

# Critical Dialogue

**Freedom as Marronage.** By Neil Roberts. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015. 264p. \$87.00 cloth. \$29.00 paper.  
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— Jimmy Casas Klausen, *PUC-Rio de Janeiro*

Blazing a path through critical discussions of republican theory, the writings of Frederick Douglass and Eduard Glissant, the Haitian Revolution, and Rastafari, *Freedom as Marronage* confronts readers with a deceptively simple question: how does a person become “free”? Freedom, Neil Roberts answers, cannot be understood without considering the dominant term that opposes freedom in political modernity: slavery. However, instead of treating these as opposite conditions and states of being—or rather, more strictly speaking, as Roberts posits following Frantz Fanon, as a state of being opposed to a zone of nonbeing—*Freedom as Marronage* shows that freedom emerges in enslaved persons’ escape from and active negation of slavery.

Roberts focuses on the liminal condition between slavery and freedom: marronage. Far from being a straightforward negation of the status of enslavement, freedom is rooted in this liminal condition. Consequently, despite the infamous and widely cited consignment of slaves to what Orlando Patterson called a condition of “social death,” Roberts insists that enslaved persons do not in fact lack agency. In and by marronage, a formerly enslaved person, whether alone or together with others, asserts herself as an agent capable of altering the circumstances and political relations that condition her being. The emphasis on slave agency constitutes an important intervention in political theory at this moment, just after the sesquicentennial of the Emancipation Proclamation, which is still widely understood as having “freed”—juridically, from above—many (but not all) slaves in the United States. Although Roberts does not focus exclusively on the U.S., his work takes its place alongside the research of historians such as Stephen Hahn and Thaviola Glymph, who have argued that slaves’ actions as escapees, soldiers, and war refugees belonged to a chain of consequences that prompted from below President Lincoln’s Executive Order.

The book explores freedom as marronage in three parts. In the first, Roberts offers a diagnosis and theoretically sophisticated rejection of the disavowal of slave agency.

It is here that he sketches the limitations of Patterson’s interpretation of slavery as “social death”: according to Roberts, Patterson ignores the psychology of the slave and thus cannot account for slaves’ “metaphysics of freedom,” and, despite his research’s global reach, he remains Eurocentric in his conception of freedom. Roberts then confronts the “disavowal” of slavery in the republicanisms of Hannah Arendt and neo-Roman theorists (especially Philip Pettit), which Roberts takes as representative of positive freedom (as non-sovereign action) and negative freedom (as non-domination) respectively. In his view, not only do Arendt and the neo-Romans disavow, that is, simultaneously acknowledge and deny, slave agency, but each is one-sided and unable to account for freedom as both positive and negative. The category of disavowal strikes me as very useful for accounting for the simultaneous absence and presence of slavery, especially racialized chattel slavery, in canonized considerations of freedom in the field of political theory.

Unlike Arendt and Pettit, slave theorists articulate understandings of freedom that bridge the divide between one-sided negative or positive accounts, and so Part II of the book reconstructs concepts of freedom as manifested in the writings and praxis of marooning slaves. Theorizing from their own experiences of slavery, thinkers like Frederick Douglass and historical actors in the Haitian Revolution have insights into, in Roberts’s words, the “dialectic of slavery and freedom” that other thinkers do not. Anyone serious about understanding freedom, then, must take the slave theorists’ expressions of marronage seriously. Their acts of marronage, moreover, are not uniform. Roberts considers them in three chapters: first, on Douglass’s individual escape from slavery, initially from the psychological fact of slavery, then from its juridical form; second, on what Roberts calls “sovereign marronage” in the large-scale slave revolt in Haiti centered on the leadership of Toussaint L’Ouverture, the features of which emerge by comparison to the “grand marronage” exhibited by escaped slaves who were able to persist in communities beyond the reach of, and intensely defended against, colonial authorities but who did not frontally challenge the structure of domination perpetuated by those authorities; third, on what Roberts calls “sociogenic marronage,” the collective forging from the bottom up of a new sociopolitical system in revolutionary Haiti.

