoans in particular the way the “mulatto capitalists” — a reference to Élie Lescot's regime — have replaced the white plantation owners in their exercise of power over the Black agrarian masses.²⁹ He was both “très content et très déçu” (very happy and very disillusioned) in Haiti, he declares.³⁰

We have no intervening witness, no manuscript or typescript, of the extensive work of editing prior to the 1946 publication, so we can never be too sure about the exact order of revisions, just the final result. What we do know is that he had nearly completed transforming our text into the future “tragedy” by August 22, 1945, when he informs Breton that he is “putting the last touches” on the new drama, that “the transfiguration is almost complete.”³¹ Despite all the lead-up, the new version was not to be published with Breton's help. The Césaire dossier at the Gallimard archives tells us that it was the writer Raymond Queneau who in 1946 arranged for publication of the “transfigured” text, along with most of Césaire's other poetic output during the war period. By this point, Césaire had left Haiti and its revolution far behind—literally and metaphorically. We also learn from these archives that “Et les chiens se taisaient” (1946) was a late addition to the poetry collection. The original plan was to follow the shorter poems with the revised edition of the “Cahier d'un retour au pays natal,” but that editorial project failed for various contractual reasons.

Regardless, the nebula—the theme, history, Haiti—could never be completely silenced. Twenty years later, Haiti would come back to take center stage in his writing. In 1960, after working on it for many years, he published his first and only historical treatise, *Toussaint Louverture: La révolution française et le problème colonial*. From 1961 to 1963—during the height of the decolonization movements in Africa—Césaire published the three acts of a new historical tragedy based on Haiti, *La tragédie du Roi Christophe*, in the pages of the journal *Présence africaine*, and in 1963, he published the whole play as a stand-alone volume. A year later, Jean-Marie Serreau staged this new Haitian play at the Salzburg Festival, with many other representations to follow, right up to our present. Haiti had returned to fully occupy its pride of place in Césaire's oeuvre, and there it will stay.

Yvan Goll and the Case of the Unreturned Pages

The story of how the Franco-German poet Yvan Goll became involved in the editorial life of Césaire in New York has been superbly narrated by Albert Ronsin, former curator of the Goll archive, in his essay “Yvan Goll et André Breton.” Once Goll had made amends with Breton more than a decade after they had come to literal blows over the paternity rights to “surréalisme,”³² they began collaborating on a special issue of Goll’s journal *Hémisphères: Revue franco-américaine de poésie* (*Hemispheres: Franco-American Poetry Review*). This happened between the end of 1943 and the beginning of 1944—around the time that Césaire sent the typescript of “. . . . Et les chiens se taisaient” to Breton. Both Goll and Breton had spent time in the Caribbean en route to New York, both had something to say about it, and each had unironically “discovered” a Black poet: Nicolás Guillén for Goll, and Aimé Césaire for Breton.

In early 1944, Goll was already hard at work translating Césaire’s “Cahier d’un retour au pays natal.” The special issue of *Hémisphères* was ready.³³ The double issue included Breton’s famous tribute to Césaire, “Un grand poète noir”; a few embarrassing, exoticizing, *doudouiste* poems by Breton about Martinique and Suzanne Césaire under the heading “Des epingles tremblantes” (“The Trembling Pins”);³⁴ Césaire’s own “Les pur-sang” (“The Thoroughbreds”); and an announcement on the back cover for an upcoming bilingual edition of Césaire’s “Cahier d’un retour au pays natal” with Goll’s translation, “Memorandum on My Martinique.”³⁵ After receiving the typescript of “. . . . Et les chiens se taisaient,” Breton passed the pages along to Goll, perhaps hoping the latter might also translate and help publish the play. Neither of these things happened. Acting on his friend’s request, Breton tried to get the document back from Goll, but to no avail. The two had just fallen out again, this time over the publication of Césaire’s “Cahier,” which Breton did not want translated. Goll’s ultimate revenge on a lifetime of indignities suffered at the hands of his more famous counterpart was to never destroy or return Césaire’s documents, despite “at least three” entreaties from Breton.³⁶ In a letter to Breton dated April 2, 1945, Césaire expresses his shock at having learned that Goll, whom he “didn’t know,” had his poems and his drama.³⁷ Luckily for us, it was too late for him to do anything about it.

That is the last documented mention of this typescript until this century.

The plot of *And the Dogs Were Silent* is rather straightforward: Its protagonist, Toussaint Louverture, rises to become the leader of the slave revolt cum Revolution; French forces and white colonists attempt to re-enslave the population by various means; Toussaint resists numerous temptations to betray his people; he is eventually captured and sent to France, where he meets his death in a cold prison cell in the Jura Mountains without having compromised his quest for freedom. The play closes with the radical spirit of Toussaint passed on to Jean-Jacques Dessalines back in Haiti, who leads the people to victory and independence.

This deceptively simple plot serves as the backdrop for an incredibly rich and original set of poetic and dramatic reflections on justice, race, truth, freedom, and rebellion. And just as significant, the drama offers an unapologetic representation of Black rebels and armies killing their former masters and, ultimately, defeating the white armies of Napoleon. This representation of what has proven to be the form of violence white Europeans and their descendants fear most of all, the just and revolutionary vengeance of those they have oppressed, probably went a step too far for the drama to have been published or staged in wartime Martinique—or, for that matter, the bruised world of a liberated France right after, which easily transitioned from fascist colonialism to liberal colonialism.

The play's three acts are roughly organized around discernible stages of the revolution: act 1 covers the original rebellions (1791–93) and the rise of Toussaint as a leader (1793–96); act 2, Toussaint's de facto command over Saint-Domingue, ending with Leclerc's invasion (1796–1802); and act 3, Toussaint's imprisonment and death, and the war of independence (1802–4). Realistic historical scenes alternate with surreal ones, echoing classical Greek tragedy, European avant-garde forms—including the recently minted “theater of cruelty”—and Black Atlantic genres, with an emphasis on call and response.³⁸ The realistic historical scenes seem to work in what we could call fictive historical synthesis: while these scenes do not necessarily correspond to specific historical events, they are meant to condense and evoke major events of the Haitian Revolution in the form of dramatic exchanges. The play's protagonist is Toussaint Louverture. Next to him we find two Recitants (or narrators) and a Chorus, who serve as his main interlocutors and provide running prophetic commentary or narration of hard-to-stage scenes.

The first act, for example, opens with the pseudo-mythical rise of Toussaint as sole leader of the revolution, with selected references to the major moments of his historical rise. When we learn that “the king’s messenger” offers him the title “Grandee of Spain,” for example, we are transported to the time at the very beginning of the revolution when Toussaint fought for the Spanish side of the island under the leadership of the historical Georges Biassou.³⁹ But Biassou does not appear in this edition and translation: he is visibly marked for deletion on the typescript. In the French edition I prepared for this volume, on which the translation is based, I tried to respect Césaire’s final choices for deletion or inclusion, inasmuch as those were clear to me. This means many characters and lines inevitably disappeared, and this is one of those cases. The original line in the typescript reads, “*Grand d’Espagne? comme Biassou?*” This erasure is typical of the handwritten revisions found in the Saint-Dié typescript. Many of these revisions, made with an assortment of writing instruments, effectively made the fictional Toussaint the singular focal point of a historical process that was shared with others in earlier versions of the draft.

