

*Robert A. Bell*

BEYOND A BOUNDARY

Talk No. 1

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am going to take you through this book, I am going to tell you what I put into it. You need not accept it. A critic would be quite justified in saying that he does not see what I said there. He sees other things. That is legitimate, in fact inevitable. I, however, am entitled to say what I put into it, and that is particularly necessary because time and again I meet people who tell me that it is a very fine book, and they like it a great deal, but I put a lot more than what they see in it. The best thing, therefore, is to tell you what I put into it. It is, as far as I am concerned, to the horrification of many of my friends I say this, as far as I think, it is the best book I have written. Perhaps when I am finished tonight you will begin to see what I am getting at although you may not agree with me.

I will begin with the dedication. It is to Learie Constantine and W.G. Grace. I hope you see the significance of that conjunction... "For both of whom this book hopes right great wrongs", i.e. to these notable cricketers great wrongs have been done and the book hopes to right those wrongs. You notice it puts the West Indian cricketer and perhaps the most notable of English cricketers on the same plane as men to whom great wrongs have been done, and in so doing extend our too limited conceptions of history and of the fine arts. I propose, in settling these wrongs, to develop and extend our too limited conception of the fine arts; so that nobody can misunderstand what I intend to do, I say it right at the beginning.

Now for the Preface. This book poses the question -- "What do they know, who only cricket know?" To answer involves ideas as well as facts. The autobiographical framework shows the ideas more or less in the sequence that they developed in relation to the events, the facts and the personalities which prompted them. Now comes the sentence which people read but do not understand or do not appreciate. The ideas originated in the West Indies, the ideas that are in this book that set out to correct wrongs, that set out to extend our conceptions of history and of the fine arts, they originated in the West Indies. It was only in England and in English life and history that I was able to track them down and test them, but the ideas came from here. I did not get those ideas in England, not a bit; and I say so right through the book. To establish his own identity Caliban (that is I, and any of you who wish to come in) after three centuries must himself pioneer into regions Caesar never knew. In other words, the West Indian native, in order to establish his own identity, must seek ideas and develop conceptions about history and the fine arts that are way beyond what the British and the others are doing. Now you may disagree with me, but it is plain what I intend to do. You will decide whether I have done it or not.

It is very curious though, so many people have read the book and don't seem to have recognized what I am getting at. If you do not recognize it tonight then the book is a failure for if a writer does not make the effect he intends he has to consider that not only the people who are reading are not understanding his book, but also that his book is not good enough. The ideas originated in the West Indies, and I begin by narrating my early life in the West Indies. That is the basis of this book... my father, my mother, my aunt, the little village we lived in; and then I won an exhibition to the Queen's Royal College and the mess

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I made of things there -- not only of myself, but of them. I did not get on very well there. I left having mastered the principles of English cricket and of English literature. Before very long I acquired the discipline for which the only name is "Puritan". I never cheated. I never appealed for a decision unless I thought the batsman was out. I never argued with the umpire. I never jeered at a defeated opponent. I never gave to a friend a vote or a place which by any stretch of imagination could be seen as belonging to an enemy or to a stranger. My defeats and disappointments I took as stoically as I could. If I caught myself complaining or making myself excuses I pulled up. If afterwards I remembered doing it, I took an inward decision to try not to do it again. From the eight years of school life, this code became the moral framework of my existence. It has never left me. I learnt it as a boy, I have obeyed it as a man and now I can no longer laugh at it. I failed to live up to it at times; when I did I knew; and that is what matters. I had a clue and I cared. I could not care more.

For many years I was a cricket correspondent in the West Indies, having to write about myself, my own club, my intimate friends and people who hated me. Mistakes in judgment I made often enough, but I was as righteous as the angel Gabriel, and no one ever challenged my integrity. Thus it was that I could not join . . . . etc. That is how I was brought up, and the generation after me was brought up in the same way. We were brought up according to the standards of the British Public School Code. We did not pay attention to it in class, but outside when we went on to the games field we observed the rules, and I have read books by Frank Worrell and Clyde Walcott which showed that they went even further than we in Barbados. So that is the life of a certain generation, or certain generations. I believe this began about 1870 when the Secondary schools were founded in the West Indies. This went up to 1939, but what has happened since then is very difficult to say. That, however, is the type of education and instruction we had. The coloured middle classes were moulded on the British pattern. This was not strange because at the school where I was, Queen's College, of the nine masters, eight of them were graduates of Oxford or Cambridge. We could reject this type of discipline after we left school, but we were rejecting something that was important, or, we could continue. Many of us continued in the same line. The members of the lower classes went their own way. If however they aspired or happened to reach a class higher than the one that they were in, they at once signified that they were members of that class by sticking to this British Public School Code as far as they could. We even wore high collars during the hot days, but that was how we were brought up, so we did not know any better at the time.

After dealing with that, I go on to treat what I call the "Light in the Dark." This was the first serious crisis in my life, and it affected me for some ten years. I played cricket at college well. One year afterwards I played very well indeed for another club and the question was: "Which club should I join?" There was the Queen's Park Club, for white, wealthy people. It had some coloured members and even a few black people. The black people who were there were usually anonymous, because by the time they had raised enough money and got enough status to be members of the Queen's Park Club they were too old to play, so nobody ever saw them. Then there was another club which drew membership from among white Catholics. I could not join either of those. I would have been more quickly elected as a member of the M.C.C. Then there was the Constabulary, but as I was not a policeman, neither did I care to be a policeman, so that club was ruled out. Then there was Stingo which was the club of the plebeian - the ordinary people; the candlestick maker, porter, low class taylor, so . . . . . Queen's Park

was too high and Stingo was too low. There were two clubs remaining. One was the Maple Club and the other the Shannon Club, and the Maple had been founded on the basis that they did not want any dark people for it was essentially a brown club. I really am surprised to hear you all laughing. You talk as if this took place in South Africa or somewhere far from here...as if you are not aware of that yourselves. Maybe you are not. Jamaica would be a most unusual West Indian island if you are not, but nevertheless let us continue. So the Maple Club would not admit dark people, but the Shannon Club was the club of the lower middle class, Constantine, his father, Pascall and the rest -- lower middle class. I wanted to join Shannon, but there were people in the Maple Club who did not stick to these principles of colour too strongly. The captain of the Maple Club wanted good men for his team. In addition, his brother was married to my mother's sister; so he came up to me and he said, "I hear you want to join us!" (I don't know where he heard that from).... But W. St. Hill and Learie Constantine at the Shannon Club would enquire how I was getting on, so there was I between them. So finally I was reminded that I had attended school at the college with the boys in the Maple Club; all of them had not got these peculiar ideas, so I joined them. They were the people I would meet in society and they were the people I should join. Though I was a little uncertain, nevertheless I joined them and got on very well. But the fact remains as I have written elsewhere, in the West Indies, especially in those days, the social question was so based on colour that the distinction of a coloured man, of whatever his particular shade of black or brown was that he kept company with people a shade lighter than himself. So the dark brown man had "arrived" when he was keeping company with brown people. And the light brown people had "arrived" when they were keeping company with the very light, nearly white people. That was how it was. I don't see why you should laugh at that. Maybe you have got mid of it here, but that is how it was. I was, therefore, faced between this choice of the right and left in Trinidad, and I had chosen to go with the right. It was to affect my political development for some ten years. I did not know that then, but it was only afterwards that looking back I saw whom my friends were, and whom my friends would have been had I joined the other side. Constantine used to tell me: "If you had joined us we would have made you into a cricketer." He was not malicious about it and we became very good friends; and there was another remarkable man on whom I shall spend another five minutes -- W. St. Hill. He and I were good friends, but I had gone to the right and it was to affect me for some ten years. So I deal with that in the next chapter I call it the "Light and the Dark".

I shall omit the sketches that I made of five or six West Indian cricketers. These were cricketers from Trinidad, men whom I knew well and who were personal acquaintances and friends of mine. These sketches will be brought in at the end, because then you will be able to see why I chose those. I could have chosen half-a-dozen others but those were chosen specifically, and I have not met a single person who understands the significance of the selection of those men. You, however, will understand when I have finished. So after I described them, I then went on to take up my first big analysis on Learie Constantine, and I think he is one of the most remarkable men of his time. He is an astonishing citizen. I know him very well. Constantine was a notable example of a man whose father was one of the most popular men in Trinidad and who had singled out for merit early by Major Harragin, a great sportsman in Trinidad, and for merit early by H.B.G. Austin, the captain of the West Indies. He had done very well in England. He had come back, but he could not get a job. In 1926 the Englishmen came down and Austin fielded out in Barbados for some 600 runs - he was in his forties and he must have felt it - and he wanted a cover point on his side and he went to Trinidad. Constantine was

working in the Government. He was acting and was told that he could not obtain leave, and he had more sense than to ask for leave because if he were acting and asked for leave then he would not get back the acting appointment. H.G.B. Austin came and he got Constantine's leave, and he got it with full pay and secured his return to the post when he returned from British Guiana. All this was being observed by my friends. But there was somebody else looking at this, and that was Constantine himself.

In 1928 the West Indies team went to England. Constantine had been training for this event since 1927. He was a fast medium bowler, but he made himself into a fast bowler. Then he intended to be a fast bowler so he could not field at cover, so he made himself into a slip. I used to see him every afternoon down at the Queen's Park Oval and frequently I used to throw balls into the slip machine and he would catch them. He made himself into a slip fieldsman to correspond with his fast bowling, because, as I told you in the book, Learie had made up his mind to go to England, and he was not coming back. That was definitely done in response to a situation in Trinidad, and the situation exists to this day. I suppose you know that we have these fine West Indies cricketers playing for the West Indian team because of League Cricket in England. But for that there would not be many W.I. cricketers there. Constantine made up his mind that he was going and he went to England, played magnificently and they kept him. Then he began what has risen to its highest pitch today, this tremendous influence and importance and grandeur of the West Indian cricketers in League Cricket in England. He went to Nelson and laid the basis of it; so that what he did lasts to this day. I have gone into it at length; the kind of cricketer he was; the kind of cricket he played; his tremendous judgment of the game and what he brought to League Cricket. That is what he established -- the style, the tone and temper of League cricket in England, when he went to Nelson in 1928.

