

Printing Toussaint L’Ouverture: Masculinity Through the Western Gaze

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The Haitian Revolution, an armed struggle in which formerly-enslaved peoples violently revolted against the colonial government of the French colony of Saint Domingue between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was perhaps the most unimaginably radical event in modern history.¹ While the French Revolution was reaching its most radical stages across the Atlantic, enslaved masses in the French colony of Saint Domingue who themselves generated most of France's wealth and prosperity were plotting the unthinkable: the overthrow of the violent system of racial enslavement under which they lived, and, at least for some revolutionaries, the creation of an independent black nation.² Though the Haitian Revolution has been largely silenced within the white-dominated historical master narrative of the modern era, Toussaint L'Ouverture, the formerly-enslaved military leader credited by many historians with a large portion of the success of the Revolution, has emerged as a relatively well-known historical figure.³ Many artworks created by Western artists during and after the Haitian Revolution characterize Toussaint L'Ouverture as a prominent focal point of the Revolution, imagining him as a hero-figure through a particularly gendered and racialized Western lens.⁴ In examining these Western artistic depictions of Toussaint L'Ouverture and his fellow black military leaders on the eve of the creation of an independent Haitian nation, I seek to expand upon existing historical studies on representations of Haitian manhood and illuminate how white, Western men living in France in the decade following the Haitian Revolution utilized images of black military leaders

¹Tanya Shields, "Their Bones Would Reject Yours," in *Bodies and Bones: Feminist Rehearsal and Imagining Caribbean Belonging* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014), 52-87; Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "An Unthinkable History: The Haitian Revolution as a Non-Event," in *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 70-107.

²C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (Random House: New York, 1963).

³Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); James; Trouillot.

⁴Helen Weston, "The Many Faces of Toussaint L'Ouverture," in *Slave Portraiture in the Atlantic World*, ed. Agnes Lugo-Ortiz and Angela Rosenthal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 345-374.

such as Toussaint L’Ouverture to intellectually grapple with shifting conceptions of masculinity and citizenship in an era of revolution.⁵

In these artworks and historical narratives, artists and historians often portrayed Toussaint L’Ouverture as a stoic and masculine leader whose military prowess and fatherly care for the revolting slaves of the colony of Saint Domingue, his “misled children,” set him apart from and above the revolutionary masses that he led.⁶ This masculine presentation, however, must be understood in the context of the ideals of normative masculinity that prevailed during this period, especially those that were created and spread by colonizing Western nations like France. In France specifically, notions of idealized masculinity underwent a dramatic change throughout the French Revolution. Whereas French society under the Bourbon monarchy may have understood ideal masculinity in terms of familial wealth and aristocracy, the leaders of revolutionary France located masculinity within the physical body of the “new man,” one who was virile, paternal, and physically stronger than the supposedly degenerating and overly-indulgent aristocratic class.⁷ The “new man” was a citizen-soldier and a father, one who used his physical body to protect both the nation he belonged to and the reproductive family unit he assumedly governed.⁸ This vision of the “new man” of France, an ideal that was globally distributed through French colonialism, became at this time deeply intertwined with narratives of citizenship and nationalism, especially as the languages of liberalism and Republicanism began to form in

⁵Mimi Sheller, “Sword-Bearing Citizens: Militarism and Manhood in Nineteenth-Century Haiti,” in *Haitian History: New Perspectives*, ed. Alyssa Sepinwall (New York: Routledge, 2013), 157-179; Shields.

⁶James, 152.

⁷Elizabeth Colwill, “Gendering the June Days: Race, Masculinity, and Slave Emancipation in Saint Domingue,” *Journal of Haitian Studies* 15, no. 1/2 (2009): 103-124; Katie Jarvis, ““Patriotic Discipline”: Cloistered Behinds, Public Judgment, and Female Violence in Revolutionary Paris,” in *Practiced Citizenship: Women, Gender, and the State in Modern France*, ed. Nimisha Barton and Richard S. Hopkins (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019), 19-49; George Mosse, *Image of Man: the Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁸Sheller, 164.

