

## ***The Multiplicity of Marronage***<sup>1</sup>

by JOHN PROTEVI

### **Abstract**

I want to see what we can say, using Deleuze and Guattari's concept of a "regime of violence", about marronage, or flight from enslavement. I will concentrate on the plantation slavery system of the New World, though I believe what I say, insofar as I incorporate work by James C. Scott on Southeast Asia, will illuminate marronage in other circumstances. I will show in a materialist but not reductionist manner that the analysis of their regime of violence lets us see the social structure and geographical features of maroon communities through the lens of "marginality", that is, the search for a form of life that best enables, though of course it doesn't guarantee, the independence of maroons faced with the massive violence capacities of the plantocracy. I don't want to say my analysis is a total reduction, as I won't try to derive their art and music and religion and so on from their regime of violence, so I don't want to say the cultural life of maroons was nothing but preparation for war, but I certainly think war is a central factor in their form of life.

### **Outline of the multiplicity of marronage**

I may run, but all the time that I am, I'll be looking  
for a stick! A defensible position!

George Jackson

I hope what I say here will interest those familiar with Deleuze and Guattari's thought, as I will show that "mastery" and "marronage" have to be added to the list of "regimes of violence" they enumerate, and, because of the particular nature of the violence that shapes their form of life, marronage is a form of occupying space and time that, while certainly not "striated" as is plantation society (in which each movement and behavior is tracked and accounted for), is not purely "smooth" or "nomadic" either, that is, solely and always

---

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank the organizers, Rodrigo Nunes and Ulysses Pinheiro, of the conference at which these ideas were first presented, as well as everyone working with them. I would like to dedicate this article to the memory of Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, a great historian of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and author of the masterpiece, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana* (1992), who passed away recently.

dedicated to mobility tactics bent on destroying the plantation system. I also hope it will interest historians, anthropologists, political scientists, geographers, and others.

There is a large scholarly literature on marronage in the modern Atlantic system<sup>2</sup>; reading a selection from that literature along with James C Scott's work on non-state peoples in SE Asia, I propose the outlines of the multiplicity of marronage, a set of interlinking processes that triggers qualitative changes in the behavior of the concrete systems in which they are instantiated when thresholds in the relations of those processes are reached. This necessitates finding common structures motivating slave flight across different social forms, such as capitalist slavery (a form of chattel slavery, in which the slave's entire person becomes a commodity bought on a market and the products of their labor are sold on a market) and other forms of slavery (for instance, non-capitalist chattel slavery, as in ancient Rome, or communal slavery in imperial systems, what Marxists used to call the Asiatic mode of production).

The multiplicity of marronage has a focus: in their flight, enslaved people search for a position of marginality to the state plantation system, where best to establish a regime of violence that will manage their relation to the state of war that slavery constitutes. Here I use "war" in the sense of violence aiming at territorial control, population displacement, and enslavement, not in Deleuze and Guattari's specialized sense of the "war machine" as anti-state, or by extension, anti-regulatory, violence. Most maroons looked to be free from, but close to – marginal to – the slave system from which they escaped. Most maroon communities were not anti-state in the sense of Deleuze and Guattari's nomads, bent on destroying states, as they often interacted with states in a regime of violence that included raid, war, and treaty, as well as trade when in relative security against the colonial system.<sup>3</sup>

Marronage is itself multiple. I will follow Carolyn Fick's schema here (1992, 6-9). The classic sociological distinction, found in Debien 1976, is taken from planters' accounts, and is that between *petit marronage* (flight with short temporal extension, sometimes only a day or two) and *grand marronage* (flight with no intention to return). This sociological distinction is developed by Roberts (2105) in a political dimension, who distinguishes, within grand marronage, between sovereign marronage, which looks to establish a state by a lawgiver, and sociogenic marronage, which looks to establish a new

---

<sup>2</sup> I draw the portrait of the multiplicity of marronage from accounts of various instances of maroon communities in Surinam (Price 1976), Jamaica (Patterson 1979 [1970], Kopytoff 1978, Johnson 2020), Brazil (Kent 1965, Freitas 1990, Schwartz 1992, Anderson 1996, Thornton 2008, Krug 2018), Haiti (Fick 1990, Casimir 2020, Roberts 2015), and the USA (Aptheker 1979 [1939]). For treatments of general themes of marronage, I rely on the Introduction to Price 1979, as well as on Scott 2009 and 2016, Roberts 2015, and Bona 2016.

<sup>3</sup> That's not to say that marronage wasn't an important factor in the Saint Domingue revolution (Fick 1990, 7), which did indeed seek to destroy the colonial slave state; the role of former maroons in the turbulence of post-revolutionary Haiti, the struggle between those who wanted was to replace the colonial state with another state or with a non-state "counter-plantation system" (Casimir 2020) is a matter of ongoing historical investigation, whose political economy dimensions are explored in Nesbitt 2022.

system where one finds “collective agency, non-sovereignty ... cultivation of a community that aligns civil society with political society” (Roberts 2015, 11).

Debates over the psychological dimensions of marronage noted by Fick in her literature review concern motivation, with some claiming that escape from cruelty was more important than a desire for freedom in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. A further socio-psychological distinction noted by Fick is that between marronage that is “restorationist” (escape from slavery to return to “African” subsistence) and that which is revolutionary (destroy the slave system). In a very helpful methodological remark, Fick cites Leslie Manigat who distinguishes an empiricist descriptive stance, tending to dismiss the importance of marronage as a threat to the stability of the entire system (insofar as the system lasted hundreds of years), and a sociopolitical perspective that emphasizes the ongoing threat to the system represented by marronage (it motivated repeated expeditions, at considerable expense, on the part of planters against maroon communities).