In 1932 I went to England and I went up to Nelson and lived at his house for a year, and after that I went up there very often and I saw and heard from various people what League Cricket was when he came, and what he had made it into by 1932 and the state in which he left it; and these boys are going into a building of which Learie Constantine laid the foundations. And that is part of West Indian history.

Then I take a critique of George Headley. Then I come to another passage and I will ask you to hold on tight to your chairs lest you get upset when I read it. "What do Men Live By?"

Most of the summers between 1933 and 1938 I spent reporting cricket; first for the Manchester Guardian and then for the Glasgow Herald. They were happy days, and if I were writing the usual type of cricket reminiscences I would have plenty to say, but though I read that sort of book I have no intention of writing one. Fiction writing drained out of me and was replaced by politics. I became a Marxist, a Trotskyist. I published large books and small articles on these and kindred subjects. I wrote and spoke. Like many others I expected war and after war the social revolution. (Now it is very strange. I have not been arrested in England for writing that. Nobody seems to have been bothered about it at all.)

In 1918 a lecture tour took me to the United States and I stayed there fifteen years. The war came. It did not bring Soviets and Proletarian power, instead the bureaucratic totalitarian monster grew stronger and spread. (That is the Russian regime). It took nearly a decade of incessant labour

and collaboration to break with it and re-organize my Marxist ideas to cope with the post-war world. This was a matter of doctrine, of history, of economics and politics. These pursuits I shared with collaborators, rivals, enemies and our public. We covered the ground thoroughly. So you see I have been telling you what happened and how it came about that I wrote this book. I then proceed to say that what bothered me after the war was this. As Marxists we had had certain ideas about society... Certain ideas about the place of games, the place of literature, the place of art in society, and the failure of the revolution during the war or after the war and the idea that bourgeois society had established itself after the war made some of us begin to think. Now these ideas were lacking in some way, and I have stated all that there and nobody has found it subversive, or if they did they hid it, and I said it is necessary to think over these things, and in thinking them over I began to think of cricket in England and of cricket in the West Indies -- the early life I had lived. That is where the ideas came from, all my half-forgotten past in Trinidad; and now my probing into the things men live by had sensitized me to see cricket with fresh eyes as soon as I had begun to think for myself about it. The first task was to get Greece clear.

I am not particularly fond of the Romans -- they and their empire over the whole of the known world and their roads and their military legions and their laws -- but every succeeding year I have read more and probed more deeply into Greek civilization, and it is quite obvious to me more and more that the two centres of European civilization are the Hebrews and the Greeks.

Now what is it we notice about the Greeks? There were two things that were very striking about them. One of them was democracy; the other was the games, organized games. The first date in European history is 776 B.C., the first year of the Olympic Games. Now I devoted a whole chapter to this, of the tremendous role that these organized games played in the life of the ancient Greek city. What is noticeable is this. With the decline of the Greek civilization games also declined; and then, a most peculiar business, organized games disappeared from the face of the earth. With the decline of the Greek democracy and the decline of the Olympic Games organized games disappeared. The Romans had some games in which men killed one another or fought with bears and tigers. Now when did the games come back? All this is treated in the book.

In 1864 Carl Marx founded the First International, in 1865 the North defeated the South in the civil war. In that same year, 1865, Disraeli passed the first bill which established popular democracy in England. In 1871 the Commune came..... failed; reaction tried to suppress democracy in France, but they won in the Parliament by one vote and the Third Republic was founded. So that between 1864 and 1870 there was a tremendous movement in Britain and the United States towards popular Parliamentary democratic procedure. But at the same time something else was taking place between that same 1860 and 1870. There was the organization of the Football League in England, the Athletic League in England, Baseball in the United States, Lawn Tennis; all organized games that had disappeared from the earth for so long came back in that very decade. So in the decade from 1860 to 1870 we have this tremendous movement all over the world towards popular democracy, and side by side with it we have the development of organized games. I can't draw too violent a conclusion. I merely state the facts. Who wants to explain them away can, but those facts can be seen and it is not so distant from what was taking place in ancient Greece. Now, having dealt with it so to speak on a world scale, watching the development of organized games and what is parallel to it, I then take up the

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history of England, and I go into what produced W.G. Grace. He was born in 1848 and that year was the end of the Chartist Movement, and the definite organization of Britain openly as a modern industrial state. There was the growth of the big cities, modern industry, and that was in 1848. By 1865 there was the first bill tending towards popular democracy, and already there was the ten-hour day and Saturday afternoons free to an immense urban population in the new towns. The climax of that was reached by 1865, and at that same time, 1860 or thereabouts, there were organized games taking the tremendous role that they are playing in modern life.

Now W.G. Grace was born in 1848, so in 1864 he was just 16. In 1863 the M.C.C. had authorised over-arm bowling which brought all sorts of possibilities to the game. By the way, if I may mention something, O'Neil says that he was scared in facing Griffith. I wrote that in my reports long before he said so, but there is another point in regard to that business. Griffith shies and he said he was afraid to face Griffith -- but Hall does not shy and he was afraid to face Hall too. They were afraid of the fast bowling. So W.G. Grace was born in 1848. In 1863 M.C.C. authorized the over-arm bowling which brought new possibilities to the development of the game. In 1864 or thereabouts the County Championship was organized. In 1863 there was the first trip of an English team to Australia. You will notice the age in which he was born. There was a new social structure in Britain. There were organized games taking place all over the world, and Grace was born just at the time, so that when he was 16 the game was re-organized both internally and on an international scale; and that made him the batsman that he was. Does anybody believe that if Garfield Sobers had been born in 1920 and was everything that he was by 1935 he would have been the player that he is today? Absolutely not. One has to be born in a certain atmosphere. One has to be surrounded by certain qualities and one has to be moving around from country to country and know what is happening. One's countrymen must begin to observe and the possibilities must exist that produce a Sobers; and it was that which produced W.G. Grace -- a series of historical and international circumstances, and with his wonderful personal capacity that pushed him forward. That was what made that old man last so long and play the cricket that he did. It was not that he could bowl and bat well. He did something which was of tremendous social significance and I have devoted three chapters to him.

In the new urban England the English people who had left the countryside where English people had lived and amused themselves for centuries had no opportunity of maintaining contact with what they had left behind, and the greatness of Grace is this, that he brought the England of the countryside into the new towns and made of English cricket a permanent and fundamental feature of the new industrial and urban England. Grace is excluded from the history books of his country. Books are written on social practices in England and he is left out. He was the best known Englishman of his time. No statue of him exists, yet he continues warm in the hearts of those who never knew him. There he is safe until the whole crumbling edifice of obeisance before mammon, contempt for Demas and categorizing intellectualism finally falls apart. The society is so backward and degenerate that it can't appreciate its really great men, and, until it falls apart Grace will not be understood.

Now I go to what I consider the most important section of the book I have written, and it is called "What is Art?"

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There are a few people who have read the book and understand what I am after, but a good many critics read and pass on. I can only tell you in brief terms what it is I am saying there.

I lay the greatest emphasis on Bernard Berenson. He was the chief of them all and his ideas of art were well circulated. I deal with him in four or five pages and show that his views on art and my views don't coincide. Now I say that these art critics will never be able to write decent art criticisms or art criticisms that matter unless they understand that when thirty thousand people go to see a cricket match, or one hundred and twenty thousand people go to see a football match, they are taking part in a genuine and artistic expression as when you go and see paintings or sculpture. I am not asking anybody for recognition. Your art criticism is in a mess and it is going to continue to be in a mess as long as you do not understand that this interest in art, this interest in popular arts, as you call it, that the people are taking, is part of a genuine expression of artistic participation, and that is what my chapter on art attempts to do.

Now I go a little further, and my method is always historical, and I will go through this very rapidly. I say what is the beginning of civilization as we know it? The general opinion is, that man hunted. I said what is this hunting? He learns to throw a stone or to throw a stick or to run after animals and place himself in such a way as to capture them. That is the beginning of the civilized structure. And we know that, not only by anthropologists and historians who seek to make it up, it is because the Bushmen and the men in France and certain places in Spain, men whom you would not dream of as being civilized have left behind artistic representations of the animals they hunted and of the men hunting them, which are unsurpassed to this day. Let us explain that. In other words, as soon as they became human, they became fully human. I remember Jacob Epstein saying of some of the statues that were found and brought to Europe from Africa: "Some of the men who did these things," Epstein thought, "were men who had the artistic capacity of Michael Angelo." These men lived in huts and they cut the tree and carved the wood. They painted on the walls in caves and the paintings are there to this day, and they are unsurpassed. So that is how they began. That is the beginning of civilization as we know it, the hunting. Then we are legitimately entitled to think that a very good hunter, a man who threw the spear well, or who threw the stone well would be imitated and worshipped by his fellow men, and the boys and the whole tribe would do exactly what they do today, that is to practise and do what the great hunter was doing. Then there would spring up a capacity for taking part in what became the organized games. This is seen from the very earliest times. Those games used to be a part of the funeral ceremony, and, from our records, the Olympic Games were a part of civilization. By degrees society developed and men from our age lost those natural artistic instincts that they had. The kind of life that men in the modern age live, an industrial life, can suppress them, though they remain a part of the human endowment, and given circumstances which encourage them they emerge with tremendous power. That is what is happening in the West Indies and that is what is happening in Brazil.

Where does Garfield Sobers come from? How does he come from that little island -- Barbados -- 40 miles wide by 21 miles long? It is said that Sobers is the finest cricketer who ever lived, at least Dexter said so; and Dexter is not given to praising anyone too much. People who have seen the famous Brazilian footballer say that they cannot imagine such a footballer for they have never seen anyone like him. Brazil could be beaten, but not as long as he is on the Brazilian team. One has to ask oneself what is taking place there. I think this is what is happening?