Europe during the Enlightenment.⁹ Many historians, such as Joan Wallach Scott and Michel-Rolph Trouillot, have argued that emerging notions of citizenship and liberalism were inherently imbued with these new ideas of idealized masculinity, employing Enlightenment ideals of the “universal” rights of all people whilst imagining personhood and liberal citizenship in narrow terms of white, patriarchal manhood.¹⁰ Others, including historian Katie Jarvis, have asserted that these boundaries of citizenship may have, in the era of the French Revolution, actually been more open to women and men who did not fulfill the norms of heteropatriarchal white masculinity than is traditionally imagined.¹¹ Despite this division, scholars generally agree that the gendered boundaries of citizenship were not fixed at the time of the Haitian and French Revolutions; rather, they were constantly debated and persistently in flux, creating a general sense of anxiety and uncertainty regarding who, exactly, could become a Republican citizen.¹²

It is in this atmosphere of anxiety regarding the gendered and raced boundaries of Republican citizenship that the masculine representations of Toussaint L’Ouverture and other black Haitian generals like him emerged. The existing historiography regarding the impact, ideological origins, and perhaps even political aims of this “masculinization,” a term I utilize in this paper to indicate how different notions of masculinity have been artistically imposed onto figures like Toussaint L’Ouverture, lacks consensus. Some scholars, like Mimi Sheller, postulate that the masculinization of figures like Toussaint L’Ouverture, whether enacted by a Western or

⁹ Mosse; Sheller.

¹⁰ Joan Wallach Scott, “French Feminists and the Rights of “Man”: Olympe de Gouge’s Declaration,” in *The French Revolution: The Essential Readings*, ed. Ronald Schechter (Hoboken: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 210-235; Trouillot.

¹¹ Jarvis, 21.

¹² Dubois; Colwill, “Gendering the June Days: Race, Masculinity, and Slave Emancipation in Saint Domingue”; Lynn Hunt, “The Many Bodies of Marie Antionette: Political Pornography and the Problem of the Feminine in the French Revolution” in *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and New Controversies*, ed. Gary Kates (London: Routledge, 1997); Jarvis; Sheller; Scott; Weston.

a Haitian creator, primarily served as a marker of Haitian nationalism. The masculinization of Toussaint L’Ouverture and other black generals is understood by Sheller as being indicative of the strength of the black race and the Haitian nation, and an overall positive aid in Haiti’s historical battle to gain legitimacy within the Western-dominated world order.¹³ Sheller, therefore, postulates that while these representations of Toussaint L’Ouverture do imbue him with masculine legitimacy in a way that is inherently Westernized, the masculinity his figure possessed is still inherently black and Haitian, despite that “the masculinization of power was historically incompatible with the egalitarian values that inspired Haitian [and French] Revolution.”¹⁴ Sheller’s conception of masculinity during the Haitian and French Revolutions is thus primarily reliant on the discourses of race and the changing racial boundaries of globally recognized Republican citizenship.

Similarly, historian Helen Weston has argued that white, Western artists portrayed Toussaint L’Ouverture within many artworks as a Westernized figure. Weston further asserts that despite the fact that these artworks frequently projected white norms of gender expression and masculinity onto Toussaint L’Ouverture, this should not be seen as solely a means by which Western values were reasserted as an ascendant norm. Instead, Weston argues that the ability of the image of Toussaint L’Ouverture to maintain hero status through the eyes of these Western artists was “an admirable form of defiance” that served to emphasize the redeemability of the black race amid narratives of black inferiority being produced from the West at this time.¹⁵ Because of this, the masculinity Toussaint L’Ouverture embodied did not necessarily reaffirm Western exceptionalism, even if artists depicted him as imitating Western conceptions of proper

¹³ Sheller; Trouillot.

¹⁴ Sheller, 159.