This episode also sheds light on the ways Césaire reconstructs history through dramatic exchanges in our text. As Césaire himself would argue years later in his historical monograph, *Toussaint Louverture*, Toussaint had abandoned his former commander Biassou, switching to the French side once they agreed to abolish slavery, but this time within the much more palatable framework of republicanism.⁴⁰ This historical break is staged in our drama in an encounter between courtly voices of temptation and Toussaint. The “king’s messenger” tempts Toussaint with a kingdom of his own, but Toussaint emblematically rejects the temptation, signaling his commitment to republicanism instead—as he would reject many similar temptations in the rest of the text, each belonging to a different historical moment.

In the second half of act 1, Toussaint appears only in one scene, originally as part of a group of rebel leaders negotiating with their former masters. The bulk of the action focuses instead on the revolution itself, beginning with the original revolt that overwhelmed the Northern Province toward the end of 1791. Material evidence on the extant Saint-Dié typescript—a distinct type of paper, the presence of an earlier pagination scheme, and so on—suggests that these were the first pages that Césaire composed. Other pagination schemes also suggest that the rise of Toussaint we see in the first pages of our text was originally placed after this section, not before. This original sequence would

have aligned better with the historical record. Part of the slight temporal confusion of act 1 results, in fact, from this change in the order of the two sections, making Toussaint's rise prophetic rather than properly chronological.

Most of the action in act 1 happens in Cap-Haïtien, or Le Cap, an important regional hub and home to the reactionary Assembly of planters that broke with France at the start of its revolution. This is the Assembly we find in the drama. A *Passerby* in Le Cap mentions a living (Dutty) Boukman, situating the action sometime before the French decapitated the latter in November 1791.⁴¹ We are at the very beginning of the slave revolt that evolved into the Haitian Revolution. At the end of act 1, we fast-forward to August 1793 when, "at an open meeting in Le Cap, 15,000 'souls' voted in favor of the emancipation of the slaves of the north," enabling the civil commissioner at the time, Léger-Félicité Sonthonax, to declare the abolition of slavery in the northern provinces.⁴² Césaire chose to begin his historical drama in this span of time, 1791–93, and in this place, Le Cap, for good reason. As Laurent Dubois explains, "Slavery had been abolished in the richest region of Saint-Domingue, on the plains out of which the revolt of 1791 had emerged, in the mountains that had served as 'boulevards of liberty' to the insurgents."⁴³

In the second act, the action takes place during the period when Toussaint holds the reins of Saint-Domingue, that is, the years between 1796 and 1802. Like the first act, act 2 can be divided into two major sections: in the first, Toussaint rejects the praises and temptations of clerics and politicians at the height of his power. A large fleet arrives to interrupt the scene of pomp and circumstance.⁴⁴ In his encounter with a French "Parliamentarian," in line with the actions of the historical Toussaint, Césaire's hero refuses to relinquish hard-won freedoms and chooses instead to go to war with the French—"the whites"—rightly suspecting that "the Consul" (i.e., Napoleon) intends to re-establish slavery in the colony. The second, and relatively figurative, section can best be described as Toussaint wandering in the wilderness.

Act 3 finds Toussaint imprisoned at Fort-de-Joux, in the cold and inhospitable Jura Mountains near the Swiss border, where the historical Toussaint met his end. Here again there are two temporal sections. The first, during which the bulk of the action takes place, retells Toussaint's final days in prison.⁴⁵ As he awaits his death, he is faced with his final temptations in the forms of a series of visitations, including one from his son Isaac; and a series of visions, including one from the Virgin Mary. The second section, and conclusion to our text—almost an epilogue, but more of a fulfilled prophecy—takes us back to Haiti, during the final war of independence led by Jean-

Jacques Dessalines. The text concludes with the suggestion, made explicit decades later in Césaire's historical treatise on Toussaint, that Dessalines re-embodies the spirit of Toussaint:

THE RECITANTE.

Who is this man? A cloud of blood crowns his wild head.

HALF CHORUS (*joyous.*)

Dessalines . . . Dessalines the butcher, Dessalines the avenger.

Toussaint, Toussaint Louverture!

While these events follow the major contours of the revolution in loose chronological order, the drama's poetry evokes vaster temporalities: the prerevolutionary past of the slave trade, the present of the revolution and its success, the other twentieth-century present of anticolonialism and its struggles. Compare, for example, this vision toward the end, ostensibly referring to the slave trade (p. 153),

TOUSSAINT (*haggard.*)

. . . A rumor of chains of shackles rises from the sea . . . a gurgling of those drowned on the green belly of the sea . . . a lash of fire, a crack of the whip, the cries of the murdered . . .

with this other toward the beginning, ostensibly referring to rebel forces (p. 77),

THE RECITANT.

It rises . . . From the depths of the earth, it rises . . . The black surge rises . . . howling waves . . . swamps of animal odors . . . the storm foaming up bare feet . . .

Did the "the black surge," or the memory of the drowned, belong solely in the past while colonial conditions still attained in the 1940s? What about now? The play's prophetic poetry, if we can call it that, works by doubling

itself—what is true once can be true again, like the Rose of Jericho we find in the text. A good example of this doubling can be found in the passing of the baton from Toussaint to Dessalines. In the first section of act 1, as described above, the Recitants foretell that Toussaint will die before they offer a vision of the king rising. Later in the play, Toussaint achieves the power of a king long before he dies, but the true meaning of the earlier vision is not revealed until the very end of the play. The play does not end simply with the expected transfer of power after the death of the king, as in canonical European tragedies. Such a transfer does happen, but it does so as the prophecy fulfilled of a king rising in the figure of Jean-Jacques Dessalines. In representing the successful revolution as only one possible fulfillment of the prophesy of a Black surge, risen and free, Césaire is, in a sense, casting the irrefutable, historical event of Haitian victory as a founding myth for other potential Black nationisms or emancipatory movements.

Haiti and Its Revolution: Sources and Source

Césaire's preoccupation with Haiti and its history begins during his student years in Paris. As early as 1939, in the first published version of the *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, Césaire makes reference to Toussaint, in a scene that serves as an immediate antecedent to act 3 of “. . . . Et les chiens se taisaient”:

Ce qui est à moi aussi: une petite cellule dans le Jura,
une petite cellule, la neige la double de barreaux blancs
la neige est un geôlier blanc qui monte la garde devant une prison
Ce qui est à moi
c'est un homme seul emprisonné de blanc
c'est un homme seul qui défie les cris blancs de la mort blanche
(TOUSSAINT, TOUSSAINT LOUVERTURE)

—
What is also mine: a small cell in the Jura,
a small cell, the snow the double of white bars
the snow is a white jailer who stands guard in front of a prison
What is mine
a lonely man imprisoned in white
a lonely man who defies the white cries of white death
(TOUSSAINT, TOUSSAINT LOUVERTURE)⁴⁶

It is also in the *Cahier* that Césaire proclaims Haiti to be the place “où la négritude se mit debout pour la première fois” (where Negritude stood up for the first time).⁴⁷ That first time refers, of course, to the Haitian Revolution—as we now call the historical process that led to Haiti’s independence in 1804. The revolution can be understood, above all, as a victorious slave rebellion and war, one in which Africans and their descendants “stood up” and defeated their enslavers. The political and military struggles that define this period also led to the foundation of the first nation in the world to permanently ban slavery. In doing so, the Haitian Revolution effectively expanded the meaning of freedom articulated in the other two famous revolutions of the time—the American and the French.