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We are not an industrial civilization. We have some bauxite and some oil, but basically we are a peasant and a rural population even though we live in what we call "towns". But you have to live abroad and to know the big towns like Liverpool and Sheffield and parts of London to know what an urban civilization is. As a rule this type of civilization does not produce remarkable cricketers. We in the West Indies learn the game and we live in circumstances where it is possible to bring the game into play, but at the same time to express our national instincts within circumstances that tend to develop the physical and social aspects of cricket. That is why we play so well. That is why Brazil plays so well. In addition to that, it is of immense importance to a person growing up that the people around him and other people on an international scale begin to look at him and his performances as something exceptional and something which brings credit to his country and to his people. That is the basis of the cricket that is played in the West Indies. That is the basis of the football that is played in Brazil, Argentina and other countries like that. I go at length into this matter in a certain chapter here. This is something that I wrote in 1953, in which I said that in England one plays cricket in a certain way because your society is what it is. The batsmen bowl in a certain way. They have this defensive method both in batting and bowling. It is part of the welfare state of mind, the society. When people want welfare state that is one thing, but if you have a welfare state of mind where you just do your share and get what belongs to you, you can't do artistic work in that way. These cricketers, professional or amateur, are essentially functionaries in a welfare state. That is what they are, constitutional members of society getting money for a job that they are doing. That is not the way great cricket is played and we, fortunately, do not play like that.

I go into that analysis as to why they play and then I go into the strokes that they play. I said formerly a batsman played a back stroke or he left the crease to drive because he was indulging in an artistic adventurous game; but these fellows today are out for defense and the result of this is the long slow defensive forward stroke. With all respect to the former captain of England, there was a time when they did not play forward as they do now, and to play forward as they do now is part of the mentality of the age. This however is wrong because spectators do not want to see this type of playing any more, they only go to see test matches. We in the West Indies live a different sort of life. We play a different sort of game, and that is why they are having us in England next year. I wonder if any of you know why...what is the reason for this. Next year there will be the football world cup. This begins in England in July, with South Africa, India, New Zealand. That will be the end of cricket for that season. The only possibility of really keeping the cricket season going in opposition to that is if the West Indies came; so instead of our going to England in 1971 we have been asked to come in 1966. I think this is fine. It shows we can do something to preserve the principles of the British civilizations.

I am now going to deal with the last chapter which is called "The Proof of the Pudding", and the sub-title of the chapter is "Vox Populi", the Voice of the People. This chapter gives a lengthy description of the circumstances which led to the appointment of Frank Worrell as captain of the West Indies XI. That was a battle. I was editor of a paper -- The Nation -- and when the Englishmen were coming I determined to have a glimpse of Alexander as captain and if, as I suspected, he was not a good captain then he should go. It was wrong for Alexander and Worrell to be on the same side with the former as captain. Purely on my own I "opened fire". I gave a sketch of Worrell's history and his development and ended up every page of chapter with the slogan "Alexander must go".



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I remember many members of the People's National Movement in Trinidad who commented on the fact that sporting matters were published in a political paper, "The Nation". Anyway the campaign was successful and Alexander had to go. That might have upset the West Indies team why they lost the series.

Then something else took place. First of all the West Indies lost the series. If they had not lost it then Worrell would not have been a captain today. Secondly, I have to be very careful about this. I have never thrown a bottle, never. I stated sharply that those who threw the bottles were wrong. The fact remains, however, that bottles were thrown. It is said that Worrell is the finest captain within living memory, but it took a lot of writing and a lot of bottles before he could be appointed.

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

John

Maxwell: I wonder if you would tell us about Cassius Clay?

A: I don't know anything about boxing to begin with. I see a lot about Cassius Clay in the newspaper. He is certainly a master of publicity. However, I will tell you what I think. He is a very young man and he has found it necessary to satisfy himself to go and join what must be a very unpopular social and political organization, so that he is not only Cassius Clay, he is now Mohammed Ali. That must be a great driving force in his desire to achieve. He is obviously a person dissatisfied with his environment and that is the thing that I notice about him. More and more I hear that he is one of the finest boxers ever known. I don't go to see boxing; I am not interested in it. I would not stop it if I had the law in my hands.

Many years ago I saw movies of a boxing match and the people were there cheering, and then one fellow hit another fellow on his nose and the blood spurted and the crowd cheered. I never witnessed another bout.

Q: It does seem to me that the development of sport is intimately connected with the development of the personality.

A: Yes I think so. Now there are two things here. There is what used to happen in the English public schools where that was a great basis for English social life, and that played a tremendous role in the lives that we lived between 1880 and 1939 in the West Indies. It was part of the training that people of the middle-class got. In England it was a tremendous part of their training. Now many boys hated it. Many of them, Robert Graves and Siegfried Sassoon for instance, wrote savagely against it, and I believe they were justified to this extent that if the sports were organized and the boys had every opportunity to take part and some boys did not want to participate, then they should not. That was all. There must be some strong impulse why a boy should go against what all his friends do. I believe, however, that the instinct towards games is far more deeply rooted; that it was intended to become a part of the English educational system. It is something deeply rooted in the human personality, and if properly organized and organized without a sense of too much discipline it will always attract children at school, because it attracts the grown-ups.

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Q: In the early days in Trinidad at the Royal Queen's Park Club or the Maple Club there was a shade complex. One had to be fair to join these clubs. We have two clubs here, the Kingston C.C. and the Melbourne C.C. The Melbourne C.C. was a brown man's club. At the Kingston C.C. it was for the whites, and at a certain time that I remember, way back in the twenties, the Jews were not even allowed to join the Kingston C.C. No person of the Jewish faith or race could join. Do you still say that in Trinidad they still maintain the shade complex at Royal Queen's Park and the Maple?

A: No Sir. I said in 1920 when I began that was the dominant feature of cricket and football and much else. I go further than that and I say that in the games that the clubs played there was a powerful expression of these social desires, social repressions and social instincts. They were expressed in the cricket and in the football. There at least competition was supposed to be open. It was not quite open, but it was more open than in the law or government, or medicine. There certain social expressions were found, but it is not so today to the same degree. That has declined to a large degree, but the fundamental basis from which that sprang (as far as I can see it still exists although it hides itself and covers itself up, but it still exists), is nothing as sharp and as clear as it was thirty and forty years ago.

Q: Mr. James, the society was multi-racial when you were here, but the society is non-racial now. In the context of West Indian development you mentioned both the social and political aspects of games such as cricket. By your conclusion you arrive at the point where the sports' development has outstripped the political development. In what you sum up, as far as cricket is concerned -- we agree that cricket is now a people's game, resultant in its being so widely acclaimed a happy sport for all. Now Sir, what would you say in the context where this social part has outstripped the political development, do you feel that the political development will reach the stage of a people's development of cricket as a sport. What time will that take?

A: The gentleman is entitled to his question in the same way as I am entitled to my answer. When I am giving a talk on the political development of the West Indies I will take up the question of the relation to the sporting development, but tonight that is not my subject so we will leave that out.

Q: Mr. James had promised to tell us about the five personalities which he mentioned. Could we hear something of them?

A: Now I am going to break up the questions and go into these. The people whom I described are Figgott the wicket-keeper, Telemaque, the batsman, George John the fast bowler, and W. St. Hill the batsman, and with your kind permission I will spend some time on them.

Figgott was one of the few comic cricketers in West Indian history that I know. He was 6'4" and he would not wear a white shirt with a collar on it. He wore a shirt without a collar and it had stripes on it. He did that every Saturday. He must have had some deep psychological reason. Figgott is to be remembered because he was the wicket-keeper -- the finest wicket keeper I have ever seen or hope to see. He used to stand up to John. I can see him now and will see him always. And John was one of the most tremendous fast bowlers who ever bowled a ball, and if you took your foot  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch over

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the line then you were gone. Piggott should have been selected in 1923 to go to England, but when the time came they selected Dewhurst instead. In those days, 1923, when the team was selected, there was George John and Joe Small of Stingo. There was Victor Tascall and Learie Constantine of Shannon. Those four were black men. Now if they had taken Piggott as wicket keeper not only would there have been five black men representing Trinidad, but Queen's Park Club would have been out altogether.

Piggott was a very good-natured man. I remember one afternoon I stood at the Queen's Park Oval and watched Dewhurst wicket-keeping. He was doing it very well, and I stood up talking to Piggott. What was strange, however, was this, that everyone felt that Piggott was left out because he was not white.

Telemaque was not a plebeian. Telemaque was a proletarian. He was a waterfront worker of some kind. There was a general strike in Trinidad in 1919 and I would not have been surprised if Telemaque had taken part in it. He played for Stingo and he was a good cricketer, but he was never selected to make the team. One year when he was about 25 years old we all felt he would have been selected, but he was left out again. His wife just sat on the pavement and wept and half the neighbours wept also. His waterfront companions had decided that had he been selected they would have paid their own fare to Barbados to see the game and to celebrate with their fellow waterfront workers at this great honour that had been done to one of them.

Then there was George John. George John was included in a chapter called "Three Generations". This chapter deals with another fast bowler, a man named Woods. Woods was in England playing against Gloucestershire for the West Indies in 1901. Jessop made 157 runs in an hour, so after the first twenty minutes when he had about 100 already, Woods who had been taking a lot of blows went up to the captain and asked to be allowed to take off his boots, because if he took them off he could get the ball. The captain refused, so Woods went back to bowl. Jessop hit the ball in all directions and again Woods requested of the captain: "Let me take off one shoe Sir." But the captain was adamant and would not allow Woods to take off his shoe there.

You see these boys (they were 18 and 19) used to come to the field where their masters were playing, and some of them bowled very well. Then they would be given shoes and taken off to England to play.

Then there was George John, a tremendous bowler. Shannon represented the lower middle-class and the people looked up at them and they played in a way which said: "Well you all think you are superior but at cricket on the savannah we are more or less equal, and we have the best men in the island." Subsequently I wrote that "It is only recent events in the West Indies that have told me that in John's behaviour there was more dynamite than in the behaviour of all the Shannon XI put together."

