

## INTRODUCTION

## Rethinking *The Black Jacobins*

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In September 1938, the small, independent British left-wing publisher Secker and Warburg published one of the first major English-language studies of the Haitian Revolution of 1791–1804, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint Louverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. Its author was the black Trinidadian writer, historian, and revolutionary C. L. R. James, and the completion of the book constituted the culmination of his active and productive period in Britain since his arrival in London in 1932.<sup>1</sup> The dust jacket informed its readers that “the black revolution in San Domingo is the only successful slave revolt in history,” the most “striking episode in modern history” and of “immense political significance.” As Secker and Warburg stressed to their readers at the time:

Far from being the chaotic bacchanalia of oppressed savages, the revolution followed with precision the rise and fall of the revolutionary wave in France; and the drama of Toussaint’s career is played out on the surface of a social revolution, unfolding with a logical completeness to be found only in the Russian Revolution of 1917.<sup>2</sup>

The reference to the Russian Revolution was telling, for James’s previous work with Secker and Warburg was *World Revolution, 1917–1936: The Rise and Fall of the Communist International* (1937), a pioneering political history of the rise of the revolutionary movement after 1917 and its failure and collapse amidst the degeneration of that revolution and the rise of a counter-revolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy.<sup>3</sup> Yet if the writing of *World Revolution* had clearly emerged out of James’s turn to Marxism and decision to then join the Trotskyist movement in Britain in 1934, the roots of *The Black Jacobins* were more numerous and deep and were first nourished in the soil of his native Trinidad.

## The Emergence of *The Black Jacobins*

In “The Old World and the New,” a lecture delivered on his seventieth birthday in Ladbroke Grove, London, in 1971, James describes with characteristic evasiveness the genesis of his history of the Haitian Revolution: “I don’t know why I was writing *The Black Jacobins* the way I did. I had long made up my mind to write a book about Toussaint L’Ouverture. Why I couldn’t tell you.”<sup>4</sup> The idea of writing a book on the Haitian Revolution clearly preceded his journey from colonial Trinidad to England in 1932. “Stuck away in the back of my head for years,” he commented in *Beyond a Boundary*, “was the project of writing a biography of Toussaint Louverture.”<sup>5</sup> The initial emergence of this book remains unclear, though as Matthew J. Smith shows in his contribution to this volume, the Haitian Revolution had been a subject of discussion by nationalists in the British West Indies since the nineteenth century. For James, it seems that his particular interest in Louverture was actively sparked by his exchanges with Sidney Harland in *The Beacon* the year before his departure from Trinidad. As Selwyn Cudjoe has suggested, it is also clear that James was influenced from an early stage in his thought by the work of J. J. Thomas, the schoolteacher whose 1889 rebuttal to J. A. Froude’s *The English in the West Indies* (1887) was one of the first assertions that Caribbean people had a legitimate claim to govern themselves.<sup>6</sup> Froude had dismissively referred to the Haitian revolutionary: “There has been no saint in the West Indies since Las Casas, no hero unless philonegro enthusiasm can make one out of Toussaint. There are no people there, with a purpose and character of their own.”<sup>7</sup> In his article “Racial Admixture,” Harland had developed a pseudo-scientific account dependent on heavily racialized taxonomies of IQ, arguing along the same racist lines as Froude’s and presenting Toussaint Louverture as belonging to what he called “class F” in intellectual terms.<sup>8</sup> Dismissing Harland’s article as “antiquated,” naïve, and characterized by “monstrous blunder[s],” James was particularly critical in his response to comments on Louverture, to whom he devotes a long paragraph. In a *reductio ad absurdum* of Harland’s statistics, he claimed:

among every 4,300 men the Doctor expects to find a Toussaint L’Ouverture. He will pick a Toussaint from every tree. According to this theory, Port-of-Spain has fifteen such men, San Fernando two, there is one between Tunapuna and Tacarigua. Or if Dr Harland prefers it that way there are about 80 in Trinidad today. I need carry this absurdity no further. But what respect

can anyone have for a man who in the midst of what he would have us believe is a scientific dissertation produces such arrant nonsense!<sup>9</sup>

In embryonic forms, we see questions that interested James throughout his later life about the exceptionalism (or otherwise) of Louverture, as well as an implicit reflection on whether the revolutionary hero might emerge in other contexts in need of revolutionary change. In the exasperated final section of the article, reflecting on the racial and educational implications of Harland's piece, James concludes: "I think I have written enough. I would have far preferred to write on Toussaint Louverture, for instance."<sup>10</sup>

In suggesting that the Haitian revolutionary might one day be the subject of his own attentions, James includes in his text in *The Beacon* a telling observation about his own sources—"All my quotations," he writes, "are from white historians."<sup>11</sup> The only life of Louverture that is mentioned directly is Percy Waxman's *Black Napoleon*, published in 1931, a work that was dismissed in the bibliographical notes of *The Black Jacobins* as a "superficial book."<sup>12</sup> It is clear that in response James was already envisaging a study of the Haitian Revolution and its inspirational leader that would challenge this prevailing historiography and provide a perspective on this key Caribbean event that would restore an understanding of its world historical significance. Shortly after the exchange with Harland, the catalyst for writing on Louverture presented itself in James's journey to Europe—in particular in his contact with the working people of Nelson, Lancashire, and his observation of their organization industrially in the Nelson Weavers' Association and politically in respect to their historic support for the socialist Independent Labour Party. In *Beyond a Boundary*, James describes his voyage in these terms: "The British intellectual was going to Britain."<sup>13</sup> Edward Said categorizes this transatlantic crossing as a "voyage in," that is, as a destabilizing process whereby the integration of thinkers from colonized countries into metropolitan culture serves as a "sign of adversarial internationalization in an age of continued imperial structures." In Said's terms, "the separations and exclusions of 'divide and rule' are erased and surprising new configurations spring up," and the genesis of *The Black Jacobins* can clearly be seen as symptomatic of such processes and as a key contribution to the challenge to the sense of racial and cultural inferiority James felt had been a central aspect of his British Caribbean education.<sup>14</sup> Such is the importance of writing this history of the Haitian Revolution and the biography of its principal leader in the work produced during James's first stay in Britain that Stuart Hall commented in a 1998 interview with Bill

Schwarz that it was “almost as if it’s one of the reasons for his coming to Europe in the first place.”<sup>15</sup> In the draft of his autobiography, James endorsed this view, associating the interest in the Haitian Revolution with the turning point of his arrival in England:

My concern with being a novelist or a writer was soon to be blown away into dust invisible. The only thing that I took with me and settle [*sic*] down to work with was the idea of showing that the blacks could do things and from my first day in England I began to look for books on the Haitian Revolution.<sup>16</sup>

*The Black Jacobins* would indeed be one of the most significant products of the 1932–38 period in Britain, a period in which—amidst the Great Depression and the rise of fascism in Europe—James intellectually radicalized toward revolutionary Marxism and militant Pan-Africanism and produced a work that itself continued to evolve during the remaining five decades of his life and beyond. Not only does the text in which the history appeared travel through a number of rewritings (in the course of which James increasingly rethought his initial premises and assumptions), it is also central to a constellation of other writings, lectures, and other interventions, ranging from the pre-text found in the 1936 dramatic version *Toussaint Louverture* (itself reworked in 1967) to constant references to Haiti, its revolution, and its revolutionary leaders in correspondence and talks until James’s death. As such—and as this volume attempts to illustrate—*The Black Jacobins* is much more than a book: borrowing a term from Dan Selden, Susan Gillman identifies the text as part of a “text-network,” made up of a series of “translations without an original”;<sup>17</sup> it is the protean centerpiece of the set of reflections on revolution, history, culture, personality, and the urgent need for sociopolitical change that characterizes James’s life; it is a key part of a prolific body of work that reveals the evolving thought of one of the twentieth century’s most significant intellectuals; it is a site in which struggles over the relationship between theory and praxis play themselves out. It remains a major element of James’s legacy and the vehicle whereby his life and work continue to influence action and debate today.

### **The Black Jacobins in Context**

It is important to trace the emergence of *The Black Jacobins* in the context of James’s intensive production of a number of other writings, not least another (more contemporary) biographical text, *The Life of Captain Cipriani*:

*An Account of British Government in the West Indies* (1932). The earlier work similarly engages with questions of Caribbean self-government and the place of the charismatic individual in political movements through a discussion of Captain Arthur Andrew Cipriani, leader of the Trinidadian Workingmen's Association. Whereas the work on Cipriani—an abridged version of which was published as “The Case for West Indian Self-Government” by Hogarth Press in 1933—drew on interviews and material James had gathered in colonial Trinidad, his writings on the Haitian Revolution depended on extensive research that formed part of an energetic engagement with radical historiography and more general Marxist writings. In *Beyond a Boundary*, James suggests that shortly after his arrival in Nelson he began to import from France the books required to consolidate his knowledge of Haitian history and write *The Black Jacobins*. His wider reading at the time—of radical and socialist historians of the French Revolution such as Jean Jaurès and Jules Michelet—provided further impetus to write the Haitian Revolution back in to the period historians came to call “the age of democratic revolution.” Together with his studies of two massive works which—as Bill Schwarz explores in his contribution to this volume—would help make him a Marxist, Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* and Leon Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*, James was, in his own terms, “reading hard”; “Night after night,” he adds, “I would be up till three or four.”<sup>18</sup>

James's securing of work as a professional cricket reporter for the *Manchester Guardian*, together with generous financial support from Harry Spencer (a friend in Nelson), meant that the study of books ordered direct from France was soon complemented by regular research visits to archives in France throughout the 1930s. As soon as the 1933 cricket season was over, James was able to visit Paris and consult documents that had rarely received such serious attention since they had been read by the first generation of Haitian historians—figures such as Thomas Madiou and Beaubrun Ardouin—in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup> He originally had the good fortune to be shown around various archives and bookshops in Paris in the winter of 1933 by Léon-Gontran Damas, a black poet from French Guiana who would be central to the development of the philosophy of *négritude*.<sup>20</sup> As the foreword that James wrote in January 1980 for the Allison and Busby edition of *The Black Jacobins* makes clear, in Paris James also met the Haitian historian and diplomat Colonel Auguste Nemours, who served as Haiti's permanent delegate to the League of Nations in the 1930s before being appointed to the post of minister plenipotentiary to France in 1937.

Nemours is perhaps best remembered for his intervention at the League of Nations in 1935, when he protested against the Italian invasion of Ethiopia with the call: “Craignons d’être, un jour, l’Éthiopie de quelqu’un” [Be afraid of becoming one day someone else’s Ethiopia].<sup>21</sup> Yet Nemours was also the author of a book on Toussaint Louverture, *Histoire de la captivité et de la mort de Toussaint Louverture* (1929), which was described by James in the bibliography of *The Black Jacobins* as a “thorough and well-documented study.” He would later publish several more, including *Histoire de la famille et de la descendance de Toussaint Louverture* (1941), *Quelques jugements sur Toussaint Louverture* (1938), and *Histoire des relations internationales de Toussaint Louverture* (1945). By the time they met in the 1930s, Nemours had also written a two-volume account of the Haitian war of independence, dedicated to Louverture, *Histoire militaire de la guerre d’indépendance de Saint-Domingue* (1925 and 1928), and James records having consulted him particularly on tactical aspects of the revolution, which the Haitian historian had demonstrated “using books and coffee cups upon a large table to show how the different campaigns had been fought.”<sup>22</sup> In the draft of his autobiography, James also notes other contacts that Nemours facilitated: “He introduced me to the Haitian Ambassador in Paris who told me a great deal. Whether he knew it or not he gave me great insight into the Mulatto side of the Haitian people.”<sup>23</sup> The nexus of race and class—and the critique of pigmentocracy—that underpins *The Black Jacobins* was clearly embedded in James’s observations of contemporary Haiti as reflected by its representatives in Paris.

We get some additional glimpses of James’s research trips to Paris during the 1930s from the memoir of Louise Cripps, a friend and comrade in the tiny British Trotskyist movement that James joined soon after his return from France in spring 1934. According to Cripps, James took her and a friend, Esther Heiger, to Paris, probably in spring 1935. The three stayed in Montparnasse in Paris, where the local cafés were “favourite meeting grounds for the Trotskyists at that time (as well as the rendezvous for artists and writers).”<sup>24</sup> James did not miss out on sampling the culture of “black Paris,” and one evening, he took Cripps to one of the black nightclubs, Le Bal Nègre. “It was not a very fancy place, but it was filled with people. There were blacks of every height, weight, and shades of colour from all parts of the world where there are Africans or people of African descent . . . we danced and danced.”<sup>25</sup> The little party also took in French Impressionist art in the Jeu de Paume in the Tuileries Gardens, and in general did a lot of sight-seeing, visiting Le

Louvre, the Bastille, Napoleon's tomb at Les Invalides, and the Palace of Versailles, with James "giving us several lectures as we wandered from place to place."<sup>26</sup> In the drafts of his autobiography, James alludes to visits to Paris with his compatriot and former student Eric Williams, during which the two historians would work together in the archives and at the Bibliothèque nationale:

He covered a lot of work for me, he is a wonderful man at research, collecting information and putting it in some sort of order. [ . . . ] And there are certain pages in the *Black Jacobins* where most of the material and all the footnotes (I would put them in some time) are things that Williams gave to me, I never had occasion to look them up.<sup>27</sup>

The insight into James's working practices is illuminating, and the understanding of *The Black Jacobins* as a collaborative project is one that merits further investigation (not least in the light of James's claim that Williams's Oxford D.Phil. thesis, "The Economic Aspect of the Abolition of the West Indian Slave Trade and Slavery," also completed in 1938, was the result of similar collaboration).<sup>28</sup>