¹⁵ Weston, 346.

masculinity. Both Sheller and Weston thus see the masculinization of Toussaint L’Ouverture in art and literature as primarily a vehicle through which his blackness, a factor that might have otherwise precluded him from obtaining normative citizenship, was overcome, allowing him to fulfill the role of the “new man” and the new Republican citizen.

Historians like Elizabeth Colwill have elaborated upon and problematized some of the claims resulting from these racially focused studies, arguing that masculinity served not primarily as a mechanism of expanding the racial bounds of citizenship but rather primarily to further reinforce the gendered boundaries of such Republican citizenship. Within her analysis of written accounts of marriages within the pre-revolutionary colony of Saint Domingue, Colwill suggests that the masculinization of Toussaint L’Ouverture must be understood as part of a global project of bolstering the exceptionalism of white, Western, and patriarchal forms of masculinity. Like Scott, she argues that masculine tropes of military and paternal heroism frequently used to represent black Haitian men, including tropes of the protective husband and the physically strong soldier-citizen, are ultimately products of norms established in the Western world to restrict citizenship based on gender and imply the global exceptionalism of Western forms of patriarchal masculinity.¹⁶ Colwill’s work diverges from Sheller’s, as she asserts that presentations of masculine black heroes in the Haitian Revolution were not celebratory; rather, these men were praised for demonstrating the use of gender privilege to approximate a Western form of gendered citizenship that relies, ultimately, on the ability of patriarchal Western gender norms to create “new men” and “sculpt citizens from former slaves.”¹⁷ Colwill asserts that the

¹⁶ Elizabeth Colwill, “Fêtes de l’hymen, fêtes de la liberté: Marriage, Manhood, and Emancipation in Revolutionary Saint-Domingue,” in *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, ed. David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 125-156.

¹⁷ Colwill, “Fêtes de l’hymen, fêtes de la liberté: Marriage, Manhood, and Emancipation in Revolutionary Saint-Domingue,” 131.

imposition of masculine heroism onto figures like Toussaint L’Ouverture did not, as Sheller and Weston argue, serve to bolster a revised form of citizenship that would allow for the existence of blackness. Instead, this masculinity evidenced that the Western arbiters of new Republican citizenship would only allow for the inclusion of black people when their gender expression approximated white norms of masculine patriarchy; thus, while white writers and artists could Westernize and redeem black men as civilized “new men,” women as a broad class could never become incorporated into the body of people deemed citizens. Colwill overall argues that at this point in history, gender was a more salient and permanent boundary to normative Republican citizenship than race, whereas Weston and Sheller maintain that race was the more relevant boundary to this form of civic citizenship. Thus, though the works of Colwill, Sheller, and Weston differ in many ways, they ultimately converge on one central claim: that, whether in favor of gendered or racialized others, there existed a hierarchy of oppression and an inherent separation between the gendered and raced boundaries of normative, Republican citizenship at the time of the Haitian Revolution.¹⁸

In this paper, I will expand upon the theories presented in the existing scholarship by analyzing artistic representations of Toussaint L’Ouverture and his fellow military leaders created by the white Western men who lived in France after the Haitian Revolution and were thus part of the synthesis and global export of European notions of military and paternal masculinity. By analyzing these pieces of art, I seek to understand how these depictions signify the complex, ever-shifting boundaries of nationhood, manhood, and citizenship in the era of the Haitian and French Revolutions. I will demonstrate that what these images indicated was not a citizenship based entirely on masculinity in the sense of normative manhood nor masculinity

¹⁸ Colwill, “Fêtes de l’hymen, fêtes de la liberté: Marriage, Manhood, and Emancipation in Revolutionary Saint-Domingue;”; Sheller; Weston.