Then there was the case of W. St. Hill, which many people think is one of the finest chapters in the book. St. Hill was a great batsman, and a very reserved, self-contained person. He was a remarkable individual who would have been at home in England, and he would have done in England what Learie Constantine has done and what Frank Worrell has done, but he did not make it. Fires burned in St. Hill and you could always see the glow. He was encircled

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and enclosed by the circumstances that enclosed a man of his type in West Indian life and he fought against it all his life, but he never could emerge. That is another type, another West Indian type. Today they are emerging in various ways, but politically they are still closed up.

Q:

A: I have dealt with that in this book with the inclusion of Francis. In 1923 Griffith was as good a bowler then as he ever became afterwards. He was then a very fine bowler, but Austin left him out and took Francis instead. That was a very unpopular selection. Francis went to England and took 10 for 72. He played in the second match and took 9 for 120 and in the third match he took 8 for 55 and all the English people felt he was a tremendous fast bowler.

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Austin also took Constantine to England at a time when most of us would have left him out. Austin was a very good captain and he placed the game very high in his judgment. I have been writing a history of West Indies cricket and I say we cannot do but pay tribute and give enormous credit to those members of the plantocracy and the commercial classes in the West Indies who built up this game and established/on the basis that enabled us to produce a Sobers, a Hall and a Griffith today.

Maxwell: Please tell us about the case of Gilchrist.

A: I did the best I could to get the West Indian Board of Control to stop punishing Gilchrist as if he were an errant school-boy and bring him back into the team. I am glad to say that Frank Worrell was talking from England saying that Gilchrist should be brought back. I will tell you one or two things about Gilchrist. I understood that he was the 22nd son of a rural family. Gilchrist's employer told me this much. He said, "I saw him bowling in the country and I brought him into Kingston." He said he had given him a job. Gilchrist was no paragon of virtue but he would never do anything to offend his boss. I begged that Gilchrist be included in the team. Some of his friends in Trinidad published some posters before the game began, saying that if Gilchrist was not on the team no one should go to see the match.

Now I saw something about Gilchrist which is highly significant. In 1957 I went to Canterbury and saw Gilchrist playing there with Walcott as the captain. He did not play very well. I went next to Hastings. There I saw Gilchrist bowling again under Frank Worrell as captain. And again something went wrong. The West Indies Board of Control handled Gilchrist badly.

Q:

A: I believe one had these class relations and Gilchrist was an extreme example. He was not able to take care of himself or defend himself so he felt the full weight of the blows.

In another ten or fifteen years West Indian cricket will be ruled and governed by Kanhai, Sobers etc. After this period a certain steadiness of judgment will be acquired and a certain realism.

C. L. R. James,  
Arts Lecture Room III,  
U.W.I. Mona,  
1.6. 65.

A NEW VIEW OF WEST INDIAN HISTORY

Talk No. 2

Ladies and Gentlemen, I have heated arguments with many of my political friends and associates and the arguments usually revolve around this. I will say, "We can do such a thing here", but my friends tell me almost without exception, "That can't be done here because the people are not up to it." Now over the last year or two I have been testing that out and I have been making some of my talks as tough as they can possibly be, and this is going to be a tough one, and up to now I have not found anybody who is not up to it. Any serious view of history is always tough and a new view of history, especially of something as evanescent as West Indian history, is likely to be difficult, but we will fight it out together.

I am paying great attention this evening to the work of our writers, because when one goes to a country like Italy or France there are the castles, there are the buildings, there are the streets, the squares, the churches, the cathedrals. One goes into the museums and into the galleries and there one sees the paintings and the sculpture. One hears the speech. I used to go to a certain place and edible stuff was sold there, and I was told that this had been going on since the year A.D. 800; over 2,000 years ago. People had been coming in from outside and selling goods there. One does not meet all these things in the West Indies to the same degree. The result is that on our writers and on the work they are doing today, there is concentrated an enormous amount of West Indian history; far more than on the writers in Britain, or the writers in France, or the writers in the United States. I intend to concentrate on them this evening and to draw some conclusions as to the historical method, that is to say a method of approach. I understand there is no Faculty of Philosophy at this university. This is the first and perhaps the last time that I will criticise the university in public, but you ought to have one. I don't see how you can study history or literature or anything, really, without at the back of it some concept of the philosophical direction of what you are studying, and I am chiefly concerned with the philosophical view of West Indian history. I am going to try to give you one, and at any rate, one thing with the philosophical view is that if it is clear you can always say: "I don't agree with that." There must be a philosophical view of any serious topic and I intend to try, through the writers, to get some sort of philosophical approach to the problem of West Indian history. I don't know any West Indian history books. I know a lot of books that write about history. I know of many books which make statements of fact for the most part, I know a lot of books that have accumulated material, but a historical treatment of the history of the West Indies -- I know of no book which deals with this matter.

I will tell you what I am going to do, so that you will be quite clear. I am jumping about rather rapidly. I will begin with a brief view of certain contemporary writers, some people whom I have discovered here in the last few months. I begin with them because they are new West Indian writers and represent a new phase in West Indian history. Some of them are very spiteful and malicious, but the people who write positively are some very fine writers indeed, and the fine thing about them is that George Lamming, whom I shall come to later, Wilson Harris, Hearne, Vidia Naipaul, myself and others are Western educated. We are trained from a literary point of view in the

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Western style and the Western tradition and method, and we bring that information to bear upon the West Indian scene. I don't think there is anything wrong in that, it has produced some very fine work. These writers I am going to introduce you to are of an entirely different type. They are native, as native as the coconut tree or the plantain, absolutely sprung from the soil. One of them I have had the pleasure of meeting for three or four hours, and he was a young man innocent of literary theory. He had read some books but he did not remember all that he had read, but he is very characteristic of the modern type of West Indian.

Now, after I have done that I will move forward towards Wilson Harris and the philosophers, Heidegger and Jaspers -- absolutely the most highly developed phase of modern thought. Wilson Harris cannot be understood and they cannot be properly understood, unless their work is taken together. And then I shall take up George Lamming and Jean-Paul Sartre. The two go together. Immediately after that I shall take up a French writer St. John Perse who is a Nobel prizewinner, and one of the great poets of France, but he was brought up in Guadeloupe and he has never escaped the results. Every bit of his work over sixty years is loaded with the West Indian influence. He said so plainly himself, but even when he does not say it is very clear. Then for a few brief minutes I will take up the poet in "Cahier d'un Retour aux Pays Nataux" the man who invented Negritude, Aimé Césaire, and then I will take up what I can or what you will allow me to, but before I am finished I shall read you some from "The Black Jacobins" which is very West Indian, and you should be able to recognize that as West Indian. I am afraid you don't.

The first person I am going to take is a boy called Earl Loyelace. He is youngman of about 30. A prize of \$5,000 was offered to any West Indian writer who would write novels that the critics approved of. There were 30 novels and four of them were sent to J.B. Priestly and he selected this one. I will read you one or two extracts from it, because that is what is happening today, and I will be glad to know that you recognize and you feel what I am talking about, because there is no other way in literature. It is how you feel about it. It is very unfair to a novelist to read an extract, but I think these are good enough.

Before he was married Walter remembers how at the end of the fortnight when he got his salary he would go with the other fellows from the office down at Jacky's and punch tunes in the juke box, and he would fry chicken and drink rum or beer and talk, talk, talk. Talk about women, talk about politics, talk about the job, about the work. Talk in liquor twisted voices and sometimes afterwards they would go down by Sicardo's night club or out on the street. Monday morning you came to work and the fellows said, "That is a good time we had last night eh?" What was a good time you would think? How the hell was that a good time. You sat there half drunk between cigarette smoke and you ate fried chicken and you crack the bone and sometimes the marrow run down the side of your mouth and fell on the front of your shirt, and you had to wipe it off and listen to obscene jokes; or sometimes a woman with a big backside passed before the door and somebody pointed at her and everybody looked and then gave their opinion of what they would like to do with her, and where and when? And then at the night club you drink rum and dance with a whore with bulging breasts and a short tight-fitting silken dress, and perhaps you would go to her room some-

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where on some alley street, or you would remain there and talk yourself to boredom and drink the rum and watch the aimless curl of cigarette smoke in the dimly-lit room.

That was a hell of a good time! Yes Sir, that was a good time. What is a good time?

That is the sort of feeling. You notice there is nothing literary about it. It is as if some bright boy at the corner was speaking. That is exactly what he is. He is a literary person who talked at the corner, I don't know if he went and visited these places, but at any rate that is what they talked about and he said: "Well, that was a good time they would say". And then comes, "That was a hell of a good time." He questions it: "What is a good time?"..and in a very natural homebred simple manner. There is a lot more that I could read about this, but I don't. I have not the time. A little later he speaks in his own voice, and the natural voice of the West Indian is heard who is not educated abroad but who had been brought up in a decent home and has learnt the language and has fine instincts. He says:

Failure like a jagged-edged knife twist teeth into his chest. Frustration chases anger down the streets of his mind. It is only left for him to weep, weep for the times and for the people of Webber Street; weep for himself and his dream. Weep, for one aging man has words and no deeds, and another is stiffened by pride and galled by previous failures; and young women are prostitutes before their breasts are fully formed; and the young men are angry and violent -- angry at street corners, ready to stick a knife in God's ribs. And a mother prays and a son knows that he must hope. And in this city, in this island the gods are falling and there is nothing for the young people to look up to, nothing for anyone to look up to. The leading citizens are wrapped in their self-centredness and life is the extension of the individual's personality, a sort of emotional masturbation; and love is something that you can crease and slip into your wallet, and pride is something that on Sunday morning you wash with a garden hose and shine, having polished. It is not only unemployment and shanty towns and over-crowded houses, not so much crimes of violence and sex, it is that there is nothing decent and valuable to hold on to.

Out of the land has come asphalt and oil, from the bosom of the peasant the bongo and the limbo have come and the wealth of song, from the tesses the calypso and the steel band; but out of the others, the leading citizens, the good and the rich and the educated folk what has come?

Now that is a drastic indictment. It does not matter whether it is completely true or not, it is that somebody is saying it who is, allow me, one of us, and he has not read it in books. It is a natural response to a certain situation and this young man is a natural writer.

