



WARWICK

The Past is Not Our Future: Walter Rodney and Youth Culture in 1960's Jamaica

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The Annual Walter Rodney Lecture

Hosted by the Yesu Persaud Centre for Caribbean Studies

Tuesday 31st October, 5.15pm
Room OC0.04, Oculus Building,
The University of Warwick

Refreshments will be provided
All welcome

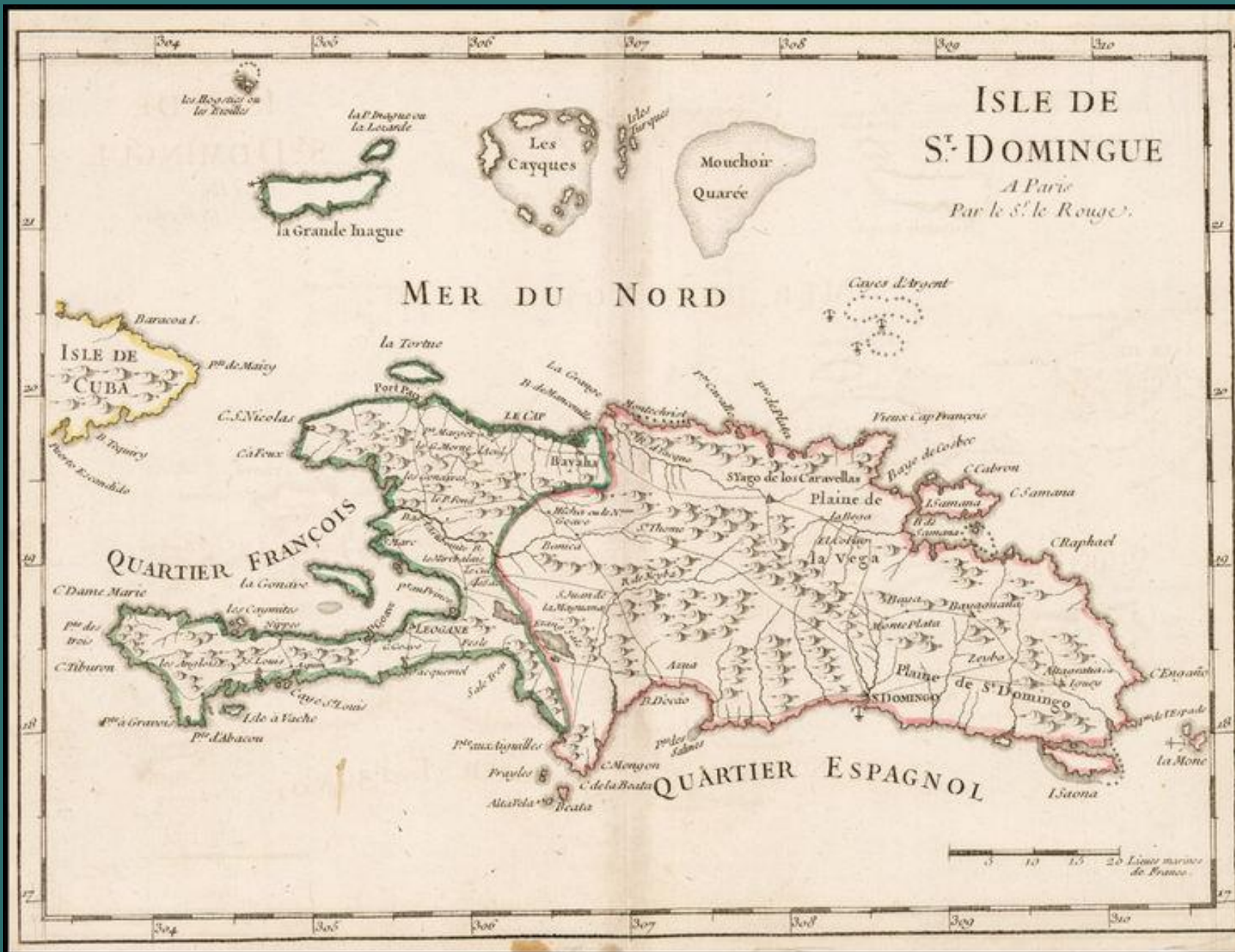
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Haitian politics, society, and migration, and Jamaican history.

