

## Marronnage as Reclamation

Marronnage, in many ways, was about enslaved people reclaiming possession of themselves and other intangible and tangible resources that enslavers stole from them. Colonial society aimed to nullify enslaved Africans' identities and sever ties to their cultural heritages. Enslavers commodified enslaved people, extracted their labor power for no compensation, dominated enslaved people's time, and denied them access to any form of capital. Maroons upended these conditions through various acts to reclaim themselves, their time, and their resources, representing a "dialectical response to the capitalist plantation system whose imperative was to reduce them to units of labor power – to dehumanize them," as Sylvia Wynter has argued (n.d.: 73–74). Maroons' actions reflected their oppositional consciousness, which is defined as a "set of insurgent ideas and beliefs constructed and developed by an oppressed group for the purpose of guiding its struggle to undermine, reform, or overthrow a system of domination" (Morris 1992: 363). In reversing the conditions of dispossession, maroons' acts of reclamation at the micro-level were foundational for revolutionary tactics and eventually expanded to the larger project of socio-political reclamation of the nation *Ayiti/Haiti* (Roberts 2015). The current chapter attempts to detect an oppositional consciousness among enslaved African descendants and maroons in the years before the Haitian Revolution. Social scientists do not often consider the Haitian Revolution, and its antecedent forms of resistance, to be part of the revolutionary processes that constituted the making of the modern era (Bhambra 2016). However, through their oppositional actions during marronnage, runaways embodied their own social, economic, and political projects by reclaiming personal sovereignty, asserting

themselves as free and equal citizens, and building solidarity through their social networks. While colonists' definitions of freedom and liberty meant having the right to engage in the "free trade" and enslaving of human flesh, maroons enacted opposing forms of modernity, giving meaning to the revolutionary slogan "*liberté, égalité, fraternité*" well before the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man.

In Saint-Domingue and other French colonies, the *Code Noir* outlined royal dictates for enslaved people's behavior and the status of their condition. The *Code Noir* articulated the economic, social, and political apparatuses that bolstered the subjugation and enslavement of African people while justifying the brute force violence of the colonial plantation enterprise. Though the *Code Noir* was in part written with the intention to "protect" the enslaved with guidelines for punishments, enslavers in Saint-Domingue generally disregarded top-down policies from the French crown and exerted physical punishments that exceeded regulations issued by the king. The *Code Noir* implemented strict rules that were designed to constrain black people's everyday behaviors and movements, with the assumption that access to freedom of movement, time, material resources and forms of capital, political power, and the ability to bear arms would contribute to rebellion. The *Code Noir* barred enslaved people from congregating with others from different plantations for any purpose without the written permission of their owner, riding horses, or walking on the roads after dark; it prohibited them from carrying weapons in public, and in the aftermath of the Mackandal case, any enslaved person carrying a sword or a machete could face three months in prison. According to Articles XVIII, XIX, and XXIV of the *Code Noir*, the enslaved could not sell any sugarcane under any circumstances, could not profit from the sale of commodities or foodstuffs at markets without the slave owner's permission, and were not allowed to earn income for the trade of subsistence food on their days off. Particularly in the aftermath of the Seven Years War, eighteenth-century Saint-Domingue was an increasingly repressive society where philosophies and scientific ideologies of white supremacy took root and further shaped constrictions on the enslaved and even free people of color. For example, black people were not allowed to bear the names of their white patrons, or even wear clothing items or hairstyles that might convey similarity to French culture; free people of color were banned from practicing medicine and eventually were banned from mainland France altogether.<sup>1</sup>

Plantation owners and members of the management class benefitted from the power dynamics created by the *Code Noir*, which authorized