solely in the sense of black heroism; rather, race and gender were intimately intertwined and socially constructed categories through which the protections of Republican citizenship were, and are today, restricted. The masculinity imposed upon Toussaint L’Ouverture’s body in these images, evidenced primarily in how white French artists illustrated his interactions with notions of militant manhood through symbols such as swords and horses and paternalistic manhood through his protective interactions with other figures within these artworks, were not absolute markers of either Western exceptionalism or black Haitian nationalism. I argue that these images instead suggest that the masculinity projected onto the bodies of figures like Toussaint L’Ouverture was not a means by which white French artists erased or negated his race, as Sheller and Weston may claim, nor merely a means by which they excluded all women equally from citizenship. Rather, these images are nuanced representations of Western anxiety regarding the changing racialized and gendered face of citizenship during the still nearly unimaginable era of the world’s first and only successful slave revolt.¹⁹ I further argue that these images, rather than being celebratory revelations of increasingly “inclusive” notions of citizenship, denote above all the desire of Western men, a population that feared masculine degeneration and defined themselves on notions of physical virility and paternalism, to maintain their position as authority figures regarding normative gender *and* racial identity, as well as the ultimate and enduring exclusion of the racialized and gendered other: women of color.

Given the centrality of women of color in debates regarding the boundaries of citizenship, being historically marginalized in terms of both gender and race, their role or lack thereof in Western images featuring Toussaint L’Ouverture and figures like him is an essential analytical framework through which his masculinization must be understood. Though in many images

¹⁹ Trouillot, 70-107.

Toussaint L’Ouverture appears as a solitary, stoic individual, there are several artworks in which he interacts with others, most notably his wife, his children, and other military members of varied racial identities. In 1821, French artist François Grenier de Saint-Martin created the print *Le Gal Toussaint-Louverture, à qui le Gal Leclerc avait envoyé ses enfans*, in which Toussaint L’Ouverture has a tense conversation with French general Le Clerc as his wife and children cling to his body, clearly in distress (Fig. 1). Toussaint L’Ouverture stands straight, strong, and with a relatively stoic if slightly concerned facial expression as his wife and children cower beside him, looking up to him with detailed facial expressions that indicate a search for guidance; thus, in this image, Toussaint L’Ouverture performs the kind of fatherly, paternalistic masculinity heavily emphasized and idealized in white European society at the time of the creation of this print.²⁰ Also relevant in this image is Toussaint L’Ouverture’s clothing: he is shown wearing a military uniform, represented in this image as far more elaborate and highly-detailed than the garb shown on the figure of the white general Le Clerc. Therefore, within the actual image presented in this print, it is clear that artist François Grenier de Saint-Martin rendered Toussaint L’Ouverture through the gendered lens of idealized Western masculinity, as is illustrated through the mechanisms employed to emphasize both his military and paternal heroism (Fig. 1).

²⁰ Colwill, “Gendering the June Days: Race, Masculinity, and Slave Emancipation in Saint Domingue”; Mosse.



Le Gal Toussaint-Louverture, à qui le G. Leclerc avait envoyé ses enfans, les inviter après les avoir reçus pour le leur donner de révolte et d'espionner les avant armes. Africain, mon enfant, jusqu'à ce que j'arrive avec vous pour toucher par là de l'empereur cubain. Les soldats de la femme et de son fils sont en décret au Gouvernement de ces enfans, qui sont morts. Je vous être fidèle à ma frère et à mes fils.

Fig. 1. François Grenier de Saint-Martin, *Le Gal Toussaint-Louverture, à qui le Gal Leclerc avait envoyé ses enfans*. 1821, Lithograph/Print. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France. Available from: ARTstor, https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/IBWA_DB_10313286450 (accessed December 9, 2019).

