

American Civilization

C. L. R. James, Anna Grimshaw, Keith Hart
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C. L. R. James, Anna Grimshaw, Keith Hart : American Civilization before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised American Civilization:

In his study of Herman Melville, "Mariners, Renegades and Castaways" (1976) C.L.R. James wrote: "My ultimate aim...is to write a study of American Civilization". This project, long in gestation, at last sees the light of day in this posthumous publication of what may be seen as the most wide-ranging expression of James's thought, the link between his mature writings on politics and his semi-autobiographical work, "Beyond a Boundary". In the tradition of de Tocqueville's "Democracy in America", James addresses the fundamental question of the "right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness". Ranging across American politics, society and culture, C.L.R. James sets out to integrate his analysis of American society in transition with a commentary on the popular arts of cinema and literature.

From Library JournalThis work by noted Trinidadian Marxist social critic James was written in 1950 as a kind of extended prospectus for the book he hoped to write but never finished. As edited by academics Grimshaw and Hart, this overview becomes a powerful polemic on the possibilities of American democracy. The analysis is unusual in its emphasis on the concept of "happiness," a state of being that is most likely to be realized in the United States. While James (The Black Jacobins , 1963; Minty Alley , 1971) recognizes the forces of authoritarianism in America--especially the power of corporations--he nonetheless is positive about American life. His discussion of the powerful

and generally beneficial role of popular culture in the United States is particularly insightful. Although choppy in places, this is a fascinating book; highly recommended for most libraries.- Anthony O. Edmonds, Ball State Univ., Muncie, Ind. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.