

REVIEW

D. Touam Bona, *Fugitive, Where are you Running?*, L. Hengehold (trans) (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2023), 230 pp., ISBN: 978-1509551842

Fugitive, Where are you Running? is a collection of essays, most of which were previously published in French, by writer, philosopher and curator Dénètem Touam Bona. The author's inclination to straddle geographic and conceptual lines is reflected in the scope, exuberance and poetic verve of the volume. The first three chapters ('Return of the Maroni', 'The Art of the Fugue', 'Manhunt') lay the conceptual foundation by foregrounding categories of marronage, fugitivity and fugue. The fugitive slave is presented as the figure that haunts the establishment of capitalist modernity and the only possible 'line of flight' from it. The fugue is the art of subtle evasion from the prisons of racialised capitalism and an alternative to the triumphalist politics of armed liberation struggles. Touam Bona proposes an impressionistic, rhapsodic and allegorical travel through the various incarnations of the maroon community – with its spontaneous and horizontal modes of organisation and accretion – and capitalism's death drive to surveil and suppress them. The following two chapters track the iterations and repression of fugitivity in the present, by engaging with technologies of migrant surveillance at the border ('Heroic Land', which mixes critique and fiction) and the space of Mayotte, a French department in the heart of the Indian Ocean, increasingly securitised and excised from the histories of flux that characterise this region ('The Impossibility of an Island'). The sixth chapter ('Cosmo-poetics of the Refuge') returns to the book's central theme of the maroon rebellion, connecting it to Afro-diasporic spirituality and performance. The final extended chapter ('Liana Dreaming') turns to environmental concerns, by foregrounding the figure of the liana as the point of resistance to colonial penetration and weapon of maroon resistance. In Caribbean cultures, the liana and the vine bring together collective bodies and communities. Against colonial tropes of taming, erasure and penetration, the power of the forest itself generates plant-induced visions of unsubmission.

Weaved together of overlapping threads, this volume is a poetic and critical tour de force. Touam Bona's erratic style reflects the book's subject matter: by resisting the dictates of neoliberal academic writing – introduction, argument, evidence, conclusion – the prose itself is an art of fugue, escape, marronage, enveloping the reader like lianas. The writing is brimming not only with critical thinking, but also with erudite

anecdotes and annotations that often surprise. While Touam Bona is unforgiving in pointing out the destructive potential of capitalism and its grounding in slavery, the book never gives in to despair or pessimism. The figures of the maroon, the fugue, the liana are offered as potentialities, in a way that is both grounded in the specificity of Black experience and reaching out to a multiplicity of worlds and subjectivities.

To this reader's mind, the volume's most puzzling aspect is the lack of engagement with ideas around fugitivity that have emerged in the context of Black studies in North America. Writers such as Saidiya Hartman, Fred Moten or Stephano Harney do not feature even as footnotes. This omission might reflect on the one hand the resilience of colonial language boundaries, while on the other testifying to the breadth and autonomy of ideas of fugitivity and marronage, which are rooted not in one or the other tradition of thought, but in Black experience more generally. Indeed, several of Touam Bona's essays predate the formulations of Black studies theorists. Still, the silence represents a missed opportunity for dialogue. Also somewhat perplexing is the cursory engagement with anarchist traditions of thought. The author does discuss Pierre Clastres, establishing a connection between his ideas about the nature of Amerindian chiefship and forms of leadership within maroon communities. But the work of scholars who have extended Clastres's arguments to understand histories of fugitivity from State control or elaborate an anthropology of anarchism – such as James Scott or David Graeber – is absent, or awkwardly subsumed under Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical patronage. These silences and erasures, however, are counterbalanced by the book's originality and sheer poetic power.

This volume was especially inspiring to read and review in the context of a special issue on a 'new war' in Cabo Delgado. This corner of East Africa was wholly marked by histories of fugitivity, as depicted by Touam Bona. From the seventeenth century, fugitive slaves from Cabo Delgado mingled with their Malagasy counterparts in maroon communities in the crags and *mornes* of the Mascarene islands. And in Cabo Delgado itself, community and culture were fundamentally shaped by fugitivity – from slavery; the rapacious brutality of the colonial state; the cotton and sisal plantation; the high modernist impositions of socialism; primitive accumulation and plunder driven by global capital with the connivance of the post-socialist elites. Whether taking to liana-enveloped highlands or to mangrove-coasting dhows, the people of Cabo Delgado are masters of the art of the fugue. And in today's landscape, fugitivity and marronage are often the only options for many people caught in a deadly stranglehold of violence, army securitisation, ethnic militias, humanitarian biopolitics and extractive capital. When the narrative of liberation no longer holds up, the old art of fugue resurfaces.

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