them to exert control and surveillance upon all areas of enslaved people's lives. Drawing on the likes of Paulo Freire and Frantz Fanon, John Gaventa has argued that such stark imbalances rely on three dimensions of power: brute force tactics; social, economic, and political apparatuses that preclude the subordinated from seeking or obtaining power; and, most notably found in colonial situations, the hegemonic "shaping of wants, values, roles, and beliefs of the colonized (Gaventa 1980: 32)." This combination of tripartite power dynamics, when they are fully exercised, can make rebellion even more difficult to observe. In such extreme conditions of structural powerlessness — accompanied by hegemonic cultures and ideologies that legitimate social, economic, and political disparities — some might assume that the lack of major enslaved people's rebellions in Saint-Domingue, such as those that occurred in places like Jamaica and Brazil, would point to a general quiescence to domination and injustice. Enslavers often assumed that bondspeople accepted their status and desired to mimic the behaviors of whites, such as adopting styles of dress or dance movements from France, for instance. It was not uncommon for plantation owners to incentivize docility and deference with trinkets or money. For example, Fort Dauphin planter Louis Tousard incorrectly thought it wise to pacify a rebellious enslaved *commandeur* named Pierre Loulou with a new coat.<sup>2</sup> However, Tousard's attempt was a response to the "onstage" face that enslaved people like Pierre Loulou had to present in order to avoid violent punishments and to prevent suspicion of their "offstage" actions, or behaviors that occurred beyond the immediate sight or understanding of power-holders and opposed control of the dominant class (Scott 1990).

It is the contention of this book that the enslaved of Saint-Domingue never fully internalized the logic of their subordination into their collective consciousness, evinced by the perpetuation of African-based rituals and militaristic ideas, and the island's *longue-durée* tradition of marronnage. Individual and collective actions that violated either parts or entire systems of oppression and the hegemonic ideologies or cultures of ruling classes are a window through which to see oppositional consciousness. The enslaved regularly transgressed colonial restrictions; for example, enslaved people bought and sold goods, or leased themselves out as laborers at the *nègre marche* in Port-au-Prince and Le Cap. However, other actions — especially those undertaken by maroons when they fled — not only speak to enslaved people's desires for economic autonomy, but point toward conceptions of themselves as 'free' with the right and liberty to define their identities, to self-protect, and to determine the course of

their own lives. When enslaved people escaped, they knew that they were risking their own death, and that of loved ones, and needed protection and resources to enhance the probability of a successful escape. To do this, they had to violate the colony's policies and assume certain specific oppositional actions to ensure their survival.

This chapter brings attention to how maroons reclaimed their humanity by reimagining their status and identity, taking possession of forms of capital and raw materials that upheld and sustained plantations' divisions of labor, adopting tactics of self-arming and militancy, and reclaiming their time. The fugitive advertisements placed in *Les Affiches américaines* give some insight into the minds of runaways by speculating on the actions they took in the minutes or days before or after they fled. Rather than interpret these actions through the lens of enslavers' foreshadowing of maroons' movements for the purposes of surveillance and re-enslavement, this chapter employs subaltern analysis of maroon actions as they are linked to a broader sense of collective consciousness regarding freedom and liberation. Subversive reading of the advertisements highlights maroons' *hidden* transcripts, their oppositional actions, gestures, and practices that "confirm, contradict, or inflect" the narratives that plantation personnel sought to convey within the *public* transcript – the very same advertisement deployed to re-establish and reaffirm control over the enslaved (Scott 1990: 2–5). While Chapter 7 will bring attention to macro-level economic, political, and environmental changes that affected trends of marronnage as a repertoire of contention, the current chapter narrows down to the micro-level actions that were influenced by shared consciousness and that constituted the tactics of marronnage. Repertoire tactics can include a wide range of activities such as civil disobedience, confrontations with police, consciousness raising, strikes, bodily assault and murder, throwing objects, looting, singing, arson, and many other actions (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004). Macro-historical contexts shape the types of tactics that can be used within a particular setting; enslaved people's "toolkit" of resistance tactics was generally narrow, including mostly individualized and embodied resistance actions such as suicide, work tool sabotage, or feigning illness, as well as other actions that were most immediately feasible.

Verta Taylor and Nella Van Dyke identify three characteristics of repertoire tactics, "contestation, intentionality, and the construction of collective identity (2004: 268)," that can make claims-making during marronnage more easily identifiable. Maroons' repertoire tactics relied on embodied acts of contestation to pursue changes in structural power relations (see Tables 5.1–5.3), and to help develop oppositional

TABLE 5.1. *Frequency distribution of oppositional actions, (N = 12,857)*

Oppositional actions	Total	Percent
Passing as free	576	4.5%
Appropriation of goods	410	3.2%
Bearing arms	64	0.5%
Repeat escape	58	0.45%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,108</b>	<b>8.6%</b>

TABLE 5.2. *Chi-square test, oppositional actions by gender and age (N = 12,857)*

Gender	Passing as free	Appropriation of goods	Bearing arms	Repeat escape	Total
Men	429 (48.6%)	350 (39.7%)	58 (6.6%)	45 (5.1%)	882 (100%)
Women	129 (72.9%)	34 (19.2%)	2 (1.1%)	12 (6.7%)	177 (100%)
Boys	11 (31.4%)	19 (54.3%)	4 (11.4%)	1 (2.86%)	35 (100%)
Girls	7 (50%)	7 (50%)	0	0	14 (100%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>576 (52%)</b>	<b>410 (37%)</b>	<b>64 (5.8%)</b>	<b>58 (5.2%)</b>	<b>1,108 (%100)</b>

Note:  $p = 0.000$ .

