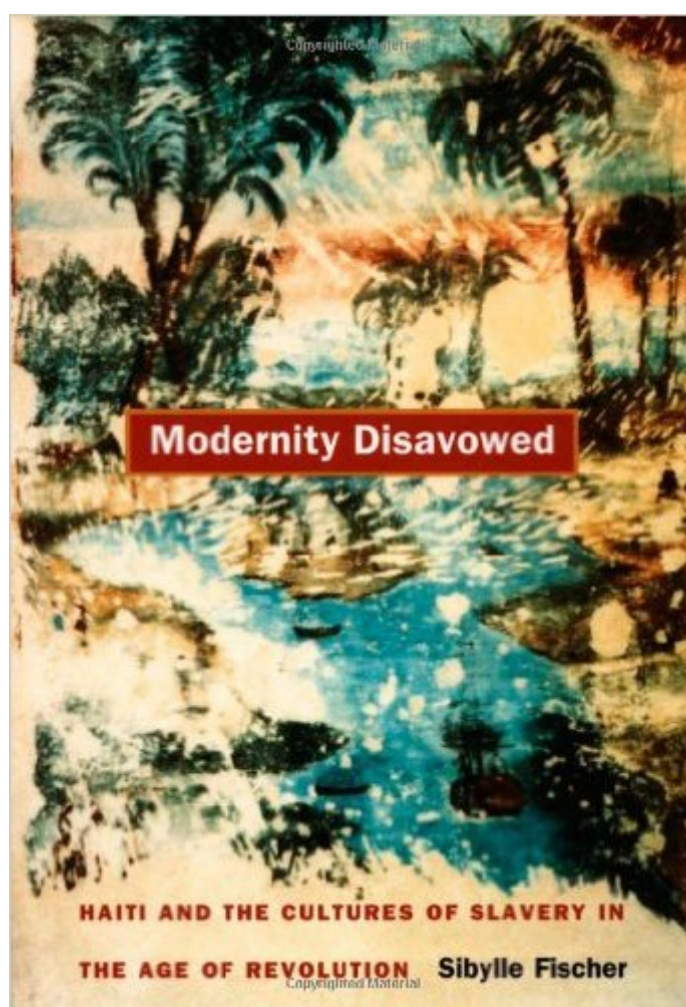


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Modernity Disavowed: Haiti And The Cultures Of Slavery In The Age Of Revolution (John Hope Franklin Center Books (Paperback))



Synopsis

Modernity Disavowed is a pathbreaking study of the cultural, political, and philosophical significance of the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804). Revealing how the radical antislavery politics of this seminal event have been suppressed and ignored in historical and cultural records over the past two hundred years, Sibylle Fischer contends that revolutionary antislavery and its subsequent disavowal are central to the formation and understanding of Western modernity. She develops a powerful argument that the denial of revolutionary antislavery eventually became a crucial ingredient in a range of hegemonic thought, including Creole nationalism in the Caribbean and G. W. F. Hegel's master-slave dialectic. Fischer draws on history, literary scholarship, political theory, philosophy, and psychoanalytic theory to examine a range of material, including Haitian political and legal documents and nineteenth-century Cuban and Dominican literature and art. She demonstrates that at a time when racial taxonomies were beginning to mutate into scientific racism and racist biology, the Haitian revolutionaries recognized the question of race as political. Yet, as the cultural records of neighboring Cuba and the Dominican Republic show, the story of the Haitian Revolution has been told as one outside politics and beyond human language, as a tale of barbarism and unspeakable violence. From the time of the revolution onward, the story has been confined to the margins of history: to rumors, oral histories, and confidential letters. Fischer maintains that without accounting for revolutionary antislavery and its subsequent disavowal, Western modernity—including its hierarchy of values, depoliticization of social goals having to do with racial differences, and privileging of claims of national sovereignty—cannot be fully understood.

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Customer Reviews

I must say that this book is a very good read. It's one of those books that captivate me mostly because it has another view than most on the subject of colonialism. This doesn't mean that it is an unbiased review. The Cuban section was done very good. That section was as unbiased as a book can get (pretty hard as most people interpret things differently). On the Dominican and Haitian section, you start to notice how differently those countries are treated. He depicts Dominicans as ignorant racists almost exclusively (as far as I can remember all mention of them is as self-hating racists), while Haitians are depicted as liberators, modernizers, an overall benign people that were victims of smear. He paints this tolerant picture that Haiti was a civilized country and downplays the fact that the whites of the colony were literally wiped out (either massacred or fled). This book fails to mention the last Haitian incursion on Dominican soil by 'Emperor' Faustin the first (following the steps of 'Emperor' Dessalines, the country's first statesman). You cannot get the full reason why anti-Haitianism was/is so widespread without reading from original sources. From independence from Haiti to the reverting back to a colony, all of Haiti's statesmen save for one tried to reconquer the Dominicans, in the process committing horrible war crimes. In particular, Faustin the first was the key needed (as his long reign was dedicated to torment the Hispanics). After that monster, there was a mulatto (who like Boyer, was much less a savage than the others) that tried to reach out to the racist white Dominican president (i.e. Dictator) who was by now fully convinced that in order to be saved by those savages, they needed outside help, and who else than Spain (what a tremendous disservice).

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