From 1932 to 1934, James had turned his research into the Haitian Revolution into a play, *Toussaint Louverture: The Story of the Only Successful Slave Revolt in History*, a drama in which one of his main concerns was challenging the ideological tenets behind European colonial domination in general and educating the British public about colonial slavery and abolition during the national commemoration of the centenary of the abolition of slavery in the British Empire.<sup>29</sup> Stuart Hall, in his 1998 discussion of how James came to write *The Black Jacobins*, stressed the importance of his campaigning anticolonial activism and his raising of "The Case for West Indian Self-Government" in particular, noting that "what is riveting . . . is the way in which the historical work and the foregrounded political events are part of a kind of seamless web. They reinforce one another."<sup>30</sup> Clearly there was the plight of occupied Haiti itself, under U.S. military domination from 1915 until 1934.<sup>31</sup> In 1935, the question of rallying solidarity with the people of Ethiopia in the face of Mussolini's barbaric war came to the fore, and James played a central role alongside Amy Ashwood Garvey and others in the Pan-Africanist movement in Britain to form the International African Friends of Abyssinia (IAFA). Hall also had in mind the way James was "fired" by the arc of heroic Caribbean labor rebellions that swept the British West Indies from 1935 onward as

“those workers involved in the sugar industry, in oil, and on the docks—the most proletarianized sectors—became conscious of their power.”<sup>32</sup>

This “seamless web” has really yet to be adequately mapped by scholars, and though some have drawn attention to the apparent silence with respect to the Caribbean labor revolts in the work itself, we get glimpses of it nonetheless.<sup>33</sup> For example, on August 9, 1937, several hundred people assembled in London’s Trafalgar Square at a rally organized by the International African Service Bureau (IASB) to hear speeches urging solidarity with Trinidadian and other West Indian workers by James and also his compatriot and friend George Padmore and Chris Braithwaite (who used the pseudonym “Chris Jones”) from Barbados, which itself had also just been rocked by riots.<sup>34</sup> Two Africans, Jomo Kenyatta, the nationalist leader from Kenya, and I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson, a towering figure of West African trade unionism from Sierra Leone, were among the other speakers. According to the Special Branch agents present,

James gave a resume of the history of the West Indies, explaining that, after the native Caribs had been wiped out, negro slaves had been imported to labour in the islands. Slavery had only been abolished when the British bourgeoisie realised that it was less expensive to pay the negroes starvation wages than to feed them. He compared the West Indian general strike of 1919 with the recent one, saying that black workers had learned much during the last 18 years from events throughout the world. They now knew how to enforce their rights, and how to remain solid in the face of threats and persecution. They were no longer afraid of strike-breaking police, militia and marines.<sup>35</sup>

One of James’s particular leadership roles within the Pan-Africanist movement in Britain during this period seems to have been to put his historical consciousness and knowledge to the service of building solidarity with the various liberation struggles across the African diaspora. As Mussolini’s war drums beat louder in Ethiopia’s direction in summer 1935, James had spoken at a meeting of the newly formed IAFA, an organization he chaired, on July 28 (see figure I.1). According to the *Manchester Guardian*, their cricket correspondent “gave a lucid history of the European treaties with Abyssinia,” and declared that “Abyssinia is a symbol of all that Africa was and may be again, and we look on it with a jealous pride.”<sup>36</sup> James’s passionate speeches in defense of Ethiopia also give a sense of how his study of the Haitian Revolution—and the ruthless guerrilla warfare waged from the mountains





**FIG. 1.1** C. L. R. James speaking on Ethiopia at a rally in Trafalgar Square, London, 1935. Courtesy of Getty Images.

of Haiti by Toussaint's army—clearly fired his imagination about how the coming war against Italian imperialism might be won. On August 16, 1935, at another IAFA rally, James suggested for example that should the Ethiopians find themselves unable to get to grips with the Italian forces in conventional combat, he would “look to them to destroy their country rather than hand it over to the invader. Let them burn down Addis Ababa, let them poison their wells and water holes, let them destroy every blade of vegetation.”<sup>37</sup>

The heroic Ethiopian resistance to fascist Italy's barbaric invasion and occupation after the war began in October 1935 was not the only symbolic demonstration of what Africa “may be again,” as 1935 also saw Copperbelt mineworkers strike in what is now Zambia. As Frederick Cooper has described,

The Northern Rhodesian mineworkers strike of 1935 was organized without benefit of trade unions, and it spread from mine to mine, from mine town to mine town, by personal networks, dance societies, religious organizations, and eventually mass meetings. The movement embraced nonminers in the towns, women as well as men.<sup>38</sup>

For James, after reading about the official British Government Commission of Inquiry into these “disturbances,” the parallel between the movement of Zambian Copperbelt miners and the seditious midnight gatherings of enslaved Africans of French Saint-Domingue could not have been clearer. “Let the blacks but hear from Europe the slogans of Revolution, and the *Internationale*, in the same concrete manner that the slaves of San Domingo heard Liberty and Equality and the *Marseillaise*, and from the mass uprising will emerge the Toussaints, the Christophes, and the Dessalines.”<sup>39</sup> If, as James warned in his pioneering 1937 history of “the rise and fall of the Communist International,” *World Revolution*, and elsewhere, as in his discussion of the Spanish Civil War, Stalinist counter-revolution endangered the possibility of the slogans of the Russian Revolution flowing out of metropolitan Europe to the colonial periphery in the same “concrete manner” as they had in 1789, he retained his optimism nonetheless, insisting the history of the Haitian Revolution pointed to the future for the African continent.<sup>40</sup>

If *World Revolution* focused on the dissipation of revolutionary impetus, *The Black Jacobins* instead told the story of a revolutionary movement that delivered not only emancipation from slavery but also independence from colonial domination. The Haitian example also allowed James, as Anthony

Bogues has suggested, to move away from the factionalism of contemporary politics “to hone his political ideas and elaborate a political theory of revolutionary struggle, national oppression and resistance of the colonial people in Africa and the West Indies.”<sup>41</sup>

### ***The Black Jacobins and Contemporary Historiography***

Leon Trotsky once remarked that “what has been written with the sword cannot be wiped out by the pen . . . at least so far as the sword of revolution is concerned.”<sup>42</sup> As James noted, this had not prevented “Tory historians, regius professors and sentimentalists,” “the professional white-washers” of the historical record, putting their pens to the task of trying to wipe out all trace of what had been written in blood and fire by the black rebel slave army under Toussaint Louverture for well over a century.<sup>43</sup> Eric Williams, whose classic work arising out of his doctoral thesis, *Capitalism and Slavery*, was published in 1944, was right to note that “no work of scholarly importance had been done in England” on the abolition of the slave trade, and that “the British historians wrote almost as if Britain had introduced Negro slavery solely for the satisfaction of abolishing it.”<sup>44</sup> For Western scholars, the Haitian Revolution, when it was mentioned at all, was essentially portrayed as Froude had described it in *The English in the West Indies*—simply as a bloodthirsty and savage race war, without reason or rhyme.<sup>45</sup>

James systematically demolished this racist argument in *The Black Jacobins*, stressing how race and class were intrinsically intertwined in Saint-Domingue, and so understanding the tumultuous upheaval that was to be so critical to the abolition of the entire Atlantic slave trade through the prism of class struggle remained fundamental. “Had the monarchists been white, the bourgeoisie brown, and the masses of France black, the French Revolution would have gone down in history as a race war. But although they were all white in France they fought just the same.”<sup>46</sup> For the first time James brought cold hard rationality to the history of the revolution, while also developing a pioneering Marxist analysis of Atlantic slavery and the slave trade. In a more sophisticated analysis of the relationship between capitalist accumulation and the barbarism of slavery than what was soon to be advanced by Williams, James noted that the plantations and the slave ships were fundamentally modern capitalist institutions in themselves, things that did not just enrich but had been themselves formed by “the French bourgeoisie” and “the British

bourgeoisie.” He described the plantations as “huge sugar-factories” and the slaves as a proto-proletariat, indeed, “closer to a modern proletariat than any group of workers in existence at the time,” and when they rose as “revolutionary labourers” and set fire to the plantations, he compared them to “the Luddite wreckers.”<sup>47</sup>

James later, with characteristic generosity, praised W. E. B. Du Bois’s achievement in his monumental 1935 work *Black Reconstruction in America* as greater than that of his own in *The Black Jacobins*, where apparently “there is no understanding of when you go beyond the economic and the social and political and you get deep into the psychology of the people who made the revolution.”<sup>48</sup> But this was surely too modest an admission on James’s part, for despite the difficulties in getting source material on the importance of African “survivals” for the Haitian Revolution in the 1930s, he was arguably able to suggestively point to the blackness of the “black Jacobins,” for example, demonstrating how the African cult of Vodou allowed those without “education or encouragement to cherish a dream of freedom.”<sup>49</sup> Moreover, in his artistic portrait of the leaders of the Haitian Revolution, above all Toussaint Louverture, James showed a biographer’s grasp of individual psychology as well as the mass collective psychology of the revolutionary slaves.

Yet James’s critical stress on black agency—making the central plot of his “grand narrative” the dramatic transformation in consciousness and confidence of the Haitian masses—was combined with a masterful grasp of the totality of social relations in which they acted. His reading of the Marxist classics, above all Trotsky’s masterful *History of the Russian Revolution* (1930), saw James make a pioneering and outstanding application to the colonial Caribbean of the historical “law of uneven but combined development” of capitalism. As Trotsky had noted, the peculiarities resulting from the “backwardness” of Russian historical development had explained the “enigma” that “a backward country was the *first* to place the proletariat in power”:

Moreover, in Russia the proletariat did not arise gradually through the ages, carrying with itself the burden of the past as in England, but in leaps involving sharp changes of environment, ties, relations, and a sharp break with the past. It is just this fact—combined with the concentrated oppressions of czarism—that made the Russian workers hospitable to the boldest conclusions of revolutionary thought—just as the backward industries were hospitable to the last word in capitalist organization.<sup>50</sup>

One of James's most striking achievements in *The Black Jacobins* was his demonstration that just as "the law of uneven but combined development" meant the enslaved laborers of Saint-Domingue, suffering under the "concentrated oppressions" of slavery, were soon to be "hospitable to the boldest conclusions of revolutionary thought" radiating from the Jacobins in revolutionary Paris, so the Marxist theory of permanent revolution illuminated not just anticolonial struggles in the age of socialist revolution but also the antislavery liberation struggle in the age of "bourgeois-democratic" revolution. The bold Haitian rebels were, James insisted, "revolutionaries through and through . . . own brothers of the Cordeliers in Paris and the Vyborg workers in Petrograd."<sup>51</sup>

Throughout his study of the Haitian Revolution, James ably demonstrated that it was not simply an inspiring struggle on a tiny island on the periphery of the world system, but was inextricably intertwined with the great French Revolution throughout, pushing the revolutionary process forward in the metropole and investing notions of human rights with new meanings and universal significance. In writing about the Haitian Revolution, he rewrote the history of the French Revolution as well.<sup>52</sup> In *The Black Jacobins* he fused classical and Marxist scholarship to resurrect a vivid panorama of the Haitian Revolution, stressing that it was not simply the greatest event in the history of the West Indies but took its place alongside the English Civil War, the American War of Independence, and the French Revolution as one of the great world-historical revolutions in its own right, a revolution that had forever transformed the world and laid the foundation for the continuing struggle for universal human rights. "The work of Toussaint, Dessalines, Christophe, and Pétion endures in Hayti, but what they did went far, far beyond the boundaries of the island."<sup>53</sup>

Edward Said once suggested that *The Black Jacobins* might be usefully compared with George Antonius's *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement*, which also appeared in 1938.

Despite the differences between the indigent and itinerant West Indian Black Marxist historian and the more conservative, highly educated, and brilliantly well-connected Arab, both addressed their work to a world they considered their own, even if that very European world of power and colonial domination excluded, to some degree subjugated, and deeply disappointed them. They addressed that world from within it, and on cultural grounds they disputed and challenged its authority by presenting alternative versions of it, dramatically, argumentatively, and intimately.<sup>54</sup>

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**SECKER & WARBURG**

FIG. 1.2 Image of Secker and Warburg's 1938 advertisement for *The Black Jacobins*. Courtesy of the C. L. R. James Estate.

*The Black Jacobins* has other contemporary “others.” Alex Callinicos has usefully described how “the example offered” by both Leon Trotsky’s political writings in the 1920s and 1930s and by his *History of the Russian Revolution*

inspired some of the ablest of his followers to write contemporary histories of other twentieth-century revolutions that sought to trace the interplay of class interests and political forces that in each case led to defeat—Harold Isaacs on the Chinese Revolution of 1925–7, Pierre Broué on the German Revolution and on the Spanish Civil War, Adolfo Gilly on the Mexican Revolution.<sup>55</sup>

In many ways, James’s work should also be located within this tradition, with respect to charting contemporary revolutionary defeats in *World Revolution* and an eighteenth-century revolutionary victory in *The Black Jacobins*. As he famously put it in his 1938 preface to *The Black Jacobins*, evoking John Keats’s “Ode to a Nightingale,” he felt “the fever and the fret” of the Spanish Revolution when writing up his magisterial history of the Haitian Revolution in Brighton in the winter of 1937. “It was in the stillness of a seaside suburb that could be heard most clearly and insistently the booming of Franco’s heavy artillery, the rattle of Stalin’s firing squads and the fierce shrill turmoil of the revolutionary movement striving for clarity and influence.”<sup>56</sup>

### Contemporary Responses to *The Black Jacobins*

It is tempting to follow David Patrick Geggus and retrospectively conclude that ever since its publication in 1938, *The Black Jacobins* “has dominated study of the Haitian Revolution in the English-speaking world.”<sup>57</sup> In reality, the reception to the work was a little more complicated. For the activist audience who mattered most to James, above all George Padmore and Paul Robeson, his account of the Haitian Revolution was immediately celebrated. As James recalled, both Padmore and Robeson responded in essentially the same fashion: “James, I always knew the history was there, that we had it.”<sup>58</sup> Padmore’s review of *The Black Jacobins* emphasized how “the author has done justice to his subject.”