Part III of the book offers analyses of marronage as an explicit or implicit thematic in late modernity, specifically in the cultural and political theory of Glissant and the political theology of Rastafari. Euro-Atlantic work on Glissant tends to be confined to literary and African studies, but Roberts shows that Glissant's fusion of poeticist and historicist reflection is relevant to academic political theory. Roberts devotes a chapter to the interrelation between two central concepts in Glissant's understanding of late modernity, creolization and marronage, which, for Roberts, are brought together especially in the figure of the "refugee-immigrant." These themes are carried forward in a final reflection on Rastafari, whose political theology of exile from Zion continues a tradition of reflection on freedom and unfreedom and the flight between them.

Given the decentering of Euro-Atlantic framings of concepts and arguments in political theory in the English-speaking academy by scholars working in African-American political theory and so-called comparative political theory, as well as related fields, few will find it controversial to accept that flight from enslavement tells us something about freedom or that enslaved persons are just as much agents as the non-enslaved. For me, the controversy lies in two areas: the implications of the argument of *Freedom as Marronage* for flight as a generic concept, and Roberts's theoretical orientation.

The central challenge that *Freedom as Marronage* poses is that Roberts focuses the entire study on the existential condition of the transition between slavery and freedom. By foregrounding flight and active movement, Roberts lends to the categories of freedom and unfreedom a multidimensionality that contradicts their habitual framing as "inherently inert conditions" (11). "During marronage," Roberts posits, "agents struggle psychologically, socially, metaphysically, and politically to exit slavery, maintain freedom, and assert a lived social space while existing in a liminal position" (10). For Roberts, then, any agentic move to escape slavery and maintain freedom counts as marronage. Consequently, and as the category of "sovereign marronage" and the book's designation as marronage of the building of a new post-slavery society in Haiti suggest, Roberts explicitly challenges the narrow definition of marooning in the fields of history and anthropology. Historians and anthropologists have conventionally divided marronage only between *petit marronage*, temporary "acts of truancy" from the plantation by individuals or very small groups, and *grand marronage*, societies of fugitives that sustain themselves over the longer-term by making themselves inaccessible to the plantation societies. The problem for Roberts is that "[u]nder this bifurcated conception, marronage cannot address the dimensions of flight experienced and envisioned through large-scale slave revolts, revolutions, and the personalities of a polity's political leadership" (10). For Roberts, "revolutions are *themselves* moments of flight" (116). Eroding the distinction between evasion and revolt, Roberts includes these other

modalities of flight in an expansive continuum of marronage. He thus finds himself closer to Patterson who had, long before publishing *Slavery and Social Death*, asserted that even slave revolts must draw on maroon tactics, than to Eugene Genovese who, in *From Rebellion to Revolution*, had advanced a full-on Leninist teleology that dismissed marronage as piecemeal and narrowly local acts of spontaneity against a central, comprehensive revolution that would abolish slavery finally.

While I appreciate the desire to assimilate the multiple modalities of flight as equally agentic escapes from the nonbeing of slavery, I have two hesitations. First, gathering the multiple species of flight under the genre of marronage blunts the critical purchase of marronage. When marronage attains state form and large-scale dimension such that the Haitian Revolution counts, it seems to me that marronage's specifically evasive quality is lost—an evasive quality that stands as a living critique not only of plantation slave regimes but also of the modern state sovereignty and large-scale political-economic formations that support them. If, from the perspective of revolt, *petit* and *grand* marronage seemed "atomistic and fleeting" or "a secluded retreat from the realities of an order in need of systemic repair" (105), then from the perspective of maroon societies, slave revolution might abolish slavery but reproduce differently oppressive juridical and capitalist orders. While I see the value in rejecting a hard distinction between the flight from and the fight against slavery, it might nonetheless be useful to recognize multiple paths between slavery and freedom that overlap but whose genealogies and effects may differ categorically.