A final distinction, which we could call geopolitical, in the multiplicity of marronage is that between wild and urban marronage. This distinction shows that maroon marginality is not solely geographical flight, but is a social relation, a becoming free from slavery. Urban marronage is hiding in plain sight by blending into crowds of freed people of color in the city, often with aid of forged papers (Price 1979, 24). Wild marronage entails finding – and improving (Stennet 2020) – a space outside state space, but nonetheless close enough to states for the major forms of interaction maroon communities have found with states: trade, raid, war, and treaty.

Rather than a typology, from a Deleuzoguattarian perspective we should see these distinctions as representing tendencies; any concrete act of marronage will be composite, though one tendency might predominate. A night-time escape might turn into grand marronage if the escapee meets the right companions. A grand marronage might dissolve into individual flights with quick return if conditions for sustained survival are not found. A flight from cruelty can turn revolutionary by circumstance, and so on.

Marronage is related to other social structures and movements. In Deleuze and Guattari’s terms, as a pattern of a way of life (an “abstract machine” to use their technical term) the multiplicity of marronage forms connections with other multiplicities, other sets of processes with their own patterns and range of instantiation. Hence there are connections of modern Atlantic slavery to thermodynamics (global solar energy flows driving wind and ocean currents enabling the triangular trade system), to plant physiology (bio-available solar energy in sugar), to human physiology and the culturally-inflected cravings of humans (sugar and other New World consumables such as tobacco and coffee), to other slavery systems (racialization leading to intergenerational slavery was more intense in trans-Atlantic slavery reflected in lower rates of manumission and assimilation than those in other systems [Patterson 1989]), to other forms of flight (from peasantry, from genocides, from the drudgery of forced labor in general).

In examining marronage, we also find connections to other forms of resistance by enslaved peoples (slave ship rebellions, suicides, infanticide, killings, revolts, and revolutions). Revolts and revolutions that attack the slave system itself, will involve the geographical heart of the slave system, the plantations and cities, but Fick emphasizes the role of wild marronage in creating the basis for Mackandal's action in 1757 Saint Domingue. The events of 1791, Fick says, might have been called a maroon war elsewhere but in revolutionary Saint Domingue the process of maroons turning revolutionaries became "irreversible". Small groups of maroons met others; "at this conjuncture that slave deserters, who in ordinary times were called maroons or fugitives ... become by the very nature of the circumstance, insurrectionaries, brigands, and rebels" (Fick, 107). Fick cites Patterson, who says one may suggest that "all sustained slave revolts must acquire a Maroon dimension" (Patterson 1979, 279).

### **Deleuze and Guattari on slavery and capitalism**

Deleuze and Guattari don't say anything directly about marronage in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, although deterritorialization and the line of flight (each term is roughly akin to changing links of environmental features and habitual behaviors) are important concepts. They use the Black American radical George Jackson as a figure of the "regime of violence" often involved in a line of flight.<sup>4</sup>

What do Deleuze and Guattari say about slavery? They have both literal and figurative uses of the terms "slave" [*esclave*] and "slavery" [*esclavage*] in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. There's nothing too surprising about their figurative uses; it fits into what one might now consider an objectionable tradition of using a term whose primary extension for the past 500 years has been real African slavery to figure various other types of unfreedom. (There was real enslavement in the English workhouses used for vagabonds, as described by Marx in the primitive accumulation chapter of *Capital*, but I mean here the use of "slave" to figure European subjection to absolutism, as in Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*.) In Deleuze and Guattari's texts, we find *esclavage* as the self-subjugation of the bourgeoisie to capital (Deleuze; Guattari 1977: 254). We also see *esclavage* as voluntary servitude to fascism (Deleuze; Guattari 1977: 29) on Reich and Spinoza). And in *A Thousand Plateaus*, the term is used in discussing the self-command inherent in Kant's moral philosophy (Deleuze; Guattari 1987: 130).<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Deleuze and Guattari refer to Jackson's line from July 28, 1970, quoted as the epigraph to this essay, "Il se peut que je fuie, mais tout au long de ma fuite, je cherche une arme!" which is translated by Lane, Hurley, and Seem as "I may take flight, but all the while I am fleeing, I will be looking for a weapon" at Deleuze; Guattari 1977: 277. For commentary on the incorporation of Jackson's writings into Deleuze and Guattari's works, see Koerner 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Some uses of "enslave" in the English version of *Anti-Oedipus* are translations of *asservissement* (Deleuze; Guattari 1977: 249, 365). Note also that "machinic enslavement" in the English version of *A Thousand Plateaus* is a translation of "l'asservissement machinique" (Deleuze; Guattari 1987: 451; 456).

In the literal sense, many of their references are to “generalized slavery” in ancient empires (peasants subject to conscripted or *corvée* labor for *grands travaux* -- monumental or utilitarian projects such as irrigation and flood control (Deleuze; Guattari 1987: 448ff; note at 569n43E; refers to Parain 1969; see also Bert 2013 and above all Badaire 2023)). Again, in relation to ancient empires, Deleuze and Guattari discuss the figure of the freed slave (*esclave affranchi*) in terms of “deterritorialization” or the setting loose of flows of people to move from their traditional homes (Deleuze; Guattari 1987: 448). In their terms, “primitive” society was “territorial” (they mean this to include hunter-gatherers, but their analysis is heavily weighted to the ethnography of sedentary chiefdoms (e.g., Clastres 1989, 1994; see also Viveiros de Castro 2014, 2019)).