He has combined with great skill history and biography without sacrificing one to the other. Mr James is a real historian, with the sensitive mind of the scholar and an excellent literary style . . . who writes with vigour and incisiveness . . . *The Black Jacobins* is a fascinating story, brilliantly

told, and should be an inspiration to Africans and other colonial peoples still struggling for their freedom from the yoke of white imperialism.<sup>59</sup>

Members of the IASB in Britain, including such figures as Jomo Kenyatta and Amy Ashwood Garvey, would have read *The Black Jacobins* in 1938, and Amy Ashwood would later hail it as “the most revolutionary book on Toussaint L’Ouverture.”<sup>60</sup> Copies were quickly sent out to contacts in the colonial world as James prepared to leave Britain for a tour of the United States. It is noteworthy in this regard that the British state intercepted a letter dated October 19, 1938, that Secker and Warburg sent to one of James’s comrades in the Pan-African movement, I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson, who was back in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

At the suggestion of George Padmore, I send you herewith a review copy of C.L.R. James’s *THE BLACK JACOBINS* for review in the *West African Standard*. I feel sure you will do what you can to promote the book and Padmore thinks you will be able to sell in your district a dozen or so copies. I hope this may be the case.<sup>61</sup>

On January 6, 1939, Wallace-Johnson, in the midst of organizing a highly successful branch of the militant nationalist West African Youth League in Sierra Leone in the context of a growing political and economic crisis in the colony, launched a new paper. The first editorial of the *African Standard* was certainly in keeping with the spirit of *The Black Jacobins*, boldly declaring that “the crowning victory of our warfare is the end of the structure of capitalism, the complete collapse of imperialism and the triumph of the cause of self-determination for the oppressed sections of humanity the world over,” and it seems they also carried Padmore’s review of *The Black Jacobins*—also published in *The People* (a Trinidadian paper).<sup>62</sup> In Britain, despite several worthy reviews, including two by comrades of his (the British Marxist Arthur Ballard and Dorothy Pizer, Padmore’s partner), the work was all but ignored outside the Pan-Africanist and Trotskyist movement.<sup>63</sup>

Flora Grierson in the *New Statesman* famously dismissed *The Black Jacobins* because of its “bias,” noting James was “a Communist and wants us to see the worst.”<sup>64</sup> Leaving aside the question of quite which “best” bits of the slave experience Grierson had hoped to see James highlight, the awful truth was that if he had actually been a Communist with a capital C, the work would have received greater attention on publication. *The Black Jacobins* certainly did not warrant anything like the attention given to Soviet novelist Anatolii



Vinogradov's 1935 *The Black Consul*, which James later recalled enjoyed an "enthusiastic welcome in almost the whole British press."<sup>65</sup> As Eugene Genovese noted, *The Black Jacobins* "deserves to rank as a classic of Marxian historiography but has been largely ignored, perhaps because of the author's Trotskyist politics."<sup>66</sup> There was no "perhaps" about it. In 1934, in a review of the powerful antifascist novel *Fontamara* by the anti-Stalinist writer Ignazio Silone, Trotsky asked, "has this book been published in the Soviet Union? Has it come to the notice of the publishing houses of the Third International? This book deserves a circulation of many million copies."<sup>67</sup> Six years later, after Trotsky's murder in 1940, James praised Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* and made a similar point, noting "had the Third International been a revolutionary organization, this book, with its knowledge, its confidence, and its will, would have inspired, directly and indirectly, millions of political leaders all over the world."<sup>68</sup> The argument here stands with respect to James's *Black Jacobins*, too.

If general indifference among British intellectuals might have been inevitable by 1938 as the clouds of war gathered overhead, *The Black Jacobins* nonetheless found an audience among a select few. The work inspired many socialists in and around the Independent Labour Party and it had been a leading member of this organization, Fenner Brockway, who had first introduced James to the publisher Fredric Warburg, of Secker and Warburg, back in 1936.<sup>69</sup> The young future Labour leader Michael Foot also recalled reading it at the time and being "swept along, like most other readers, by the excitement and the passion, the sheer narrative drive."<sup>70</sup> The Communist Eric Hobsbawm recalled that "C.L.R. James' *Black Jacobins* was read, in spite of the author's known Trotskyism" by some of those who went on to form the Historians' Group of the Communist Party of Great Britain, so crucial to helping develop the tradition of "people's history" and then "history from below" after World War II.<sup>71</sup> These intellectuals aside, Peter Fryer accurately judged that James "might have been writing in German for all the notice that was taken by historians" in Britain.<sup>72</sup>

When Dial Press published a U.S. edition in November 1938, the reception was rather better, perhaps helped somewhat by James's presence in the United States as well as the contemporary interest in Haiti in the period immediately following the 1915–1934 occupation. William Seabrook, a U.S. writer who had visited occupied Haiti and was the author of an influential work on Haitian Vodou, *The Magic Island* (1929), wrote a very perceptive review in the *Journal of Negro History*:

Mr. James has rendered the public a service for which he merits the attention due a scholar who blazes the way in an all but neglected field . . . with this comprehensive view of the history of the island and those who made it the author has given the public a work which surpasses any production in this field hitherto published . . . *Black Jacobins* deserves a warm welcome and an extensive circulation.<sup>73</sup>

Harold Courlander, a U.S. anthropologist who had been influenced by Seabrook and soon published his first book about Haitian life, *Haiti Singing* (1939) (he later wrote a classic work on Haitian culture, *The Drum and the Hoe: Life and Lore of the Haitian People* in 1960), reviewed the work in the *Saturday Review of Literature*:

*The Black Jacobins* is not a simple account of this epic revolt in the West Indies. Nor could it be simple. But for the first time the scene is viewed with complete perspective and the theme recorded with understanding. It is not only one of the most sharply defined stories of the period to be published in our time, it is told in terms which have contemporary significance. "To the African robbed of his land and segregated, what does it matter whether the robbers are fascists or democrats?" It may prove to be the text of tomorrow's events in Africa.<sup>74</sup>

Rayford W. Logan, a leading black U.S. historian at Howard University who had links to the Roosevelt administration, and who had also conducted research in occupied Haiti, was more reserved in his praise than were Seabrook and Courlander. Nonetheless Logan concluded his review for *Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life* by noting that

*The Black Jacobins* is a notable contribution to the history of the Caribbean and of the class struggle . . . this study definitely established Mr. James as an historian from whom other authoritative monographs may be expected. This is certainly one of the books that our libraries will want to display during Negro History Week.<sup>75</sup>

Other scholars such as Ludwell Lee Montague, based at the Virginia Military Institute and soon to publish *Haiti and the United States, 1714–1938* in 1940, were also appreciative, with Montague noting that James "finds his way with skill through kaleidoscopic sequences of events in both Haiti and France, achieving clarity where complexities of class, color, and section have reduced others to vague confusion."<sup>76</sup>

While African American journals such as *The Crisis* and Trotskyist journals like *New Internationalist* were naturally enthusiastic, even *Time* magazine hailed *The Black Jacobins* as

an impassioned account of Toussaint L'Ouverture and the Santo Domingo revolution, written from the Marxist point of view by a young British Negro. It bristles with harrowing atrocities, fiery denunciations of imperialism, but manages to give a vivid account of a revolution which greatly influenced U.S. history before the Civil War.<sup>77</sup>

An equally glowing review followed in the *New York Times*, which noted that “Mr. James is not afraid to touch his pen with the flame of ardent personal feeling, a sense of justice, love of freedom, admiration of heroism, hatred for tyranny—and his detailed richly documented and dramatically written book holds a deep and lasting interest.”<sup>78</sup>

### **Underground Histories: The Persistent Presence of *The Black Jacobins***

Despite such praise, as James went “underground” in the United States in 1939, living a pseudonymous existence to be able to stay and work with Raya Dunayevskaya and the other members of the Johnson-Forest tendency within U.S. Trotskyism, *The Black Jacobins* also became something of an underground text, rapidly going out of print. One rare intellectual in the United States who did manage to make use of it was the Austrian radical anthropologist Eric R. Wolf (1923–1999)—later author of the classic studies *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century* (1969) and *Europe and the People without History* (1982)—who had come across James’s writings as a seventeen-year-old refugee from fascism while interned in England in 1940 with other “aliens” at an Alien Internment Camp at Huyton near Liverpool. “I learned about Marxism by reading C.L.R. James,” Wolf recalled.<sup>79</sup> “C.L.R. James . . . got me to think of Marxian methods to understand colonialism and global inequalities. That gave me an entry into the so-called underdeveloped world. From there, I read some political science, social science, and finally, just before the war, anthropology.”<sup>80</sup> Studying anthropology at Columbia University after World War II, Wolf formed a study circle with others, including Sidney Mintz. As Wolf recalled,

during those years I read three landmark books which suggested that anthropology could gain much from the infusion of Marxian understandings . . .

Karl Wittfogel's *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Chinas* (1931), an extraordinary, ecologically orientated study of the Chinese economy . . . Paul Sweezy's *The Theory of Capitalist Development* (1942) . . . the third was C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins* (1938), on the slave rebellions in Haiti in the wake of the French Revolution, one of the first attempts to write a history of a people supposedly "without history."<sup>81</sup>

Yet James remembers how the few African intellectuals who managed to get hold of a copy were certainly impressed by its thesis that "placed the revolutionary struggle squarely in the hands of the Africans."<sup>82</sup> Among these was the future leader of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, whom James met in the United States during World War II. As James recalled, "Nkrumah read the book and we talked about it."<sup>83</sup> Indeed, if "C.L.R. James" had somewhat faded from view, his reputation as the author of *The Black Jacobins* persisted. Though James—unlike Nkrumah—was not present himself at the historic Fifth Pan-African Congress held in Manchester in October 1945, the official report edited by George Padmore included *The Black Jacobins* in its list of suggested reading.<sup>84</sup> In the summer of 1947, Raya Dunayevskaya visited Britain and attended a left-wing demonstration in London's Trafalgar Square. As she wrote to James back in the United States, "I noticed one of the Negro RAF men had the identification 'Trinidad', so I proceeded to introduce myself and ask whether he had ever heard of fellow Trinidadian [C.L.R. James]. An author? Yes. 'Black Jacobins'? Yes."<sup>85</sup> In the Caribbean, the work clearly proved an inspiration. A young Trinidadian radical, John La Rose, recalled coming across "the world classic *The Black Jacobins*" long before he was able to meet James. "I remember I had been so moved by his description of Boukman and his fellow revolutionaries on the mountain making the blood sacrifice amid thunder and lightning in 1791 at the start of the Haitian revolution that I wrote my first poem there and then."<sup>86</sup>

During the war, a French Trotskyist, Pierre Naville—who had first met James in Paris in 1936—translated the work into French in 1943–1944, when France itself was under Nazi occupation.

My opinion at that time was that if France succeeded in restoring its national sovereignty—with the help of the Anglo-American forces—her first duty would be to give back freedom to its colonial empire as it existed before 1939. I thought that the publication of this book by James, whom I had known before the war, dedicated to the freedom struggle of the 'Hai-

tians' in Saint-Domingue during the first French Revolution, would serve this purpose.<sup>87</sup>

*Les Jacobins noirs*, Naville's French translation, eventually appeared in 1949, but David Geggus has noted that "the book has never been very popular with Francophone readers," perhaps, he suggests, because of superficial factual errors that might have been noticed by an educated French audience.<sup>88</sup> In February 1950, in *Les Temps Modernes*, Louis Ménéard declared *The Black Jacobins* "most topical and most useful, as Naville stresses in his preface. The analysis and the way he [James] disproves a thousand abusive or calumnious tall stories about the cruelty of the Black insurgents are particularly instructive." Nonetheless, Ménéard wondered at whether the Haitian Revolution really represented "the revolutionary success" that James saw it as, noting

there is a problem: to what extent was the framework of bourgeois principles which Toussaint used not a new form of exploitation of the Black proletariat, but more subtle, and still far from a true liberation? . . . The fight of San Domingo only appears to be a revolutionary fight when viewed with the perspective afforded by other times and other events.<sup>89</sup>

This review forced James to protest by letter to the editors of *Les Temps Modernes*, noting the Haitian Revolution was "a revolution for the abolition of basic slavery; to assure their liberty, the Blacks judged it necessary to establish an independent State. I feel uncomfortable to have to declare that I consider these goals to be valid in themselves." As he continued,

The revolution of San Domingo received its impetus from the French Revolution, and could not have been achieved without it, but reciprocally, the Blacks' fight proved a powerful contribution to the victories against the counter-revolution in France. In this way the slaves' revolution does not only have an immediate justification, but also an historic justification.

As for Ménéard's argument that Toussaint did not deliver "true liberation" for the enslaved of Saint Domingue, James was scathing:

Of what does this "true" liberation consist? The only meaning I can give him is the socialist abolition of all exploitation of man by man. It is not reasonable to blame Toussaint for not having tried to achieve that. The only liberation in question was the liberation from basic slavery and it was a liberation that was fairly "true." Mr. Ménéard passes over this point as if it were

without importance. I insist—if I insist on something—on the fact that it was of a great importance, in the sense that I have talked about above . . .