Second, while there are moments when it seems that, despite being closer to Patterson's insistence that flight inform fight, Roberts nonetheless succumbs to Genovese's teleological privileging of fight against flight, macro- against meso- or micropolitical practices. Systemic repair qua revolutionary abolition seems to represent the gold standard in the chapters on sovereign and sociogenic marronage, where Roberts refers to the "abridged radicalism" of other modes of marronage (103). Certainly, Roberts does not deny the weaknesses of sociogenic and especially sovereign marronage, but bottom-up "structural reordering" (115) of the political world based on the "lived experiences" of the formerly enslaved *en masse* seems best to embody Roberts's ideal. Certainly, maroon societies were impure in that they remained parasitical on the plantocratic order, but their retreat into (qua production of) the interstices of the plantation regime's sovereignty posed as fierce a critique as did the revolutionary abolition of plantocracy—which was *also* impure in its acceptance of juridical order on a large scale as the means to effect radical change.

Certainly, *Freedom as Marronage* proves that Roberts does not write in a tentative voice but always takes his stances boldly. As the book proceeds, it becomes clear that the operative vision of normative theory is prescriptive and

the orientation existentialist. In the book, most of the statements of the kind “Subject is (or denotes) Predicate” function more as prescription than description: e.g., “Sociogenesis is a pluralistic sanctuary, relational, intrinsic to revolution, and a humanism” (120), which means that a project for sociogenic marronage ought to be predicated in the given ways. Roberts’s existentialist orientation, meanwhile, is evidenced by the frequent recourse to the enslaved person’s “experience” which always seems to be informed by a metaphysics, epistemology, ontology, and phenomenology of freedom, although how is at times unclear. Together, prescription and existentialism generate a mode of theorizing by which the theorist authorizes how a subject who aims to be free ought to act, best illustrated by the reliance on the metaphor of the “blueprint” (e.g., “Glissant’s four-stage blueprint for sociogenic marronage” [144]). But this provokes questions. How transparent is the category of “experience”? (Joan Wallach Scott argued in the classic essay “The Evidence of Experience” that it is not a neutral, transhistorical concept but is constructed.) If *Freedom as Marronage* retains the transhistorical normativity that Roberts claims for it, then how can those who have not personally experienced chattel slavery benefit from the blueprints that slave theorists draw? Under what kinds of assumptions about authority can one pronounce a general normative claim from the interpretation of specific experience?

Arguing prescriptively from existence and experience, and the metaphysics that connects them, may authorize a mode of normative theorizing that downplays contingency. By contrast to blueprint-type theorizing, which certifies means and ends in advance, a normative theorizing that argues tentatively but descriptively about better *versus* worse effects of practices oriented to a provisional strategic aim accepts nothing but contingency. Rather than drawing a blueprint, this other normative theorizing tries to come to terms with complexly intricate, mutually affecting forces on a field of battle. Unable to know the whole, which undergoes alteration not only by every change in vantage point but also by each tactical contest, this other normative theorist cannot prescribe but can only make contingent quasi-descriptive claims about the apparent effects of local modifications of forces—better or worse effects with respect to a strategic aim. How conditional are the first steps constituting freedom according to this other metaphor, and how ambivalent their apparent effects! Whether they are worth the risk cannot be assessed programmatically but must be constantly reassessed with each risk taken.

### Response Jimmy Casas Klausen’s review of *Freedom as Marronage*

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— Neil Roberts

I want to thank Jimmy Casas Klausen for the review of my book. Klausen and I share a commitment to explore

the meaning of slavery and slavery’s significance for deciphering the concept of freedom. For me, the notion of *marronage*—as both a concept and lived experience of flight in its different modalities—serves as a compelling heuristic to answer questions about the dialectic of slavery and freedom often left unexplored in contemporary studies of politics.

I appreciate Klausen’s account of two facets of my argumentation in *Freedom as Marronage*: 1) the articulation of the category of *disavowal* and the traumatic effects of disavowing slavery and slave agency and 2) emphasis on *slave agency*. This second point, as Klausen aptly notes, fundamentally differentiations *marronage* and the book’s overall framework from Orlando Patterson’s celebrated—albeit misguided—theory of slavery as a form of social death and conception of slaves as, in effect, living zombies without an intrinsic capacity for agency.

There are three areas, however, I wish to focus this brief response on. They highlight Klausen’s constructive critique and concerns I have about misreadings of what I wrote and incomplete documentation of the book’s content.