In Deleuze and Guattari’s reading, primitive society initiation rites marked bodies of initiates in relation to the earth as source of all goods; such “coding” rendered their spatial location and their characteristic behaviors of transfer of goods (“mobile blocs of debt”) predictable within the limits of their territories. Such coding was “overcoded” by imperial administrative mechanisms such as censuses and tax rolls, whereby people and their actions were inscribed in a centralized accounting system that transcends local codes. However, the calling up of a workforce to send to the sites of *grands travaux* would entail “deterritorialization” to allow loosening up of travel to the worksites and “decoding” to allow new behaviors (digging and hauling, let’s say, as opposed to hunting, gathering, and craft work). And in a last reference to the ancient world, the figure of the slave appears in the discussion of the composition of the “nomad war machine”, their name for anti-state forces in general, whose point of highest intensity, they claim, was the Steppe nomads (Deleuze; Guattari 1987: 393).

In contrast to ancient slavery, trans-Atlantic slavery of Africans is noted by Deleuze and Guattari only rarely, in passing and by implication. It is implied in contradistinction to generalized slavery at Deleuze; Guattari 1987: 451 (“Even slavery changes; it no longer defines the public availability of the communal worker but rather private property as applied to individual workers” – this would hold for both Greek and Roman slavery as well as for trans-Atlantic slavery). It also appears in the discussion of the work model vs “free action” at Deleuze; Guattari 1987: 491 (“the Americans apparently imported so many blacks only because they could not use the Indians, who would rather die”).

While Deleuze and Guattari don’t say anything about marronage in general, and hence nothing about it in relation to Atlantic slavery in the early phase of global capitalism, they do have a theory of capitalism as such. For them, capitalism is built on the surplus value of flow, as opposed to surplus value of code for “primitive” societies and surplus value of overcoding for imperial systems. In a deliberately provocative move, they will come up with a theory of machinic surplus value (as opposed to Marx’s position that only human labor power produced surplus value) but that would be for them a much later

development, well after the abolition of gross forms of Atlantic chattel slavery. We can't pursue this in the present context but for further analysis, see Thoburn 2003.

The relation of slavery and capitalism is a highly technical and very much active debate. Recent works focus on surplus value. Foster et al 2020 claim Marx is best read as slaves producing surplus value. Nesbitt 2022, on the other hand, shows how scholars who concentrate on the way slaves produced commodities for a global market see slavery as an integral part of capitalism, while those who concentrate on a definition of capitalism centered on the extraction of surplus value from wage labor see slavery as an antiquated holdover. For Nesbitt, both sides neglect the Marxian analysis of capitalism as a "social form". There is such a thing as capitalist slavery for Nesbitt, but despite its horrors, it does not involve extraction of surplus value. Slaves cannot be the source of surplus value as they have no labor power that can be sold as a commodity; rather than purchase labor power as do owners who employ wage laborers, owners of operations using slave labor purchase the person, not their labor power. Hence slaves are treated as constant capital, as sources of motive power, rather than as variable capital.

On the other hand, slave labor does produce commodities that are sold on a global market, enabling slave owners to thereby capture a portion of the surplus value available in the global system, building up wealth for those owners. Nesbitt walks us through Marx's analyses in *Capital* volume 3 that show that the market price for commodities reflects an average rate of profit for the system as a whole, no matter the composition of capital in the production process for any one producer. (Although Nesbitt doesn't get into the details, Blackburn (1997) claims, in his support of Williams (1944), to be able to show that profits from West Indies slave labor plantations found their way into financial circuits in England, providing a catalytic effect in the form of easy credit for the burgeoning English industrial system.) Slavery gets squeezed out of the capitalist system by improvements to productivity of other forms of constant capital which along with wage labor produce surplus value that it alone is able to capture as market price of commodities fall. Nesbitt's case study is slave-produced cane sugar undercut by beet sugar produced by advanced machinery and proletarian wage labor.

Deleuze and Guattari are among those who see slavery as non-capitalist. By defining capitalism as the conjunction of flows of labor that is decoded (people able to learn new habits) and deterritorialized (people able to move in search of work) and flows of money that is decoded (fungible between merchants, industry, and finance) and deterritorialized (banking systems allowing investment and disinvestment on national and international scales) they see enslavement in terms of non-capitalist economies. Hence, they talk about the political economy of slave societies in distinction to capitalism in their "universal history" in *Anti-Oedipus*; in the case of Rome, "all the preconditions [of decoding] are present ... without producing a capitalism properly speaking but rather a regime based on slavery [*régime esclavagiste*]" (Deleuze; Guattari 1977: 223). Rome had chattel slavery, but production was dedicated to amassing concrete wealth via the profitable sale of

commodities. Rich Romans pursued enjoyment from consumption of commodities; we do not see reinvestment, forced by competition in a market for the means of production, into accumulation of surplus value. In the Marxist formula, Roman production was commodity accumulation mediated by money (C-M-C) as opposed to money accumulation via commodity sale (M-C-M', the mature form of capitalism). A similar point is made in *A Thousand Plateaus* in discussing the conditions for capitalism: "the flow of labor must no longer be determined as slavery or serfdom [*l'esclavage ou le servage*] but must become naked and free" (Deleuze; Guattari 1987: 452).

Although there is not too much on modern Atlantic slavery in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, a point of articulation to decolonial debates would be the references to Samir Amin in *Anti-Oedipus 3* on the relation of periphery and center. For Deleuze and Guattari, although the tendency of the rate of profit to fall holds in the center (because of the replacement of variable capital by fixed capital via technologization of production), it is compensated for by continuing expansion of capitalism at the periphery (permanent primitive accumulation). Hence the periphery is not traditional or antiquated but is integrated into the global system. (See Weeks 2019 on DG as dependency theorists.)