As to the particular type of thought that this review seems to me to reveal, I abstain from any comment. But my book is a study of revolutionary theory and practice, referring especially to colonial revolution, and it really was not possible for me to let the interpretation of it given by Mr. Ménard stand without correcting it.<sup>90</sup>

Causing a stir in *Les Temps Modernes* aside, the French translation enabled the work to reach at least some Francophone anticolonialists, including, it appears, Frantz Fanon.<sup>91</sup> It also ensured the work finally made an impact in Haiti itself, where James recalled it quickly became something akin to a Bible. “When *The Black Jacobins* was published in French, it was read and deeply admired in Haiti. I unreservedly took the side of the slaves. Yet it was years before they discovered that the book was written by a Negro and a West Indian. That testifies to the historical objectivity.”<sup>92</sup>

The appearance of the 1949 edition helped facilitate a dialogue between James and the Haitian historian Étienne Charlier, a member of the Déjeu Party, who wrote one of the first Marxist critiques of Haitian history (*Aperçu sur la formation historique de la nation haïtienne*, 1954). Charlier was also one of the first to stress the role of the maroons in helping ignite the Haitian Revolution, provoking historiographic controversy in Haiti and further afield. As W. E. B. Du Bois noted in 1955,

from the time of Columbus . . . in every island . . . there were hundreds of slave revolts which prove, as Haitian historians say, that the French Revolution did not spread from France to the West Indies but from the West Indies to France. Negro revolt under the Maroons culminated in Haiti where Britain, France and Spain were worsted and the United States was frightened into stopping the slave trade.<sup>93</sup>

Another of Charlier’s arguments—which triggered a robust response from a number of Haitian intellectuals, including Jean Price-Mars—was that 150 years after the revolution, pigmentocracy continued to determine social class in Haiti. Emmanuel Paul attacked Charlier for perpetuating the “mulatto legend” of Haitian history through suggestions that maroon revolt was precursory to the revolution that began in 1791,<sup>94</sup> and James—in a 1955 letter to Charlier—contested the claim that Louverture was “a man of the ancient regime.” Repeating the key thesis of *The Black Jacobins*, James again presents

the leader of the Haitian Revolution as “a revolutionary who had gone a long way but could not continue to what the situation actually demanded, the independence of the island,” but he concedes that this is “a question more of the biographical analysis of Toussaint than of the fundamental analysis of the classes and forces in conflict.” “And there,” he adds, “I have learnt much from you!” In anticipation of his future interest in this key aspect of the history of the revolution, the letter goes on to question Charlier on material available about Toussaint’s nephew, Moïse, “the man of the minor figures who interests me most,” before James concludes with a statement underscoring what principally draws him to the Haitian Revolution: “the revolutionary and creative power of untaught slaves is what interests me about the revolution in San Domingo more than anything else.” What he appreciated in Charlier was his central thesis that warns against versions of history that privilege “a few great men” to the detriment of any recognition of “the only great midwives of history,” the people themselves.<sup>95</sup>

From the perspective of French revolutionary historiography, James had already been influenced here by Daniel Guérin’s controversial argument in his substantial study *La Lutte de classes sous la première République: bourgeois et “bras nus” (1793–1797)* (published by Gallimard in 1946), a book that outlined a then-unorthodox critique of Jacobinism that explored the progressive domestication of the anonymous popular vanguard that drove the revolution in its early years. From the late 1940s, James worked on an English translation of Guérin’s study, a section of the introduction to which appeared in French in 1958 in *Perspectives socialistes*.<sup>96</sup>

Perhaps part of the reason James never completed his intended translation of Guérin’s work was the thrilling political developments taking place as national independence movements rose across Africa and the Caribbean after World War II, vindicating the prophetic conclusion to *The Black Jacobins*. On March 6, 1957, James—alongside many other distinguished black activists and writers from across the African diaspora, including Martin Luther King Jr. and George Padmore—was present for the Independence Day celebrations in Ghana, having been invited by Kwame Nkrumah.<sup>97</sup> While in Ghana, James discovered that *The Black Jacobins* had served as an inspirational underground text of the antiapartheid movement in South Africa. In his foreword to the 1980 edition, he recalled that “during the celebrations of the independence of Ghana in 1957, I met some Pan-African young men from South Africa who told me that my book had been of great service to them.” After being recommended to the work by a white university professor, the

young black students found it “a revelation, particularly in the relation between the blacks and the mulattoes . . . they typed out copies, mimeographed them and circulated the passages from *The Black Jacobins* dealing with the relations between the blacks and the mixed in Haiti.”<sup>98</sup> James’s experience more generally on this visit was incredibly stimulating, and as he wrote to his comrades back in the United States on his return to London, he felt it critical to begin writing “a 70,000 word book on Ghana.” This eventually emerged in 1977 as *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution*, and contained a significant chapter on “The Revolution in Theory,” written around 1957, discussing how he came to write *The Black Jacobins* and outlining some thoughts on how the Marxist theory of permanent revolution needed to be updated in light of decolonization. As James put it in a letter written to his comrades on March 20, 1957,

I propose to review past writings particularly *Black Jacobins*. I shall quote and show how clearly the future was foreseen there, when practically everybody thought they were crazy. (Read in particular pp. 314–316; p. 11; p. 222.) . . . I shall review Nkrumah’s book [*The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah*] and break completely with, or rather develop qualitatively the theoretical premises of the *Black Jacobins* and the Leninist theory of the colonial revolution. The African revolution (as a process) is no longer to be seen as supplementary to or subordinate to the revolution in Western Europe. I shall examine it in relation to the French Revolution, the Russian; the Chinese and the Hungarian.<sup>99</sup>

The next day, James wrote again to his comrades, explaining that he had begun his rethinking of *The Black Jacobins* in the light of inspiring recent political developments. “You will note that at last the two strands which I have worked on for the last twenty years, beginning with *The Black Jacobins* and *World Revolution*, have at last merged quite naturally into one.”

Please remember that the last part of the book is going to pose very sharply the enormous difficulties which face Nkrumah and the CPP [Convention People’s Party] . . . The central question is Nkrumah’s rejection of armed revolution. He says, and he tells me that I can quote him on this, that looking over the experience taking over the government and between 1957 he is not certain that the method he adopted was correct. I am fairly certain that it is. But the real danger comes now, and originates with the lack of momentum with which he was compelled to approach the problems



of government. Revolutionary it was, profoundly so, as Luther King in Montgomery, Alabama was revolutionary.<sup>100</sup>

Three days later, on March 24, 1957, James again met with Martin Luther King Jr. and his wife, Coretta, as they passed through London. Together with Selma James, George Lamming, and David Pitt, they discussed the Montgomery bus boycott and the wider civil rights movement that had erupted in the United States.<sup>101</sup> On April 5, 1957, James, who had been forced to return to Britain from the United States in 1953 amidst the rise of McCarthyism, wrote the following letter to King:

Dear Dr. King,

I expect that you are safely home by now. I hope you and your wife had a pleasant journey and that when you reached home you found the baby well, and the organisation in good shape.

I have by now been able to send a copy of *THE BLACK JACOBINS* to Louis and Lucille Armstrong and have asked them, when they have finished with it, to send it on to you. You will have realised by now that my political frame of reference is not 'non-cooperation', but I examine every political activity, strategy, and tactic in terms of its success or failure.

I wish you the best of success and hope to hear from you periodically.

I am thinking in terms of re-writing *THE BLACK JACOBINS*. The facts of the case and my general interpretation will remain the same, but there are many references and certain tones and attitudes which I think spoil the book for the general public.

With best wishes for yourself and the family, and with warm greetings to all your fellow workers.

Yours sincerely,  
C. L. R. James<sup>102</sup>

On April 30, 1957, King replied to James, noting that "I am looking forward with great anticipation for a copy of *The Black Jacobins*. [Lawrence Dunbar] Reddick has already told me what an excellent piece of work it is."<sup>103</sup>

Amidst the exciting contemporary political changes under way, epitomized by "the Ghana Revolution," James actively reengaged with Haiti's revolutionary history. Although it remains unclear whether he ever visited Haiti himself, he actively planned to do so in this period. In March 1958 he

corresponded with the poet, politician, and diplomat Jean-Fernand Brierre about his discussions with Félix Morisseau-Leroy and others regarding a possible trip that year.

You would be interested to know that my book on Haiti has formed an indispensable basis for my study of Ghana. The basic parallels, both in the course of political events and in the shaping on individual character, are astonishing. In tracing what was immanent in Haiti and has now reached full flower in the political development of Ghana, we walk along the very high road of modern history.<sup>104</sup>

James's role in interpreting the legacies of the Haitian Revolution in wider frames, not least those of contemporary postcolonial politics, was recognized in Haiti, and his papers contain a letter to Morisseau-Leroy from Lamar-tinière Honorat, undersecretary of state and representative of the recently elected president François Duvalier, in which he recognizes the existence of "une dette à acquitter envers le grand intellectuel noir antillais" [a debt to be paid to the great Black Antillean intellectual].<sup>105</sup> It seems that at the time there were plans to produce a Haitian edition of *The Black Jacobins*, and it is clear that by this stage James was keen to engage contemporary Haitian historians in discussion of his work.

### Rewriting *The Black Jacobins*

In the British West Indies, triumphant nationalist politicians also realized their debt to James and *The Black Jacobins*. On May 30, 1960, Eric Williams, now leader of the People's National Movement in Trinidad, publicly praised in front of a large crowd "the trail blazed" since "C.L.R. James's monumental analysis of the Haitian segment of our history" in exposing the "great lie of West Indian history."<sup>106</sup> That year James returned the compliment, noting "for my part I had had plans for doing more work on the West Indies. I put that aside for other things when I saw the powers [Eric] Williams had developed and the direction of his mind. I felt the intellectual basis of West Indian nationalism was in safe hands."<sup>107</sup> Williams's warm sentiment about *The Black Jacobins* was eloquently expressed the same year by the Barbadian poet and novelist George Lamming, who had first met James in 1950s London. In an important reflective essay in *The Pleasures of Exile*, Lamming declared *The Black Jacobins* "a West Indian classic . . . the product of a West Indian work-

ing at the height of his powers.” “It is not by accident that a document so rich in facts, so beautiful in narrative organisation, should have remained out of print for over twenty years.” Yet

it is wonderful that this epic of Toussaint’s glory and dying should have been rendered by C.L.R. James, one of the most energetic minds of our time, a neighbour of Toussaint’s island, a heart and desire entirely within the tradition of Toussaint himself, a spirit that came to life in the rich and humble soil of a British colony in the Caribbean.<sup>108</sup>

Encouraged by Lamming’s endorsement of his book, James began to sense the political and intellectual urgency of making *The Black Jacobins* available in an accessible format once again. This comes through in a letter to Fredric Warburg in September 1960: “With the situation what it is in South Africa, the Rhodesian Federation, in Kenya, the Congo and the West Indies, there is an insistent demand that the book be republished, not least in America. The general idea is that the edition should be paper-covered.”<sup>109</sup> The idea soon became a reality, for North American publishers were beginning to see the commercial potential of republishing *The Black Jacobins* amidst the civil rights movement. As Selma James recalled in 2013, “the reason *The Black Jacobins* was republished was because black people in the United States were requesting it and the publishers said ‘Ah, this is a chance to make some money.’ And so we got the call. We were absolutely astonished. It came out of the blue.”<sup>110</sup>

Having produced the first edition in the interwar context of emerging anticolonial and Pan-African activism, James was committed to recasting it in the altered, postindependence context of the 1960s. In his rewriting of the book, he concentrated on a very different set of highly complex circumstances. In the Caribbean, newly won independence in the former British colonies (most notably in Trinidad) is to be contrasted by accentuating a colonial relationship through departmentalization in the French territories of Guadeloupe, Guiana, and Martinique. Led by activist-intellectuals such as Édouard Glissant, an autonomist movement was growing in the Francophone Caribbean, the direction of which was modulated in part in response to the inspiration of the Cuban Revolution and the anxiety generated by the rise of Duvalierism in Haiti. In a wider Atlantic frame, the sharpening of the politics of race, in particular the growing militancy that later became known to the world as Black Power, granted the Haitian Revolution a renewed resonance.

James's rewriting began in earnest in the context of his return to Trinidad from 1958 onward in advance of independence. He noted in a 1961 letter to Morris Philipson—his editor at Random House—the existence of “a lot of excitement in the West Indies” about the new edition, “especially in view of the approaching independence, the emergence of Castro, and the recent death of Trujillo.”<sup>111</sup> In a letter earlier the same year to John G. Patisson at Secker and Warburg, James had similarly referred, in the context of the Cuban Revolution, to “excitement among the politically-minded all over the West Indies with frequent references to *The Black Jacobins*, and the historic revolution in San Domingo which is so near to them.”<sup>112</sup> Indeed, the correspondence with Philipson allows tracking of this process of translation of the 1938 edition into its new context and reveals James's freedom to reshape the work as he saw best. In November 1960, Philipson stated that if the new edition were contracted, “it would be entirely agreeable with us to have you make any changes, omissions, or alterations that you should wish to make for such a new edition.”<sup>113</sup> The implications of this rewriting have been studied in detail by David Scott in his important intervention in postcolonial studies, *Conscripts of Modernity*. Scott focuses on the addition of six new paragraphs to chapter 13, “The War of Independence,” to describe the way the anticolonial romanticism of the 1938 edition is translated into a form of postcolonial tragedy. There is still a need for a more thorough genetic analysis of the complete set of transformations in the text, for although the alterations to chapter 13 are clearly very significant, there are rewritings evident throughout the text (not least in terms of a lightening of the Marxist-inflected language of 1938). In letters to Philipson, James referred to “a number of political references, in themselves very slight, but nevertheless obtrusive, which I want to take out,” and Philipson also suggested a reduction of the accounts of the military campaigns while urging James to consider whether “to change some of the phrasing of your analysis of relations among the classes of people involved, since you yourself indicated that it is now rather questionable whether the particular sets of Marxian terms used for such analysis are the most appropriate.”<sup>114</sup>

In a subsequent letter to the editor of the *New Statesman* after the new edition had been published, James outlined the extent of his revisions, highlighting the updating of sections relating to the historiography of the French Revolution and the refined assessment of the world historical role of *Louverture* (and its links to Haiti), concluding that the 1963 edition would find a readership that eluded its precocious 1938 predecessor: “It has been agreed

that the book appeared before its time and that it is events in the colonial world after World War II that make what was envisaged in 1938 actual history of the 1960s and the times ahead.”<sup>115</sup> The paratextual addition of a new appendix was, however, clearly the element of the new edition, situating the Haitian Revolution in the “spurts, leaps and catastrophes” of Caribbean history, to which James anticipated the most significant reaction. The genesis of the appendix can be tracked in James’s correspondence with Philipson, who encourages the author to develop the modest textual addition to which he first refers: “I shall also write an introduction of a few pages in which I shall link up what took place in the Caribbean in the eighteenth century with what is taking place there today, what is known in general as the passing of colonialism.”<sup>116</sup> Philipson, understanding the potential significance of such an essay, encouraged James to produce “an essay of whatever length you would wish to make it,”<sup>117</sup> and in a subsequent letter repeated the invitation “to write as extensive an introduction as you wish to, in order to make the point that we discussed concerning the reflections that may well be drawn for contemporary colonial problems from the Haitian experience.”<sup>118</sup>

In a letter to George Lamming after the new edition had appeared, James highlighted the importance of his new appendix, “From Toussaint L’Ouvverture to Fidel Castro,” and commented: “I am still amazed at what you did for *Black Jacobins* in *The Pleasures of Exile*. I send you a revised copy and I eagerly await what you will have to say about the Appendix.”<sup>119</sup> There has been much debate as to the respective emphases of the 1938 and 1963 editions, triggered not least by James’s later claim that the first version of *The Black Jacobins* was written “with Africa in mind.”<sup>120</sup> Although the new edition was produced in a rapidly changing Caribbean context—in the tension between disappointments regarding Trinidadian independence and continued hope associated with Cuba—its resonance remains multiple and its relevance for newly independent sub-Saharan African states evident. James wrote to Basil Davidson that the appendix “poses West African development in pretty stark opposition to African,” but nevertheless saw his focus on “the fundamental conception that goes under the name of Negritude” as a persistent link.<sup>121</sup> He continued this argument in a letter to Colin Legum of *The Observer* in which he stated that the new edition constituted “the beginning of much clarification about the things that are disturbing people who are concerned with the future of African development.”<sup>122</sup>