First, to Klausen’s biggest “hesitation”: the expanded notion of *marronage* I present. Klausen is correct that the book aims to move beyond the following conventional division of *marronage* into two notions of flight: *petit* and *grand* *marronage*. My introduction of additional types of *marronage*—sovereign and sociogenic—, in Klausen’s estimation, “blunts the critical purchase of *marronage*” and privileges “fight against flight, macro- against meso- or micropolitical practices.”

A confession: yes, I care about revolutionary politics! That does *not*, though, mean I have jettisoned concerns for micro-level analyses and crucial insights garnered from the fugitive experiences, practices, and thought of individuals and isolationist communities fleeing regimes of slavery. The book seeks to distill how we can interpret those actions along with forms of slave agency involving collectivities and acts of flight at the macro-level. Also, Klausen’s “fight against flight” formulation simply misrepresents my book. Fight, as an act of struggle, is itself integral to processes of flight. The explication of Frederick Douglass, let alone the rest of the book, aims to make this clear.

Second, while reviews cannot include everything, it is striking what readers would not learn based on Klausen’s review. Intricate inquiries into the thought of British Romanticist Samuel Taylor Coleridge and philosopher and black feminist Angela Y. Davis mediate the book’s discussion of Douglass. I mention this because a key subtext of the monograph is an attempt to push scholars in the social sciences to rethink the texts, figures, and movements we draw upon to study ideas. Moreover, the book’s most controversial claim arguably is the assertion that human beings (past, present, and future) are born enslaved and

freedom is the process of flight from various forms of enslavement. This adage does not apply only to the modern period as Klausen suggests.

Finally, after reading *Fugitive Rousseau* and the last two paragraphs of Klausen's review, I am reminded that, while my training is in political science, my intellectual vocation is interdisciplinary. Klausen's commentary on *experience* and *blueprint* illuminate how my views of lived experience are shaped by the phenomenological, political, cognitive, and conceptions of existence linked to metaphysics that may appear heretical to political scientists. Metaphors are *not* my preoccupation. Sometimes heresy is necessary to change normative interpretations of freedom shrouded in disavowal and epistemological provincialism.

**Fugitive Rousseau: Slavery, Primitivism, and Political Freedom.** By Jimmy Casas Klausen. New York: Fordham University Press, 2014. 333pp. \$ 65.00 cloth.  
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— Neil Roberts, *Williams College*

The lack of attention to slavery as a concept, institution, and lived experience is an unfortunate reality throughout much of the discursive terrain within contemporary political theory and the wider field of political science. Notions of slavery—whether silenced or disavowed in the study of the science of politics—often become a leitmotif in other areas of the humanities and social sciences. The significance of slavery also extends to the physical sciences. The irony, however, is that slavery has been central to understandings of the human ever since the emergence of *homo sapiens*. Slavery continues to exist in late modernity, be it human trafficking, forced sexual work, or modes of unfree activity in carceral states. As prison abolitionists such as Angela Y. Davis note, the Thirteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution provides juridical support for the punitive treatment as slaves of persons “duly convicted” of a crime.

Discourse on the eighteenth-century Genevan thinker Jean-Jacques Rousseau epitomizes the aforementioned irony. This is all the more troubling given the integral role of slavery and slaves in Rousseau's conceptualizations of freedom, especially freedom's moral, psychological, and political valences. To be clear, in the case of Rousseau, there has been notable scholarship engaging his writings on slavery. They are, though, few and overwhelmingly dismissive. The work of Laurent Estève, Carole Pateman, Sue Peabody, Louis Sala-Molins, and Susan Buck-Morss exemplify this intellectual camp and the grounds for their critique, aspects of which are valid, have to do with Rousseau's elision of racial slavery throughout his oeuvre. The camp nevertheless reduces Rousseau's commentary on slavery to a particular modern form.

Another camp's works are not purely dismissive, yet they contain at best occasional references to Rousseau on slavery

and slaves. Think, for instance, of Patrick Riley's *The Cambridge Companion to Rousseau* (2001). Furthermore, Christie McDonald and Stanley Hoffmann's co-edited *Rousseau and Freedom* (2010) is emblematic of the ongoing trend of volumes devoted to Rousseau that do not have a single chapter connecting his theorizations on freedom to slavery and slave agency. Works of theory and intellectual history littered with silences and disavowals become merely historical fiction posing as factual self-evident truths.