There is another one, a man called Michael Anthony. He wrote a book called "The Games Were Coming". It was a good enough book, good enough, but there was one episode in it that was very striking, and I should have known from that episode how he would write later. But I didn't. There is a young woman who is engaged to one of the cyclists in the games, and he is so concerned with

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the cycling and training and being up to riding pitch and so forth that he would not sleep with her and she is fed up with him; but she is in love with him. She works at the store of an East Indian, a man of about 50, and quite naturally in the simplest straightforward manner Michael Anthony shows that she slips into an affair with this Indian man old enough to be her father. I don't know what that means to you, but I tell you what it means to me. In Trinidad you will hear very often, and you will hear it in British Guiana too, that Indians with small businesses invite to work with them attractive creole girls and soon have them in a situation where they are compelled to give way to their demands and desires.

Now, Michael Anthony says exactly the opposite, and if you lived in Trinidad you would know that this girl slipped into an affair with this man who was old enough to be her father because she wanted to. He definitely says so. The girls are not always forced into such situations, you know. Sometimes they go because they like it, and that was quite something to say in the Trinidad atmosphere. As I said, I should have seen at once what kind of person he was, but I did not. He has written another book called THE YEAR IN SAN FERNANDO. It is the story of a child of twelve who spends a year of his life in San Fernando, and what happens to him and the grown-ups he meets. I will give you only one episode to tell the kind of personality he is. He used to go to the Roman Catholic school, then he went to San Fernando and he worked as a moulder at the oil company. He worked with his hands. Then he went to England and he has worked in the railways, and I believe he has worked on the busses; but he has written these two novels. This novel, THE YEAR IN SAN FERNANDO is a superb piece of work. I will let you see how homebred, how natural and simple it is. I know the people who are being written about and I know the men who are writing it.

The boy of twelve is in the house and Mrs. Chandles and her nephew Edwin are having a terrific row.

I stopped thinking of Edwin to listen again. Mrs. Chandles was talking about the money she had spent on their education. This was not new to me. She had always boasted about this, about the upper-class education she had given her children. Both boys had gone to the big college. (This is a boy of 12 speaking). I had seen the college myself on the hill and I had gazed upon it with awe. I had also seen Mr. Chandles' coat with the college things on, and now I thought of our own poverty and of my mother sending me here because she could hardly feed us all, yet no such row could take place in Ma's house; and we were not refined or anything and we had not been to the big college.

That is most genuinely the attitude of a West Indian person who had not been to the big college, and he had not been able to wear jackets with the design; and he heard this woman constantly speaking of the education that she had given to those children of hers; and here was the kind of row going on. I don't know what is your experience of the West Indies, but I know what is mine. Those sentiments exist among a substantial section of the population who don't get up on the platform to make speeches and who are not sent by the Government on commissions abroad, and do not become ministers. But the simple ordinary lower middle class people whose sentiments are straightforward and clean and clear form a substantial element in the population. I have known them for years, I have come back and met them, and the future of the West Indies depends to a large degree on them. That these two



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writers should spring from out of them and write in the finished way that they do, expressing these sentiments, is to me a hopeful sign in what seems rather a gloomy future.

There are other writers of the day so let me get them out of the way. There is a Mr. Austin Clarke from Barbados. He writes a book called THE SURVIVORS OF THE CROSSING. I mention him purely because he is a most offensive person as a writer and his offensiveness is not individual to him, and if it were I would not bother, but there is a strain of cruelty, a strain of contempt that runs in educated people for the mass of the population. They are usually angry with them because they have not recognized their distinguished abilities and the many things they are willing to contribute to the West Indian society, if only these stupid people would recognise them for what they are, and his book is redolent of it. As a matter of fact, to use plain language, it stinks of it. It is a horrible book altogether. I will read one passage from it to show you what he thinks of the ordinary people of the West Indies.

This is a woman named Stella and she has at last got herself in a situation where she is living with a man who has a little more money than usual. It is very objectionable, but nevertheless it is a bitter medicine we have to take.

"No," Stella said, "But I gained sense, and you know Clemmie darling, pussy is a funny thing. It is the onliest weapon a woman have. You give your man some when he want, some and be-Christ it turn his head right behind his back."

I have never heard any West Indian, either directly or indirectly speak in this way. This comes from Mr. Clarke's own dirty mind.

Take Biscoombe for example.

He telling the Marrison and the parish that I nice that I sweet. Sure! I know to set his plate, and I know how he like it. But I using my weapon. You don't see my two childrens going to High School? You don't see them sitting down besides o' the manager's children and Rev'runt McKinley's children on a mornings? How the hell you think they get there? By trotting up and down behind Rufus? A man who can't even give me two shilling to buy mensing pads when the month come? No, child! It is this! This! This thing what God put up 'twixt my crutch! And she touched the apex of her legs, and patted it until Clementina could hear her hands hitting against her skin.

Now that is a piece of nastiness that is peculiarly Mr. Clarke's, and a certain type of them. I know them. They are not all like these two, you know, when they are educated; especially when they are educated abroad and they come back and do not find the reception that they think they ought to have they are nasty as ever. There is a cruel streak of barbarism running in the educated West Indian which reaches a clear pitch of expression in this book. Remember the name - THE SURVIVORS OF THE CROSSING - so when you go into the bookshops and see this book you will know not to buy it.

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Then there is a Mr. Alvin Bennett. You may know him. GOD THE STONEBREAKER. Mr. Bennett it seems is a Jamaican who went to England sometime 40 or 50 years of age, and now he has found time and energy to write this book. It is not a good book. Let us leave it at that, but the book is worthwhile reading because he is a member of an old generation who is trying to get on terms with the present generation. There is a part in this book in which some coloured boy rapes an English girl, the daughter of someone, and it is a terrible mess. It is very painful to read. This man is not malicious; he is merely stupid and dull. He wanted to write a novel and he got some ideas together and he put the race question and he put this and that and he called the book GOD THE STONEBREAKER. He has put some pretty tough stones for God to break!

I would like to go on to Jaspers and Heidegger and Wilson Harris. What is happening to Wilson Harris in the West Indies is a scandal. I came here the other day and I mentioned the name Wilson Harris and I was asked: "Who is Wilson Harris?" This was not outside the University. It was inside. Some other people said, "Yes, I have heard of him, but I find him very difficult." Others said, "I have tried to read him and I can't." Others can't find his books. That is an absolute shame for a university. I must say, "Give it to Trinidad, it was bad enough although it did not have the university that you have." British Guiana was worse. They not only did not know, but they did not want to know.

To deal with Wilson Harris we have to tackle some serious philosophical questions. We have to tackle the work of Heidegger whose "Being and Time" is of the same quality in the 20th century as Hegel's "Philosophy of Mind" was in the 19th and the "Critique of Pure Reason", by Kant was in the 18th. That is the stamp of writing. If Heidegger has one rival it is Jaspers. Both of them are today about 80. They are still alive and flourishing. They are two of the greatest philosophers of this century. Now philosophy is a very difficult business. Strictly speaking philosophy is as technical as medicine or marine engineering or electricity or something like that. It is a difficult, technical business that you have to spend a lot of time on. But fortunately, philosophers when they write not only write about philosophy but they write about the world in which they are. I have a great deal of interest and excitement and often instruction reading the philosophers, although I do not have the technical capacity to understand them as a student of philosophy would. Now I am going to give you my view of Heidegger.

Heidegger says that the life we live is the life lived by the "they", by "they" he means all of us, you and you and the philosopher himself. He says we live a life of every-days. We eat the same food, we read the same books, we read more or less the same newspapers, we have the same amusements, we listen to the same politicians more or less. That is the life of every days, the average life. It can't be helped. That is the way we live and that is the way we have to live. Most people live that way and that is an inauthentic existence. Our decisions don't amount to individual decisions on anything; it is more or less that we strike an average -- neither too much of this nor too much of that; and we get on as everybody else is getting on. Then there comes in the life of every person and every unit something that is called the "dasein" and "dasein" is a German word meaning "being there". At certain times in our lives we are there, in the world as it is, and we face the reality of our existence, and life becomes somewhat different. We may slip back into the life of the they, we may never find

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it, but we usually get an opportunity. Some individual, some person usually gets a vision of the world, the "dasein" -- the being there, and straightway existence becomes authentic. We have to come to conclusions, we have to make decisions ourselves, and we live an authentic existence. There are two things that he marks out as signs of the authentic existence, and they are temporality and historicity. Some people translate it as historicality. I like historicality. It is a long word and it is more imposing in sound. Historicality and temporality... Time and history. He says the sense of history is something that you have to be aware of. It is not what all those historians write in the history books, and Heidegger's contempt for the sociologists, the historians, the economists and the rest of them is almost equal to mine, and that would have to be very great.

I read with immense satisfaction, Heidegger saying, "What is this sociology?" He said that a lot of facts were found out, written down in a book and some sort of compendium of information was formed. The economists have been doing that for years. The economist quotes a lot of facts and he puts tables and charts; what is there to that? At the end of it nothing is known. Ricardo, was not an economist of that kind. Adam Smith was not. I am particularly happy to see Heidegger slaughter Ernest Cassirer. He and Susan K. Langer, who is an American who does his work are full of the doctrine that man is a myth making animal. I read their books from start to finish and I said, "This is very funny to me, and I get nowhere with this kind of doctrine." Mr. Heidegger in one short paragraph of his book disposed of Mr. Cassirer and Miss Susan Langer and terms their work nonsense.

The dasein means that you are involved, and the temporality and historicity are to be seen in this way. An event can be seen properly historically in regard to what is expected to happen and in regard to what has happened in the past. Therefore the present history of an event is always a sort of compromise, an equipoise between the past and the future that you expect. There is nothing that is historically true, one has to take what has happened and what is likely to happen before the historical event can assume any significance.