Though Toussaint L’Ouverture appears to fulfill both the military-based and paternalistic ideals of Western masculinity within the print itself, artist de Saint-Martin wrote the following within the caption of the print: “the demands of [Toussaint L’Ouverture’s] wife and his children cannot change his resolution...telling the Governor...take back my children because it is necessary. I want to be loyal to my brothers and my God (Fig. 1).” Though Toussaint L’Ouverture appears to be both the ideal father and soldier, the caption imbues this image with a masculine tension: Toussaint L’Ouverture, in his quest to lead his black Haitian brothers to victory and independence from the French, is forced to choose between his biological family and the cause of the Haitian Revolution. In pairing this normatively masculine image with a tension-laden caption, the artist restricted Toussaint L’Ouverture’s ability to identify with Western notions of masculinity, portraying him as unable to be both a protective father of his biological

nuclear family and of his formerly-enslaved “brothers” that he must lead in battle. Toussaint L’Ouverture had to choose between Haiti and his family, and, according to the caption, his manifestation in this print ultimately surrendered the ability to care for his family for the cause of Haitian independence. Consequently, within this image, Toussaint L’Ouverture ultimately takes on the contradictory roles of both the failed patriarch and the brave, heroic leader of his “African brothers” within the Haitian Revolution; he simultaneously fulfills masculine ideals of the Western world with his commitment to military leadership while also failing as a masculine patriarch within his nuclear family unit.²¹ While Sheller or Weston may see this as an example in which Toussaint L’Ouverture is imbued fully with a masculinity rooted in black Haitian identity and nationalism through his decision to invest in Haiti above all else, and while Colwill may see this as an example in which Toussaint L’Ouverture is praised solely for mimicking Western masculine militarism and exercising control over the lives of the women and children who surround him, neither interpretation is fully correct.

Altogether, when the cumulative effects of both the print and the caption are considered, this specific artistic representation Toussaint L’Ouverture embodies the masculine anxiety of the French man responsible for creating this print. Toussaint L’Ouverture here exists in the contested boundary between the white citizens and the racialized, uncivilized “other”; the artist neither normatively masculinized him nor completely subjugated him as a non-citizen. Further, the extent to which the artist bestowed citizenship upon him here was ultimately predicated on the delegitimization of both the familial figures featured within this painting and the imaginary, invoked image of the black military masses in need of Toussaint L’Ouverture’s superior,

²¹ James, 152.

Westernized intellectual leadership.²² This partial masculinization of Toussaint L’Ouverture indicates and illuminates the male anxiety present during this era within the citizenry of white French men that feared above all else the degeneration of their physical and civil ascendancy. One could argue that the artist was simultaneously threatened by the masculine potential of Toussaint L’Ouverture as a military patriarch and desperate to reassert that, ultimately, he as a black, formerly-enslaved man could not fulfill both the militarized nationalist and paternal forms of masculine superiority ascribed to white men in the Western world.

This is not, however, the only artwork from this period in which Toussaint L’Ouverture and other black military leaders like him appear in the company of women, children, and people of color. In the print *L’Incendie du Cap, ou Le Règne du Toussaint-Louverture*, completed in 1802 by an anonymous French artist at the request of French playwright René Périn, Haitian black military leader Henri Christophe stands in the middle of Toussaint L’Ouverture’s angry Haitian army as they burn down Le Cap, wielding swords and torches (Fig. 2). Though Henri Christophe is perhaps not quite as well-remembered as Toussaint L’Ouverture within the Western master narrative of the Haitian Revolution, he was also a generally well-known military leader throughout the Haitian Revolution and eventually became the monarch of the Kingdom of Haiti.²³ Like Toussaint L’Ouverture, the historical record has presented Henri Christophe as both a Westernized figure in his military prowess and commitment to Western ideals of family and marriage structure, but also as a figurehead of the black race as well as the independent nation of Haiti.²⁴ In this image, he appears much like Toussaint L’Ouverture in *Le Gal Toussaint-Louverture, à qui le Gal Leclerc avait envoyé ses enfans*: the artist presented him as existing in

²² James.

²³ Trouillot.