### **General remarks on the notion of regimes of violence**

Deleuze and Guattari write, "Violence is found everywhere, but under different regimes and economies" (Deleuze; Guattari 1987: 425). A regime of violence would be the pattern of approved and disapproved violent and peaceful (violence-avoiding, conflict-resolving and mitigating) acts and responses characteristic of a particular social system. I'll exclude what Oksala (2012) calls "ontological violence" (that which chops up the world, taking this as that, the very form of discursive thought) and "instrumental violence" (the application of force after a political decision-making process, e.g., going to war after a debate). Regimes of violence, on the other hand, just are an aspect of social systems, intertwined with political (decision-making), cultural (sense-making), and productive / distributive ("economic") patterns.

Let us examine the regimes of violence we find in the relation of maroons and states in the Atlantic slave system. Here we are defining states as do Deleuze and Guattari; states arise with the imposition of "an apparatus of capture", which, in emphasizing the removal of independent access to the earth as means of production, widens the application of the Marxist notion of primitive accumulation (for discussion, see Sibertin-Blanc 2016, Alliez and Lazzarato 2016, Smith 2018, Protevi 2019, Badaire 2023).

as a general rule, there is primitive accumulation whenever an apparatus of capture is mounted, with that very particular kind of violence that creates or contributes to the creation of that which it is directed against, and thus presupposes itself. The

problem then becomes one of distinguishing between regimes of violence. (Deleuze; Guattari 1987: 447)

In their analysis of states as the institution of an apparatus of capture, Deleuze and Guattari see statification as political and economic. "Statification," in the sense of the putting into state-form of non-state societies, is a regime of violence. Some societies ward off the state through their economy of violence, as we know from the work of Clastres in political anthropology (1989; 1994). When it comes to statification, Deleuze and Guattari belong to those who see force rather than contract at the origin of historical states. There is a (political) "originary violence" to (economic) primitive accumulation; states create that which they capture. The violence of the apparatus of capture creates or contributes to the creation of that which it is directed against; such violence thus presupposes itself. This means that in statification non-state peoples must be conquered (primary violence) to turn them into the primary producers (whether taxed peasants, debt bondsman, or chattel slaves) whom the tax collection / army / security forces (secondary violence) can target as cheater, delinquent, criminal, heretic, runaway.

Such state force in imposing capture is rendered invisible; it seems as if in establishing itself the state is establishing peace in non-state life, which is, in the very act of statification, figured as a state of nature or state of war. Once established, the state figures the violence of its police as the use of legitimate force by crime fighters. On the economic side of things, capture presupposes the ability to make equivalences (what Scott [1998; 2009] calls "legibility") such that free activity is turned into comparable units of work enabling the extraction of profit; territories are turned into comparable units of land enabling the charging of rent; and exchange is turned into comparable units of money and the imposition of a currency and taxation system (Deleuze; Guattari 1987: 437-448).

Deleuze and Guattari evade any question of a linear narrative of the "origin" of states. Rather, they talk about the conditions for the repeated genesis of concrete states as conforming to a pattern of capture. Scott (2017) nuances this, while staying in general agreement. In his analysis, there are multiple options for political economy regimes for the "domus" (the bringing together into a semi-permanent encampment of multiple species) in rich wetlands, but once the state assemblage can fasten upon the domus and convert much of it to solely grain agriculture, then its appropriation / specialization machine can work. Hence, as with Deleuze and Guattari's "Urstaat" thesis, Scott would say that while any one actual process of statification is contingent on ecological circumstance and geographical constriction, such that, as an actualization of the state diagram it might be chronologically short-lived, the diagram itself stays the same, awaiting in its virtuality further instantiations.

Let us reiterate that, like Scott (2019) and Clastres (1989; 1994), Deleuze and Guattari reject any notion that the state evolves peacefully or contractually from pre-state conditions; rather, they insist, states are born by capture, the violent imposition of the



state form (taxes, obligatory labor, and rent on land) on non-state peoples. The state is then one social form among others, not the telos of sociality. Such capture, however, provokes flight or marronage. The first maroon societies are thus contemporaneous with the first states; as soon as there were states, people "ran for the hills". However, those fleeing the state could rarely simply ignore states, and would sometimes wish to return either to settle down, or to trade with the state. In fact, non-state people came to be necessary to states as supplying both non-human (raw materials) and human (enslaved people) commodities.

Thus, flight, while it is in one sense a mere consequence of capture, is in another sense co-constitutive of states; without those who flee, the state would have no one to trade with and would have to attempt primary resource extraction from hills, mountains, swamps, on its own initiative and expense. But such extension would dangerously stretch the power of the state to extract taxes, labor, and rent in its core. Much better then to manage the margins of the state qua geographical border and deal with the outsiders as needed. At the same time as states dealt with those on their geographical borders, internal population management was instantly set up, as states were in constant need of importing new members whose differences in political status (free vs slave; urban vs rural; and so on) needed to be regulated.

