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**Charles Forsdick and Christian Høgsbjerg, *Toussaint Louverture: A Black Jacobin in the Age of Revolutions* (London, UK: Pluto Press, 2017) vii + 176 pp.**

Charles Forsdick and Christian Høgsbjerg's *Toussaint Louverture: A Black Jacobin in the Age of Revolutions* offers a succinct biography of the architect of Haiti's independence at the turn of the nineteenth century. This text emphasizes the importance of the Haitian Revolution on a cultural scale, pointing out that historians outside of Haiti tend to ignore it, despite Louverture's global legacy. The introduction examines how historians represent the figure of Louverture in contradictory ways. Was he an exceptional figure? Was he simply after social elevation? The mythologisation of Louverture coupled with the lack of archival material renders it difficult to answer these questions. The goal of the project is "to challenge versions of Louverture that aim to accommodate him to the norms and values of *our* age of late capitalism, and to reassert the incendiary political implication of *his* life, actions and revolutionary political thought" (10, italics in the original). The authors wish to clear away some of the confusion surrounding the historical figure and present a measured portrait of Louverture for the general public.

The text takes a clear position against what it calls New Conservative Revisionism in revolutionary history, as exemplified by the work of Philippe Girard, even as the authors sometimes use archival material from Girard, as well as offer his interpretation of events. The authors rely on established history on Louverture, particularly Cyril Lionel Robert James's *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint Louverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938). It is from this study that the authors draw their own subtitle of "black Jacobin" for Louverture.

The chapters are divided chronologically, composed of several subsections, as the authors delve into the history of colonial Saint-Domingue as a lucrative sugar colony and site of competition among three empires—Spain, England, and France. The first chapter, entitled "Toussaint Unchained, c. 1743–91," sets the stage for Louverture's birth and the historical context surrounding his early education. Known as Toussaint Bréda, named for the plantation where he was born, Louverture became a free black citizen most likely in the early 1770s.

The events of 1791–93 constitute the bulk of chapter two, as the authors recount the resurrection of 1791 in Saint-Domingue and the radicalization of the French Revolution. The authors trace Louverture's initial hesitation to join the resurrection to his name change to Toussaint Louverture. There

are various reasons for this adoption, including Louverture's possible desire for association with the Voodoo god Legba, keeper and opener of the Gate of Destiny (53). Despite Louverture's antipathy towards voodoo, the association with the popular god could only prove beneficial.

Continuing on to explore the events of 1793 to 1798, the third chapter focuses on the idea of Louverture as a black Jacobin. Louverture abandoned the Spanish to join the French Republican army in 1794, a series of events detailed in the chapter. His military genius both in guerrilla warfare and in conventional warfare, as well as his political astuteness, led to his rise within the government of Saint-Domingue. The British withdrew from the island, as well as the West Indies in general, as a result of Louverture's success. The chapter ends with a consideration of Louverture's black Jacobinism, an argument supported through the use of Louverture's own voice in letters and official publications.

In the fourth chapter, the authors examine Louverture's political development as a diplomat and creator of the Haitian constitution. The chapter evaluates Louverture's decision to maintain the economic status quo; Louverture displayed classist prejudices by establishing strict laws with regards to property ownership that favored white plantation owners over the poor. In discussing Louverture, the authors assess "that Louverture had been forced to establish a harshly repressive military dictatorship [which] reveals his essential failure to defend the new liberty of a post-emancipation society through the forced militarization of plantation labour" (100). Louverture, in that sense, resembles Robespierre, in that both leaders turned on the groups that had brought them to power.

Napoleon Bonaparte was furious with Louverture's constitution. In the fifth chapter, the authors trace the years 1801 to 1803 where Napoleon's attack on Saint-Domingue, directed by General Charles Leclerc who landed on the island in February 1802, led to the Louverture's surprising arrest. Historians continue to debate why Louverture walked into a meeting with French officials when he was aware of the possibility of arrest. The chapter then traces Louverture's "reverse Middle Passage" trip across the Atlantic and subsequent imprisonment in Château de Joux, which has since become a *lieu de mémoire* in Haitian literature, as well as "a symbolic site of Caribbean memory more widely" (120). To depict these events, the authors quote from Toussaint's memoir, produced in prison, a rare example of a former slave narrative written in French (122-123). Quotes from Aimé Césaire and Edouard Glissant's literary interpretations of these events add depth to the recounting.

In the last chapter, the authors weigh in on Louverture's global legacy by examining representations of the leader since his death. In discussing Louverture's political reign, the authors take a clear position; they explain that "enlightened absolutism" (143) defined Louverture's governance of the island, explaining that it would be ahistorical to expect Louverture to have established a democratic government.

The text is ultimately a useful compilation of the existing work on Louverture and on revolutionary history, as well as a meditation on the idea of revolution itself. For readers interested in learning more about Haitian independence and about the figure of Louverture, this biography animated with lively prose would be an excellent starting point. To supplement Louverture's literary legacy, the authors also include eight contemporary images in color by various artists of Toussaint and other historical figures, adding a useful artistic component to the text.

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