TABLE 5.3. *Chi-square test, oppositional actions by birth origin (1,068 observations)*

Birth origins	Passing as free	Appropriation of goods	Bearing arms	Repeat escape	Total
Saint-Domingue	301 (58.9%)	168 (32.88%)	22 (4.31%)	20 (3.91%)	511 (100%)
Africans & Atlantic creoles	259 (46.5%)	223 (40.04%)	40 (7.18%)	35 (6.28%)	557 (100%)

Note:  $p = 0.000$ .

consciousness and collective identity. One way runaways reimagined their status and identity was by passing as free. Before retreating from plantations, some runaways who could read or write in French or other European languages – a form of human capital that was valued in the Americas – replicated documents to declare themselves free. Others found “fancy” clothing or otherwise disguised themselves to be considered as part of the population of free people of color. Maroons also enacted

intentionality through strategic decision-making and conscious intentions to create lasting change for themselves. They appropriated material goods and technologies through looting horses, mules, or canoes to reach their chosen hideout quickly, or they took money, clothing, or food to consume or to exchange at a market. They empowered themselves with militant actions by bearing arms such as guns, sabers, sickles, and other work tools as they prepared to endure the high-risk action of living in marronnage. Finally, maroons reclaimed themselves and their time by repeatedly escaping or remaining at-large for longer periods of time. Those who escaped repeatedly faced increasingly violent repercussions with each return, yet fear of brutal punishment was not enough to dissuade the most resolute fugitives. By fleeing, maroons denied the plantocracy access to their knowledge pools they had garnered as enslaved laborers and marshalled those resources toward the creation of self-freed social networks and independent living zones. The time that maroons appropriated not only allowed them to live on self-defined terms, it also facilitated the space to recruit others into marronnage. The diffusion of oppositional ideas and tactics, through the repertoire tactic of marronnage, helped to spread collective consciousness and solidarity as the Haitian Revolution approached.

## REIMAGINING STATUS AND IDENTITY

### Passing as Free

Though the *Code Noir* allowed unmarried slave owners to marry bondswomen and manumit them and their resulting children, most enslaved people in Saint-Domingue had few options for formal emancipation from slavery – even when the law was on their side. For example, a group of six *mulâtres* were scheduled for manumission by their owner, and soon after his death they parted from the plantation. Unbeknownst to them, he had not actually freed them and they were still considered fugitives. Four of the men were returned, but one woman and her children remained at large. She won her freedom in court, but it was later revoked and the women were re-enslaved.<sup>3</sup> For many, freedom dreams could only be fulfilled through marronnage – even though Saint-Domingue's intendant declared in 1767 that maroons would never be formally recognized as free – maroons embodied liberated identities regardless of legal recognition.<sup>4</sup> Henriette, a Kongolesé woman around 30 years old, escaped her owner in Le Cap during the night in mid-November 1771. Henriette was described as a thin woman with an elongated chin and was noted for her

work as a good seamstress, laundress, and ironer. The advertisement placed for her return could not definitively state whether she left as a maroon on the 14th or 15th, meaning that Henriette had effectively slipped away without her absence being detected for at least two days. However, by the time the advertisement was published in *Les Affiches américaines* two weeks later on November 30, the contact person on the advertisement – Sieur Trutou, a hat maker from Le Cap – had begun to speculate that Henriette was presenting herself as a free woman of color.<sup>5</sup> Given her expertise in sewing and cleaning clothes, Henriette indeed may have been able to create outfits to adorn herself in a similar style to Saint-Domingue’s free women of color, who were famed for their fashion sense, and to blend into that group as she set out as a self-liberated woman.