The mere fact of the subject matter, of course, should not be seen as a landmark in Black Atlantic or Francophone print or performance culture. That tradition was incredibly rich by the time Césaire began composing “. . . . Et les chiens se taisaient.” We can, however, read it alongside a history of evolving “tropics”—or a constellation of tropes—within the rich, abundant discourse that focused on the revolution and its aftermath, a veritable “transatlantic print culture of the Haitian Revolution,” to quote literary historian Marlene Daut.⁴⁸

We do not know exactly when Césaire began exploring this print culture. In a most remarkable answer to one of his friends, the Haitian poet René Depestre, in an interview conducted at the Cultural Congress of Havana in 1967, Césaire does give us a rough estimate of when these studies began:

Eh bien, à partir du moment où j’ai découvert le monde noir des Etats-Unis, où j’ai découvert l’Afrique, j’ai fini par prospector l’ensemble du monde nègre, et c’est ainsi que je suis tombé sur l’histoire d’Haïti. J’adore la Martinique, mais c’est une terre aliénée, tandis qu’Haïti représentait pour moi les Antilles héroïques et aussi les Antilles africaines. J’ai fait la liaison entre les Antilles et l’Afrique, et Haïti est la terre la plus africaine de toutes nos Antilles. C’est en même temps un pays qui a une histoire prodigieuse, la première épopée noire du nouveau monde a été écrite par les Haïtiens, par des gens comme Toussaint Louverture, Christophe, Dessalines, Pétion, etc.⁴⁹

Only when I began to discover Africa and the Negro world of America, and not until I had explored the entirety of the Negro world, did I grasp the history of Haiti. I adore Martinique, but Martinique is an alienated land, while Haiti represented the heroic Antilles and also the African Antilles

for me. I make the link between the Antilles and Africa, and Haiti is the most African land of the Antilles. It is at the same time a country with a marvelous history. The first Negro epic in the New World was written by Haitians, by people like Toussaint l'Ouverture, Christophe, Dessalines, et cetera.⁵⁰

His discovery “of the North American Negro” and “of Africa” can be safely dated to coincide with the 1931–32 run of the journal *La revue du monde noir*, edited by Paulette Nardal and Leo Sajous, amid the new, bilingual—French and English—“Black internationalism” that was brewing in Paris.⁵¹ Given these dates, his study of Haitian history and the literature of the revolution was likely contemporaneous with C. L. R. James’s own sojourn in Paris to research the same subject in 1933–34.⁵²

Some historical references in the typescript do point to a few specific sources from the nineteenth century that were readily available to Césaire in Paris during these years. For example, “Sonthonax is opening the prisons . . . Sonthonax is arming the slave . . . Sonthonax is opening the gates of Le Cap to Pierrot and Macaya” (p. 81) points us directly to volume 2 of Beau-brun Ardouin’s *Études sur l’histoire d’Haïti*.⁵³

Les noirs sortis des prisons, les esclaves de la ville et d’autres parmi les insurgés les plus voisins du Cap, sous les ordres de Pierrot, de Macaya et de Goa, appelés par les commissaires civils, comprenant tous que la cause de ces commissaires était la leur propre [. . .]

—
The Blacks out of the prisons, the town slaves and others among the insurgents closest to Cap, under the orders of Pierrot, Macaya and Goa, called by the civil commissioners, understanding that their cause was the same as the latter’s [. . .]⁵⁴

By the time Césaire began to compose his play, though, the print culture of the nineteenth century had receded. One important difference between the period leading up to World War II and those earlier moments in the print culture of the Haitian Revolution is the diminishing importance of the trope of the “mulatto/a” and “mulatto/a vengeance” that marks the earlier period.⁵⁵ Except for the passing mention of the revolutionary sacrifice of “the mulatto Delgrès,” mixed-race characters are mostly absent from Césaire’s typescript. Other than this brief cameo, the importance of free men of color in the historical process of the revolution is completely elided in “. . . . Et les chiens

se taisaient” —and rather decentralized in most of the work by other notable authors midcentury, we might add.

This should not come as a surprise. Césaire’s typescript belongs to a different era in the literary history of revolutions, a more dualistic, post-Garvey, “Romantic” moment—to use David Scott’s generic designation⁵⁶—rife with hopeful anticolonialist fervor. This is the time of Soviet interest in the revolution and Sergei Eisenstein’s failed “Haiti Project” (1931–37); of German expressionist Karl Otten’s *Der schwarze Napoleon* (1931); of C. L. R. James’s own retellings of the revolution in English, in his play *Toussaint Louverture*, starring Paul Robeson (1936), and in his monumental treatise *The Black Jacobins* (1938); of Langston Hughes’s *Emperor of Haiti* (1936) and Jacob Lawrence’s portraits of Toussaint in Harlem (around 1938); and, not long after, of the magical realism of Alejo Carpentier’s *El reino de este mundo* (1949). This is also the time of Alexandre Kojève’s Paris lectures and his revival of G. W. F. Hegel’s Haiti-less master/slave dialectics (1933–39).⁵⁷ All these projects share the emergence of neorevolutionary, Manichean “tropics” that belong squarely in the middle of the twentieth century. Despite this surge of important renditions in other languages around the world, by 1941 it seems Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s iconic “silence” had indeed taken hold of the francophone world outside of Haiti.⁵⁸ Césaire, a young, erudite Martinican poet studying in Paris, felt the Haitian past was something he “came upon” after an encounter with African American literature. After all, Haiti was simply “hardly known in Martinique,” Césaire tells Depestre in the interview.

While Césaire seemed to be playing catch-up with the Haitian Revolution, he diverges from his contemporaries in two key respects: his aim is to rescue a revolution in the Caribbean that can be read as part *African*;⁵⁹ and he is staging a victorious struggle for freedom against colonial France *from within* a French colony. His newly recovered historical knowledge becomes part of his well-documented quest for a shared African heritage. Paradoxically, the fact that history could be replaced—via metonym and however ephemerally—by a deep, ancient, unconscious African legacy, discoverable through poetic freedom, gave him clearance to elide Haiti altogether from *Et les chiens se taisaient* between 1944 and 1946. This evolving process makes our drama even more remarkable, and certainly distinct from his contemporaries’ or future retellings of the revolution.

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Césaire's Toussaint and the Question of Language

My task, as I see it, is to prepare the groundwork for your own readings of the text. For that reason, I have mostly avoided my own readings beyond those two fundamental acts of literary interpretation: editing and translating. In this section, however, I want to highlight at least a couple of avenues that might be worth exploring for readers new to the text: Césaire's Toussaint, and the drama's unique use of call-and-response modalities.

Césaire's 1960 historical monograph, *Toussaint Louverture: La révolution française et le problème colonial*, is divided into three sections that follow a dialectic logic, in the Hegelian sense, which map to three racial clashes and their resolutions, where each resolution leads in turn to the next historical stage—from the tantrum of white planters, to the demand for rights of free men of color, to the Black revolution. The treatise could be fairly described as a study in parliamentary and popular politics and an argument for Toussaint's mastery of both. The figure of Toussaint that comes through in that work shares two very important traits with his predecessor in the typescript. Both of them refuse to compromise the pursuit of freedom from slavery; and both provide a fundamental critique of French colonial doublespeak masking as republicanism. As the historian John Walsh points out, both are entangled in the knots of being at once "Black, free and French in the Caribbean."⁶⁰ In the final tally, Césaire's Toussaint proves to be a stricter republican than his French counterparts in his unerring pursuit of equal political rights.