The 1963 edition of *The Black Jacobins* was complemented by a new version of the play describing the same events, rewritten for a performance

produced by Dexter Lyndersay at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, in 1967, and discussed by Rachel Douglas in her contribution to this volume. There is also further evidence of James's ambitions for rewriting the work across media, and in a 1967 letter to his fellow Trinidadian Marina Maxwell, he mentioned the possibility of a film version of the work: "I am on the verge of sending a copy of my book and a copy of the play to the Rank Organization where I understand there is an excellent possibility that they will take out an option, for them of course to us as and when they please."<sup>123</sup> Susan Gillman notes that the appendix to the 1963 edition was part of an expansive gesture, with the text's original opening in 1938, presenting the landing of Columbus in the New World, extended to the present day:

Expressed mathematically: from Columbus to Toussaint + from Toussaint to Castro = from Columbus to Castro. The total evokes a strikingly open-ended comparative history that outdoes even Eric Williams's book of the same title, *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean, 1492–1969*, that would not appear until 1970.<sup>124</sup>

When the revised edition of *The Black Jacobins* was published by Random House in 1963, David Geggus notes that its prestige was now "enhanced by the wave of decolonisation that it had predicted and by the onset of the new social history," epitomized by E. P. Thompson's monumental *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963).<sup>125</sup> Professional historians found the work more difficult to avoid now, and in a sign of things to come, in a footnote to the second volume of his *Age of Democratic Revolution* (1964), R. R. Palmer recommended James's work as one of "the best" of the "many books on the revolution in Haiti."<sup>126</sup> *The Black Jacobins* finally began to receive the kind of recognition and attention it deserved amidst the rise of the New Left and the Black Power movements in the Caribbean and internationally. In his contribution David Austin explores some of the intense and urgent discussions about the work's meaning and message among young black radical activists and scholars on the Caribbean New Left, including the Canadian-based C. L. R. James Study Circle, which came together in Montreal around figures such as Franklyn Harvey, Tim Hector, Anne Cools, Alfie Roberts, and Robert A. Hill.<sup>127</sup> James had added six new paragraphs discussing the tragedy of Toussaint Louverture in this new edition, noting that his hero "was attempting the impossible—the impossible was for him the only reality that mattered." The revolutionary energy of the 1960s, captured in the slogan "Be realistic—demand the impossible!" thus found its echo consciously or unconsciously in

James's *Black Jacobins*, helping make it "a book of the Sixties" for many young black revolutionary activists.<sup>128</sup>

The young Trinidadian who became a key figure in the Black Power movement of the United States, Stokely Carmichael, has described how he was "thrilled—moved and inspired" when he read "this great book," which "just overwhelmed" him.<sup>129</sup> Third Worldism was also at its height, and as Dan Georgakas, a young radical in Detroit, once recalled, there was a tendency among others of his generation to interpret *The Black Jacobins* "in a kind of Maoist fashion as an example of how an underdeveloped Third World nation could defeat the most powerful imperialists of its day through a protracted people's war."<sup>130</sup> Yet importantly those engaged with local race and class struggles also found the work an inspiration. Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, in their history of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, a U.S. organization described by historian Manning Marable as "in many respects the most significant expression of black radical thought and activism in the 1960s," recalled that "James's ideas were well known to League activists and *Black Jacobins* was the work which struck the deepest chord."<sup>131</sup>

By the late 1960s, the rise of the civil rights and Black Power movements enabled James to return to the United States to lecture. As Selma James recalled, "CLR was not able to even pass through the States, or even Puerto Rico on his way to London from the West Indies until Black students demanded that he come and lecture. . . . The movements were great and were immediately beneficial to us."<sup>132</sup> From 1968 to 1969, thanks to the demands of black students at Northwestern University, James was invited to be a visiting scholar, which enabled his legal return to the United States. He later moved to Washington, DC, where he briefly taught black studies at Federal City College (now the University of the District of Columbia).<sup>133</sup> In a letter to Fredric Warburg in January 1969, written after the international revolutionary turmoil of 1968, James noted: "*Black Jacobins* in the new edition is a great success and I found the book well known on campus after campus in the United States and Canada."<sup>134</sup> The impact it made on the emerging field of black studies in the North American academy should not be underestimated, and distinguished scholars such as Manning Marable and David Levering Lewis have paid tribute to the powerful impact of the work.<sup>135</sup> In 1968, the work was translated into Italian, and despite a misleading rendering of the work's subtitle as "La prima rivolta contro l'uomo bianco" ("The first uprising against the white man"), Ferruccio Gambino recalled "the publication of *The Black Jacobins* led to some radical rethinking not only of world

history and world accumulation but also of the very notion of imperialism, class, and social formation” among the Italian left.<sup>136</sup>

The work also made an impact in Britain, in particular among young West Indian intellectuals. As Stuart Hall, a young Jamaican scholar then in London, remembered, “although of course I knew of its existence, I’m pretty certain that I didn’t read it until the paperback publication of 1963, and so far as I remember it wasn’t prominent in public discussion. So for me, and for many others, it is in fact a text of the sixties.” As Hall notes,

the West Indian intellectuals who came to London in the fifties and sixties . . . knew C.L.R. through *The Case for West Indian Self-Government* and his connections with the West Indian labour movement, but not through his histories. So I don’t think it really becomes an active text again until the sixties . . . it was a long while before people in Britain understood that, in addition to the other ways in which they knew James, he was also an important historian.<sup>137</sup>

One exception to this general rule was Walter Rodney, the outstanding Guyanese historian and political activist, who had come across *The Black Jacobins* in the library while studying as an undergraduate at the University of the West Indies in the early 1960s. He later declared the work together with Williams’s *Capitalism and Slavery* as “two of the foremost texts that informed a nationalist consciousness” among his fellow students in this period. On moving to Britain to undertake his doctorate at the School of Oriental and African Studies, he joined a study circle on Marxism for West Indian students in London around James himself.<sup>138</sup> Rodney later presented *The Black Jacobins* as James’s “major effort to project a past revolt into present consciousness,” declaring it to be a “remarkable study of the momentous victory of the enslaved African population of San Domingo against white plantation society, against the Thermidorean reaction in France, and against the expansionism of British capital.”<sup>139</sup> The next generation of black radicals in Britain would often come to know James after first hearing about and reading his historical work. As Jamaican dub poet Linton Kwesi Johnson once recalled,

I came into contact with the work of C.L.R. James when I was a young Black Panther, a member of the Black Panthers Youth League and the Black Panther Movement in England, in the late 1960s, early 1970s. We studied the book *The Black Jacobins*, chapter by chapter. It was the begin-



ning of my political education and my having a sense of what black history meant.<sup>140</sup>

Among a new generation of African intellectuals, the work struck a chord. The Kenyan novelist Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o first met James at Makerere, while James was visiting Uganda in 1969, and James later actively supported the struggle to free political prisoners such as Ngũgĩ in Kenya. Ngũgĩ met James again in London during the 1980s at the annual International Book Fair of Radical Black and Third World Books (1982–1995), established by Bogle-Louverture Publications, New Beacon Books and the Race Today Collective.<sup>141</sup> As Ngũgĩ wrote in 1993, in *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms*, “if I could make every black person read one book on the history of black people in the West, that would have to be C.L.R. James’s *The Black Jacobins*.”<sup>142</sup> That was easier done in some places than others. In apartheid South Africa, Scott McLemee notes of the banned 1963 edition that “copies were scarce, and the potential audience was large so people had to improvise,” continuing that one group

tore James’s thick book into clusters of a few pages, to be circulated a little at a time. Members would study each fragment closely and then pass it on to the next eager reader. They doubtless memorized large parts of the book this way, while waiting for the next instalment to reach them. Few writers ever find their work treated with such passionate intensity.<sup>143</sup>

### Rethinking *The Black Jacobins*

It is difficult to talk of the impact of *The Black Jacobins* in terms of the afterlives of a text because the work continued to expand and evolve, not least as it was discovered by new readerships in newly politicized contexts. In James’s lectures in the United States in the late 1960s, the Haitian Revolution continued to be a key subject in his repertoire, largely because he found that his history had attracted new audiences. What becomes increasingly apparent is that *The Black Jacobins* had begun to take on a life of its own—as is the case with many of the other so-called great books about which James himself wrote extensively—meaning that telling divergences may appear between the text and James’s commentary on it, not least in terms of the work’s historiographic underpinnings.

In “The Old World and the New” (with reference to which this introduction opened), James may have discussed with a certain vagueness his personal

motivations for writing *The Black Jacobins*, but he remains very clear about two aspects of the text. The first is the way the history of the Haitian Revolution reacted to a certain zeitgeist: “Something was in the atmosphere,” he writes, “and I responded to it.” The second is the extent to which the text had by then achieved a wider resonance of unprecedented scope and scale:

What is remarkable is that today, in 1971, that book is more popular, more widely read than at any other previous time. In other words, though it was written so long ago, it meets the needs of the young people in the United States today, and I am very pleased about it, in Britain, Africa, the Caribbean and other places. There has been a French translation, there has been an Italian translation. . . . But the book was written in 1938 and still has a validity today, 1971, because I came originally from the kind of territory which produced René Maran, Marcus Garvey, George Padmore, Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon, and we were prepared not only to say what should be done in the Caribbean, but we were trained and developed in such a way that we were able to make tremendous discoveries about Western civilisation itself.<sup>144</sup>

James gives a sense of the continued engagement with a text that had been published three decades earlier. He focuses on translation as a key element of the work’s wider dissemination but does not make explicit the ways he had continued to revisit his account of the Haitian Revolution, in a process that could be seen as self-translation, in the light of changing circumstances in the Caribbean and in the wider global frame to which he alludes. In his foreword to the 1980 Allison and Busby edition of *The Black Jacobins*, an edition which helped ensure the work made an impact on a new generation of radicals and anti-racists, James acknowledged the limitations of his original history: “1938 is a long time ago, however, and I waited many years for other people to enter the lists and go further than I was able to go. I was never worried about what they find, confident that my foundation would remain imperishable.”<sup>145</sup> He went on to reference two projects—Jean Fouchard’s *Les Marrons de la liberté* (1972), which built on the work of Charlier and provided the first detailed study of the maroons and for the English translation of which (*The Haitian Maroons: Liberty or Death* [1981]) he wrote a preface, and Carolyn Fick’s doctoral thesis that was published as *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (1990). Both of these works signal the emergence of an alternative historiography of the Haitian Revolution, one in which the formerly enslaved play a key role.<sup>146</sup>

James's characteristic conviction regarding the "imperishability" of *The Black Jacobins* is tempered by a firm sense in his 1980 foreword that "further study of the revolution in French San Domingo will reveal more and more of its affinity with revolutions in more developed communities"—a reflection that continues to echo the shuttling in the 1930s between the historical moment of the Haitian Revolution and the interwar niche in which James was interpreting it.<sup>147</sup> He had been aware for some years that the historiographic underpinnings of *The Black Jacobins*—in particular his reliance on narrating the revolution primarily through the figure of Toussaint Louverture—were increasingly under scrutiny. The emergence of alternative modes of narrating the past, in which the agency of the people was granted the greater recognition it merited, undermined the emphases on the revolutionary leaders by which the writing of Haitian history had long been characterized. *The Black Jacobins* had challenged such tendencies, not only by resisting hagiography and by drawing political meanings from the flaws evident in a character such as Louverture but also by alluding to the role of the formerly enslaved masses in inciting, driving, and shaping the revolution.

In essence, this recalibration of the relative emphases on the role of the leaders of the revolution and that of the formerly enslaved masses characterized James's continued reflection on Haiti in the final years of his life.<sup>148</sup> It is a theme particularly evident in the "Lectures on *The Black Jacobins*" delivered at the Institute of the Black World in Atlanta in 1971, given alongside a series of other lectures (including one on the Trinidadian Marxist sociologist Oliver Cromwell Cox). Aldon Nielsen studies James's 1971 lectures on *The Black Jacobins*—that appeared in print for the first time in *Small Axe* in 2000—in the current volume. Perhaps more than any other source, the transcripts capture James's constant reengagement with, reevaluation of, and rewriting (literal and otherwise) of the work that already had begun to multiply in the 1930s. The three lectures have a clear structure, moving from a detailed account of the genesis of the text, locating it in relation to his other writings in the 1930s in "How I Wrote *The Black Jacobins*" (June 14, 1971), establishing the credentials of the book in a differential comparison with Du Bois in "*The Black Jacobins* and *Black Reconstruction: A Comparative Analysis*" (June 15, 1971), and concluding with a self-reflexive account of what a new and fully revised 1970s edition of the work might look like in "How I Would Rewrite *The Black Jacobins*" (June 18, 1971). The final lecture underscores the extent to which new material—drawing on the work of contemporary French historians such as Lefebvre and Soboul—included in the footnotes of the 1963

edition would, in a rewritten version of the text, even more radically affect the historical analysis of the Haitian Revolution. James claimed a new version would foreground the formerly enslaved as the chorus of the narrative and focus on the “obscure leaders” or on the “two thousand leaders to be taken away” whom Leclerc describes in a letter to Napoleon in which he outlines the implications of removing Louverture from the Caribbean.<sup>149</sup> The work he imagines builds on the research of Haitian scholars such as Jean Fouchard and anticipates the writings of other key scholars of the Haitian Revolution, such as Laurent Dubois, Carolyn Fick, John Thornton, and Michel-Rolph Trouillot. The invitation implicit in the lectures is summarized by Anthony Bogues in his afterword to their publication in *Small Axe*: to “think *with* and then *beyond* James.”<sup>150</sup> It is striking that the author himself, in his reflections on and revisions and rewritings of *The Black Jacobins* over a period of five decades, demonstrates the potential of such a project and encourages the reader to use the book in the light of such a challenge.