### **Mastery and marronage as regimes of violence**

Let us first consider Deleuze and Guattari's list of regimes of violence before adding "mastery" and "marronage." They write, "We can draw a distinction between struggle, war, crime and policing as so many regimes of violence" (Deleuze; Guattari 1987: 447). Struggle [*lutte*] is the form of violence of primitive society, which Deleuze and Guattari gloss, in referring implicitly to Clastres, as coded, blow-by-blow violence: "a certain ritualization of violence".<sup>6</sup> As we noted above, in Deleuze and Guattari's specialized sense, "war" is the form of violence best exemplified in the steppe nomad "war machine" and its violence directed against the states they fell upon. Crime is relative to states; it is the violence of illegality or capture without "right". State policing or lawful violence is capture simultaneously constituting the right to capture. But the state's peace is a regime of violence that disavows itself, that structurally hides the primary violence of the capture that denies access to the earth to nonstate people, forcing them into peasantry or slavery, forms of life that secondary state violence is then used to reinforce.

At the limit, each New World plantation was a state in DG's sense, in both the political violence and economic capture sense. Capture is the imposition of a system of equivalence

---

<sup>6</sup> The regime of violence of nomadic foragers is detailed by Boehm (2012) as a "reverse dominance hierarchy" in which slackers and bullies are ridiculed, exiled, or killed.

measurement: labor discipline, bookkeeping practices (ability to measure individual productivity of workers), financial speculation (mortgages, credit, insurance), and so on (Thoburn 2003; Alliez and Lazzarato 2016; Weeks 2019). In its violence aspect, slavery is war, a system of terror. Mastery is the creation of a zone where lives can be taken or exposed to threat of torture and death with impunity.<sup>7</sup> It can be encapsulated in the notorious phrase of the *Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina* that “Every freeman of Carolina shall have absolute power and Authority over his Negro slaves”.<sup>8</sup> There might be a slight ability for the metropolitan or colonial government to control the actions of planters (the LeJeune affair showed the inability of the Code Noir to be enforced [Fick 1990, 37-38]), but within each plantation the rule of the master was absolute, making “mastery” a regime of violence in DG’s sense.

Hence, we can say that mastery is institutionalized terrorism; it is the ability to impose a regime of social death on people (Patterson 2018) – slaves are those who face utter insecurity about the present and future caused by a pattern of torture and killing at whim. Further, mastery’s regime of violence, although produced locally and individually, could, when faced by resistance or revolt masters, call upon reinforcements from government and other slaveholders when needed. The structure of planter society was thus also a factor in the regime of violence of mastery. Patterson makes the point that absenteeism increased the probability of marronage and revolt. Slavery-based planter colonialism had a limit case in which it was not a state in the sense of living under a centralized authority but was rather pockets of absolute autocracy of masters who had only economic and social relations with neighbors with very little overall government; they were just living side-by-side. As Patterson put it in the case of Jamaica, whites were “transients” hoping to grab their riches and flee: “a brittle, fragile travesty of a society which lingered during these years constantly on the brink of upheaval and anarchy” (Patterson 1979, 251).

Marronage is its own regime of violence. Dimensions of the maroon regime of violence in its interactions with surrounding states are predatory raiding, defensive war in traditional sense of territorial control, and post-treaty capture and return of escaping slaves.<sup>9</sup> From the state perspective, maroon raiding is crime, though we can also see it as

---

<sup>7</sup> Compare the notion of necropolitics in Mbembe (2003).

<sup>8</sup> John Locke was Secretary for the Lord Proprietors of Carolina when that phrase was penned. The debate over Locke’s role in the trans-Atlantic slave system is quite large. Among other pieces, see Bernasconi and Mann 2005; Uzgalis 2017; and Brewer 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Maroon raids terrorized white settlers. Aptheker reminds us of Hobbes when he cites an 1823 *Norfolk Herald* article claiming that whites “have for some time been kept in a state of mind peculiarly harassing and painful, from the too apparent fact that their lives are at the mercy of a band of lurking assassins, against whose fell designs neither the power of the law, or vigilance, or personal strength and intrepidity, can avail” (Aptheker 1979, 151). For Hobbes, the state of war is a length of time of uncertainty; it’s the psychological stress of war that motivates desire to join social contract. Note also that whites have claimed “law” on their side (cf. Deleuze and Guattari’s apparatus of capture analysis: the original violence of statification makes resistance into crime that law and police combat in secondary violence or lawful application of force). After the death of a white man, the *Norfolk Herald* article continues, “No individual after this can consider his life safe from the murdering aim of these monsters in human shape” (note

an alternate form of predation on primary producers as opposed to self-created “legitimate” state taxation. The political economy of maroon communities conformed to the regime of violence; hunting and swidden agriculture are adapted both to environment and to risk of attack (Price 1979, 10). All these relations are entangled and change with changing relations to the still-enslaved population and to autochthonous populations.

Relations with those who were still enslaved were often friendly and co-conspiratorial but could turn antagonistic as treaties of maroon communities with states often required the maroons to assist in pursuit, capture, and return of still-enslaved populations. (The Jamaican revolt known as Tacky’s War was ended by maroon troops [Patterson 1979].) This created enmity between maroons and the enslaved (Price 1979, 22), though that is now finessed in creation of Queen Nanny as symbol of resistance.

Maintaining the social structure of maroon communities required an initiation ritual to finesse the situation of multiple African origins of their inhabitants (Price 1979, Johnson 2020). Ensuring loyalty was a constant preoccupation; deserters from a maroon community were executed (Thornton 780; Price 1979, 17). Maroons often distinguished captive slaves taken in raids from slaves who escaped and found them. The former were held in bondage for a time to ensure acculturation (Price 1979, 17; Johnson 2020). In her study of Jamaica’s Windward Maroons, Johnson (2020) concluded that their form of servitude was not that of chattel slavery:

Maroons navigated a middle ground between the traditions of their West African ancestors and the realities (and opportunities) of life on the sugar-producing island of Jamaica .... The relatively small size of the “slave” population, the stability of “slave” families, and the continuities in lines of ownership in Maroon towns intimate that masters saw their “slaves” as more than chattel. This was consistent with the types of bondage practiced in other kin-based communities during the pre- and early colonial period. (Johnson 2020)

Relations with autochthonous peoples were also multiple, ranging from alliance (Schwartz 1992, 1304), to neighboring coexistence, to mingling to form a new people, to war, either spontaneous or by being hired by states. Maroons and natives would also play off different European powers against each other in shifting alliances.