Heidegger thinks the same of time. He says that time does not consist of a series of minutes, but with their significance before we know what happened and when and what temporal conclusions are to be drawn from an event. Finally he thinks that the end of all historicity and temporality is the fact that we will die. That becomes very important in our lives at certain moments. It is the one thing that nobody can do for us. We have to die for ourselves. The result is that when we become concerned about the dasein and really feel ourselves a part of the world every calculation of ours is concerned with the fact that we are going to be dead, that we have lived a certain life and that we have at last ventured and made an authentic contact with the world as it is. Heidegger's book was written in 1926. The title is BEING AND TIME, and Jaspers' work began to be published in 1931. Jaspers is the man of the extreme situation. Before Hitler came into power, before the war, before the Gestapo began to make life impossible for everybody, Jaspers said that we only began to know what life was like when we were in extreme situations. We lived according to people around us -- what Heidegger called the inauthentic existence of the they; but it was in extreme situations that we found out what were the realities of life and of our characters and

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of our relations with people. He wrote that book in 1931.

In 1933 Hitler took the whole of Germany and a great deal of Europe, as Stalin had been doing in Russia, and made them realize the extreme situation. For many years the Gestapo had caused people to face the extreme situation. Jean-Paul Sartre insists that Jaspers' philosophy and work is the philosophy of the extreme situation because it was only when people were faced with the extreme situation, like the Gestapo, that the realities of their lives in France were understood. There the Gestapo took its victims into a cellar, cross-examined and tortured them, and made these victims decide whether they would speak or not, and no one was ever going to know. You had then to decide on the realities of the situation knowing that each victim was his only judge and the only witness. Then Sartre said, "We were never so happy as under the German occupation" because then we knew what was right and what was wrong." Each person knew what he had or had not to do. There was no problem then. It was after the war and after the Germans had left that France was in trouble and is still in trouble up to today. So that is Heidegger and that is Jaspers. Now where does Wilson Harris come in?

I recommend to you his first book -- "The Palace of the Peacock". In "The Palace of the Peacock" Harris is an extremely bold man. "The Palace of the Peacock" is the story of some men who are making a journey along one of the rivers, with the rapids and whirlpools etc. in British Guiana. Before many paragraphs the reader finds out that the people who are taking part in this are dead. Harris describes about eight or ten people and they are dead people. They are not only dead, but he describes the moment of death that strikes them as they were making this journey down. This one was stabbed, this one slipped over into the whirlpool, this one quarrelled with another etc. etc. But at the same time what Harris does is to tell you what are the lives that are lived by these people -- their family lives -- before they came to take this terrific journey in the interior of British Guiana. If you bear this in mind you will see that Harris is very much aware of what Heidegger is aware of and what Jaspers is aware of. There is the normal everyday life -- the inauthentic life of the they that they live in Georgetown and the other settled areas of British Guiana. That is the contrast in his book all the time. But then they go into the interior where they are dealing with forests, wild animals, hunger, people who shoot and all sorts of primitive authentic experiences. Harris' books are concerned with people who are in the extreme situation and who find the *dasein* in those situations. That is the meaning of these six or eight people who take the journey. They are seeking the Palace of the Peacock, which is the world of the future. All of them are seeking it, and it is in the moment of death that you find out what they stand for, and what they really think, and there is a sketch of their lives, the lives of the everyday -- inauthentic -- and in this tremendous journey, in this peculiar part of the world with all these dangers and troubles (hunger, starvation, poisoning, fighting with one another -- all extreme situations) there they live an authentic existence, and find out what the reality of life is. In book after book Harris does that. That is the contrast which must be borne in mind, and natives of the West Indies should be able to understand his books much better than people elsewhere.

There is another thing I would like to say about Mr. Harris' work. Jean-Paul Sartre is one of the most remarkable writers Europe has ever known. He is the most distinguished writer of the 20th century -- the post-war 20th century. You have to imagine that

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NEW MAN OF WEST INDIAN LITERATURE Page 9

Kant and Spinoza and Descartes could write novels and plays, tremendous novels and plays as good as any being written, and at the same time would write their books, discuss a method and critique of pure reason and Hegelian logic and still write novels and plays. And that is what Jean Paul Sartre does. What is most peculiar is that the novels and plays are not an amusement, but are exemplifications in fiction of the dramatic arts, of the philosophy that he is writing in his serious philosophical works. That is the first time that that has happened in Europe. But our good friend from British Guiana has gone one better. Harris writes his fiction and his philosophy and his dramatic episodes all in one book. Pages after pages from Harris are written as if they came straight from Heidegger or from Sartre or any of these other philosophers, and then he moves straight into the description of the inauthentic existence in Georgetown, or he puts someone in an extreme situation in the forest and amidst the whirlpools and that begins to make him think of the life he is living in the life of the they in Georgetown while he is in that extreme situation, and the contrast between what life was in that inauthentic environment and what it is in that extreme situation is marked. These philosophers have "nothing on Harris", absolutely nothing. There is no philosophical point that he does not take, and Wilson Harris introduces doctrines which they have not introduced. The fact that he is doing this is strange. He was not educated abroad. He did not study this philosophy. He happened to live in a peculiar/ of the world. He happened to be a natural writer and a man serious about writing, and was for 15 years a land surveyor in the interior of British Guiana. He had these experiences. He would go to Georgetown, which I suppose is just like Port-of-Spain, the inauthentic life, the life of the they, and then he would go into the interior, and the contrast between the two ways of life must have had a tremendous impact on him. The five books he has written up to now deal with the same theme. If one is familiar with the works of Heidegger and Jaspers then one will understand Wilson Harris much better.

The next writer I shall deal with is Mr. George Lamming who is of a different type from Harris, and the man who reminds me of Lamming is Jean-Paul Sartre. This is one of Sartre's books, BEING AND NOTHINGNESS, a heavy philosophical work. I don't mean it is boring, but it is packed close, page after page. It is astonishing to know that this man is one of the cleverest and funniest dramatists that you can find. I am going to read a passage from BEING AND NOTHINGNESS -- Page 421.

He says the master, the feudal lord, the bourgeois, the capitalist all appear not only as powerful people who command, but in addition, and above all as "thirds" (That is a philosophical expression that he has) that is as those who are outside the oppressed community and for whom this community exists.

You see he is very much concerned philosophically with the relation between the person and the other. He says,

....but in every community there is the relation between you and the other and there is the third -- those for whose benefit the society exists. It is therefore for them and in their freedom that the reality of the oppressed class is going to exist.

It is in the reality with the third section of society and their conception of society that the oppressed classes find out what they are.

"It is to them and through them that there is revealed the identity of my condition. It is for them that I exist in a situation organized with others. This means that I discover the "us" in which I am integrated and the class outside in the "third."

Hegel is also very strong on this and Sartre is there referring to Hegel's conception in the famous simile in the psychology of the Master and the Slave, where Hegel said that it is the fact of the Master and his mastership exercising authority over the slave. He said that this in turn made the slave conscious of what his master thought of him and how he must think about himself. This is a very famous comparison and Sartre refers to it often, and he is touching on it there.

And now Mr. George Lamming. I have chosen OF AGE AND INNOCENCE, and if I had to decide on the finest novel since the war that would not be far down in my list. I would like to go through an episode there with you which shows how closely related Lamming is to Sartre. I know he reads a lot of Sartre. In OF AGE AND INNOCENCE there is a girl called Penelope who is married to an Englishman and they both go out to a West Indian island called San Cristobal, an island discovered by George Lamming. She has a friend called Marcia who is married to a West Indian, and this West Indian boy behaves very badly towards Marcia. Marcia goes to Penelope and she tells Penelope all that this boy has caused her to suffer, the humiliations, the lack of communication that he is guilty of in regard to her, and Penelope quiets Marcia and is kind to her and Marcia drops off, and Penelope suddenly discovers that she has homosexual feelings in regard to Marcia. When she understands that the girl is horrified. She says "Good heavens, what has happened to me?" Marcia does not know, and Lamming spends two or three pages showing how this thing has happened to Penelope almost unknown to herself, and she would like to talk to her husband about it and tell him, but she says she can't do it. She says she can't do it because once she does then she will never be the same to him or to anybody else whom she speaks to, because she will be Penelope, the same girl, but in spite of this unfortunate habit of hers. She says she would be Penelope in spite of, she would not be the old Penelope, and she goes around for some days deeply disturbed by this that has happened to her and the recognition of the fact that her character, her outlook on life is shaped completely by the persons who live around her.

Now Penelope when coming there has had an episode -- a very sharp episode, on board a plane with a man called Shephard. Shephard pulled a revolver and he threatened to shoot all of them, and he seemed determined to shoot Penelope in particular on the plane, but they quietened him down and he left. Now Shephard has become a great leader of the Nationalist Movement in San Cristobal. He is a black man with a bald head and Penelope goes one day to swim and she finds that she is being drowned, and somebody from an island in the bay comes to her rescue, saves her life and she sees that the person is Shephard who behaved so crazily on board the plane. Shephard is going to this island in the river and he is reading, so he saves Penelope and he goes up on the shore and sits down and they start to talk.

Shephard then becomes very communicative and admitted that he behaved very badly to her on the plane, and wanted then to explain why. She is very sympathetic, for after all he has just saved her life, and he begins:

I knew a woman in England, she was a friend of mine, who looked exactly like you. And she deceived me. So, when I saw you, everything that I had experienced with her came back to me.

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He then tells her why he is there leading the Nationalist Movement. He said that he had no personality of his own. Millions of people like Penelope regarded him as a certain type of person. A black man was a certain type of person and he had to live according to those standards that had been set for him. He said that a chair was something that lived the life of a chair because the people who had made it and put it there had decided that that was the way a chair should be. That was the situation in which he found himself. He lived according to the standards and outlook of people who set standards and outlooks for him which he had nothing to do with. Now he had accepted those standards, but when he chose to break away from them he would do what the chair could not do. He would break out of them and go back and fight them and get rid of them that way. Then in the midst of it he used a phrase that struck Penelope and sent the tears rolling down her cheeks: He said:

I am going to be a person in spite of what they think about me.