This must cease. We can no longer remain in the Matrix if our aim is to describe accurately Rousseau's thought.

Thankfully, with the recent publication of works by Madeleine Dobie, David Lay Williams, Jane Anna Gordon, scholars advancing the “creolizing Rousseau” project initiated by Gordon and myself, and now Jimmy Casas Klausen, there is a growing body of literature exploring the relevance of Rousseau for interpreting various types of enslavement inclusive of, albeit not limited to, transatlantic racial slavery. The challenge of attribution still remains: that is, amidst these burgeoning conversations, analysts must decipher which claims Rousseau deserves credit for and what assertions result from stretching Rousseau's insights beyond his written record.

*Fugitive Rousseau* is an important book that foregrounds slavery; examines closely in distinct ways more familiar Rousseau texts (especially the *Discourse on Inequality*, or *Second Discourse*, *Émile*, and *Of the Social Contract*); inquires into select works by Rousseau, less mined in the current moment (such as the unfinished, posthumous *Émile and Sophie*); meditates on the meaning of Rousseau's choice of book titles, pages, and a frontispiece; turns surprisingly toward exegesis of the two Hellenistic traditions, usually considered in tension with one another—Stoicism and Epicureanism—to trace their influences on Rousseau's thought, rather than conventional scholarship situating Rousseau solely within the social contract tradition; introduces a fugitive conception of freedom that the author contends distills Rousseau's uniqueness; and outlines the implications of the latter idea for questions of civilization, empire, anarchism, and radical politics. The fifth chapter's articulation of “fugitive freedom,” a patently *political* and *collective* notion according to Klausen, serves as the book's crescendo (pp. 204–63). An account of histories of the act of “flight,” encapsulated in the French word *marronage* (marronnage, maroonage, maronage), is invoked to justify this reading. The dialect of slavery and freedom buttresses the entire work. It is noteworthy that Klausen excludes from consideration Rousseau's autobiographical writings and the period Rousseau himself was a fugitive (p. 28).

Klausen defends a heretical interpretation of Rousseau by emphasizing three areas: 1) language, 2) primitivist and counterprimitivist discourses, and 3) models of exit. With regards to language, Klausen argues, against the critics mentioned earlier, that Rousseau was crucially concerned with racial slavery and the plight of modern

chattel slaves. Audience here matters. “Rousseau makes chattel slavery salient to an audience of people who have never themselves been subject to it” (p. 34). Klausen posits that Rousseau uses two literary devices—metonymy and metaphor—to displace and condense different forms of slavery. Rousseau deploys hyperbolic and symbolic language in order to evoke a response of indignation from a European audience whose governments were empire-building, had colonies, and cultivated, at home and abroad, slavery, the quintessential unfreedom. While Klausen’s prose is an exercise in linguistic ventriloquism, demanding the utmost patience of the reader, the point here is an important one worth thinking through.

Klausen also claims Rousseau desires to catalogue the overlapping effects of the “senses” of slavery: chattel (institutionalized private property), moral (dependence), and political (despotic subjugation). These types of enslavement are to be recognized as forms of domination both individual and collective enslaved agents experience (pp. 82–87). Klausen’s emphasis on domination is reminiscent neo-republican formulations of freedom as a mode of domination from the arbitrary interference by another.

Most striking is Klausen’s meticulous, and at times brilliant, exegesis of the title page and frontispiece of the *Second Discourse*, a treatise published by Marc Michel Rey, containing an epigraph by Aristotle, and featuring a famous image with a caption underneath (“He returns to his Equals”) hitherto receiving different previous appreciations. Reproductions of the visual works, along with *Social Contract* title page, accompany the analysis (pp. 79, 81, 216). By delving into the words and aesthetics of this seemingly familiar text, Klausen opens up a fresh conversation on the political language of freedom that Rousseau specialists and non-specialists alike will find inviting.