Now in its eighth decade, *The Black Jacobins* continues to attract new readers and new readings, as a result of the new editions in which it appears (most recently and notably the 2001 Penguin version, with an introduction by James Walvin) and of the translations in which it continues to circulate.<sup>151</sup> Translation has constituted a key mechanism in the text’s circulation; to reflect this, the volume contains English versions of the prefatory material to the French and Cuban editions (by Pierre Naville and John Bracey, respectively) as well as the afterword to the 2006 Italian edition (by Madison Smartt Bell). Having been almost lost from view (except among a dedicated readership in the immediate postwar period), the second edition of 1963 propelled the work into the midst of debates on decolonization and its aftermath, transforming it into a handbook for revolution in the context of the emerging black power movement and other ongoing struggles. For some, James’s political partisanship and lack of status as a professional historian sometimes made him somewhat vulnerable to the charge that *The Black Jacobins* was not somehow adequately scholarly. Although it is the case, as Geggus notes, that “relying heavily on secondary sources, *The Black Jacobins* has its share of factual errors, but probably, fewer than most of its competitors,” historians of the Haitian Revolution (such as Thomas O. Ott) who have tried to insist that these mistakes somehow flowed naturally from flaws in James’s Marxist ideology have never been convincing.<sup>152</sup>

In particular, Ott’s accusation that James’s “stumbling attempt to connect the Haitian and French revolutions through some sort of common mass

movement is a good example of ‘fact trimming’ to fit a particular thesis or ideology” now looks more than a little short-sighted in light of the way it anticipated subsequent scholarship around transnationalism and Atlantic history.<sup>153</sup> As Catherine Hall and Keith McClelland have noted recently,

the injunction to place metropole and colony within the same analytic frame, practised so brilliantly by C.L.R. James in the late 1930s in his classic text on the Haitian and French revolutions, *The Black Jacobins*, but neglected by historians for decades, has been widely adopted. As metropolitan societies once at the heart of great European empires struggled to adapt to and understand their own forms of postcolonial melancholia and to transform themselves into multicultural and creolised societies, historians thought anew about their paradigms.<sup>154</sup>

Although Franklin Knight could suggest in 1974, in a review of Ott’s work, that “curiously, however, the historiography of the Haitian revolution fails to yield any competent scholarship of the quality readily available for the American, French, Mexican, Russian, Turkish, or Cuban revolutions,” what seems most remarkable today is that *The Black Jacobins* has established itself as not simply the classic Marxist account of the revolution but the classic introduction to the Haitian Revolution in its own right.<sup>155</sup> As Paul Buhle once put it, “*The Black Jacobins* is the novelistic account of the first successful slave revolt in two thousand years; like W.E.B. Du Bois’s *Black Reconstruction*, it will never be out of date.”<sup>156</sup> As well as various and continuing new translations of the text, James’s insights and analysis have been taken up and developed by numerous historians of race and slavery in the Americas, including Robin Blackburn, Carolyn Fick, Eugene Genovese, and George Rawick.<sup>157</sup> Testimony to the power of the work to inspire might also be seen by the fact that as well as David M. Rudder’s 1988 calypso song “Haiti,” *The Black Jacobins* has inspired at least one opera, at least one play, and one art exhibition.<sup>158</sup>

### **Conclusion: *The Black Jacobins* in a Contemporary Frame**

In an overview of James’s political legacy, Selma James criticizes the tendency of a number of contemporary critics and readers to defuse the incendiary implications of works such as *The Black Jacobins*. “It was often more convenient,” she writes, “in the mushrooming CLR James industry for most of his political history to be dismissed as either a detour in an otherwise brilliant career or the foibles of a genius.”<sup>159</sup> The frustration evident here is

over what might be seen as a “cultural turn” in studies of James, resulting in the presentation of his work “in a political and organizational vacuum.”<sup>160</sup> A postcolonial engagement with James began with the work of Edward Said, most notably in the chapter of *Culture and Imperialism* cited already, in which James’s journey to England in the 1930s is seen as an archetypal “voyage in,” between colonized and colonizing worlds, with the Caribbean thinker challenging and reorienting intellectual and political life in Europe and its colonies as a result.

In another essay, in which James does not play a role, Said describes “travelling theory,” by which he understands the shift of ideas between contexts and the dissipation of their original insurrectionary, revolutionary impact in the process.<sup>161</sup> Said asks what happens when a theory, idea, or text is tamed and instrumentalized as it undergoes multiple displacements. Taking as his example the work of Georg Lukács, he tracks the analysis of reification in *History and Class Consciousness*, the transfer of which from 1919 Budapest to mid-twentieth-century Paris (in the work of Lucien Goldmann) and finally to later twentieth-century Cambridge (in the work of Raymond Williams) is seen in terms of dissipation, degradation, and domestication. Said emphasizes the importance of recognizing both current context and point of origin; transfer is seen in terms of the loss of incendiary power and revolutionary impact. For Said, when a book with an incendiary power first emerges, it possesses what he considers to be a worldliness or organic connection to lived experience or contemporary history that is lost as it is progressively distanced from its origins. In identifying the cultural turn in discussions of works by James, Selma James may be seen to describe the type of traveling to which Said alludes. It is clear that studies of *The Black Jacobins* in a number of fields, not least postcolonial studies, have heavily underplayed the book’s political underpinnings and implications.

It is important to note, however, that the dissipation he originally describes is eschewed in Said’s later corrective essay, “Travelling Theory Reconsidered,” in which he considers alternative trajectories of Lukács’s work; in Adorno’s and Fanon’s respective engagements with his writings, there emerges an alternative type of “travelling theory gone tougher, harder, more recalcitrant,” as if reinterpretation has become not so much a repetition as a reignition of original impact in different contexts and different situations.<sup>162</sup> *The Black Jacobins* has been subject to both of these processes, and this introduction has endeavored to track the shifting influence of the work in a range of different situations—geographical, historical, and intellectual. What remains clear is

its continued potential to illuminate and inspire—and contribute to the process of “setting the past in relation to the present in order to distil from it a politics for a possible future.”<sup>163</sup>

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While we were preparing this volume for submission, the sad news reached us of the passing of Stuart Hall. Given that Hall was one of the most profound and thoughtful readers of *The Black Jacobins*, which he suggested was “the first work to centre slavery in world history,” and that we had hoped he might honor us by contributing an afterword to this volume, we felt it was only fitting to salute his rich life, work, and legacy by dedicating this volume to his memory.<sup>164</sup>

## Notes

1. On James’s political and intellectual evolution in Britain, see Christian Høgsbjerg, *C.L.R. James in Imperial Britain* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).
2. Our thanks to Robert A. Hill for providing the text from the original dust jacket from the 1938 Secker and Warburg edition.
3. James’s first work to be published with Secker and Warburg was his novel *Minty Alley* (1936).
4. C. L. R. James, “The Old World and the New,” in *At the Rendezvous of Victory: Selected Writings*, vol. 3 (London: Allison and Busby, 1984), 211. It is interesting to note in passing that the French ornithologist Louis Jean Pierre Vieillot (1748–1831), who had experienced the Haitian Revolution firsthand, coined the term “Black Jacobin” in 1817 to name a type of hummingbird (*Florisuga fusca*) found in parts of Latin America. On Vieillot, see Paul H. Oehser, “Louis Jean Pierre Vieillot (1748–1831),” *Auk* 65, no. 4 (1948): 568–76.
5. C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (London: Hutchinson, 1969), 122.
6. See Selwyn R. Cudjoe, “The Audacity of It All: C.L.R. James’s Trinidadian Background,” in *C.L.R. James’s Caribbean*, edited by Paget Henry and Paul Buhle (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), 46–50.
7. James Anthony Froude, *The English in the West Indies; or, the Bow of Ulysses* (London: Longmans, Green, 1888), 347.
8. Sidney C. Harland, “Race Admixture,” *Beacon* 1, no. 4 (July 1931), 27.
9. C. L. R. James, “The Intelligence of the Negro: A Few Words with Dr. Harland,” *Beacon* 1, no. 5 (August 1931), 7–9. For a full discussion of this exchange, see Aldon Lynn Nielsen, *C.L.R. James: A Critical Introduction* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997), 8–12.
10. James, “The Intelligence of the Negro,” 10.
11. James, “The Intelligence of the Negro,” 9.

12. C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London: Penguin, 2001), 336.
13. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, 114.
14. Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), 295.
15. Stuart Hall, "Breaking Bread with History: C.L.R. James and *The Black Jacobins*:" Stuart Hall Interviewed by Bill Schwarz," *History Workshop Journal* 46 (1998): 24.
16. C. L. R. James, "Autobiography, Section 4, 1932–38," University of the West Indies (UWI), Box 14, file 309.
17. Susan Gillman, "Black Jacobins and New World Mediterraneans," in *Surveying the American Tropics: A Literary Geography from New York to Rio*, edited by Maria Cristina Fumagalli, Peter Hulme, Owen Robinson, and Lesley Wylie (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 171, 172.
18. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, 124.
19. David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Color and National Independence in Haiti* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 87–102.
20. See C. L. R. James, "My Knowledge of Damas Is Unique," in *Leon-Gontran Damas, 1912–1978: Father of Negritude: A Memorial Casebook*, edited by Daniel L. Racine (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1979), 131–34. Thanks to F. Bart Miller for this reference.
21. In *The Black Jacobins*, James recalled how Lord Robert Cecil, representing the British government at the League of Nations in 1935, tried to counter Nemours by bringing up the historic massacre of many French whites in Haiti by the new Emperor Dessalines, at the time "supported by the King of England" in 1805. As James noted, Cecil "would have been more cautious if he had known the part his own highly civilized country played in this supposedly typical example of black savagery." See James, *The Black Jacobins*, 299.
22. James, *The Black Jacobins*, xvi, 336. For more on James and Nemours, see Charles Forsdick, "The Black Jacobin in Paris," *Journal of Romance Studies* 5, no. 3 (2005): 9–24.
23. James, "Autobiography, 1932–38."
24. Louise Cripps, *C.L.R. James: Memories and Commentaries* (London: Cornwall Books, 1997), 48–55.
25. Cripps, *C.L.R. James*, 50.
26. Cripps, *C.L.R. James*, 48–50. Though James could clearly read French well, Cripps recalled his spoken French in comparison was less strong, something that "really angered him" as "he could not fully express his views." On this 1935 trip, apparently "he became almost fluent in French in three weeks."
27. C. L. R. James, "Eric Williams," UWI, Box 16, folder 338.
28. For further discussion on the intellectual relationship between James and Williams with respect to their work overthrowing the conventional historical understanding of Atlantic slavery and abolition, see Aaron Kamugisha, "C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins* and the Making of the Modern Atlantic World," in *Ten Books that Shaped the*



*British Empire: Creating an Imperial Commons*, edited by Antoinette Burton and Isabel Hofmeyr (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 190–215. For recent scholarship on the material legacies of colonial slavery in Britain that build upon the pioneering work of James and Williams, see Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland, Nick Draper, Kate Donington, and Rachel Lang, *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership: Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

29. The play was performed at the Westminster Theatre in London by the Stage Society in March 1936, with Paul Robeson in the title role. See C. L. R. James, *Toussaint Louverture: The Story of the Only Successful Slave Revolt in History: A Play in Three Acts* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013). For a recent discussion of twentieth-century theatrical engagements with the Haitian Revolution, see Jeremy Matthew Glick, *The Black Radical Tragic: Performance, Aesthetics, and the Unfinished Haitian Revolution* (New York: New York University Press, 2016).

30. Hall, “Breaking Bread with History,” 21.

31. On the occupation, see Mary Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915–1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), and for some suggestive comments about James’s thoughts on this, see Raphael Dalleo, “‘The Independence so hardly won has been maintained’: C.L.R. James and the U.S. Occupation of Haiti,” *Cultural Critique* 87 (spring 2014): 38–59.

32. Hall, “Breaking Bread with History,” 21.

33. For discussion of James’s apparent “silence,” see Bill Schwarz, “Not Even Past Yet,” *History Workshop Journal* 57 (2004): 104–5. For a response, see Christian Høgsbjerg, “A Thorn in the Side of Great Britain’: C.L.R. James and the Caribbean Labour Rebellions of the 1930s,” *Small Axe* 35 (2011): 24–42.

34. On Padmore, see Leslie James, *George Padmore and Decolonization from Below: Pan-Africanism, the Cold War, and the End of Empire* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); and on Braithwaite, Christian Høgsbjerg, *Mariner, Renegade and Castaway: Chris Braithwaite: Seamen’s Organiser, Socialist and Militant Pan-Africanist* (London: Socialist History Society and Redwords, 2014).

35. National Archives, London, KV/2/1824/13a; Public Record Office, London, CO318/427/11; quoted in Bill Schwarz, “C.L.R. James and George Lamming: The Measure of Historical Time,” *Small Axe* 14 (2003).

36. *Manchester Guardian*, July 29, 1935.

37. S. K. B. Asante, *Pan-African Protest: West Africa and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis, 1934–1941* (London: Longman, 1977), 46.

38. Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 58.

39. C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint Louverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1938), 314–15. See also *Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Disturbances in the Copperbelt, Northern Rhodesia*, Cmd. 5009 (London, 1935), 19.