### **Social structures of maroon communities**

There is a large and specialized scholarly literature on the social structure of maroon communities. Among the most interesting and well-developed debates is that over the

---

here the Lockean animalizing language). The goal of the militia was to kill the maroons and “thus relieve the neighbouring inhabitants from a state of perpetual anxiety and apprehension”. Needless to say, that’s the intended state in which slaves were to be kept (Patterson 2018).

social structure of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Brazilian maroon community of Palmares, with Kent 1965, Schwartz 1992, Anderson 1996, and Thornton 2008 seeing it as a kingdom, and Freitas 1990 and Krug 2018 seeing it as a “republic”, in Freitas’s words, that is, decentralized and egalitarian, albeit with a centralized military defense system.

Let us see how Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of a regime of violence can illuminate the question of social structure of maroon communities. As Deleuze and Guattari specify in *A Thousand Plateaus*, their work is not an analysis of mode of production, of infrastructure and superstructure, but an analysis of their “machinic processes”.

We define social formations by machinic processes and not by modes of production (these on the contrary depend on the processes). Thus primitive societies are defined by mechanisms of prevention-anticipation; State societies are defined by apparatuses of capture; urban societies, by instruments of polarization; nomadic societies, by war machines; and finally international, or rather ecumenical, organizations are defined by the encompassment of heterogeneous social formations. But precisely because these processes are variables of coexistence that are the object of a social topology, the various corresponding formations are coexistent. And they coexist in two fashions, extrinsically and intrinsically. (Deleuze; Guattari 1987: 435)

“Social topology” means that machinic processes can interact, both in real world systems (“concrete assemblages”), and in being taken up in different proportions by systems other than those where they are the defining element. Assemblages are defined by what escape them, what flees from them. We should take that literally in thinking of marronage.

It is wrongly said (in Marxism in particular) that a society is defined by its contradictions. That is true only on the larger scale of things. From the viewpoint of micropolitics, a society is defined by its lines of flight, which are molecular. There is always something that flows or flees, that escapes the binary organizations, the resonance apparatus, and the overcoding machine. (Deleuze; Guattari 1987: 216)

Extrinsic coexistence means interactive existence side-by-side: “States cannot effect a capture unless what is captured coexists, resists in primitive societies, or escapes under new forms, as towns or war machines” (Deleuze; Guattari 1987: 435) – or as maroon societies. Intrinsic coexistence means that machinic processes can work in social systems that are not those with which they are most associated. For instance, the “power of metamorphosis” of the war machine (its capacity to change habits, to make a habit of changing habits) can be tamed by its transformation into a state military apparatus, but it can also resist such taming and be reborn in other forms, perhaps as revolution (Deleuze; Guattari 1987: 436)

I'm going to speculate here that concrete maroon societies had a number of these machinic processes at work: 1) prevention-anticipation of state forms -- to the extent that they were anti-hierarchical (again, that is a matter of debate with regard to Palmares); 2) war machines (power of metamorphosis) – though not nomadic, they did have to be able to organize to fight state invasion in mobile bands and to conduct raids without having predictable habits of fighting; 3) and perhaps ecumenical – they “encompassed heterogenous social formations” to achieve consistency, to have it all hang together for a time, in trading with the coastal settlements, in accepting people from all sorts of cultural backgrounds.

### **Geography of marronage**

Geography, or more precisely, topographical features, plays a key role in the regime of violence established in wild marronage (for a literature review and original analysis, see Wright 2020). State space is a space of enforceable regularities; state agents look to detect irregularities from the expected position and behavior patterns of subjects. Spaces open to early stratification are valleys and rivers allowing for military enforcement, administrative “visibility”, and economic integration. Non-state spaces in Scott (2009) are mostly hills and mountains but include any region where state military reach is hampered, such as jungles, deserts, marshes, and so on (2009, 13). Deleuze and Guattari see the paradigmatic example of an anti-state war machine in the Steppe nomads. Classical maroon societies, by contrast, are found in hills and mountains (Jamaica, Saint Domingue), in swamps (the “Great Dismal Swamp” between North Carolina and Virginia), in littoral spaces (coves, offshore islands, and the like, as in coastal South Carolina).

Let us look more closely at the intersection of economies of violence with geographical features, specifically the “friction of terrain” that James C Scott thematizes (2009: 43, *et passim*; 2017: 116-149). Marronage is a spatializing practice, as maroons improve the hiding, ambush, booby-trap, and raiding aspects of their territories (Stennet 2020). The space of marronage differs from the “smooth space” of the nomadic war machine in its Steppe incarnation, in that it seeks to find and hold a space that is inaccessible to pursuing infantry but that allows multiple options for inter-relating with states: raids on people and trade routes at times, but also commercial exchanges when those are possible and desired.

