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Making 'The Black Jacobins': C. L. R. James and the Drama of History. By RACHEL DOUGLAS. (The C. L. R. James Archives.) Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019. xii + 306 pp., ill.

This study marks the first monograph that engages with the vast array of texts and lectures on the Haitian Revolution, produced by Black Atlantic Marxist C. L. R. James over his lifetime. Loosely drawing on Gérard Genette's notion of literary texts as palimpsests that always carry traces of other texts within them, Rachel Douglas contends that James's Black Jacobin texts have to be regarded as one rewritten and partly effaced (self-)palimpsest. Chapter 1 traces the creation of James's first major text on the Haitian Revolution, his play *Toussaint Louverture*. It was staged in London in 1936 with towering Black Atlantic actor Paul Robeson taking the eponymous title role as the Haitian revolutionary leader. Comparing the various typescripts scattered across archives in the Atlantic world with James's hand-written changes and the performance's programme, Douglas compellingly reconstructs a possible play-script. Chapters 2 and 3 engage with the two editions of James's monumental and highly influential history of the Haitian Revolution, *The Black Jacobins* (1938). Douglas demonstrates how James aimed, in the revisions for the second edition (1963), to move from a focus on the great leader to a history from below. However, these changes remain comparatively minor apart from the addition of a long appendix that traces the trajectory from the Haitian to the Cuban Revolution. Chapter 4 shifts to the collaborative genesis of James's second play on the Haitian Revolution, also entitled *The Black Jacobins* (1967). Douglas retraces the fascinating correspondence between James and the director, fellow Trinidadian Dexter Lyndersay, who staged the play in Nigeria. His criticism of the initial script, which he held to be lacking 'action' and replete with overlong speeches (p. 149), throws into sharp relief James's deficiencies as a dramatist. While Douglas underlines James's attempt to portray the masses as the driving force of the revolution, his addition of humorous subaltern characters,

reminiscent of Shakespearean *clowns*, seems not entirely successful. Chapter 5 concludes with a panoramic overview of the impact of *The Black Jacobins* on visual artists and historians, and of the histories of the book's translations as well as stagings, radio adaptations, and television treatments. Though well written, the study is slightly uneven in the quality of the analyses. Douglas is at her most convincing when she compares the various typescripts and minutely traces the changes made. Theoretically, however, the study is somewhat underwhelming. Although the Marxist nature of James's texts is repeatedly stressed, it remains largely elusive how closely James engages with Marx's writing, both intertextually and ideologically. The book would have benefited from a closer editing to avoid repetitions and to allow for development where necessary: one excellent idea, to investigate James's engagement with Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, is not sufficiently explored to do justice to the complexity of Césaire's epic poem (pp. 126–29). Nevertheless, by discussing all of James's Black Jacobins texts together, Douglas reveals compellingly that James remained preoccupied with multiple rewritings of his texts on this vital but silenced revolution, which posed the first profound challenge to white supremacy and colonialism.

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