And that was Penelope's problem. She felt that although that had happened to her she was still Penelope, but if she had told people she would only have been Penelope in spite of that. And here some days afterwards Shephard is telling her that his problem as a black man suffering from the oppression and the humiliations that white people imposed on him is that he had to be Shephard in spite of the indignities they had imposed on him. The two things were tied together and Lamming here, as in many other parts of his writing, was saying that such and such a person was a political person, this man was a social person. Another took on these political and social activities. But the origin of such a person rested in certain fundamental human responses and it was his business to trace in every case the basic human responses that had expressed themselves in this political way. And Lamming is not very far from Sartre.

Sartre says that most people are living in an attitude that he calls bad faith, and the examples he gives are very amusing. He says in the big book on philosophy a young man meets a young woman and he asks her to let him take her out. Well the young woman says yes and she goes with him. He says she knows what his aim is but she has to pretend that it is not that, but if she thought he had no such aim she would not like the party so much. But to know that he is thinking that way and she has to deal with it, and his asking when he may begin the first approaches ..... That is all in Jean Paul Sartre's book BEING AND NOTHINGNESS. I suppose that is being.

Then the young man will tell the young lady how attractive she is looking that evening. She acknowledges the compliment and the fellow thinks he may go a little further. He then puts his hand on hers and she begins to talk about abstract, intellectual artistic matters and pretends that he has not put his hand on hers. Sartre calls that living in bad faith. He feels that the large majority of people live like that, and he goes into great detail to show it.

Shephard is a great revolutionary leader. He is a fine man, a powerful fellow, but under these extraordinary circumstances Shephard shows what was the motive that sent him in this direction. And Lamming is constantly drawing conclusions and making analyses. And very fine they are. He is no superficial psychoanalyst. He deals with historical and objective facts, but he wants to find out the feeling that exists in people that leads them in certain directions, and he sometimes finds out some strange feelings in some strange places.

Here I will stop a little bit and discuss some poetry.

You know the complaint that is made about Lanning in every one of his books; he seems to respect only the mass of the population. He seems to think that all salvation for the West Indies or for any country lies in them. That criticism is made of him because all through his writing it is very clear that that is the way he thinks. I would like to draw something quite sharply to your attention; the way Jean-Paul Sartre thinks. He has recently started an autobiography called WORDS, and these are the last pages:

I see clearly. I am free from illusions. I know my real tasks, and I must surely deserve a civic prize. For about ten years I have been a man who is waking up, cured of a long bitter-sweet madness, who cannot get away from it, who cannot recall his own ways without laughing and who no longer has any idea what to do with his life.

Now, after speaking to people about communism and the necessity of working for the proletariat he admits that for ten years he has made of himself an awful fool and he can't think of what he had been doing without laughing and wondering what he should do with the rest of his life. Sartre is the ablest writer of this generation and now he tells us in 1964 that for the last ten years he has not known what he was doing and he cannot look at the past of his life without laughing; what he has been doing is too absurd.

He is not the only one. There is Mr. T.S. Eliot. We can abuse him properly because he is dead. I am going to read two passages from his poem: FOUR QUARTETS. There is not the faintest trace in Wilson Harris of the quality possessed in all the modern writers who really matter. These modern/writers are sick to the <sup>European</sup> soul. How Sartre could have the nerve after all he has been writing and the number of people who have gone to gaol for him and whom he has led in demonstrations and whom he has encouraged to believe in this to say that he is now a man who for the last ten years can only look back at the past and wonder at the non-sense he has been guilty of...at least he should have kept his mouth shut. He should have said nothing. Here is T.S. Eliot:

I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope  
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing, wait without  
love

For love would be love of the wrong thing! there is yet  
faith  
But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the  
waiting.

Wait without thought, for you are not ready for the thought  
So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the  
dancing.

Whisper of running streams and winter lightings,  
The wild thyme unseen and the wild strawberry,  
The laughter and the garden, echoed ecstasy  
Not lost, but requiring, pointing to the agony  
Of death and birth.



A NEW VIEW OF WEST INDIAN HISTORY --- Page 13

You say I am repeating  
Something I have said before. I shall say it again.  
Shall I say it again? In order to arrive there  
To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,  
You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy.  
In order to arrive at what you do not know  
You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.  
In order to possess what you do not possess  
You must go by the way of dispossession.  
In order to arrive at what you are not  
You must go through the way in which you are not.  
And what you do not know is the only thing you know  
And what you own is what you do not own  
And where you are is where you are not.

I have already stated in BEYOND A BOUNDARY that T.S. Eliot  
is a poet I always read. First of all he is a fine poet and  
secondly he states most clearly and exactly whatever I do not  
believe; I can find it there.

Now undoubtedly he feels that way. Undoubtedly many people  
feel that way, but you don't find that in the West Indian writer.  
We have not yet reached the stage where we are sick of existence  
and doubtful of the future. There is a feeling that there is  
some perspective. We have not suffered enough. We have not  
been in it long enough to have the sickness of the soul which  
so many of these European intellectuals have.

Jean-Paul Sartre said that for the past years he did not  
know what he was doing. Here is another poem:

So here am I, in the middle way, having had twenty years -  
Twenty years largely wasted, the years of l'entre deux  
guerres -  
Trying to learn to use words, and every attempt  
Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure  
Because one has only learnt to get the better of words:  
For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in  
which  
One is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture  
Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate  
With shabby equipment always deteriorating  
In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,  
Undisciplined squads of emotion. And what there is to  
conquer  
By strength and submission, has already been discovered  
Once or twice, or several times, by men whom one cannot  
hope  
To emulate -- but there is no competition --  
There is only the fight to recover what has been lost  
And found and lost again and again: and now under conditions  
That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor loss.  
For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our  
business.

This is one of his finest poems. It is a poem I read quite  
often just to know how I do not think. So there are the two  
of them; Jean-Paul Sartre, T.S. Eliot -- two of the biggest  
names in the 20th century and remarkably fine writers. Sartre  
in particular is an astonishing person with a tremendous variety  
and absolute capacity. I want to make it clear that the present  
generation of West Indian writers have none of that in them.  
They write differently.

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Orlando Patterson in his book "The Children of Sisyphus" puts at the beginning a quotation from Camus:

I said that the world was absurd but I was too hasty.  
This world in itself is not reasonable, that is all  
that can be said.....

Albert Camus.

The characters, however, in that book are nasty, mean, stupid filthy and all sorts of things, but they are not absurd. When a prostitute says that she will do all she can to give her daughter an education, that is not an absurdity. And despite the belief of this 24 year old writer that life is an absurdity, Patterson cannot help making these people on the lowest levels of existence show the essential human virtues, the things that make man human and remove him from the state of the animal. He describes people whose lives are on lower levels than the animals', but these profoundly human instincts are there. I don't know if he put them there purposely, I would not be surprised if they were there instinctively, but he has in mind Camus' philosophy.

That is one of the first things we must get clear about these writers. They are not like T.S. Eliot or Jean-Paul Sartre who think that life is a miserable business, and there is no point in it. Sartre says that there is no point in it at all and Eliot says that the only point in it is through struggle, and to know that in struggle lies the significance of it. The rest we know nothing about. That may suit him. It does not suit me and I don't think it suits the average West Indian. We have a lot to find out. We have a lot of sorrow to pass through and maybe at the end of 15 or 20 years we will know what it is to have an absolutely hopeless view of the world. But we have not got it today. We have a lot of things that are quite wrong but that we have not got.

Now I am going to go very quickly through two books and then I am going to read some extracts from my own book "The Black Jacobins" I would like to spend two or three minutes talking about Aime Césaire. He lives in Martinique; went to school there, and when he was 19 he went to France. There he joined the Communist Party and he was taken by a friend to spend a vacation in southern Europe, some part of Yugoslavia. It was there he wrote the poem "Cahier d'un Retour au pays Natal" The Statement of a Return to the Country where I was Born." It is the finest poem ever written about Africa, and for many centuries men have been writing about Africa. There he makes the famous statement about "Negritude". It is a most drastic denunciation of Western civilization. He says hurrah for those who never invented anything, for those who never explored anything, for those who never mastered anything. He says the African is as he is and hurrah for that, because look at those who have invented and explored; look at them. He says, listen to the white world, its horrible exhaustion from its immense labours, its rebellious joints cracking under the pitiless stars.

Its blue steel rigidities cutting through the mysteries of  
the flesh  
Listen to their vain-glorious conquests trumpeting their  
defeats  
Listen to the grandiose aibis of their pitiful floundering.

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He says look at the African . He never discovered anything, hurrah.

Look at the Whites bombing one another and sending up satellites.

He says the African lives close to nature and he is part of nature which these people and their western civilization have lost altogether. I believe and I have stated that this is not something which could have been written by any African at all. It is particularly a West Indian problem. Césaire was looking for something to believe in and he could find nothing West Indian so he turned to Africa. He reminds me of Marcus Garvey who spoke magnificently about Africa but he had never been there and did not know any African language. Césaire writes this splendid poem about Africa but he had never been there at any time. His negritude was in praise of the native civilization of Africa. It was a tremendous rejection of Western civilization.

Now T.S. Eliot rejects it also in a peculiar way. Jean-Paul Sartre rejects it completely and finally rejects himself, but Césaire thinks there is something in the world that Africa has got, and that we West Indians have it because we came from Africa. Listen to this part of his poem.

For it is not true that the work of man is finished  
That man has nothing more to do in the world but be a parasite  
in the world  
That all we now need is to keep in step with the world.  
But the work of man is only just beginning  
And it remains to man to conquer all the violence entrenched  
in the recesses of his passion.  
And no race possesses the monopoly of beauty, of intelligence,  
of force.  
There is a place for all at the rendezvous of victory.

I have translated that and I beg Mr. Césaire's pardon. You can't translate poetry from one language into another. You have to be masters of both and you have to be a fine poet in both languages. That is very hard. But I go on to say in some prose which I think is respectable; Here is the centre of Césaire's poem. By neglecting it, Africans and the sympathetic of other races utter loud hurrahs that drown out common-sense and reason. Césaire is not saying that everybody should live as the African does. The work of man is not finished, therefore the future of the African is not to continue not discovering anything. The monopoly of beauty, of intelligence of force, possessed by no race, certainly not by those who possess negritude. Césaire never said that the African was wonderful and superior and the future of civilization rested with the Negro. He never said that. Negritude is what one race brings to the common rendezvous where all will strive for the new world of the poet's vision.