The Toussaint of the monograph also has more in common with the typescript's Toussaint than with the Rebel of later versions of *Et les chiens se taisaient*. While the main character's refusal to compromise is a common theme in all these other versions, Césaire takes pains in the typescript to portray Toussaint as *a republican* fighting against the nonegalitarian forces of colonialism. This care to show the nuance of his position, even at his most radical, echoes somewhat the historical Toussaint we know today—a Toussaint who was not above coalitions and alliances but who arguably remained faithful to republican ideals. While the Rebel of the published versions does have a measure of nuance, the historical detail of aligning Toussaint with republican values is absent from them. This should come as no surprise. Once you abstract the dramatic encounters away from the history of the French and Haitian Revolutions, where the question of republicanism was paramount, and consider that the rise of a Free France carried with it a new promise of equality, a republican Rebel makes less sense toward the end of the war.

Toussaint's radical refusal to compromise in “. . . . Et les chiens se taisaient” can therefore be interpreted differently than in the other versions. The typescript's rejection of double standards and a condemnation of colonialism's alibis can and should be first understood in the specific historical contexts of the Haitian Revolution and Vichy Martinique together, even as this anti-colonial critique now reverberates anew in France and elsewhere, well into our postcolonial present.

We find double standards and their unmasking on several occasions in the typescript. In a pointed exchange between the Parliamentarian and Toussaint, for example, the former implies that the French have lost control of Saint-Domingue, when Toussaint had never claimed independence. In his response, Toussaint not only reaffirms that allegiance but also, in doing so, points out the obvious—that the French intention has little to do with republican values and everything to do with wresting political power away from France's former slaves:

PARLIAMENTARIAN.

I'll be frank, the Republic intends to take back control of its most beautiful colony: Saint-Domingue.

TOUSSAINT.

I was not aware that Saint-Domingue had declared its independence.

As we know from history and from a few lines later in the drama, the French also intended to go one step further and restore slavery in Saint-Domingue. This French betrayal highlights the precedence of colonialism over egalitarian republican values—the pretenses of republican speech used as a mask for colonialism—that the drama works to undermine. Toussaint, in the last instance, is the last one to truly defend, to the letter, the republican values of the “three golden words” (p. 48), *liberté*, *égalité*, and *fraternité*—the fine idea that the governed should have a say in how they are governed. In Toussaint's unmasking responses—and the play provides many examples—we find an honest poetic and dramatic counter-discourse responding to language used as a ruse or alibi. This recurring clash is all the more poignant when we consider that Césaire is composing this drama in relative secrecy, while using camouflage to bypass censorship in *Tropiques*.

This use of language serves as a form of truth-telling that differs from, and serves as a prelude to, his elaboration of the truth of poetry in his first theoretical essay, “Poésie et connaissance” (“Poetry and Knowledge”), originally delivered as a lecture and published in Haiti in 1944.⁶¹ In the latter, the truth of “myth” is posited as superior to science because of its source in the totality of the poet’s being and experience—a reformulation of Nietzsche’s “gay science”; in “. Et les chiens se taisaient,” this makes sense only inasmuch as Toussaint, the drama’s paramount truth-teller, does so by offering his race’s lived experience and his own as a response to the ruses and alibis of colonialist speech; in other words, it is the totality of Toussaint’s experience as a slave, a rebel, and a leader that gives his poetry the force of truth that belies colonial speech.

To drive the point home, the drama’s main literary trope is the constant doubling of repeating voices in multiple registers, setting up a game of clashing antiphonies and choral forms, of double-edged calls and responses. These doublings come in two main forms: antagonistic or solidary. These forms map, more or less, onto Henry Louis Gates’s “oppositional” and “cooperative” modalities in his classic study *The Signifying Monkey*.⁶² For every white colonial voice or scene, from beginning to end, there is an antagonistic, repetitive response from Black voices or scenes: a sort of perverse call and response across registers—a “heteroglossic signifyin’,” to use Gates’s term. For example, the same racist song in the mouth of a colonist, “À la Martinique” by Félix Mayol, is reprised a few pages later by the rebels, forcing its meaning to shift (p. 75).

2ND GROUP: A VOICE.

[. . .] The Caribbean, you see, very gentle islands, very gentle . . . real mild . . . sweetie islands, you see. And so, good evening, Revolution.

(The voice hums:

In Martinique, Martinique, Martinique

That is chic . . .)

In the bloody scene that follows (p. 77), this becomes

(A collective hysteria. The scent of blood intensifies. The Speaker dances the bamboula on the dais.)

THE CROWD.

In Martinique, Martinique, Martinique

That is chic, that is chic

In Martinique, Martinique, Martinique

Mimicry as mockery, assimilation, or reclamation are only some of the modalities of antagonistic repetition deployed in the text. This pervasive gesture is never far from the recuperation of the word *nègre* implied in the celebration of a *négritude*. That acceptance is never of the white gaze, only of the liberatory response of the Black voice. The need to respond—to repeat the very language of the colonizer, French, back to the colonizer in order to transform it—drives Toussaint’s poetry as well. Césaire reenlists the poetic I of the “Cahier d’un retour a pays natal” for his hero, whose poetry continues to push the boundaries of the language, to shatter its traditional forms to make room for new ones, and to inflect it with the semantics and sonorities of creole.⁶³ Unlike in the “Cahier,” though, this embodied and dramatic “I” is now reoriented away from soliloquy and begins a dialogue with others: with white antagonists, Black crowds, choral voices, and even visions of the Virgin Mary and Christopher Columbus.

The antagonism operates also at the intertextual level. Multiple references and literary gestures indicate that Césaire was writing against the literature of colonialism, past and present. *Le livre de Christophe Colomb* (*The Book of Christopher Columbus*) by Paul Claudel, for example, stands out as a prime target. Claudel’s monumental work, first conceived as a new operatic *Totalkunstwerk*, publicly occupied the elder poet throughout the 1930s, while Césaire was a student in Paris.⁶⁴ In *Le livre*, Claudel extolls the virtues of a Christopher Columbus who refuses to compromise and single-mindedly pursues his dream of exploration and conquest, rejecting the temptations that risk derailing him, eventually leading to his imprisonment and death. This Columbus becomes the named foil of *And the Dogs Were Silent*,⁶⁵ and Toussaint’s own destiny responds to the consequences of the former’s journey and mythmaking with an equally uncompromising call for retribution and freedom. Many scenes in Césaire’s play replace the voice, plot, and scenes of Claudel’s text with its own revolutionary subject, while retaining many of the latter’s literary tropes, poetic forms, and rare stage devices drawn from the avant-garde “documentarist” techniques of Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht.⁶⁶

From Claudel's Columbus about to leave from Spain *on a screen* . . .

CHRISTOPHE COLOMB II, *de même*: Quitte ta mère! Abandonne-la! Quitte ta famille! Quitte, quitte ta mère! La Volonté de Dieu est ta patrie! Tout cela qui t'empêche de partir, tout cela est ton ennemi. [. . .]

(Tout cela apparaît mélangé sur l'écran.)

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS II, *the same*: Leave your mother! Abandon her! Leave your family! Leave, leave your mother! The Will of God is your country! Everything that stops you from leaving is your enemy. [. . .]