Professor Smith is the author of the books *Liberty, Fraternity, Exile: Haiti and Jamaica After Emancipation* (University of North Carolina Press, 2014), winner of the 2015 Haiti Illumination Book Prize of the Haitian Studies Association and *Red and Black in Haiti: Radicalism, Conflict, and Political Change, 1934-1957* (University of North Carolina Press, 2009), which was a winner of the Gordon K and Sybil Lewis prize for best book in Caribbean History from the Caribbean Studies Association.



English 213 –
Lecture 2

*Secret History; or, The
Horrors of St.
Domingo*
Lenora Sansay

- We arrived safely here, my dear friend, after a passage of forty days, during which I suffered horribly from sea-sickness, heat and confinement; but the society of my fellow-passengers was so agreeable that I often forgot the inconvenience to which I was exposed. It consisted of five or six French families who, having left St. Domingo at the beginning of the revolution, were now returning full of joy at the idea of again possessing the estates from which they had been driven by their revolted slaves. Buoyed by their newly awakened hopes they were all delightful anticipation. There is an elasticity in the French character which repels misfortune. They have an inexhaustible flow of spirits that bears them lightly through the ills of life
- [...]
- On landing, we found the town a heap of ruins. A more terrible picture of desolation cannot be imagined. Passing through streets choked with rubbish, we reached with difficulty a house which had escaped the general fate. The people live in tents, or make a kind of shelter, by laying a few boards across the half-consumed beams; for the buildings being here of hewn stone, with walls three feet thick, only the roofs and floors have been destroyed. But to hear of the distress which these unfortunate people have suffered, would fill with horror the stoutest heart, and make the most obdurate melt with pity” (61)

Key Dates

- 1789-1799 French Revolution and the French Republic
- 1791 – initial slave rebellions
- 1794 – reaches truce with newly Republican France
- 1799 – End of the Republic, restoration of monarchy via the coup of Napoleon Bonaparte
- 1803 - Louisiana Purchase
- 1804 – Haiti declares independence
- 1804 – “White Massacre”
- 1825 – France Demands an “Independence debt” from Haiti

American Revolution 1776

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed”

French Revolution 1789

“Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good. The aim of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.”

Haitian Revolution 1801

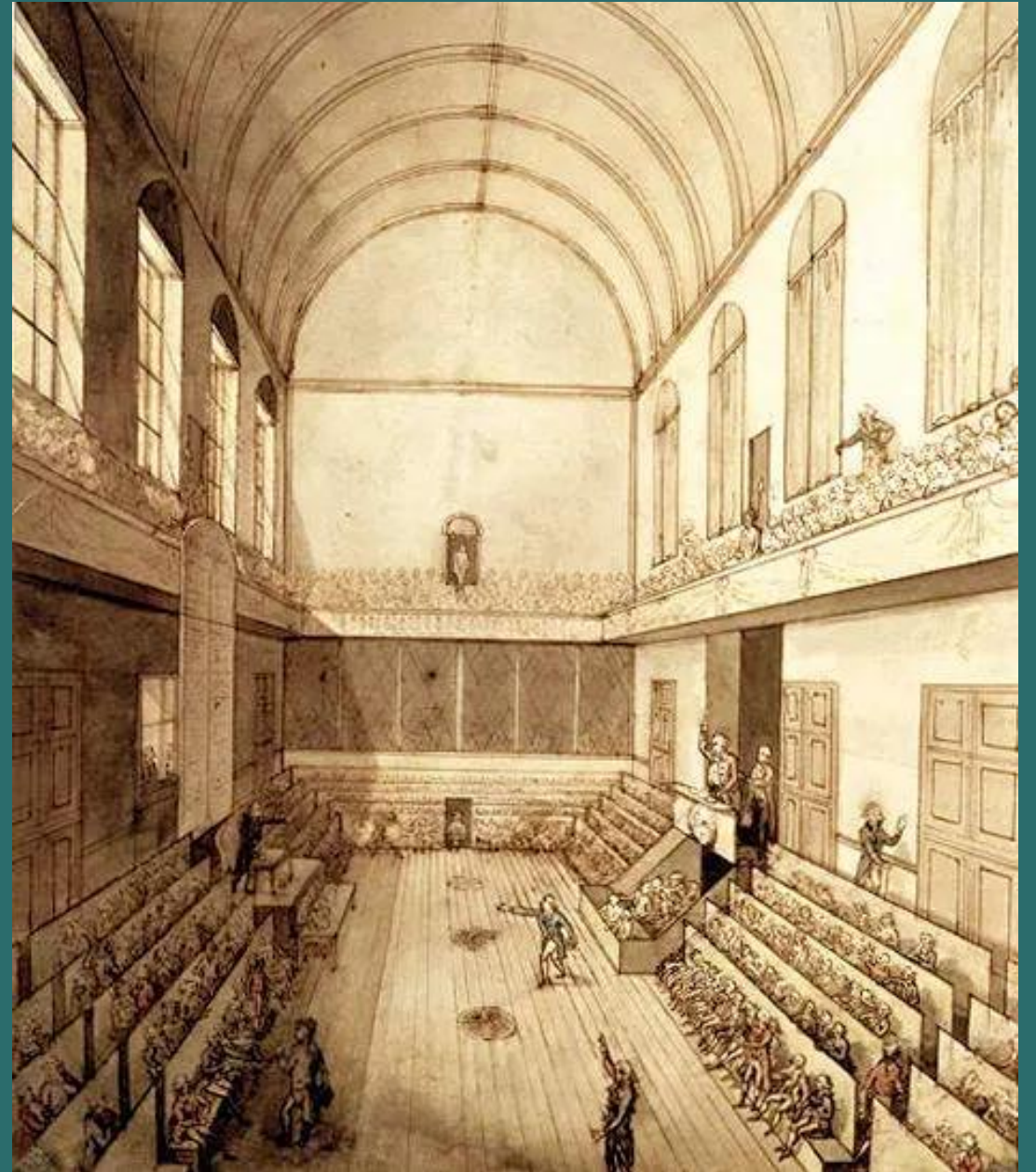
“There can be no slaves on this territory; servitude has been forever abolished. All men are born, live and die there free [...] No other distinctions exist than those of virtues and talents, nor any other superiority than that granted by the law in the exercise of a public charge. The law is the same for all, whether it punishes or protects.