Maroon attacks on pursuers are enabled by their choice of territory and the improvements they have made to it. Although the smooth vs striated distinction in *A Thousand Plateaus* 14 is too abstract to be useful in theorizing the space of marronage, even with the way Deleuze and Guattari say we should be thinking about differing geo-social tendencies rather than different actual or physical spaces (smoothing or striating as practices vs smooth or striated as a fixed space), Deleuze and Guattari do say there are

other spatial practices to consider. Nonetheless, despite its specific adaptation to their marginal geographic positions, maroon attacks have elements of “smooth space” – they don’t follow predetermined lines, they are experienced by state troops as coming from everywhere and nowhere.

Choice of a wild marronage geographical situation – mountains, forests / jungles, swamps, coastal zones – looks to impose a high cost on pursuing state agents. Rough terrain imposes a cost in time and money and physical effort on pursuers. Biotic elements encountered by the pursuers can impose disease or predation costs. All that can lead to discipline problems among the pursuers and additional costs of re-imposing order (punishment is never cost free; it distracts from pursuit at a minimum but risks slacking, desertion, or even mutiny). Especially when pursuers relied on slaves as porters (Patterson 1979, 266). Then there are costs imposed by ambush, booby trap, and other forms of guerrilla warfare.

### **Contemporary dimensions of marronage**

Marronage has become a generalized figure of resistance to the local and state power structures of global capitalism (Roberts 2015; Bledsoe 2017). Edouard Glissant uses the figure of the maroon extensively in his literary (*The Fourth Century* [2001]), and theoretical works (*Poetics of Relation* [1997]), where he also refers to Deleuze and Guattari’s line of flight. Deleuze and Guattari mention African slaves as figure of affect in American literature of beat generation: “cornered between two nightmares, the genocide of the Indians and the slavery of the blacks, Americans constructed a psychically repressed image of the black as the force of affect, of the multiplication of affects” (Deleuze; Guattari 1987: 282-3). This could be brought to bear in discussion of the figure of the maroon as symbol of the resistance of African peoples to global white supremacy – in fact the resistance of all oppressed peoples.

Scott 1998 and 2009 analyzes contemporary state domination; despite failures of central planning, more modest administration can keep internal population management going very nicely in the core – going off the grid or creating police no-go zones in the cities notwithstanding. When we consider contemporary urban marronage, biopolitical and neoliberal state administration can keep internal population management going in the core: the middle and working classes that are registered, tracked, and managed, some with full disciplinary force, others with the more “dividualizing” practices of “control” via databases and so on (Deleuze 1992). non-documented people, or those dissatisfied citizens, go about trying to live as squatters, as inhabitants of “no go zones”, as those who “go off the grid”, and other forms of evading state rules within state territories.

In the periphery, surveillance with GIS and drones, force projection with helicopters, and brutality with automatic weapons can keep peasantry in line and keep nonstate

people confined to margins and ineffective in resisting resource extraction when desired. This is not to say that sheer force is confined to the periphery; what we see in so-called "no-go zones" is a sort of "shared sovereignty" between nonstate actors – in Scott's terms, "barbarian" gangs – and state police forces, who arrive in force when they want to and shoot first and ask questions later.

One last turn of the screw. Scott agrees with Deleuze and Guattari on the need to conceptually separate the primary or originary violence of statification as capture and enslavement of non-state peoples, and the ordinary, everyday, or secondary violence of policing, tax collection, and labor coercion, which repeat and reinforce the originary violence by which tax and labor become obligations and attempts to evade them and / or to appropriate surplus by private means become criminalized. Might it not be the case, however, that in "no-go zones" that non-state actors, often seen as "criminal gangs" by the state, engage in a sort of "shared sovereignty" by which they compete with states for appropriation of surplus ("protection" rather than taxes being a form of regularizing plunder, hence requiring punishment of those even gangs consider freelancers infringing on "their people") and, sometimes, for provision of services (food handouts, housing via squatting or camping, and so on) from the marginal populations that states show little interest in managing other than by intermittent raids for deportation and camp dismantling purposes?

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alliez É.; Maurizio L. (2016). *Guerres et Capital*. Paris: Amsterdam.
- Anderson R. N. (1996). "The *Quilombo* of Palmares: A New Overview of a Maroon State in Seventeenth-Century Brazil" in *Journal of Latin American History* 28/3, pp.545 – 566.
- Aptheker H. (1979 [1939]). "Maroons Within the Present Limits of the United States" in *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas*. (ed.) R. Prince. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, pp.151-167.
- Badaire Q. (2023). *Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari face à l'économie politique: usages critiques des sciences sociales dans les années 1960-70*. PhD thesis. Online: <https://www.theses.fr/s175692>.
- Bernasconi R.; Mann A.M. (2005). "The contradictions of racism: Locke, slavery and the *Two Treatises*" in *Race and racism in modern philosophy*, (ed.) A. Valls, Ithaca: Cornell University, pp. 89-107.
- Bert J-F. (2013). « La Méditerranée vue par les anthropologues marxistes » in *Yod* 18. Online: <http://journals.openedition.org/yod/1749>.
- Blackburn R. (1997). *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800*. New York: Verso.