*(All of this appears together on the screen.)*⁶⁷

. . . to Césaire's Black rebels driving the white colonists back where they came from *on a screen*:

THE RECITANTE (*doleful.*)

Three hundred thousand men, harnesses shattered, are rushing into the city with piercing howls . . . The seaport is swarming with whites trying to reach the stranded vessels . . . Oh, the boats are capsizing . . .

*(As she speaks, all of this appears on the screen.)*⁶⁸

In contrast to the counterresponses to the voices of assimilation and colonialism, Césaire's play also offers numerous instances of what we could call collaborative or solidary forms of repetition, usually reserved for exchanges between Black characters. The exchanges between Toussaint and revolutionary forces often take the form of Black call and response. The call and response as a cultural form finds its origins in the African cultures that Césaire was eager to recover at the time. The form generally consists of a "call" from one group or individual, which is reemphasized in a "response" by another group or individual. At the end of act 1, we even find a plantation work song using a traditional call and response, as if to drive the point home.

1ST SLAVE (*singing.*)

Hey, my friends, ho.

2ND SLAVE (*singing.*)

Hey, my friends, ho.

1ST SLAVE (*singing.*)

The earth is all fatigue; my fatigue will fatigue her.

2ND SLAVE (*singing.*)

The sun is all fatigue; my fatigue will fatigue her.

These sympathetic, popular forms of repetition are not left unquestioned, though. The poetic and prophetic voice of Toussaint, the Chorus, and the Reciters stands in consistent contrast with the prose of the rest of the Black characters in the play, as if to mark a distinction between the language of the people and the language of the poet. If a poetic, anticolonial discourse is to emerge and a transmuted French is to be born, our text seems to suggest it must do so in contrast to other popular registers—that these preceding registers derived from historically Black genres must be refined further in the pursuit of equality and freedom, even if they are the ultimate source for this new French, this poetry.

Coda: The Drama Now

Césaire's typescript was distinct and remarkable for its time, true, but it is even more so for ours. After Césaire's efforts, and that of others mentioned above, Marie Chauvet, Derek Walcott, Édouard Glissant, and Jean-Claude Fignolé have taken worthy stabs at dramatic renditions of the Haitian Revolution. Many more have as well, and continue to do so, and not only for the stage. Danny Glover, for example, has spectacularly (and unsuccessfully) tried for years to produce an epic blockbuster for Hollywood based on C. L. R. James's *The Black Jacobins*. We are still waiting for that blockbuster by Glover, or anyone else, for that matter. Despite all these efforts in the past few decades, we always seem to find ourselves back in Trouillot's silence. Arriving at our own unique moment in the literary history of the revolution, we find instead the rabid resurgence of noxious myths about Haiti and Haitians.⁶⁹

We are living through a period plagued by the obsessive, unexamined tropes of the “failed state,” of the “poorest nation in the hemisphere,” and its “progress-resistant people.” The silences being produced now are specifically and rather obviously meant to paper over the role of the United States and global finance in the economic and political conditions of today’s Haiti.⁷⁰ This is a moment when Haiti “needs new narratives,” as Gina Athena Ulysse proposes.⁷¹ But this is also the moment of the hypermediated global Blackness of Marvel’s *Black Panther*, of toppled statues, and Black Lives Matter; of the historiography of Africa and its diasporas reaching new levels of maturity, just as smartphones propagate manufactured mythologies at alarming rates—all of which, for better or worse, provide the current terrain for these new narratives to emerge.

Perhaps “. . . . Et les chiens se taisaient” was indeed ahead of its time for the way it portrays Black violence without reservation. We have no way of knowing with certainty the impact it would have had. In the last instance, our own present must provide the main test for *And the Dogs Were Silent*. We should be ready now. An increasing number of mixed audiences understand that the violence to “force freedom,” to use a recent formulation by Kellie Carter Jackson, was necessary and justified.⁷²

As we face new planetary challenges, and with it new mutations of racism, Césaire’s drama opens new opportunities for us. Undoubtedly, this largely unknown—and hitherto untranslated—historical drama by Césaire offers a powerful and original addition not only to the canon of midcentury literature of the revolution but also, more importantly, to the Black literature of our time. The drama erupts now, volcanic as Césaire would have it, in its staging of unapologetic Black victory and vengeance—where the Negrophobe and the Negrophile both get shot—and there it catches us, in the aporia between the documented history of agency and emancipation of a real people, and the racial-self bobbing in the waning ripples of its wake.

Textual, Editorial, and Translation Notes

Our edition and translation, *And the Dogs Were Silent*, is based on one sole documentary witness:⁷³ a 107-page typescript titled “. . . . Et les chiens se taisaient,” and bearing Césaire’s handwritten revisions, housed at the municipal library of Saint-Dié des Vosges in France. In a twist of fate, this is the

AIME CESAIRE.

..... ET LES CHIENS SE TAISAIENT.

(drame en trois actes)



107ff + 61tbls

DUKE

I.1. Title page, “ Et les chiens se taisaient.” Typescript.
Saint-Dié des Vosges, France, November 1943. Fonds Yvan Goll,
510.301 II Ms.592 b. Bibliothèque Municipale de Saint-Dié.

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ACTE I

(La scène est à Saint Domingue, l'époque de la Révolution française.)

La récitante.

Je dis que ce pays est un ulcère.

Le récitent.

Je dis que cette terre brûle.

La récitante.

J'avertis : malheur à celui qui frôle de la main la résine de ce pays.

Le récitent.

Je dis que ce pays, monstrueusement, dévore.

La récitante.

Ce pays est nuudit.

Ce pays bâille, ayant creché l'ankylostome Cuba, une bouche de clameurs vides.

Le récitent.

Ce pays mord : bouche ouverte d'une gorge de feu, convergence de crocs de feu sur la croupe de l'Amérique mauvaise.



DUKE

I.2. First page, ". Et les chiens se taisaient." Typescript.
Saint-Dié des Vosges, France, November 1943. Fonds Yvan Goll,
510.301 II Ms.592 b. Bibliothèque Municipale de Saint-Dié.

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same small town where America was christened as such by the cartographer Martin Waldseemüller in 1507.

One passage in the typescript suggests that Césaire started work on the draft sometime in 1941 or earlier, during the height of l'Amiral Robert's regime in Martinique. Defying his captors, Toussaint asks them to spit on him "the thick spit of centuries / matured / over 306 years" (p. 125). One possible way to make sense of this number is to add it to 1492. This operation yields the date 1798, a couple of years before Toussaint is imprisoned, providing us a tentative interpretation. Calculating backward from 1941, though, this highly specific number leads us to 1635, the year Martinique and Guadeloupe were appropriated in the name of the French Crown by Pierre Belain d'Esnambuc. The "thick spit," aged 306 years, could also reasonably refer to the period that Martinique has been under French colonial control by 1941.

We find more precise information about the completion of the typescript in a trove of letters from Césaire to Breton housed at the Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques Doucet in Paris. The first of these letters to mention the play is postmarked September 23, 1943, where Césaire notes that he has just finished "un drame nègre" (a black drama).⁷⁴ A letter dated November 16, 1943, announces the impending arrival in New York of a package containing "un recueil possible de poèmes ainsi qu'un drame: Et les chiens se taisaient" (a possible collection of poems as well as a drama: And the dogs were silent).⁷⁵

When we consider the size of the text—107 loose leaves plus title page—a completion date of late 1943 reinforces a start date of 1941 or earlier. A text of this size is larger than all of Césaire's combined output up to that date, from his first pamphlet pieces in Paris as a young man, to the 1939 edition of "Cahier d'un retour au pays natal," to his contributions in *Tropiques*. Considering the amount of effort he must have devoted to being a successful and dedicated teacher,⁷⁶ while tending to his growing family, Suzanne's pulmonary problems, and his already substantial literary activity in *Tropiques*, we cannot but be astonished by this hitherto unknown literary work, which doubtless was Césaire's most ambitious effort until that point. Establishing the dates of composition matters, of course, because they define the context—Vichy Martinique and his new friendships—for the typescript.