The vision of the poet is not economic or politics, it is poetics, sui generis true unto itself and needing no other truth, but it would be the most vulgar racism not to see here a poetic incarnation of Marx's famous sentence: "The real history of humanity will begin." And Césaire is saying that the African

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has something to contribute. There are certain fundamental aspects of human life which he still has which the West has lost, and he will bring it to the rendezvous of victory. That is the meaning of Negritude.

I am going to leave out, for the time being, the Frenchman who was brought up in Guadeloupe, and I am going to read you an extract from one West Indian writer, a man whom we are not accustomed to think of as being a West Indian writer. After this, however, you will always think of him in that way. You will never think of him as otherwise.

I would like to read you a letter written by Toussaint L'Ouverture. It is a letter that he wrote six years after he had been a slave. He had become Consul of Haiti, of San Domingo, and he was doubtful whether the people who were ruling France would not restore slavery under the influence of the French slave owners who were again in political power. He writes this letter to them telling them that he hopes they would not do any such thing, that the people of San Domingo after they had been free for three or four years would never allow slavery to come back again. The letter is a great masterpiece and very West Indian. He says:

The impolitic and incendiary discourse of Voblas (who was a slave owner) has not affected the Blacks nearly so much as their certainty of the projects which the proprietors of San Domingo are planning. Insidious declarations should not have any effect in the eyes of wise legislators who have decreed liberty for the nation. But the attempts on liberty which the colonies propose are all the more to be feared because it is with the veil of patriotism that they cover their detestable plans. We know that they seek to impose some of them on you by specious promises in order to see renewed in this colony its former scenes of horror. Already perfidious emissaries have stepped in among us to ferment the discreptive level prepared by the hands of liberticides; but they will not succeed.

I swear it by all that liberty holds most sacred that my attachment to France, my knowledge of the Blacks make it my duty not to leave you ignorant either of the crimes which they meditate or the yoke that we renew to bury ourselves under the ruins of a country revived by liberty, rather than suffer the return of slavery.

Nobody in the West Indies today writes that way. Nobody does. Nobody can. I will tell you why afterwards.

It is for you Citizens, Directors, to turn from over our heads the storm which the eternal enemies of our liberty are preparing in the shades of silence. It is for you to enlighten the Legislature. It is for you to prevent the enemies of the present system from spreading themselves on our unfortunate shore to sully it with new crimes. Do not allow our brothers, our friends to be sacrificed to men who wish to reign over the ruins of the human species. But no, your wisdom will enable you to avoid the dangerous snares which our common enemies hold out for you. I send you with this letter a Declaration which will acquaint you with the unity that exists between the proprietors of San Domingo who are in France, those in the United States and those who serve under the English banner. You will see there a resolution

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unequivocal and carefully constructed for the restoration of slavery. You will see there that the determination to succeed has led them to envelop themselves in the mantle of liberty in order to strike it more deadly blows. You will see that they are counting heavily on my complacency in lending myself to their perfidious views by my fear for my children. It is not astonishing that these men who sacrifice their country to their interests are unable to conceive how many sacrifices a true love of country can support in a better father than they, since I unhesitatingly base the happiness of my children and that of my country which they and they alone wish to destroy. I shall never hesitate between the safety of San Domingo and my personal happiness. But I have nothing to fear. It is to the solicitude of the French Government that I have confided my children. I would tremble with horror if it was into the hands of the colonists that I had sent them as hostages. But even if it were so, let them know that in punishing them for the fidelity of their father they would only add one degree more to their barbarism without any hope of ever making me fail in my duty.

I say you could not find such writing anywhere in the West Indies today. Toussaint had been a slave up to 1791; he was writing this in 1797. How did that happen?

They cannot see how this odious conduct on their part can become the signal of new disasters and irreparable misfortunes, and that, far from making them regain what in their eyes (liberty for all) has made them lose, they expose themselves to a total ruin and the colony to its inevitable destruction.

Do they think that men who have been able to enjoy the blessing of liberty will calmly see it snatched away? They supported their chains only so long as they did not know any condition of life more happy than that of slavery, but today when they have left it, if they had a thousand lives they would sacrifice them all rather than be forced into slavery again. But no, the same hands which have broken our chains will not enslave us anew. France will not revoke her principles. She will not withdraw from us the greatest of her benefits. She will protect us against all our enemies. She will not permit us a blind morality to be perverted, those principles which do her most honour to be destroyed, her most beautiful achievement to be degraded and her decree to be revoked. But if to re-establish slavery in San Domingo this was done, then I declare to you it would be to attempt the impossible. We have known how to brave dangers to obtain our liberty. We shall know how to brave death to maintain it.

That is the kind of letter they should receive from a colonial leader. That is the one that Toussaint wrote. And then he goes on. You know France had sent him a sword and various presents because he was now head of State and so forth. And he finished up with two paragraphs, which are two of the finest paragraphs I know.

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This, Citizens, Directors is the morale of the people of San Domingo -- these are the principles that they transmit to you by name.

My own you know. It is sufficient to renew my hand in yours, the oath that I have made to cease to live before gratitude dies in my heart, before I cease to be faithful to France and to my duty, before the god of Liberty is profaned and sullied by the liberticides, before they can snatch from my hands that sword, those arms which France confided to me for the defence of its rights and those of humanity, for the triumph of liberty and equality.

I go on to say that the Blacks were taking their part in the destruction of European feudalism and Liberty and Equality; the slogans of the revolution, meant far more to them than to any Frenchman. That was why in the hour of danger Toussaint, uninstructed as he was, could find the language and accent of Diderot, Rosseau and Mirabeau, Robespierre and Danton ..... and in one respect he excelled them all. For even these masters of the spoken and written word, owing to the class complications of their society too often had to pause, to hesitate, to qualify. Toussaint could defend the freedom of the Blacks without reservation, and this gave to his Declaration a strength and a single mindedness rare in the great documents of the time. The French bourgeois could not understand it. Rivers of blood were to flow before they understood that elevated as was his tone, Toussaint had written neither bombast nor rhetoric but the simple and sober truth. That was what that magnificent letter was. It was the simple and sober truth.

Now how did Toussaint come to write like that? He wrote like that because he was a West Indian. And he wrote like that because he was a West Indian slave. You see he had nothing else in his head. When West Indians became a people and started to take part in the world they read the documents of Rosseau, Robespierre, Danton and Mirabeau, the French Assembly. That was all they knew; so when they started to write they wrote in the same temper and in the same style. All over the place they wrote like that. I will impose on you another letter. This one is not very long.

Some people in French San Domingo where they have declared for freedom have been invited by some Negroes in Spanish San Domingo to come over and fight for the Spanish king, because Negroes believe in kingship and not in the republic.

So these gentlemen had no schools. Even secondary education was not free. They had been slaves. But this is the letter that these youngmen wrote to the men from Spanish San Domingo.

Some republicans have offered to surrender, if there were among us men low enough to resume their chains we abandon them to you with a good heart.

The liberty that the Republicans offer us you say is false. We are Republicans and in consequence free by natural right.

They did not learn that in San Domingo, they had read this in some document by Rousseau or Robespierre or one of them.

a/ We are Republicans and in consequence free by natural right. It can only be king whose very name expresses what is most vile and low who dares to arrogate the right of reducing to slavery men made like themselves whom nature had made free.

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Where did they learn that? They had been reading Rousseau, Voltaire and the others and that was all they knew. So, when they settled down to write they wrote in the same tone and it was very real to them. Liberty, equality and fraternity to a man who had been a slave was a very lively concept. So this letter continues.....

The king of Spain has furnished you abundantly with arms and ammunition -- use them to tighten your chains. As for us we have no need for more than stones and sticks to make you dance. You have received commissions and you have guarantees -- guard your liveries and your parchments. One day they will serve you as the fastidious titles of our former aristocrats served them. If the king of the French who drags his misery from court to court has need of slaves to assist him in his magnificence, let him go seek it among other kings who count as many slaves as they have circuits. You conclude, vile slaves as you are, by offering us the protection of the king, your master. Learn and say to that Spanish Marquis that Republicans cannot treat with a king. Let him come, and you with him, we are ready to receive you as Republicans should.

Now, three years before they were slaves. They could not read. A few of them had learnt. I have seen, many a time, where this lieutenant or captain dictates his report, and there you see the pencil mark where his secretary signs his name and he then traces over the pencil in ink in order to sign his name. He could not write. But some of those letters would astonish you and they used naturally, and with very great sincerity, the language of the people they were reading; Rousseau, Voltaire, Robespierre, Danton. That is what I mean when I say that Toussaint was a West Indian. All these West Indians used the language and they accumulated wisdom of the European peoples and particularly of two masters of the western language -- Britain and the United States. So when they begin to write they have an immense accumulation of material at their disposal, the language and all sorts of techniques. And in addition to that they are West Indian. They have to describe the life of the West Indian and the West Indian only knows one world. At the back of the minds of all these writers there is one word always. It has been with us for 300 years.

If they brought you as a slave from Africa, brought you over thousands of miles of sea and then put you in a foreign country where all around you people were free, what would be in your head all the time -- Freedom. A slave who was brought up in a country which had a long tradition of slavery would not think of freedom would in that way. For him it/ be in the nature of things. And after some centuries there would be a revolt or something, but this slavery would be part of his experience of life. Once you had brought someone over these thousands of miles and stuck him here and he looked all around and there were no other slaves but he, then he might fight or he might not fight; but he would have in the back of his mind that paradise -- heaven and happiness would be to get out of his bondage and be as other people were. All West Indian writers have this quality in common, however educated or uneducated they are; at the back of their minds the experience of centuries is the idea of freedom. The conception driving them on, every single one, is the conception of freedom, and any historian who is writing the history of the West Indies and does not know that, and is not aware of that, is certain to write bad history.

C.L.R. James,  
Arts Lecture Room III,  
U.W.I., Mona,  
3.6.65.