- Bledsoe A. (2017). "Marronage as a Past and Present Geography in the Americas" in *Southeastern Geographer* 57/1 "Black Geographies in and of the United States" pp.30-50.
- Boehm C. (2012). "Ancestral Hierarchy and Conflict" in *Science* 336/6083, pp.844-847.
- Bona D. T. (2016). *Fugitif, où cours-tu?* Paris: Presses universitaires de France.
- Brewer H. (2017). "Slavery, Sovereignty, and "Inheritable Blood": Reconsidering John Locke and the Origins of American Slavery" in *The American Historical Review* 22/4, pp.1038-1078.
- Casimir J. (2020). *The Haitians: A Decolonial History*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Clastres P. (1989). *Society Against the State*. New York: Zone Books.
- Clastres P. (1994). *Archaeology of Violence*. New York: Semiotext(e).
- Debien G. (1979 [1966]). "Marronage in the French Caribbean" in *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas*. (ed.) R. Prince. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Deleuze G. (2004 [1967]). "The Method of Dramatization" in *Desert Islands and Other Texts*. (ed.) D. Lapoujade. New York: Semiotext(e).
- Deleuze G.; Guattari F. (1977). *Anti-Oedipus*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze G.; Guattari F. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze G.; Guattari F. (1991). *What is Philosophy?* New York: Columbia University Press.
- Fick C. (1990). *The Making of Haiti*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
- Foster J. B.; Holleman H.; Clark B. (2020). "Marx and Slavery" in *Monthly Review* 72/3. Online: <https://monthlyreview.org/2020/07/01/marx-and-slavery>.
- Freitas D. (1990). *Palmares: A Guerra Dos Escravos*. (5<sup>th</sup> ed). Rio de Janeiro: Edições Graal.
- Glissant E. (1997). *Poetics of Relation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Glissant E. (2001). *The Fourth Century*. Winnipeg: Bison Books.
- Hall G. M. (1992). *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*. Baton Rouge: LSU Press.
- Jackson G. (1970). *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*. Online: <https://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/soledadbro.html>.
- Johnson A. M. (2020). "Jamaica's Windward Maroon "Slaveholders"" in *New West Indian Guide / Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 94/3-4, pp.273-292. Online: <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134360-bja10010>.
- Kent R. K. (1965). "Palmares: An African State in Brazil" in *The Journal of African History* 6/2, pp.161-175.
- Koerner M. (2011). "Lines of Escape: Gilles Deleuze's Encounter with George Jackson" in *Genre* 44/2, pp.157-80.
- Kopytoff B. (1978). "The Early Political Development of Jamaican Maroon Societies" in *The William and Mary Quarterly* 35/2, pp.287-307.
- Krug J. (2018). *Fugitive Modernities*. Durham: Duke University Press.



- Mbembe A. (2003). "Necropolitics" in *Public Culture* 15/1, pp.11-40.
- Mills C. W. (1997). *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Nesbitt N. (2022). *The Price of Slavery: Capitalism and Revolution in the Caribbean*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.
- Nietzsche F. (1997 [1887]). *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Oksala J. (2012). *Foucault, Politics, and Violence*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Pallota J. (2019). "Viveiros de Castro au-delà de Clastres: Vers un Brésil mineur ou un alter-Brésil" in E. Viveiros de Castro, *Politiques des multiplicités: Pierre Clastres face à l'État*. Bellevaux: Éditions Dehors.
- Parain C. (1969). « Protohistoire méditerranéenne et mode de production asiatique » in *Sur le mode de production asiatique*. Paris: Centre d'études et de recherches marxistes.
- Patterson O. (1979 [1970]). "Slavery and Slave Revolts: A Sociohistorical Analysis of the First Maroon War, 1665-1740" in *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas*, (ed.) R. Price. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, pp.246-292.
- Patterson O. (2018 [1982]). *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Price R. (ed.) (1979). *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Price R. (1976). *The Guiana Maroons: A Historical and Bibliographical Introduction*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Protevi J. (2019). *Edges of the State*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Roberts N. (2015). *Freedom as Marronage*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Schwartz S. B. (1992). *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels: Reconsidering Brazilian Slavery*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press.
- Scott J. C. (1998). *Seeing Like a State*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Scott J. C. (2009). *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Scott J. C. (2017). *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Sibertin-Blanc G. (2016). *State and Politics: Deleuze and Guattari on Marx*. New York: Semiotext(e).
- Smith D. (2018). "7000BC: Apparatus of Capture" in *A Thousand Plateaus and Philosophy*, (eds.) H. Somers-Hall; J. Bell; J. Williams, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp.223-241.
- Stennett L. (2020). "An exploration of agency within Maroon ecological praxis: Unearthing the histories of Maroon ecology in Jamaica and Brazil from 1630 to 1780" in *Decolonial Subversions*, pp.99-119. Online: [http://decolonialsubversions.org/docs/pdfs/9\\_2020.03.29\\_LStennett.pdf](http://decolonialsubversions.org/docs/pdfs/9_2020.03.29_LStennett.pdf).

- Thoburn N. (2003). *Deleuze, Marx, and Politics*. London: Routledge.
- Thornton J. K. (2008). « Les États de l'Angola et la formation de Palmares (Brésil) » in *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 63, pp.769-797. Online: <https://www.cairn.info/revue--2008-4-page-769.htm>.
- Uzgalis W. (2017). "John Locke, Racism, and Indian Lands" in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Race*, (ed.) N. Zack, New York: Oxford University Press, pp.21-30.
- Viveiros de Castro E. (2014). *Cannibal Metaphysics*. Minneapolis: Univocal Publishing.
- Viveiros de Castro E. (2019). *Politiques des multiplicités: Pierre Clastres face à l'État*. Bellevaux: Éditions Dehors.
- Weeks S. (2019). "A Politics of Peripheries: Deleuze and Guattari as Dependency Theorists" in *Deleuze and Guattari Studies* 13/1, pp.79-103.
- Widerquist K.; McCall G. (2016). *Prehistoric Myths in Modern Political Philosophy*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Williams E. (1944). *Capitalism and Slavery*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Wright W. J. (2020). "The Morphology of Marronage" in *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 110/4, pp.1134-1149.