The typescript contains many useful material clues that can help us understand Césaire's writing process, what we call the genesis of the text: different pagination schemes superseding one another; five different types of paper and two types of carbon paper used at different periods of time; layers of deletions and additions made using different writing instruments, suggesting

different stages of revision. Careful analysis of this material evidence reveals that the play went through several distinct stages of composition and revision marked by changes in temporality, plot, themes, and dramatis personae.⁷⁷

The earliest set of pages that Césaire composed, typewritten on a type of white bond paper that is found nowhere else in the typescript and roughly corresponding to pages 45 to 82 of the current volume, suggests that he had at first a popular audience in mind. Focused on the first two years of the Haitian Revolution (1791–93), the drama’s action at this stage of composition centers the Haitian people themselves rather than the heroic figure of Toussaint Louverture. Lines of enigmatic, prophetic poetry are rare during this stage of composition compared to later stages. They are also relegated exclusively to the Chorus and the Reciters, who in these early stages served more often than not as supplements to the stage, narrating difficult-to-stage armies and revolutionary crowds into being. Using the chorus to compensate for a bare-bones set makes sense, of course, in the context of wartime Martinique.

Once Vichy and its dangers were out of the picture and Césaire’s poems began appearing in New York City in the surrealist venue *VVV*, publishing his incendiary play there may have seemed possible, or worth exploring. The next letter from Césaire to Breton, postmarked January 17, 1944, takes for granted that the promised package had arrived and announces the arrival of some supplementary pages for “. . . . Et les chiens se taisaient,” consisting of the short text “Intermède” (“Interlude”).⁷⁸ The Césaire documents at the Fonds Yvan Goll in Saint-Dié des Vosges, France, where the typescript is housed today, do not include this shorter piece. This suggests that Breton handed the typescript to Yvan Goll somewhere between November and January; that the integral Saint-Dié typescript, edited and translated here, was part of the package that Césaire announced in mid-November 1943; and that final revisions were completed close to this date. No other revisions were ever added after this date, other than the penciled numbers of the Saint-Dié des Vosges cataloguing system and a small stamp with their logo.

* * * * *

This English translation of “. . . . And the Dogs Were Silent” is based on my editorial work to establish a text drawn from the material evidence of the Saint-Dié typescript. To produce this base text, I respected Césaire’s final choices wherever possible. Sequences marked for deletion in the typescript were left out; sequences added by Césaire were included. Césaire’s revisions often in-

volved several layers of revision. I consistently chose the last stage of revision I could discern from the material evidence. I normalized the names of all speakers for consistency. I did not always follow Césaire's use of punctuation, the so-called accidentals, and often chose modern usage over his. In cases where I deemed accidentals informed the poetry, I respected Césaire's choices.⁷⁹

My approach to translation is overwhelmingly plainspoken and vernacular. I don't attempt to emulate the style of any contemporary or historical school of poetry. Insofar as this is fundamentally a scholarly translation, I pay close attention to questions of usage in their historical moments. That said, I took some liberties in making the English resonate with contemporary audiences. When I couldn't translate a particular effect convincingly, I chose broad legibility over literal translation—except in the case of some regionalisms and arcane vocabulary that are no less unfamiliar in the original than they are in the translation. Unfamiliarity is a feature of Césaire's poetry, and I tried to respect that to some extent.

The drama depends on two binaries that prove difficult to translate satisfactorily: Black/white, and to a lesser extent, man/woman. The complex temporalities outlined above, combined with our own present concerns and sensibilities, complicate these binaries further for translation. The unfolding drama is based on the Haitian Revolution; African memories and European histories resonate in the text; the drama was written for a still-colonized audience during the fascist Vichy regime; and our own era is marked by reascendant fascism around the world and a corresponding antifascist, antiracist, and antipatriarchal struggle.

Césaire's perennial *nègre*—the root of *Negritude*—exemplifies these difficulties. The fact of the matter is that there are no symmetrical solutions between English and French to be found. The reason is not difficult to understand. The history of racial terms in the anglophone world simply does not align with that of France and its former colonies for two centuries, at the very least. We are caught in a philological game of partial mirrors and misleading temporalities. One need only to look at the particular and contingent history of the *n*-word and of the words *colored*, *black/Black*, and *African American* in the United States to understand these are heavily determined by that country's own historical tensions and social movements. Other histories attain to France and its former colonies. To complicate matters for us, Césaire himself plays an outsized role in the fate of the word *nègre* in the francophone world—except for Haiti, perhaps, where the word continues to mean simply “a person.”

How to capture, then, this reappropriation in the context of a poetic text that relies on the act of repetition with a difference? where Toussaint mirrors back to France its republican language to surface its hypocrisy? where Césaire is attempting the epochal reversal of a loaded term in the context of a world war? We would be tempted to translate it using the *n*-word—as Clayton Eshleman, Annette Smith, and A. James Arnold have done—by citing its reappropriation in some Black youth cultures or arguing that etymologically it shares a common origin or a common negative historical role. A quick look at the differences between the reappropriation of the *n*-word in the United States compared to the fate of *nègre* in the history of the twentieth century can help us reject the first alibi as an unnecessary solution. As for the second and third, the word *negro* (same etymology) and *black/Black* have equally carried negative historical connotations at some point or another and have equally undergone transformations in English usage.⁸⁰ The *n*-word in English, understood as an imperfect choice among others, thus becomes inexcusable on sociohistorical and cultural grounds operating on the present, and it would close rather than open the conversation around Césaire’s intentional recuperation of the word *nègre* in our text. Who does the translation matters—similar to the way in which a Black character repeating the words of a white character matters in this volume because the effect is different. Although I have Black ancestors, no one I know positions me as such unironically.

That leaves us with *negro/Negro* or *black/Black*. Hard to choose. In the text, we encounter a large number of occurrences of *nègre* and *noir*. The latter is most often used as an adjective, but because of the nature of the poetry, it sometimes slips into figuring people for the reader. I chose to translate *noir* as lowercase *black*, leaving it to the reader to interpret the figural connotations, unless the context makes it certain that the adjective refers to race, as in *Spartacus noir*, in which case, I use *Black*. Occurrences of *nègre*, nouns and adjectives, are consistently translated as uppercase *Negro*, following contemporary editorial practice. The word shares with English a historical process (even if it doesn’t align perfectly chronologically) of oscillation from negative to positive to uneven use and disuse. To a modern ear, they sound historical in both cases, making the reading experience of the French similar to that of the English translation.

This solution reaches its most jarring moments in those occurrences of *nègre* we find in stage directions. We have reason to remain consistent, though. The text in this volume is an editorial fiction that freezes a text that was being actively revised at the time of our snapshot. One of the most im-

portant transformations of the text was the shift from a theatrical work with clear stage directions to a closet drama of sorts, where the stage directions became part of the poetry. Given this situation, if we were to use *Black* in stage directions as if we were speaking to a living stage director, we are imposing a hard theatricality on a text that is already starting to shed it. Even more to the point, the solution, when applied consistently, has the added benefit of preserving Césaire's recuperative gesture as the valence of enunciation flips as the drama unfolds.