Spanish American Revolution 1861

“The National Convention declares the abolition of Negro slavery in all the colonies; in consequence it decrees that all men, without distinction of color, residing in the colonies are French citizens and will enjoy all the rights assured by the constitution.

It asks the Committee of Public Safety to make a report as soon as possible on the measures that should be taken to assure the execution of the present decree.”

-National Convention
February 4, 1794

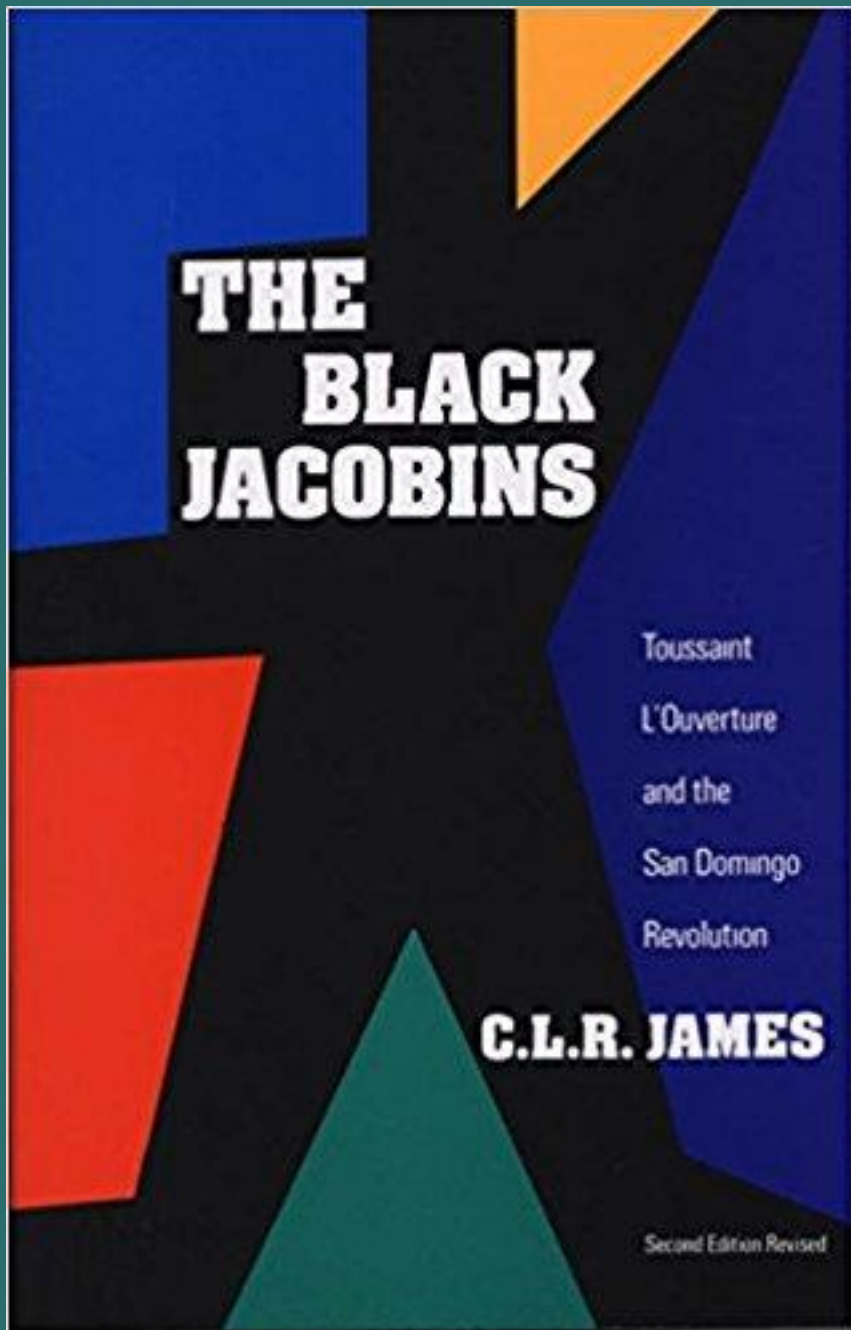




“There can be no slaves in the territory; servitude is forever abolished.

Here all men are born, live and die free and French”

-Haitian Constitution (1801)
Toussaint L'Ouverture



“The transformation of slaves, trembling in hundreds before a single white man, into a people able to organize themselves and defeat the most powerful European nations of their day, is one of the great epics of revolutionary struggle and achievement”