The repertoire tactics of marronnage were actions that people knew how use and were feasible given the confines of the context in which they lived. Enslaved people’s awareness of the free population, and its political, economic, and social influence in Saint-Domingue, was part of the societal context within which maroons inserted themselves as liberated people. The most common way fugitives embodied oppositional consciousness and countered colonial era codes was to blend into the population of free people of color, at times by replicating documents or verbally attesting to their non-slave status. Of the total runaway population, 576 people, nearly 5 percent of runaways, either replicated or took free papers, disguised themselves as a free person of color, or took extended liberties with their *billets* or “tickets,” which were written slips that allowed an individual enslaved person to travel with their enslaver’s permission (Table 5.1). Many advertisements used the phrase “se disent libre” – calls themselves free – to indicate that fugitives were self-presenting or telling people that they were a free person of color. Any enslaved person who pretended to be free but could not produce an eyewitness to verify their emancipation could be fined 3,000 *livres* and punished by a sentence of three months in prison; and anyone caught in public after eleven o’clock at night would receive 15 whip lashes.<sup>6</sup> Yet these punishments did not deter maroons from reimagining their status in order to reinforce a sense of dignity, self-respect, and liberation.

Enslaved women like Henriette were much more likely than men to choose attempting to pass as free as a marronnage tactic (Table 5.2). David Geggus attributes the differences in gender and birth origin in passing for free as linked to free people of color and the notion that lighter-skinned women had an easier time blending with free women. Creole women, especially those who were domestic laborers, may have

had better access to writing materials and the plantation owners' files to replicate or take tickets or passes. For example, a creole woman named Rosette had already been missing for three months when an advertisement for her disappearance was published on November 23, 1771. Rosette had lived in France with her owner for ten years and, upon returning to Saint-Domingue, decided to free herself and to articulate her status as such.<sup>7</sup> The economic power of free women of color in Le Cap and Port-au-Prince would have been an attractive and attainable achievement for a woman like Rosette, whose long-term residence in France would have deepened her cultural competency and language skills, which would have allowed her to become a member, on her own terms, of the *gens du couleur*. On the other hand, Africanity bore its own relation to freedom pursuits. Clarice, a 45-year-old Arada woman, took her ten-year-old creole daughter as she fled their owner in Port-au-Prince during the winter of 1790. The advertisement announcing their marronnage specified that Clarice had "the marks of her country," or cultural scarifications, and that her unnamed daughter also had a scar on her upper eyelids. Neither of them had been stamped by their owner in Saint-Domingue, but Clarice did bear the stamp of the ship that transported her from the Bight of Benin to the Caribbean.<sup>8</sup> The advertisement's composer highlighted Clarice and her daughter's scars not just to identify them, but to differentiate them as African, which presumably put them at a disadvantage in the French colony. However, we might consider Clarice's scars as part of a Fon-based cultural heritage that would have informed her self-declared freedom. If Clarice was born around 1745, the Dahomean-Oyo conflicts were likely part of the context of her adulthood and increasingly shaped her worldview as she and others faced the instability of freedom at the Bight of Benin.

The gendered dimension of passing for free in marronnage, combined with the fact that enslaved women were more likely to be manumitted by their owners than enslaved men, means that even as enslaved women reclaimed their freedom, they in some ways conceptualized freedom within the boundaries of the colony's legal frameworks. The constrained possibilities for freedom shaped the imagination of what could be actualized. However, enslaved men were also structurally privy to avenues to emancipation through service to the *maréchaussée* – the police force primarily composed of freemen of color tasked with chasing fugitive runaways – and through self-purchase using funds saved from artisanal trade work. Despite the prominence of free women of color in the port cities, for women passing as free at times meant traversing gender identity



and assuming masculinity. For example, a creole woman named Helene from the Paterson plantation called herself free and was described as “disguising herself often as a man,” as did a Kongo woman named Esther who fled disguised as a man.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, an advertisement posted on August 15, 1789 announced the escape of a creole woman named Victoire, who fled as a maroon from a Grande-Riviere de Jacmel plantation three years earlier and was often seen frequenting the areas between Jacmel and Léogâne. Victoire was described as a beautiful 40-year-old – which may be part of the reason she chose to belie her attractiveness by disguising herself as a man and wearing the uniform of the *maréchaussée*.<sup>10</sup> For Victoire, the audaciousness of marronnage not only meant assuming the appearance of a member of the free people of color class; it also entailed performing militarized maleness, which was seemingly effective since she was able to avoid capture for three years.