It bears mentioning that in contemporary France, we hear the anglicism *black* take root. Capitalized *Black* wins in the anglophone print world. The anglophone option ironically fulfills the dreams of Césaire's *nègre* for our present. Even though we can never have our cake and eat it too when it comes to translation, I will always hear the contemporary reverberation of *Black* in the *Negro* of our volume. I hope you do too.

Translating the sexual politics of Césaire is similarly difficult. These are justly open to critique in the original, and thankfully, others have risen to the challenge.⁸¹ I have respected the language of the original and do not bowdlerize the often-violent representations of women, nor the feminization of political bodies and the repeated universalization of *man* to mean *people*. Because English nouns are gender neutral for the most part, some choices do end up erasing gendered language in the original by default.

A few words are left untranslated where no satisfying solution presented itself but where they could carry their sense by taking advantage of some flexibilities of modern English. Most prominently, in the case of *Recitant* and *Recitante* I take advantage of English's French DNA. In previous translations of the *Les armes miraculeuses* version, Eshleman had chosen *Narrator* and *Narratress*, which exchanges the poetry of a recitation for a gendered ersatz that does not necessarily please our ears today.

Césaire's use of prepositions was particularly difficult to translate. The poetic lines, especially those recited by Toussaint, abuse the French preposition *de*—in many cases without the aid of punctuation to help us disambiguate. This preposition opens up a surprising number of possible translations depending on context. For the most part, I chose to use *of* and minimize the presumption of possession.

I edited and translated the text because I believe we need it now. I wanted to highlight a historical prophecy of Black redemption that becomes true; to offer a text that fights against the doublespeak of colonialism because the ruses of that discourse continue to haunt us today. Césaire's Toussaint remains

uncannily relevant to France's current incarnation of republicanism—just as obsessed with secularism and universalism, just as willfully blind to its own coloniality and racism. I wanted you to hear this Toussaint respond to the messengers of France, the ambassadors of Napoleon. Finally, I wanted to recover a more fiery Césaire, a man who wrote dangerous words at a time when speaking honestly and directly in public could cost him dearly. These goals, more than anything else, seal my choices in *And the Dogs Were Silent*.

Notes

1. Césaire, “Et les chiens se taisaient, ‘tragédie.’” An adaptation for the theater, published as a stand-alone volume by Présence africaine in 1956, was based on this more abstract 1946 text, not on the decidedly more theatrical text we publish in this volume.

2. Ronsin, “Yvan Goll,” 73.

3. Gil, “La découverte.”

4. A diplomatic edition is any edition of a document that tries to respect as much as possible its original graphemes. Such an edition does not correct punctuation nor try to read final authorial intention in a manuscript. In the case of the typescript, that meant including ~~deleted passages~~ and original pagination schemes, indicating additions to the original type *in italics*, and typographically representing other material traces found in the original, such as large crosses drawn in empty spaces on half-used pages.

5. See Véron, *Aimé Césaire*, and “Césaire at the Crossroads”; Arnold, *Aimé Césaire*; Frost, “The Past of Future Life”; and Sofo, *Les éclats de la traduction*.

6. Filostrat, *Négritude Agonistes*; Rexer, “Black and White and Re(a)d All Over.”

7. Three translations have become available recently: Césaire, *Journal of a Homecoming / Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*; *The Original 1939 Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*; and “Notebook for a Return to the Land of My Birth.”

8. This idea is explored most recently, for example, in Raoul Peck's documentary *Exterminate All the Brutes* (2021).

9. Edwards, “Introduction: Césaire in 1956”; Julien, “Terrains de Rencontre.”

10. Beloux, “Un poète politique,” 26.

11. For an in-depth study of the complicated history of the Black avenger in the Atlantic world, see Pierrot, *The Black Avenger*.

12. Césaire, “Et les chiens se taisaient,” *Les armes miraculeuses* (1946) (my translation).

13. Césaire, *Et les chiens se taisaient* (1956), 55 (my translation).

14. Jennings, *Vichy*, 119–21.

15. Glissant, “Souvenirs des années 40 à la Martinique,” 98.

16. Jennings, *Vichy*, 1.
17. S. Césaire, "Léo Frobenius," 27–32.
18. Jennings, *Vichy*, 186.
19. First quotation, Césaire, Letter to Breton, April 20, 1942; second quotation, Césaire, Letter to Breton, August 3, 1943.
20. Jennings, *Vichy*, 188–89.
21. Césaire, Letter to Breton, April 4, 1944.
22. Véron, "Césaire at the Crossroads," 433.
23. Césaire, Letter to Breton, April 4, 1944.
24. For further analysis of these literary crosswires, see Ménil, "Sur la préface de Breton," 203–14; Blachère, "Breton, ascendant Césaire"; Véron, *Aimé Césaire*.
25. Véron, *Aimé Césaire*, 239–40.
26. The collection in question is the "Colombes et Menfenils" manuscript, now in the hands of a private collector, and sent together with the typescript of ". Et les chiens se taisaient" in November 1943.
27. Césaire, Letter to Breton, May 26, 1944.
28. Césaire, "Et les chiens se taisaient" (1946), 154.
29. Véron and Hale, *Les écrits*, 76–77.
30. Césaire, Letter to Breton, April 2, 1945. We know that this was also a time of relative hardship for the family, since the government was not paying Suzanne Césaire for her own work as part of the cultural mission. For an examination of this period from her perspective, see Joseph-Gabriel, *Reimagining Liberation*, 29–56; and Curtius, *Suzanne Césaire*.
31. Césaire, Letter to Breton, August 22, 1945.
32. Two decades earlier in 1924, in one of the most infamous episodes in the already notable history of surrealism, a young Goll and a young Breton each published a "surrealist manifesto" around the same time. Soon after, they had a fistfight over who really had the right to speak for surrealism. Breton won both fights.
33. *Hémisphères*, nos. 2–3 (Fall/Winter 1943–44).
34. *Doudouiste* literature, the literature that exoticizes the Caribbean as a colorful paradise, home to sweet pretty women, the "doudous," was something that had already been strongly condemned by Aimé Césaire in his "Cahier" and in *Tropiques* before Breton wrote his Martinican poems, and even more poignantly, by Suzanne Césaire, as Anny D. Curtius demonstrates in *Suzanne Césaire*, her recent monograph on the growing body of representations of the latter and her writings. In the only letter where Césaire acknowledges having read them (April 4, 1944), he prudently does so in passing, leaving it at that.
35. After overcoming many obstacles, and that we know of without Césaire's involvement, this bilingual edition was eventually translated by Lionel Abel and Ivan Goll and published in 1947: Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal / Memorandum on My Martinique*.
36. Breton, Letter to Goll, December 12, 1944.

37. Césaire, Letter to Breton, April 2, 1945.

38. Antonin Artaud published *Le théâtre et son double* (*The Theater and Its Double*) in 1938. Artaud was briefly a member of the surrealist movement until he was expelled by André Breton. In his seminal text on the *théâtre de la cruauté*, he advocates for a theater of shock and awe, whose main purpose is to violently wake the audience into reflection.