40. See Christian Høgsbjerg, “‘The Fever and the Fret’: C.L.R. James, the Spanish Civil War and the Writing of *The Black Jacobins*,” *Critique* 44, nos. 1–2 (2016): 161–77.
41. Anthony Bogues, *Caliban’s Freedom: The Early Political Thought of C.L.R. James* (Chicago: Pluto, 1997), 41.
42. Leon Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed: The Military Writings and Speeches of Leon Trotsky*, vol. 1 (London: New Park, 1979), xviii.
43. James, *The Black Jacobins*, 11, 15.
44. Eric Williams, *Inward Hunger: The Education of a Prime Minister* (London: Deutsch, 1969), 49; Eric Williams, *British Historians and the West Indies* (New York: A and B, 1994), 182.
45. This was essentially the thesis of the most “serious” official account of the Haitian Revolution before James, the U.S. academic T. Lothrop Stoddard’s *The French Revolution in San Domingo* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1914). On Stoddard’s “vendetta against the Negro race,” see James, *The Black Jacobins*, 335.
46. James, *The Black Jacobins*, 104.
47. James, *The Black Jacobins*, 69, 71, 73.
48. C. L. R. James, “Lectures on *The Black Jacobins: The Black Jacobins and Black Reconstruction: A Comparative Analysis*,” *Small Axe* 8 (2000): 94.
49. James, *The Black Jacobins*, 14. Although James’s work does have important parallels with Du Bois’s *Black Reconstruction*, and his discussion of the American Civil War in *A History of Negro Revolt* suggests an awareness of the work, there remains no evidence he had actually read Du Bois’s classic itself while writing *The Black Jacobins*. For James’s appreciation of Du Bois, see C. L. R. James, “W.E.B. Du Bois [1964],” in C. L. R. James, *The Future in the Present: Selected Writings*, vol. 1 (London: Allison and Busby, 1977).
50. Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution* (London: Pluto, 1977), 19–20, 33.
51. James, *The Black Jacobins*, 224.
52. This was suggestively pointed toward in a remarkable earlier work apparently unknown to James, a 1925 dissertation at the University of Paris on “L’Attitude de la France à l’égard de l’esclavage pendant la révolution” [The Attitude of France toward Slavery during the Revolution], submitted by the black U.S. scholar Anna Julia Cooper. This was published in 1988. See Anna J. Cooper, *Slavery and the French Revolutionists (1788–1805)* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988); Vivian M. May, “‘It Is Never a Question of the Slaves’: Anna Julia Cooper’s Challenge to History’s Silences in Her 1925 Sorbonne Thesis,” *Callaloo* 31, no. 3 (2008): 903–18.
53. James, *The Black Jacobins* (1938), 311. James’s use of the phrase “beyond the boundaries” in 1938 is quite striking.
54. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 299.
55. Alex Callinicos, “The Drama of Revolution and Reaction: Marxist History and the Twentieth Century,” in *Marxist History-Writing for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Chris Wickham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 160–61. See Harold Isaacs,

*The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1961); Pierre Broué, *The German Revolution* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Pierre Broué and Emile Témime, *The Revolution and the Civil War in Spain* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972); Adolfo Gilly, *The Mexican Revolution* (London: Verso, 1983). James may have played a role in helping Isaacs, then a member of the American Socialist Workers' Party, publish his *Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution* with Secker and Warburg in 1938 (the first edition carried a long introduction from Leon Trotsky). See Paul Collin, "The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution: An Essay in the Different Editions of that Work," *Revolutionary History* 2, no. 4 (1990). James wrote an admiring review of Gilly's study of the Mexican Revolution. See C. L. R. James, "A Revolution Ignored," *Third World Book Review* 1, no. 1 (1984): 36–37.

56. James, *The Black Jacobins*, xix–xx.

57. David Patrick Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 33.

58. James, "Lectures on *The Black Jacobins: The Black Jacobins and Black Reconstruction*," 85, 91.

59. George Padmore, "Toussaint, The Black Liberator," *People* (Trinidad), November 12 and 19, 1938. This review was syndicated in the British journal *Socialist Vanguard: Monthly Journal of the Militant Socialist International* 4, no. 12 (December 1938).

60. This comment was made by Amy Ashwood Garvey in August 1940 in a speech on "The Contribution the West Indian Negro had made to the Social and Cultural Development of the U.S.A. Negro" at Edelweiss Park, Kingston, Jamaica. See "Important Work Done in U.S.A. by West Indians," *Daily Gleaner*, August 13, 1940. Thanks to Matthew J. Smith for this reference.

61. National Archives, London, KV2/1824/36a, Letter from Secker and Warburg to I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson of the West African Youth League, Trelawney Street, Freetown, Sierra Leone, October 19, 1938.

62. LaRay Denzer, "Wallace-Johnson and the Sierra Leone Labor Crisis of 1939," *African Studies Review* 25, nos. 2/3 (1982): 172. In Trinidad, the *Port of Spain Gazette* noted, "Mr. C.L.R. James, Trinidad-born writer and politician who has been residing in England for the past few years is once more in the lime-light as an Author. His latest book is *Black Jacobins* which deals with Haytian History." See *Port of Spain Gazette*, November 6, 1938.

63. See the review by "K.A." in *The Keys: The Journal of the League of Coloured Peoples* 6, no. 2 (October–December 1938); Arthur Ballard, "The Greatest Slave Revolt in History," *New Leader*, December 9, 1938; Dorothy Pizer, "A Lesson in Revolution," *Controversy* 28 (January 1939). For James's later reminiscences of Ballard, see Al Richardson, Clarence Chrysotum, and Anna Grimshaw, *C.L.R. James and British Trotskyism: An Interview* (London: Socialist Platform, 1987).

64. Flora Grierson, "Man's Inhumanity to Man," *New Statesman*, October 8, 1938.

65. James, *The Black Jacobins*, 336.

66. Eugene D. Genovese, *In Red and Black: Marxian Explorations in Southern and Afro-American History* (London: Allen Lane 1971), 155. On November 29, 1979, Genovese wrote to James in praise of *The Black Jacobins*, noting that his wife, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, and he “independently came to the conclusion many years ago that it is about the best one-volume Marxist history of any revolution, and it has deeply influenced our thinking on many questions.” See letter from Eugene Genovese to C. L. R. James, November 29, 1979, Box 1, File 11, C. L. R. James Collection, Quinton O’Connor Library, Oilfield Workers’ Trade Union, San Fernando, Trinidad and Tobago.
67. Leon Trotsky, “Fontamara,” *New Internationalist* 1, no. 5 (December 1934): 159.
68. C. L. R. James, “Trotsky’s Place in History,” in *C.L.R. James and Revolutionary Marxism: Selected Writings of C.L.R. James, 1939–1949*, edited by Scott McLemee and Paul Le Blanc (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1994), 123.
69. Fenner Brockway would later become the founder and chairman of the Movement for Colonial Freedom (later Liberation) in Britain.
70. Michael Foot, “C.L.R. James,” in *C.L.R. James: His Intellectual Legacies*, edited by Selwyn R. Cudjoe and William E. Cain (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 102. The work also inspired Michael’s nephew, the revolutionary socialist Paul Foot. See Paul Foot, “Black Jacobin,” *New Statesman*, February 2, 1979.
71. See Eric J. Hobsbawm, “The Historians Group of the Communist Party,” in *Rebels and Their Causes: Essays in Honour of A.L. Morton*, edited by Maurice Cornforth (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1978), 23. In *The Age of Revolution* (1962), Hobsbawm recommended *The Black Jacobins*. Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: Europe, 1789–1848* (London: Abacus, 2002), 389. Brian Pearce, another member of the Communist Party Historians’ Group (who became a Trotskyist and was expelled after leaving the party in 1957), praised *The Black Jacobins* in the British Trotskyist paper the *Newsletter*, on October 10, 1959, together with Eric Williams’s *Capitalism and Slavery*. Pearce noted that both works threw “Marxist light” on the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire, “one of the most mystified and sentimentalized in our history.”
72. Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto, 1987), 207.
73. See William B. Seabrook, “*The Black Jacobins*,” *Journal of Negro History* 24, no. 1 (January 1939).
74. Harold Courlander, “Revolt in Haiti,” *Saturday Review of Literature*, January 7, 1939.
75. Rayford W. Logan, “Reviews—Caribbean History,” *Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life* 17, no. 2 (1939).
76. Ludwell Lee Montague, “*The Black Jacobins*,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 20, no. 1 (February 1940): 129–30.
77. *Time*, December 5, 1938. See also James W. Ivy, “Break the Image of the White God . . .,” *Crisis* 46, no. 8 (August 1939); George E. Novack, “Revolution, Black and White,” *New Internationalist* 5, no. 5 (May 1939).

78. “The Black Jacobins of San Domingo’s Revolution,” *New York Times*, December 11, 1938. See also “W.N.,” “Black Majesty’s War Has Pointers for Today,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 8, 1939.
79. Eric R. Wolf, “Encounter with Norbert Elias,” in *Human Figurations: Essays for Norbert Elias*, edited by Peter Gleichmann, Johan Goudsblom, and Hermann Korte (Amsterdam: *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift*, 1977), 30.
80. Gerd Baumann, “Interview: Eric Wolf: How Ideological Involvement Actually Operates,” *European Association of Social Anthropologists Newsletter* 25 (March 1999): 11.
81. Eric R. Wolf, *Pathways of Power: Building an Anthropology of the Modern World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 4.
82. Alan J. Mackenzie, “Radical Pan-Africanism in the 1930s: A Discussion with C.L.R. James,” *Radical History Review* 24 (1980): 70.
83. C.L.R. James, “Interview [1972],” in Ian Munro and Reinhard Sander (eds.), *Kas-Kas: Interviews with Three Caribbean Writers in Texas: George Lamming, C.L.R. James, Wilson Harris* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972), 35.
84. Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, *The 1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress Revisited* (London: New Beacon Books, 1995), 122.
85. Letter from Raya Dunayevskaya to C. L. R. James, July 29, 1947, Raya Dunayevskaya Collection at Wayne State University Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Detroit, MI.
86. John La Rose, “CLR James—The Revolutionary as Artist,” in John La Rose, *Unending Journey: Selected Writings* (London: New Beacon Books/George Padmore Institute, 2014), 52–53.
87. Pierre Naville, “Avant-propos,” in C. L. R. James, *Les Jacobins noirs: Toussaint L’Ouverture et la Révolution de Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Editions Caribéennes, 1983), xix–xxi, quoted in Frank Rosengarten, *Urbane Revolutionary: C.L.R. James and the Struggle for a New Society* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008), 228–29. On Pierre Naville, see Michael Löwy, *Morning Star: Surrealism, Marxism, Anarchism, Situationism, Utopia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 43–62. For Naville’s recollections of James, see Pierre Naville, letter to Franklin Rosemont, June 20, 1989, Franklin and Penelope Rosemont Papers, Joseph A. Labadie Collection, University of Michigan Library, Ann Arbor.
88. Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 33. Geggus cites French colonial historian Gabriel Debien’s discussion of *The Black Jacobins* in 1947. Gabriel Debien, “Les travaux d’histoire sur Saint-Domingue (1938–1946): essai de mise au point,” *Revue d’Histoire des Colonies* 34 (1947): 31–86.
89. Louis Ménard, “*Les Jacobins noirs*,” *Les Temps Modernes* 52 (February 1950).
90. C. L. R. James, “Correspondence [27 February 1950],” *Les Temps Modernes* 56 (June 1950). Our thanks to Merryn Everitt for her translation of these pieces from *Les Temps Modernes*.
91. There is a copy of *Les Jacobins noirs* in Fanon’s personal library. See Ministère de la Culture, *Bibliothèque Fonds Frantz Fanon*, 60. We are indebted to Matthieu Renault

for this reference. For James on Fanon, see C. L. R. James, “Fanon and the Caribbean,” *International Tribute to Frantz Fanon: Record of the Special Meeting of the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid*, 3 November 1978 (New York: United Nations Centre Against Apartheid, 1979), 43–46. Growing interest in James in France is signaled by the recent appearance of Matthieu Renault, *C. L. R. James: La vie révolutionnaire d'un “Platon noir”* (Paris: La Découverte, 2016).

92. C. L. R. James, “A Convention Appraisal: Dr. Eric Williams, First Premier of Trinidad and Tobago; A Biographical Sketch [1960],” in *Eric E. Williams Speaks*, edited by Selwin R. Cudjoe (Wellesley, MA: Calaloux, 1993), 338. The 1949 edition had referred to “P.I.R. James” as the author. Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 226.

93. W. E. B. Du Bois, “Two Hundred Years of Segregated Schools,” in *W.E.B. Du Bois Speaks: Speeches and Addresses 1920–1963*, edited by Philip S. Foner (New York: Pathfinder, 2000), 304.

94. See Emmanuel C. Paul, *Questions d'histoire* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie de l'Etat, 1955).

95. C. L. R. James, letter to Étienne Charlier, August 24, 1955, UWI, Box 7, folder 190.

96. C. L. R. James, “L'actualité de la Révolution française,” *Perspectives socialistes: revue bimensuelle de l'Union de la Gauche Socialiste*, February 15, 1958, 20–21. On Guérin's *La Lutte de classes sous la première république. Bourgeois et “bras nus,” 1793–1797*. (Paris: Gallimard, 1946), see Norah Carlin, “Daniel Guérin and the Working Class in the French Revolution,” *International Socialism* 47 (1990): 197–223.

97. Independent Ghana became a kind of home for an entire generation of West Indian migrants; it was also visited by Ras Makonnen, George Lamming, Kamau Brathwaite, Jan Carew, the Nobel Prize–winner Arthur Lewis, Amy Ashwood Garvey, and Frantz Fanon. See Bill Schwarz “Crossing the Seas,” in *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain*, edited by Bill Schwarz (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 27n41. For more on James in Ghana, see Kevin K. Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

98. James, *The Black Jacobins*, xvii.

99. C. L. R. James, “Letters on Politics: III. 20 March 1957,” in *The C.L.R. James Reader*, edited by Anna Grimshaw (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 269.

100. C. L. R. James, letter to friends, March 21, 1957, in possession of Robert A. Hill.

101. For James's letter on March 25, 1957, about this meeting, see C. L. R. James and Martin Glaberman, “Letters,” in *C.L.R. James: His Life and Work*, edited by Paul Buhle (London: Allison and Busby, 1986), 154–58.

102. C. L. R. James to Martin Luther King, April 5, 1957, quoted in *The Martin Luther King Jr. Papers Project: Vol. IV: Symbol of the Movement*, edited by Clayborne Carson, Susan Carson, Adrienne Clay, Virginia Shadron, and Kieran Taylor (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 149–50.

**103.** Martin Luther King to C. L. R. James, April 30, 1957, quoted in *The Martin Luther King Jr. Papers Project: Vol. IV*, 194. Reddick served as curator of the New York Public Library's Schomburg Collection from 1939 until 1948 and may have met James while he was in the United States.

**104.** C. L. R. James, letter to Jean Brierre, March 1, 1958, UWI, Box 7, folder 190.

**105.** Letter from Michel Lamartinière Honorat to Félix Morisseau-Leroy, April 16, 1958, UWI, Box 7, folder 190.

**106.** Quoted in Anthony P. Maingot, "Politics and Populist Historiography in the Caribbean: Juan Bosch and Eric Williams," in *Intellectuals in the Twentieth-Century Caribbean: Volume II, Unity in Variety: The Hispanic and Francophone Caribbean*, edited by Alistair Hennessy (London: Macmillan Caribbean, 1992), 153.