Klausen, however, views a negotiation occurring in Rousseau between two conceptions of *political* freedom: a cultural “primitivism” privileging nature, purity, and a politics of reservation, exemplified in the *Second Discourse*; and a “counterprimitivism” focused on the fugitive actions of non-civilized, non-domesticated agents who seeks to flee the unfreedom of enslavement (pp. 3–4, 210). Klausen’s inquiries into *Émile* and *Émile and Sophie* complicate the relationship between these notions, for the travels of the character Émile, tutored through the negative education project of Jean-Jacques, in the completed novel and the subsequent capture of Émile by Barbary pirates and tale of Émile’s enslavement in Algiers in the latter work point to Rousseau’s nativism and weariness of cosmopolitanism (pp. 115–58, 159–203). So how can the enslaved become free?

Exit from flawed social and political orders is central. Albert Hirschman’s exit model, while notable, remains insufficient (pp. 4, 65). Klausen turns to the model of fugitive slaves, beings who on the one hand do not believe the malignant orders they are fleeing can be overturned at

the time of their flight, and on the other hand enact of mode of resistance that can have the effect of catalyzing transforming the social and political worlds they exit from. Fugitives have their own body politics (p. 227). Fugitives, in Klausen’s vision, embark on a collective “ceaseless exodus” and physical marronage: a flight from domination whose pluralistic search for a Promised Land out of slavery requires rejecting ideals of purity and teleological redemption narratives (pp. 250–52, 262–63). This is *fugitive freedom*. While becoming a fugitive stops short of revolution, it is radical.

Klausen formulates a provocative vision. The explication of fugitive freedom also underscores the first of my concerns, posed in the spirit of critical dialogue: the unacknowledged distinction between the stated position of “Rousseau” and a “Rousseauian” argument. For all of the deft analysis of Rousseau’s primary texts in *Fugitive Rousseau*, the core assertions about fugitive freedom are admittedly speculative, or Rousseauian. Klausen writes, “In contrasting fugitive political freedom against the other two models—Émilean countercosmopolitanism and autarkic small or marginal states—I am not performing a straightforward exegesis of Rousseau’s written record” (p. 25). With the exception of the interesting foray into Rousseau on the ancient Israelites and flight (pp. 249–63), the fugitive freedom thesis bases itself on extrapolation. Many Rousseau scholars would find this objectionable. This leads me to wonder if Klausen and the critics of Rousseau’s written record on racial slavery are actually not disagreeing, for they each contend revisionist “Rousseauian” work building on Rousseau’s oversights might have useful intellectual and political results.

Next is a phenomenological query: what of the *experience* of slavery? The book describes metaphor and metonymy in Rousseau, yet we do not read about experience. My intuition is that this is not Klausen’s fault, but rather a representation of the texts examined. I wonder how an interrogation of the lived experience of bondage would push Klausen not only in a rereading of Rousseau, but also a reconsideration of fugitive body politics and what marronage means beyond its conventional historical and anthropological usages. Such terrain could include models of exit *and* mass revolution.

The decision to reduce political fugitivity to the collective while bracketing individual flight explains the exclusion of Rousseau’s autobiographical writings and works composed while Rousseau was a fugitive. The effect, however, is a limitation to the radicalism of Klausen’s argument. And this connects to the experience of slavery question. Exploring Rousseau’s 1764 *Letters Written from the Mountain*, for example, penned when Rousseau was a fugitive from French authorities, would be suggestive. Rousseau was residing in the mountainous Swiss community of Môtiers and had already read libel targeted at him by the Catholic Archbishop of Paris. Then the Procurator-General of

Geneva publically criticized him. In engrossing prose, Rousseau responds with *Letters*, bringing out additional dimensions of his fugitive thinking on slavery and freedom. He would be on the run again to the Île Saint-Pierre months after *Letters's* publication. *Confessions* offers reflective context for that period. Ascertaining how a fugitive struggles for individuality is as valuable as assessing struggles for collective flight.