²⁴ Trouillot, 31-69.

the space between white civilization and black barbarity. The distance between Henri Cristophe and the black masses is emphasized within this print based on the differences in how the artist chose to portray them: Henri Christophe stands physically tall and still amidst a mass of hunched and mobile black soldiers portrayed as violent and barbaric destructors of Le Cap's infrastructure (Fig. 2). These black masses wear tattered clothes and trample over the bodies of white men, while Henri Christophe stands apart, watching the destruction unfold. Though he is supposedly the person ordering these masses, the artist chose to separate Henri Christophe from these black militants by emphasizing his straight and powerful posture as well as his orderly military clothing and lack of weapon (Fig. 2). Thus, while the artist imbued him with masculinity as the paternalistic leader of these masses and as a brave, valiant soldier, Henri Christophe is ultimately only able to access this masculine heroism through a visual ascendancy over other members of the black race also featured in the image: the artist's recognition of his merits as a black military hero rested on the ease with which he could visibly present Henri Christophe as inherently separate from the "uncivilized" black masses also featured within this print. Therefore, the potential for masculine citizenship projected onto Henri Christophe by this French artist, though in some ways a seemingly inclusive extension of the boundaries of citizenship to a non-white man, was dependent on the continued denigration of black people broadly.



Fig. 2. Anonymous, *L'Incendie du Cap, ou Le Règne du Toussaint-Louverture*. 1802, Print/Engraving on Copper, 167 x 102 mm. University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville, Florida. Available from: ARTstor, https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/IBWA_DB_10313291966 (accessed December 9, 2019).

This print, however, also provides insight into the position of the artist regarding the gendered boundaries of citizenship at this time. In the corner of this image, the artists depicted a group of white women, cowering and running away from the violence in Le Cap. The detail that the artist employed in illustrating their facial expressions relayed clearly that these were meant to be fearful and confused figures, clinging desperately to their children as several white men attempt to protect them by creating a physical barrier between them and the violence occurring in Le Cap (Fig. 2). The artist, then, created an overall scene in which white men, the ultimate figures of white civility, perform heroism by protecting white women and children from the barbaric and embodied dangers of the black male masses of the Haitian Revolution. The artists positioned women entirely outside of this negotiation of the boundaries of masculine citizenship; they are victims of violence and recipients of protection rather than agents of their own personhood. Though Henri Christophe stands apart from the violent masses, he is separated as well from these protective white men; he is part of the threat, occupying, in this case, a hypermasculine black ability to harm white women. Henri Christophe's position in this photo,

then, illuminates a complex, paradoxical anxiety possessed by the artist; his work asserted the superior masculine heroism of the white men protecting their wives and children from the barbarism of the formerly-enslaved Haitian rebels while simultaneously expressing a genuine fear of the masculine potential and physical strength possessed by the black men of the Haitian Revolution. This is especially relevant given the increasing presence of biological racism within this era, which posited an embodied difference between the black and white races and thus inherently bolstered ideologies that depicted white men as inherently more able to reason and exist as civilized citizens in the era of the Enlightenment.²⁵

The prints *L'Incendie du Cap, ou Le Règne du Toussaint-Louverture* and *Le Gal Toussaint-Louverture, à qui le Gal Leclerc avait envoyé ses enfans* therefore together demonstrate anxiety within white French men regarding the fluid nature of the gendered and racialized boundaries of masculine citizenship during the era of the French and Haitian Revolutions. The white French artists who created these two prints visually permitted black military leaders like Toussaint L’Ouverture and Henri Christophe, in some ways, to gain recognition as masculine citizens by illustrating them as strong and paternalistic military leaders, but only at the expense of the continued disempowerment and racist or sexist exclusion of the women and people of color also featured within these images or invoked within their captions. Overall, it is clear that while some may read these images as demonstrations of expanding notions of Republican citizenship during this period of revolution, these images actually only heroized Henri Christophe and Toussaint L’Ouverture as exceptions to the general rule of dehumanization applied to black Haitians and women broadly, and therefore actually served to

²⁵ John D. Garrigus, “White Jacobins/Black Jacobins: Bringing the Haitian and French Revolutions Together in the Classroom,” *French Historical Studies* 23, no. 2 (2000): 259-275.

reify both the racialized and gendered boundaries of citizenship and assuage the male artists' masculine fear of the degeneration of their power as white, European men.