Saint-Domingue-born creoles were more likely (though not considerably so) than Africans and other Atlantic creoles to pass as free (Table 5.3). This is probably because enslaved people from Saint-Domingue were likely to have had closer proximity to the necessary tools to accomplish this aim – such as European language literacy, a trade, or household wares like clothing and writing materials. However, though other Atlantic creoles may not have been fully accustomed to the French language and Saint-Domingue’s landscape, several Caribbean-born runaways seem to have had the advantage of speaking, reading, or writing the dominant languages of the Atlantic world and they used these capabilities to move fluidly from enslavement to self-fashioned freedom. Marc, a bi-racial creole man from Martinique, was a cook who escaped wearing a blue frock coat and his hair in a ponytail. The advertisement stated that Marc was very “clever” and was perhaps carrying a fake ticket to attest to his freedom.<sup>11</sup> Emmanuel was a maroon described as a “creole of the Spanish islands,” who had a slim figure, was missing two of his front teeth, and wore a short beard. Emmanuel had escaped his owner in Le Cap on more than one occasion. The first time, he was arrested with several others from the same plantation and they were placed in the jail at Saint Marc. The second time Emmanuel escaped, between the end of October and the first of November 1779, seems to have been the last time he was officially seen: he took his clothes and was passing as free near Fort Dauphin. Emmanuel was also described as speaking English, Dutch, and Spanish, which would have allowed him to traverse into Santo Domingo undetected as a free black man. Language seems to have

facilitated his passage into freedom – two years after the first advertisement was published, he had still not been found.<sup>12</sup>

Other cases problematize the question of who had access to self-fashioned freedom that was legible in Saint-Domingue; those born in the Caribbean were not the only ones who were exposed to a wide array of cultural, religious, and linguistic practices. Catherine was a laundress born in the Kongo, who may have experienced relations with Portuguese colonists, traders, and enslavers while in her homeland. When she escaped her owner in Dondon, she set out “calling herself Portuguese, or sometimes Swedish, knowing how to speak Spanish.”<sup>13</sup> We do not know the nature of Catherine’s familiarity with the Portuguese and the Spanish – it is possible that she was transported to the Caribbean on ships owned by either country – but what is clear is that she used her experiences from the Middle Passage to her advantage. Similarly, Jean, a wigmaker by trade who also was born in the Kongo, was described as calling himself creole since his good French and little Spanish made him “able to play the role of a free negro by his intelligence.” His owners also suspected that Jean had taken several pieces of gold with him as he escaped.<sup>14</sup>

### Appropriating Material Goods and Technologies

Not only was enslaved labor exploited for no compensation, enslaved people were prohibited from financially benefitting from other types of economic activity such as trading food, sugarcane, or other commodities. To counter being dispossessed of any economic autonomy, maroons gravitated to cities and town markets to participate in “market marronage” (Sweeney 2019). Enslaved people in the areas surrounding Cap Français were exposed to many of the luxuries available in the city, which attracted people from all walks of life, especially during the weekend markets. Urban slaves, African, and mixed-race individuals alike purchased their own freedom and in some instances went on to own businesses and real estate. The Petit Guinée (“Little Africa”) neighborhood was composed of *gens du couleur* and *affranchis* and was a magnet for runaways, enabling them to socialize and rent rooms as they re-fashioned their lives as free people. During a search of Petit Guinée in the early 1780s, police found over 200 runaways.<sup>15</sup> Le Cap was a rowdy city of 20,000, patrolled by fewer than 20 police officers – leading to the 1785 Chamber of Agriculture report about *calendas* and other gatherings of slaves (see Chapter 3).<sup>16</sup> In June 1786, colonial authorities flogged and

hanged a group of maroons, enslaved people, and free blacks accused of theft in the public square of Le Cap; they whipped and sentenced others to the chain gang for forging free passes and renting rooms from a freeman named Larose.<sup>17</sup> On the night of January 15, 1785, the group had entered the room of a free *mulâtress* named Catherine and stole furniture and other effects. Included in the court statement were François, an enslaved man who belonged to a free woman named Jeannette; Colas, a slave; Bijou; Alexandre; Jean-Louis, an enslaved Kongolese; Versailles; Jean Louis, an enslaved Mondongue; Anne; Sieur Masse; Hypolite; Cesar, an enslaved mattress maker; Toussaint, a maroon who formerly was enslaved by the free widow Jupiter; and Jean-Louis, a creole wigmaker.<sup>18</sup>

