

Summary

PATRYCJA CEMBRZYŃSKA/ Black freedom. *Portrait d'une négresse* by Marie-Guilhelmine Benoist and the muffled gestures of revolution

Eugène Delacroix's painting of 1830, *Liberty Leading the People* depicts a personification of liberty. This is a young giantess with her breast naked and the Phrygian cap on her head. In one hand she holds up the tricolour flag, in the other a bayonet. Revolution is a female, as Maria Janion wrote in her article about the Liberty Goddess. Slavery is female as well – what James Smalls persuades us, by analysing a picture often compared with Delacroix's painting, *Portrait d'une négresse* by Marie-Guilhelmine Benoist, painted in 1800 (at present in The Louvre), where the allegory of Liberty is embodied by the painter's black servant. Hugh Honour claims this portrait to be the most beautiful image of a black woman ever painted. In March 2012 the National Museum in Warsaw recovered a portrait of *Black Woman* painted by Anna Bilińska-Bohdanowicz (1884). Is it equally exceptional? What is similar and what is different in both of the works of art?

The author of the article is interested in reception of Benoist's painting, which is winning international fame thanks to development of post-colonial and feminist studies. Her interest has grown even bigger since *Portrait d'une négresse* was taken care by popular culture – in the advertisement of the louboutins of 2011 a black model, in a pose following the painting, presents the brand shoes. The allegory of Revolution with high heels on? On whose behalf does Goddess of Liberty act today?