Despite the importance of these images, in which military heroes like Toussaint L'Ouverture and Henri Christophe were depicted interacting with women, children, and men of varied races, there are also many relevant images in which white French men illustrated these figures as isolated individuals. These images too reveal much about how the artists, primarily white men from France, understood these figures as men, as people of color, and as Republican citizens during the era of the French and Haitian Revolutions. Perhaps one of the best-known artistic representations of Toussaint L'Ouverture is the anonymous portrait of him that was published in France in the late eighteenth century (Fig. 3). In this portrait, Toussaint L'Ouverture is shown from the profile point of view, and he appears physically quite different than in other artistic interpretations of his physical form. Within this image, it is clear that Toussaint L'Ouverture is displayed as a heavily racialized figure: he has a dramatically elongated forehead and nose, a severe underbite, and enlarged lips, all of which were features ascribed as markers of the biologically distinct black body during the development of biological racism that took place within this era of European history.²⁶ The artist also, however, did render him as the kind of masculine military hero so valorized in Europe, intentionally presenting his military uniform in great detail and thus making both his military status the prominent visual focus within this relatively simple print.

²⁶ Jeff Werner, "Curman's Skull: Scientific Racism and Art," *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift/Journal of Art History* 87, no. 3 (2018): 154-172.



Fig. 3. Anonymous, *Half-length portrait said to be of General François Dominique Toussaint Louverture (1743--1803) in left profile wearing full dress uniform.* Late eighteenth century, Oil on Paper, 6.5 x 5.1 cm. Musée du Panthéon National, Port-Au-Prince, Haiti. Available from: ARTstor, https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/IBWA_DB_10332044000056192 (accessed December 9, 2019).

There is thus an inherent tension in this artwork, as is present in all of the works discussed previously: Toussaint L’Ouverture is presented as a normatively gendered male soldier-citizen that thus fulfills at least somewhat the criteria for idealized Western masculinity, but also is represented by the artist as permanently separated from completely fulfilling the ideals of Western masculinity due to the hyper-present assertion of his biological distance from physical whiteness within this image. This assertion of his blackness served to both exclude him from Western notions of white masculine citizenship, but also to reify the notion that the “neutral” citizen was necessarily “white” according to the biological notions of race beginning to develop at this time.²⁷ The ambiguity of masculine citizenship projected onto the figure of

²⁷ Werner.

Toussaint L’Ouverture, even in this one, simple image, demonstrates the anxiety possessed by this anonymous French artist regarding the boundaries of Republican and masculine citizenship during the unthinkable events of the Haitian Revolution; though the artist was willing to recognize Toussaint’s military heroism, he was not willing to invite him fully into the boundaries of white, Western civilization. The tensions of this artwork thus elucidate how, even in imbuing figures like Toussaint L’Ouverture with the masculine, military legitimacy that precludes women who cannot access these tropes and thus bolsters Western heteropatriarchal masculine norms, these seemingly celebratory images ultimately reveal a white male desire to defend the raced and gendered boundaries of citizenship that reify the ascendancy of white, European men.

A similar tension exists in the print *Toussaint Louverture, Chef des Noirs Insurgés de Saint Domingue*, completed by an anonymous French artist in 1808 (Fig. 4). Here, the artist rendered Toussaint L’Ouverture as a more masculine figure than any artist discussed previously; he is shown at the center of the image riding a horse and holding a sword above his head. The sword is especially relevant; as established by Mimi Sheller, the sword has historically been presented in many artistic images as a phallic symbol of masculine virility and strength.²⁸ This, paired with the high detail present in the artistic rendering of the military garb of both Toussaint L’Ouverture and his horse, creates an overall representation of him as an accomplished and prosperous masculine hero of the Haitian Revolution. This normative masculinization of Toussaint L’Ouverture is further emphasized by the ways in which the artist visualized him, within this print specifically, as a hero of antiquity. According to Lynn Hunt, one of the primary ways in which white men re-imagined themselves as “new men” during the French Revolution was through a revitalization of these heroes of the distant past, those they could imagine as