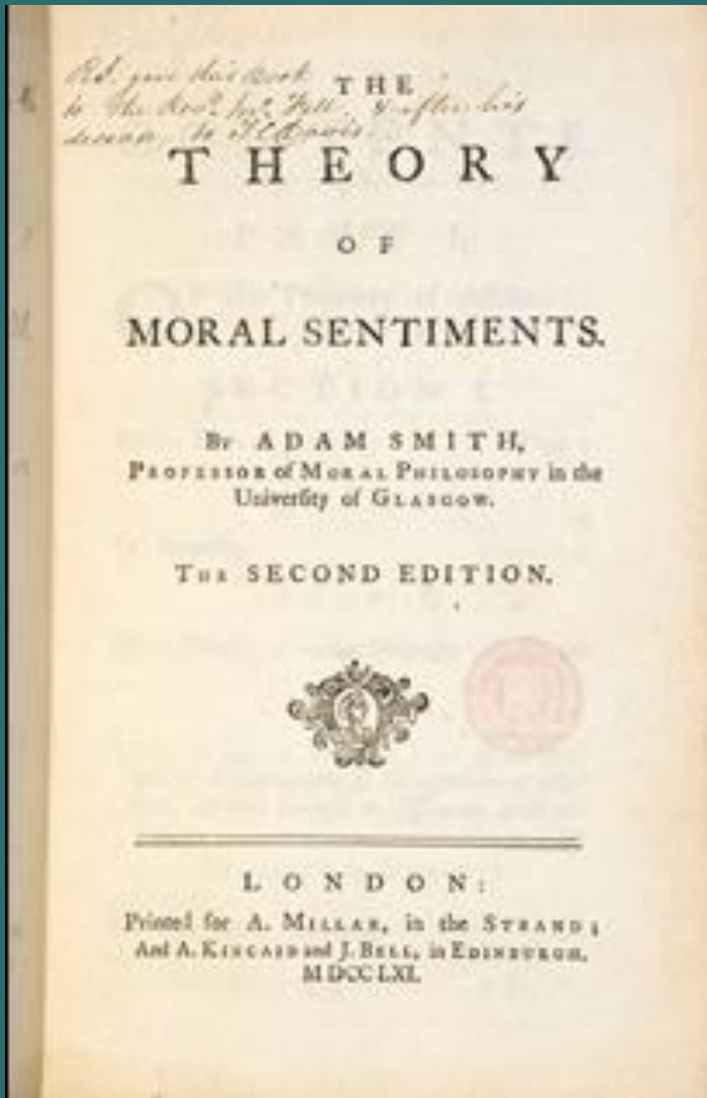


I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep for ever: that considering numbers, nature and natural means only, a revolution of the wheel of fortune, an exchange of situation, is among possible events: that it may become probable by supernatural interference!”

-Thomas Jefferson *Notes on the State of Virginia*

“Men make their own history,
but they do not make it as they please;
they do not make it under self-selected
circumstances,
but under circumstances existing already,
given and transmitted from the past.
The tradition of all dead generations weighs
like a nightmare
on the brains