**107.** C. L. R. James, "A Convention Appraisal: Dr. Eric Williams," 334. See also Williams's 1964 comment on James, who "in his *Black Jacobins*, rescues the Haitian slave revolution and the rise of Toussaint L'Ouverture from historical oblivion, and his analysis is of profound and enduring significance, if only as one of the first challenges to the British interpretation of the abolition of the slave system." However, by then James and Williams had split politically, and Williams also suggested that James's "in-cursion into West Indian history was only a temporary deviation from the author's preoccupation with Marxism and the world revolution." Williams, *British Historians and the West Indies*, 164.

**108.** George Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960; London: Pluto, 2005), 119, 150.

**109.** C. L. R. James, letter to Fredric Warburg, September 1, 1960, UWI, Box 7, folder 179.

**110.** Selma James's comments at "Every Cook Can Govern: C.L.R. James and the Canon," London, November 23, 2013.

**111.** C. L. R. James, letter to Morris Philipson, June 23, 1961, UW, Box 7, folder 181. In the same letter, James mentions plans for a Caribbean edition of the book, with a print run of two thousand copies. There were also discussions, ultimately abortive, in 1961 regarding a Spanish translation with the Imprenta Nacional de Cuba (see James's correspondence with John G. Patisson at Secker and Warburg, February 9, 1961, UWI, Box 7, folder 179).

**112.** C. L. R. James, letter to John G. Patisson.

**113.** Morris Philipson, letter to C. L. R. James, November 7, 1960, UWI, Box 7, folder 181.

**114.** See correspondence between C. L. R. James and Morris Philipson, December 10, 1960, and February 24, 1961, UWI, Box 7, folder 181.

**115.** *New Statesman*, April 3, 1964.

**116.** James to Philipson, December 10, 1960, UWI, Box 7, folder 181.

**117.** Philipson to James, December 21, 1961, UWI, Box 7, folder 181.

**118.** Philipson to James, February 24, 1961, UWI, Box 7, folder 181.

**119.** C. L. R. James, letter to George Lamming, March 15, 1964, UWI, Box 7, folder 190. James makes a similar point in a letter of the same date to V. S. Naipaul, to whom,

following Naipaul's review of *Beyond a Boundary* in *Encounter*, he wrote: "I am looking forward to what you may have to say about *Black Jacobins* and in particular about the Appendix." UWI, Box 7, folder 190.

120. James, *The Black Jacobins*, xvi.

121. C. L. R. James, letter to Basil Davidson, March 15, 1964, UWI, Box 7, folder 190.

122. C. L. R. James, letter to Colin Legum, March 15, 1964, UWI, Box 7, folder 190.

123. C. L. R. James, letter to Marina Maxwell, 29, October 1967, UWI, Box 7, folder 190. Marina Maxwell, a singer, poet, playwright and performer, was the wife of the Jamaican journalist John Maxwell.

124. Gillman, "Black Jacobins and New World Mediterraneans," 174.

125. Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 33.

126. R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760–1800, Volume II: The Struggle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 514.

127. On this group, see David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex, and Security in Sixties Montreal* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2013), 73–93. See also Paul Buhle, *Tim Hector: A Caribbean Radical's Story* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2006) and Kate Quinn (ed.), *Black Power in the Caribbean* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014).

128. James, *The Black Jacobins*, 236.

129. Stokely Carmichael and Michael Ekwueme Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture)* (New York: Scribner, 2005), 105.

130. Dan Georgakas, "Young Detroit Radicals, 1955–1965," in C. L. R. James: *His Life and Work*, edited by Paul Buhle (London: Allison and Busby, 1986), 187.

131. Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying: A Study in Urban Revolution* (London: Redwords, 1998), xi, 16, 261. For more on James's general influence among the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, see the essays by Modibo M. Kadalie and Matthew Quest in the updated edition of Kimathi Mohammed's 1974 text, *Organization and Spontaneity: The Theory of the Vanguard Party and Its Application to the Black Movement in the U.S. Today*. See Modibo M. Kadalie, "Introduction" to Kimathi Mohammed, *Organization and Spontaneity* (Atlanta, GA: On Our Own Authority!, 2012); Matthew Quest, "Afterword: C.L.R. James and Kimathi Mohammed's Circle of Black Power Activists in Michigan," in Kimathi Mohammed, *Organization and Spontaneity* (Atlanta: On Our Own Authority!, 2012).

132. Personal correspondence with Selma James, May 28, 2014.

133. Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 94–95.

134. C. L. R. James to Fredric Warburg, January 10, 1969, George Padmore Institute, 429/4.

135. As Marable put it in 2000, "there is no more powerful history in the English language, in my judgment, than James's classic study of the Haitian Revolution." Manning Marable, "Black Studies and the Racial Mountain," *Souls: Black Politics*,



*Culture, and Society* 2, no. 3 (2000): 20. See Onwubiko Agozino, “The Revolutionary Sociology of C.L.R. James: An Interview with Manning Marable,” *Transition* 106 (2011): 127–38. See also David Levering Lewis’s praise for the “superb analytical synthesis of race, class and color” and great narrative style of *The Black Jacobins*; James P. Comer, Paula J. Giddings, Richard A. Goldsby, William Chester Jordan, Randall Kennedy, David Levering Lewis, Albert J. Raboteau, and Ronald Waters, “Books That Changed the Lives of Black Scholars,” *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 19 (1998): 102.

**136.** Ferruccio Gambino, “Only Connect,” in *C.L.R. James: His Life and Work*, edited by Paul Buhle (London: Allison and Busby, 1986), 198. Thanks to Giorgio Riva for alerting us to the problematic Italian translation. In 1968, James made efforts to encourage translations of *The Black Jacobins* into German, Japanese, and Spanish, as well as trying to interest British Lion Films into making a film based on *The Black Jacobins* playscript. See the correspondence in UWI, Box 10, file 241.

**137.** Hall and Schwarz, “Breaking Bread with History,” 22.

**138.** Kamugisha, “C.L.R. James’s *The Black Jacobins*,” 204–5. Another exception was Darcus Howe, a relative of James, who was presented with an original first edition copy of *The Black Jacobins* in 1962 when he met James in London after Howe had arrived from Trinidad the year before. Personal information from Darcus Howe, December 15, 2014. For Howe’s brief reflections on *The Black Jacobins*, see “Red Reads: Fifty Books that Will Change Your Life,” *New Statesman*, August 10, 2009, 21.

**139.** Walter Rodney, “The African Revolution,” in *C.L.R. James: His Life and Work*, edited by Paul Buhle (London: Allison and Busby, 1986), 35.

**140.** Quoted in David Austin, *The Black Jacobin* (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2006).

**141.** The inaugural Book Fair was opened on April 1, 1982, by C.L.R. James, while Ngūgĩ opened it in 1987. See Sarah White, Roxy Harris, and Sharmilla Beezmohun, eds., *A Meeting of the Continents: The International Book Fair of Radical Black and Third-World Books—Revisited* (London: New Beacon Books, 2005).

**142.** Quoted in Patrick Williams, *Ngūgĩ wa Thiong’o* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 8. See also Abdilatif Abdalla’s 2011 interview with Ngūgĩ wa Thiong’o about C. L. R. James, <http://vimeo.com/37375273>.

**143.** Scott McLemee, “C.L.R. James: A Biographical Introduction,” *American Visions* (1996).

**144.** James, “The Old World and the New,” 211.

**145.** James, *The Black Jacobins*, xvi.

**146.** For more evidence of James’s continuing interest in the developing historiography of the Haitian Revolution, see his review of Wenda Parkinson’s biography, “*This Gilded African*”: *Toussaint L’Ouverture*; C. L. R. James, “Romanticising History,” *New Society*, February 15, 1979.

**147.** James, *The Black Jacobins*, xvii.

148. The consequences of this shift in his thinking by the 1970s are well brought out by the late Jamaican Marxist historian and politician Richard Hart, author of classic works such as the two-part history *Slaves Who Abolished Slavery* (1980, 1985). As Hart later recalled, “It was C.L.R. James who, in his *Black Jacobins* impressed upon me how important the individual can be in expediting or delaying the development of historical events and in diverting the course of historical events as they unfold in one direction or another. In this book he illustrated this in the person of Toussaint Louverture. However, in a later period, C.L.R. set off in the opposite direction. In his ‘New Beginning’ period he was at pains to denigrate the importance of the individual in historical events, attributing the course of developments almost entirely to ‘the masses.’ I will never forget my meeting with a then young man in Trinidad, whose name I forget but who was introduced to me by James Millette, who complained that he had been misled by C.L.R. into failing to recognise the importance of the individual in history. C.L.R. James had profoundly influenced both of us, but at different times and in opposite directions!” Richard Hart, personal correspondence with Christian Høgsbjerg, September 3, 2005.

149. C. L. R. James, “Lectures on *The Black Jacobins*: How I Would Rewrite *The Black Jacobins*,” *Small Axe* 8 (2000): 107. C. L. R. James’s lecture on Oliver Cromwell Cox’s *Caste, Class, and Race*, given at the Institute of the Black World, Atlanta, Georgia, on June 16, 1971, has also now been published. See C. L. R. James, “The Class Basis of the Race Question in the United States,” *New Politics* 60 (Winter 2016).

150. Anthony Bogues, “Afterword,” *Small Axe* 8 (2000): 117.

151. In 1991, Ohmura Shoten published a Japanese translation of the 1963 Vintage edition of *The Black Jacobins*, which was reprinted in 2002. The main translator was Yoshio Aoki. We are indebted to Yutaka Yoshida for this information. The first Spanish editions of *The Black Jacobins* appears to have been released in 2003—by Fondo de Cultura in Mexico and Turner Publicaciones in Spain—while there was a Portuguese Brazilian edition in 2006 published by Boitempo.

152. Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 33. For discussion of inaccuracies in *The Black Jacobins*, also see David Patrick Geggus, *Slavery, War and Revolution: The British Occupation of Saint Domingue 1793–1798* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 82, 85–86, 103. In his history of *The Haitian Revolution*, Ott claimed to set out to “bring the Haitian Revolution into clearer historical perspective” against those who in the past “often viewed much of the conflict ideologically, varying from T. Lothrop Stoddard’s white racism to C.L.R. James’s Marxism.” Singularly sure of his own total freedom from any kind of ideological shortcomings, Ott promptly slandered James as a “Negro racist.” Thomas O. Ott, *The Haitian Revolution 1789–1804* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1973), 199, 204.

153. Ott, *The Haitian Revolution*, 185.

154. Catherine Hall and Keith McClelland, “Introduction,” in *Race, Nation and Empire: Making Histories, 1750 to the Present*, edited by Catherine Hall and Keith McClelland (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 2. See also Ann Laura Stoler and

Frederick Cooper, “Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda,” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, edited by Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 1–56. For a valuable recent discussion of the “particular, insurgent, imaginative geography of the Haitian revolution” and “the dynamic geographies of connection between the French and Haitian revolutions” as uncovered in *The Black Jacobins*, see David Featherstone, *Resistance, Space and Political Identities: The Making of Counter-Global Networks* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 23–28. James’s approach has still not been accepted by all historians, and one of the most celebrated liberal histories of the French Revolution avoided even a passing mention of the Haitian Revolution. See Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London: Random House, 1989).

**155.** Franklin W. Knight, “Toussaint, the Revolution and Haiti,” *Reviews in American History* 2, no. 2 (1974): 200.

**156.** Derek Seidman, “An Interview with Paul Buhle,” *Counterpunch*, March 8, 2004. Buhle wrote the authorized biography of James. See Paul Buhle, *C.L.R. James: The Artist as Revolutionary* (London: Verso, 1989).

**157.** There was a German translation in 1984. Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 33. Eugene D. Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979); Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997); Robin Blackburn, “Haiti, Slavery and the Age of the Democratic Revolution,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (2006); Robin Blackburn, “*The Black Jacobins* and New World Slavery,” in *C.L.R. James: His Intellectual Legacies*, edited by Selwyn R. Cudjoe and William E. Cain (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995); Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776–1848* (London: Verso, 1988). On the work of George Rawick, author of the classic study *From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1972), see David Roediger and Martin Smith (eds.), *Listening to Revolt: The Selected Writings of George Rawick* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 2010). *The Black Jacobins* continues to inspire new historiographic approaches. See, for example, Gerald Horne, *Confronting Black Jacobins: The United States, the Haitian Revolution, and the origins of the Dominican Republic* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2015).

**158.** See David Blake and Anthony Ward, *Toussaint, or The Aristocracy of the Skin: Opera in Three Acts* (Sevenoaks: Novello, 1977), and Tariq Ali, “Nothing to Lose but Their Manacles,” *Guardian*, June 6, 1989, about his 1989 play *Liberty’s Scream*, which was screened on Channel Four’s Bandung File shortly after James’s passing on July 11, 1989. The art exhibition “Black Jacobins: Negritude in a Post Global 21st Century” was an initiative developed by Black Diaspora Visual Arts—a partnership based in Barbados with major sponsorship from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts—which held a five-day symposium in 2011 in Barbados and Martinique that examined the influence of James and Aimé Césaire on visual artists in the region. It was

followed by an exhibition of commissioned works titled “Black Jacobins at the Caribbean Pavilion,” held at the Barbados Community College. Many thanks to Alissandra Cummins for information about this art exhibition. *The Black Jacobins* was also among inspirations for several works by Lubaina Himid in the 1980s, including “Scenes from the Life of Toussaint Louverture” (1987).

**159.** Selma James, “Striving for Clarity and Influence: The Political Legacy of C.L.R. James (2001–2012),” in Selma James, *Sex, Race and Class: The Perspective of Winning: A Selection of Writings 1952–2011* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012), 283.

**160.** S. James, “Striving for Clarity and Influence,” 285.

**161.** See Edward W. Said, “Traveling Theory,” in *The World, the Text and the Critic* (1983; London: Vintage, 1991), 226–47.

**162.** See Edward W. Said, “Travelling Theory Reconsidered,” in *Critical Reconstructions: The Relationship of Fiction and Life*, edited by R. Polhemus and R. Henke (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 255.

**163.** Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*, 21.

**164.** Hall, “Breaking Bread with History,” 22.