²⁸ Sheller, 159.

existing as heroes before the dawn of the “corrupt” civilization that had led to aristocratic dominance and European monarchies.²⁹ In appearing on horseback, wielding only a gun and against a barren, mostly natural background, Toussaint L’Ouverture as represented in this image clearly fits into this idealized image of antique male heroism. Thus, in many ways, this image renders Toussaint L’Ouverture as a masculine hero, especially in the context of French notions of masculinity.



Fig. 4. Anonymous, *Toussaint Louverture, Chef des Noirs Insurgés de Saint Domingue*. 1808, Hard-colored Etching on Paper, 403 x 250 mm. Bibliothèque nationale, Paris, France. Available from: ARTstor, https://library.artstor.org/#/asset/IBWA_DB_10313288665 (accessed December 9, 2019).

What creates such a hyper-present masculine tension in this and similar images of Toussaint L’Ouverture is the extent to which he is *de-racialized* and lauded for his association with whiteness and with Western notions of white masculinity. The artist made the intentional

²⁹ Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

decision to present Toussaint L’Ouverture as an isolated heroic figure in an otherwise empty background (Fig. 4). In doing so, he presented Toussaint L’Ouverture not as proof of the ability of black men to obtain the masculine citizenship idealized in the Western world, but instead as an exceptional example of an individual, redeemable black man who achieved citizen status by participating in a form of military masculinity that conformed to white European masculine norms and reified the ultimate exclusion of women from any meaningful path to gaining citizenship. Thus, this image, just like the three other images analyzed previously, reveals a certain paradox of ideology possessed by the artist. The French artists that created all of these prints, while willing to participate in and perform Republican ideals of liberty and equality enough to stretch the boundaries of Republican citizenship to include exceptionally masculine and heroic figures like Toussaint L’Ouverture and Henri Christophe within their art, were overall only willing to do so alongside the broad continuation of logics of general exclusion for women and people of color from redeemability and potential citizenship.

It is impossible to truly know exactly what thoughts went through the minds of these white French artists as they created the pieces of art analyzed within this paper. By analyzing the works that they created, however, it is possible to understand the anxieties they felt regarding the increasingly fluid boundaries of citizenship and manhood during the era of the French and Haitian Revolutions. Created during a time of Enlightenment thinking, in which ideologies of identity and citizenship, especially race, were increasingly codified within both the law and the emerging field of the scientific study of the human body and all of its variations, these images elucidate that this period was not one in which white thinkers of European society universally approved of a newly expansive notion of inclusive citizenship. Rather, how these artists differentially masculinized figures like Toussaint L’Ouverture, both in ways that aligned with

and diverged from Western notions of idealized military and paternal masculinity that prevailed during this time, evince above all a desire of white French men to reify *both* the gendered and raced boundaries of citizenship and the idea that the white man existed as the neutral, average citizen against which all others were naturally ordered as inferior. These white French artists presented masculine black military leaders like Toussaint L’Ouverture and Henri Christophe not as proof of a redeemable black race but instead as masculine exceptions to the rule of black barbarity and as proof of the ascendancy of men over all other gendered beings. Their exceptionalism was utilized to justify both the denigration of the black race and the idea that women were naturally inferior counterparts to the patriarchal masculine citizens meant to protect and lead them. These conclusions are significant in that they make clear how, even during times of supposed expansion of the rights of citizenship and agency to marginalized identity groups, we must constantly critically evaluate how visual representations of “diversity and inclusion” often serve to reify hierarchies of power and identity that exist even in the modern democratic world.

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