39. Georges Biassou was one of the early leaders of the revolution. Toussaint began his revolutionary career as a medic in Biassou's band. In 1793, after Spain and France declared war on each other, Spain offered freedom to Biassou and his troops if they fought on behalf of Spain from the Spanish side of Hispaniola.

40. Césaire, *Toussaint Louverture*, 216–20.

41. Dutty Boukman was another early leader of the revolution. He is said to be the *houngan*, or vodou cleric, who officiated the ceremony at Bois Caïman that sparked the original slave rebellion in 1791.

42. Dubois, *Avengers*, 163.

43. Dubois, *Avengers*, 163.

44. Napoleon placed his brother-in-law, French Army general Charles Leclerc, at the command of a large army with orders to take back control of the colony and reinstitute slavery. Leclerc arrived at Cap Français in February 1802.

45. In the 1946 version, the entire drama takes place in the prison, and the scant action revolves around the Rebel's last days. Sometime in 1944, Césaire made the decision to place all the action in the prison or “mad house.” We explore some of his reasons below, in the section titled “Césaire's Mission in Haiti.”

46. Césaire, “Cahier d'un retour au pays natal,” 33; Césaire, “Notebook for a Return to the Land of My Birth.”

47. Césaire, “Cahier d'un retour au pays natal,” 32.

48. Daut, *Tropics of Haiti*, 2015.

49. Depestre, “Entretien avec Aimé Césaire,” 77.

50. Depestre, “An Interview with Aimé Césaire,” 36.

51. Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, 119–86.

52. C. L. R. James started his research on Haitian history for his recently recovered screenplay, “Toussaint Louverture: The Story of the Only Successful Slave Revolt in History: A Play in Three Acts,” in the winter of 1933 at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Høgsbjerg, introduction to James, *Toussaint Louverture*, 9). James continued to deepen that research in the 1930s, culminating in his classic study *The Black Jacobins*.

53. Ardouin, *Études*, 174–75. Césaire's choice of Ardouin makes sense in light of the play's teleology toward a Republic. The positive light of Toussaint as a redeemer and avenger of his people, on the other hand, may have more to do with Césaire's readings of Thomas Madiou's *Histoire d'Haïti* or Victor Schœlcher's *Vie de Toussaint Louverture*—whom Césaire will cite favorably in his own volume on Toussaint years later. For a recent discussion of how Haitian nineteenth-century

historiography and print culture can be understood as a paper war between an anticolonial abolitionist tradition and an internationalist republican tradition, see Stieber, *Haiti's Paper War*. Although their traces are not as evident in the typescript, we should consider that Césaire likely read French literary works on the revolution of the nineteenth century as well, including Victor Hugo's novel *Bug-Jargal* (1826) and Alphonse de Lamartine's overly sentimental verse drama *Toussaint Louverture* (1850).

54. My translation. Textual evidence also seems to point to Beaubrun's brother Céigny. "Still though! The English and the Spaniards brought to their senses, we sent back Master Gilles" (p. 92) points to C. N. Céigny Ardouin, *Essais sur l'histoire d'Haïti*, 233–34. A "Master Gilles" is not a well-known historical figure. The name Gilles makes very rare appearances in the historiography. Céigny's has an entry for a Gilles Bénech, an African-born rebel slave, who eventually fought in the Republican army under André Rigaud against the British and retired to the plantation of his parents after the British were defeated. This historical Gilles provides a good candidate for the Master Gilles of the Passerby in act 2 because he would be an example of a Black rebel who knows his place, as opposed to Toussaint. Other direct citations can be found in the explanatory footnotes on the translation.

55. Daut, *Tropics of Haiti*, 1–48.

56. See Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*. In his now classic study, Scott calls attention to the evolution of context, or "problem-spaces," for stories of the revolution. He does so through an examination of C. L. R. James's two different editions of *The Black Jacobins*, which were decades apart from each other.

57. On this erasure, see Sibylle Fischer's influential introduction to *Modernity Disavowed*.

58. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*.

59. In this sense, this text serves as a precursor to recent historiography that attempts to understand slave rebellions and warfare in the Caribbean as African. See, for example, Brown, *Tacky's Revolt*.

60. Walsh, *Free and French*.

61. Césaire, "Poésie et connaissance," 14–19.

62. Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*.

63. Bernabé, "Choix de la langue"; Walker, "Aimé Césaire and the Problems of Language," 23–34.

64. A *Totalkunstwerk* is a total artwork, i.e., an art form that aspires to include all other ones.

65. Véron, *Aimé Césaire*, 178. Kora Véron offers the provocative thesis that the play's title comes from Bertrand Ramón de la Sagra, *Histoire physique, politique et naturelle de l'île de Cuba*, who describes Columbus's surprise on his first journey at finding dogs that did not bark—silent dogs—in what is now Cuba. This origin, she adds, reinforces the connection to Claudel's *Livre de Christophe*

Colomb. De la Sagra would be referencing Christopher Columbus himself, who reports on his arrival to Cuba on October 28, 1492, that he encountered a silent dog, “un perro que nunca ladró” (a dog that never barked). The next day Columbus counts many “perros que jamás ladraron” (dogs that never barked). Not much later, in *La natural hystoria de las Indias* (1526), Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo dedicates a whole chapter to these silent dogs of the Taínos; Césaire, in turn, claimed he derived the title from ancient Egypt’s mortuary mythology. For the latter, see Harris, *L’humanisme*, 28.

66. Many of these dramatic techniques are marked for deletion in the typescript and therefore are not present in this edition and translation.

67. My translation.

68. This last stage direction does not make it into our edition because of our decision to respect Césaire’s deletions. I bring it up here solely to illustrate the antagonistic intertextual relationship to Claudel’s text. This is just one example of many found in the typescript where Césaire echoes and responds to Claudel’s text. For more on this subject, see Ruhe, “L’antichaudelien d’Aimé Césaire”; Laforgue, “Césaire et Claudel.”

69. For recent treatments of the literary and filmic history of the revolution, see Kaisary, *The Haitian Revolution*; Figueroa, *Prophetic Visions*; and Sepinwall, *Slave Revolt on Screen*.

70. Glover, “Flesh like One’s Own.”

71. Ulysse, *Why Haiti Needs New Narratives*.

72. Jackson, *Force and Freedom*.

73. In textual scholarship, a witness is any single material instantiation of a text. In our case, there’s only one witness of the text “. . . . Et les chiens se taisaient.” On the other hand, there are many witnesses of the text “Et les chiens se taisaient” (1946) or *Et les chiens se taisaient* (1956).

74. Césaire, Letter to Breton, September 23, 1943.

75. Césaire, Letter to Breton, November 16, 1943.

76. Ngal, *Aimé Césaire*, 111–13.

77. For an extended genetic analysis, see my introduction to the diplomatic edition in *Poésie, théâtre, essais et discours*.

78. Césaire, Letter to Breton, January 17, 1944.

79. Césaire’s typescript is unusual in that no external hand, save for the Saint-Dié library stamp, left its traces on the document, and to date, it stands as the sole witness to this version of the work. Although my general approach to material textuality is inherited from the “social turn” of Jerome J. McGann and D. F. McKenzie, to produce our base text I found it more expedient to refer to the more traditional methods in American literary editing, which imagine and honor a final authorial intention. For a discussion of these methods, see Tanselle, “Greg’s Theory.”

80. See Smith, “Changing Racial Labels.”

81. See, for example, Couti, *Dangerous Creole Liaisons*.