of the living. ”

-Karl Marx, 1852



Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 1758
An ethics of sympathy

“By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him...His agonies...when we have thus adopted and made them our own, begin at last to affect us, and we then tremble and shudder at the thought of what he feels” (9).

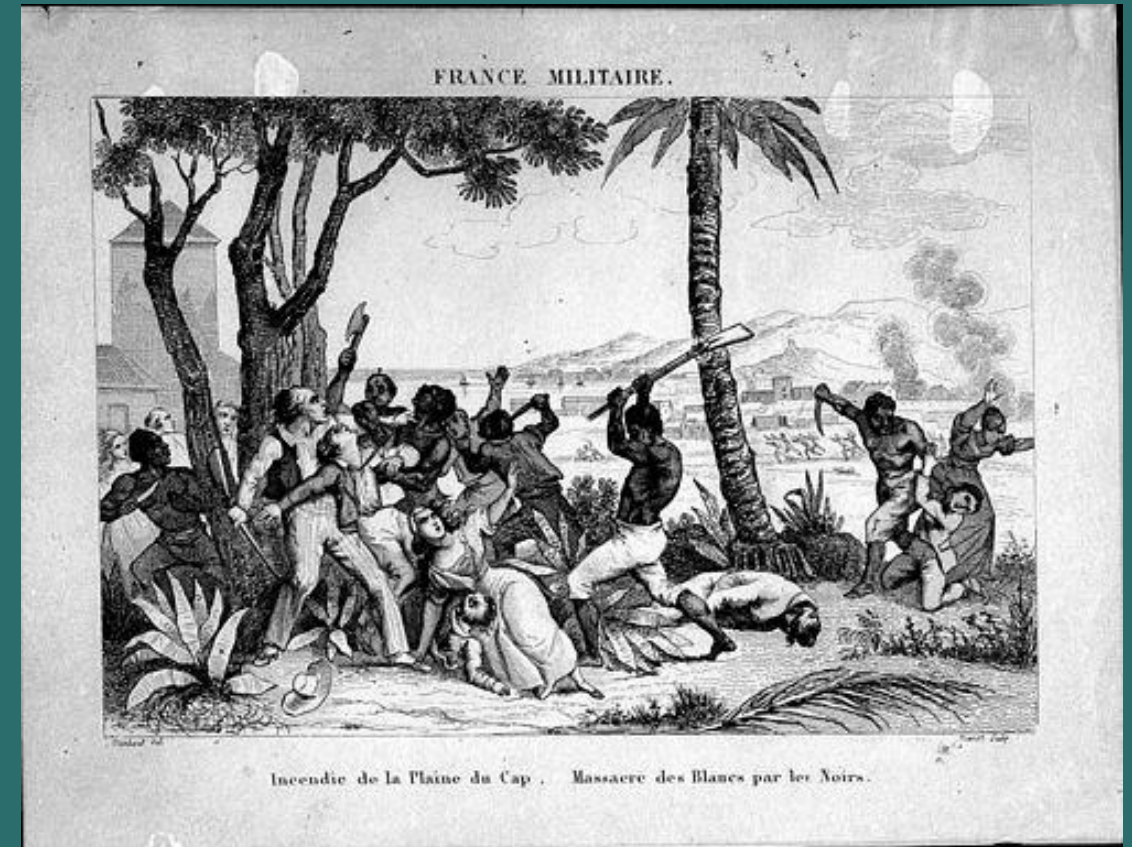
“Affluence might have been thought necessary to her, yet the sensibility of her heart rejects the futile splendour that surrounds her, and the tears that often stain her brilliant robes, shew that they cover a bosom to which peace is a stranger” (79)