Finally, the paradigmatic status attributed to Josephine Baker in the last pages of the afterword with the following statement is puzzling: “perhaps fugitive Rousseau’s best and most emblematic follower *playacted* being unable to read him. I speak of Josephine Baker—diasporic Baker of the banana skirt, of the electrifying ‘Danse sauvage,’ in short, of metropolitan French imperial fantasy” (p. 279, orig. emphasis). The quandary has less to do with Baker and more the trajectory of Klausen’s book. There is no framing of black Atlantic philosophy up until this concluding juncture. Baker is presented as counterprimitivist despite the description of her “cultural marronage” appearing classically primitivist (pp. 279–83). Perhaps it the “hidden transcripts” of the *dammés* that James Scott defines, Robin Kelley explicates with respect to Afro-modern actors, and Frantz Fanon and Sylvia Wynter before both theorized in relation to the slave’s process of marronage (physical, psychological, and social-structural): surreptitious fugitive actions whose double meanings are the grounds for an authentic upheaval out of slavery and the materialize of freedom. I would have enjoyed reading more background to Baker’s heretical fugitivity.

*Fugitive Rousseau* is an excellent study that refashions the terms of debate on Rousseau’s political theory. Its signal achievement is re-centering slavery as the foundation upon which future theorizations of Rousseau on freedom must rest. For that, we should all should be grateful.

**Response to Neil Roberts’ review of *Fugitive Rousseau***  
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— Jimmy Casas Klausen

So mutually resonant are our projects, I often considered Roberts’s book and his review of my own as exercises in self-criticism. In the variation in our archives and emphases, I recognized limitations in *Fugitive Rousseau*. There are, however, fundamental differences between our projects, best captured by Friedrich Nietzsche. In *On the Genealogy of Morals* (I.13), Nietzsche criticized the tendency to project a “doer” behind every deed (e.g., calling a flash the action of a prior “being” called “lightning”). Axiomatically, I tried to heed—though it is very difficult given conventions of modern Euro-Atlantic thought—Nietzsche’s warning and

will use his suspicion of the subject to answer Roberts’s queries in regard to experience, the distinction between Rousseauian and Rousseau, and finally the import of Josephine Baker.

Why insist on “experience”—an ambiguous category? Is experience deeds? Or does it refer to a subjectivity behind acts? Might experience sometimes indeed *enable* capture by making subjects knowable? Surely, a slave or former slave would enact freedom differently than Rousseau, who was never enslaved but, I argue, nonetheless linked varieties of unfreedom to slavery. However, the difference between, say, Frederick Douglass and Rousseau need not be explained by subjectivity but by the dissimilar resistances their respective deeds must answer.

When it comes to Rousseau’s projection, through his many autobiographical texts, of a “self” behind his writings and actions, Nietzsche’s statement that the subject is a fiction superadded to deeds could not be more true. Rousseau’s many self-reflections rhetorically conjured subjective depth behind his deeds, but if these texts themselves are acts, they cannot un-problematically serve as adequate explanations for other acts. Indeed, especially for Rousseau, self-reflection often deflects from, rather than explains, other acts. Consequently, I avoided addressing Rousseau’s reports of his struggles as a fugitive as truly illuminating his theorizing of unfreedom.

Even when Rousseau himself is not distracting readers with self-conjuration, interpreters gladly do, following the many scholarly conventions for assembling deeds/texts to project a precedent authorial intention. It is restrictive, however, to attribute too much to what Roberts calls “the stated position of ‘Rousseau.’” By contrast, to insist on a “Rousseauian” line of thought does not pretend to a comprehensive truth behind the writings. Unmooring texts/deeds from an author-function releases them from subject-driven expectations that discrete deeds need refer to one another or be internally coherent. Texts/deeds can thus be assembled otherwise, to stage other truth-effects.

Constantly upsetting expectations for “experiential” coherence or clarity, Josephine Baker seemed to me an apt figure for concluding *Fugitive Rousseau*. Certainly she could be inserted into a genealogy of the Black Atlantic, but for me Baker emblemizes in the most paradoxical way a Rousseauian fugitive body politics: by *submitting* to French imperial fantasies, she became a fugitive in Paris. She proves that freedom involves not a pure escape to a distant space or isolated culture, but instead involves impure acts of compelled, serial performances that court public scrutiny while deforming social norms, not least by deflecting from, and rendering uncapturable, any possible abiding doer behind her deeds.