“Though to me has been invariably kind yet my heart is torn with regret at the torments which his irascible temper inflict on his wife. They force her to seek relief in the paths of pleasure, whilst destined by nature to embellish the sphere of domestic felicity” (80)



“Madame G-, lured by the hope of reinstating her children in their paternal inheritance, left Barracoa, followed by the blessings and regret of all to whom she was known. [...] Some houses she owned in the Cape, upon being rebuilt, promised to yield her a handsome revenue [...] Madame G received a letter from one of her black chiefs, who had been a slave to her mother. He advised her not to think of leaving the country; assured her that it was the intention of Dessalines to protect all the white inhabitants who put confidence in him [...] When the time allowed for the evacuation had expires, the negroes entered as masters. During the first days reigned a deceitful calm which was followed by a dreadful storm” (124)

“They were sitting one day in mournful silence, when the door of their prison opened, and the chief, whose letter had induced them to stay, appeared. **HE saluted Madame G- with great familiarity, told her it was to his orders she owed her life, and said he would continue his friendship and protection if she would give him her eldest daughter in marriage. The wretched mother caught the terrified Adelaide, who sunk fainting into her arms. The menacing looks of the negro became more horrible”** (125)



“Every inhabitant lived on his estate like a Sovereign ruling his slaves with despotic sway, enjoining all that luxury could invent or fortune procure [...] The jealousy of the women was often terrible in its consequences. One lady, who had a beautiful negro girl continually about her person, thought she saw some symptoms of *tendresse* in the eyes of her husband, and all the furies of jealousy seized her soul. She ordered one of her slaves to cut off the head of the unfortunate victim, which was instantly done. At dinner her husband said he felt no disposition to eat, to which his wife, with the air of a demon, replied, perhaps I can give you something that will excite your appetite; it has at least had that effect before. She rose and drew from a closet the head of Coomba [...] Many similar anecdotes have been related by my Creole friends” (70)

“A black chief and his wife were made prisoners last week, and sentenced to be shot. As they walked to the place of execution the chief seemed deeply impressed with the horror of his approaching fate: but his wife went cheerfully along, endeavoured to console him and reproached his want of courage. When they arrived on the field, in which their grave was already dug, she refused to have her eyes bound; and turning to the soliders who were to execute their sentence, said ‘Be expeditious, and don’t make me longer,’ She received their fire without shrinking, and expired without uttering. Since the commencement of the revolution she had been a very devil!” (92)

“Tis same fury in female form killed with her own hand a white man who had been her husband’s secretary. He offended her; she had him bound, and they stabbed him with a penknife till he expired” (92)

“But the moment of enjoying these pleasures is, I fear, far distant. The negroes have felt during ten years the blessing of liberty, for a blessing it certainly is, however acquired, and they will not be easily deprived of it. They have fought and vanquished the French troops and their strength has increased from a knowledge of the weakness of their opposers, and the climate itself combats for them” (73)

Versus

“Domestic *felicity* she never knew! I am convinced that she has never been less happy than since her marriage! [...] I have seen him oblige her to stay at home and pass the evening alone with him after she had dressed for a ball. This does not accord with the liberty French ladies are supposed to enjoy. But I believe Clara is not the first wife that has been locked up at St Domingo, yet she excites little sympathy because she has not the good fortune to be one of the privileged” (87)

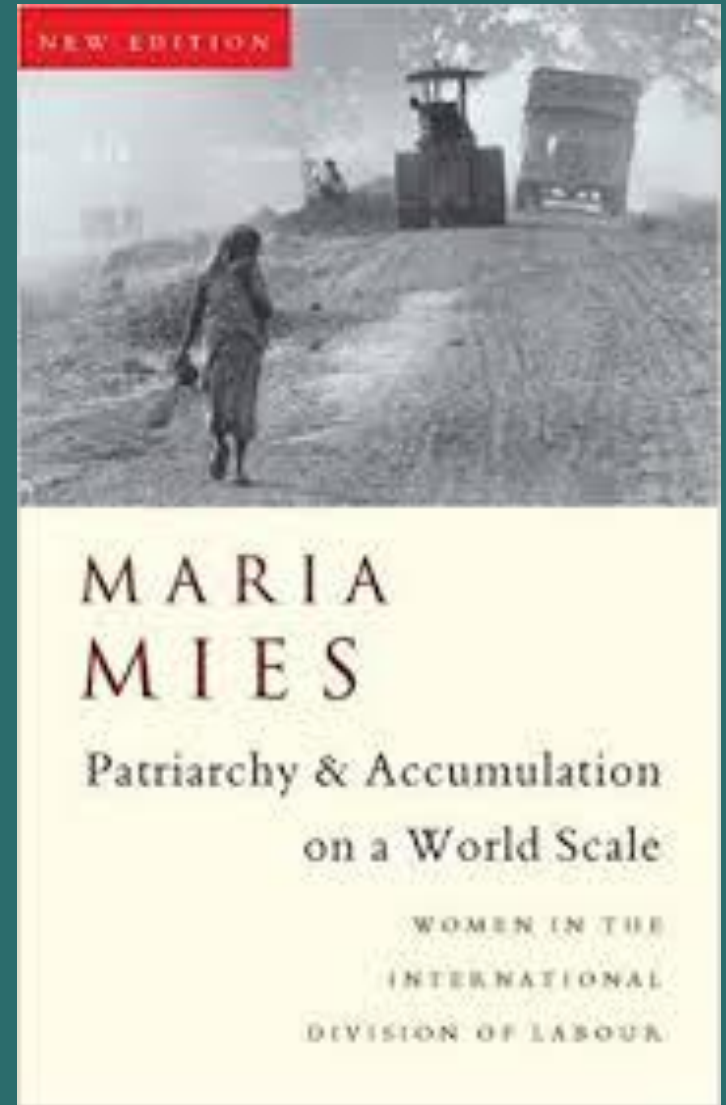


Pauline Bonaparte

“Clara had the yellow fever. Her husband, who certainly loves her very much, watched her with unceasing care, and I believe preserved her life, to which however she attaches no value since it must be passed with him” (63)

“[Pauline Bonaparte] “She as in a room darkened by Venetian blinds, lying on her sofa from which she half rose to receive me. When I was seated she reclined again on the sofa and amused general Boyer, who sat at her feet, by letting her slipper fall continually, which he respectfully put on as often as it fell. She is small, fair, with blue eyes and flaxen hair. Her face is expressive of sweetness but without spirit. She has a voluptuous mouth, and is rendered interesting by an air of languor which spreads itself over her whole frame. She was dressed in a muslin morning gown, with a Madras handkerchief on head” (64-5)

“‘slave women in the Caribbean were neither wives nor mothers’ [...] women of the European bourgeoisie were domesticated and ideologically manipulated into wifehood and motherhood as their ‘natural’ vocation. While one set of women were treated as pure labour force, a source of energy, the other set of women was treated as ‘non-productive’ breeders only” (92)



“He talks of buying a plantation and of settling here. If he does I shall endeavour to return to the continent, but poor Clara! She weeps when I speak of leaving her, and when I consider the loneliness to which she will be condemned without me, I have almost heroism enough to sacrifice my happiness to her comfort” (117)

19th-Century Now

Historical perspective is one “that makes the present, as revolutionary ‘now-time,’ its vanishing point”
–Susan Buck Morss

One of the arguments underpinning this module is that understanding the 19th-century is crucial for understanding the rise of Trump. Throughout the module, we have looked at a number of texts – Charles Chesnut’s *Marrow of Tradition* (1901) for instance – that I have argued help elucidate the “revolutionary ‘now-time’” of Trump.

For the last week of Term 2, you will choose a reading or set of readings that you think help illuminate the present. Starting in Week 3, you will form groups of 5-6 and collectively nominate a text (or set of readings) that you think we should read.

During the final lecture of the term in week 10, every group will have 5 minutes to argue for why their text(s) should be chosen by the class. At the end of that class, we will all vote, in order, for our top three texts. The one with the most points wins. You can choose any novel, short story, poem or series of poems, or essay that you wish. It does not need to be an “American” text. Below is a list of suggested texts. **Please feel free to find texts not on this list.**