The complex strata of race, color, status, and class in Le Cap made these kinds of informal economic activities possible. The population density of the city and the ongoing interactions between enslaved people, free people of color, and runaways facilitated connections between them to circumvent colonial structures through rebellions, conspiracies, and other forms of resistance. Both enslaved people and maroons took part in informal trading of wares and illicit expropriation of resources to bolster a sense of economic independence and freedom. People of African descent attempted to demonstrate economic autonomy and accumulate various amounts of capital, even when it cost them their lives to do so. In January 1775, three men in Le Cap – Joseph Lacroix, who worked as clerk for Sieur Foäche, and two enslaved men named Jolicœur and David – were arrested for breaking into Foäche’s safe and stealing 70,000 *livres*. While Jolicœur and David were returned to their enslavers, Lacroix received a harsher sentence, death by hanging in the marketplace, since he used his key to enter Foäche’s house.<sup>19</sup> Mardy, a Kongo man, was convicted in 1784 of burglarizing and assassinating his enslaver, for which he was disemboweled on the breaking wheel torture device and decapitated. The authorities exposed his head on a pike at Fossette, outside Le Cap, where enslaved people typically performed their burial rites.<sup>20</sup> Two enslaved men and one woman sawed a hole in a white man’s home in Limbé and stole merchandise, an offense for which they were executed in 1786.<sup>21</sup> A creole man named Cezar, owned by a Capuchin priest, was accused of trafficking enslaved women and men from Gonaïves and attempting to make money from the sales, which was a violation of the 1758 Le Cap ruling. After the discovery of Cezar’s plan, he was condemned to death by hanging; also prosecuted were the proprietor who rented him a room and the free people of color who replicated Cezar’s free papers.<sup>22</sup>

Maroons also appropriated resources that could be considered forms of capital that could allow them to participate in the market for trade, or enable them to use materials for subsistence farming and consumption within self-liberated communities. Although many enslaved people attempted to escape spontaneously when they viewed an immediate window of opportunity, others planned their journey as carefully as possible. Careful deliberation was necessary to avoid capture and to reach a chosen destination. Food, money, clothing, or horses – which the enslaved were prohibited from riding – were necessary for survival or to expedite the escape, and over 400 runaways appropriated such items during marronage. Africans and other Atlantic creoles were over 7 percent more likely to steal items and provisions in order to escape than those born in Saint-Domingue (Table 5.3). In addition to taking flight in boats and canoes to navigate Saint-Domingue's waterways, maroons also took horses as either a means of transportation or to sell as livestock. Marie-Louise, a 'Sénégaloise woman,' and Prince, a Bambara man, fled as maroons from Terrier-Rouge and stole a red horse from a plantation in Trou as they made their escape.<sup>23</sup> Another couple, an unnamed woman and man, escaped Le Cap on a horse as they headed to Jean Rabel.<sup>24</sup>

A work gang *commandeur* named Petit-Jean fled a Port-à-Piment plantation on horseback after taking possession of three to four thousand *livres* worth of gold and clothing that allowed him to pass as free.<sup>25</sup> Twenty-five-year-old Azor of the Mondongue nation was a maroon suspected of conspiring with other blacks to steal a chest full of silver, jewelry, handkerchiefs and other articles, and a wallet containing various papers.<sup>26</sup> Some runaways seized opportunities to take items that were not necessarily directly needed for survival but may have served a purpose that was more significant – though difficult to discern. Free papers and replicated passes may not have been the only documents of interest to fugitives: for example, a creole man named Andre escaped with an unnamed woman who had been charged with fleeing the prison of Le Cap, taking with them papers belonging to the manager of the Damare plantation.<sup>27</sup> Many runaways embodied more than one oppositional action, appropriating plantation materials and arming themselves. For example, Pierre, a creole of Gros-Morne, left as a maroon with a horse, 600 *livres*, guns, a machete, and was wearing the jacket of his owner Adam Courier.<sup>28</sup> Several advertisements were published over the course of four years for a Mozambican runaway named Nérestan, who escaped more than once between 1786 and 1790 and was seen wielding a large machete and claiming to be free. Nérestan had taken refuge among

enslaved people from several sugar plantations around Matheux, who brought him stolen goods in exchange for rum that he bought from local drink stands.<sup>29</sup>

## MILITANCY

Repertoire tactics that involve some level of militancy, such as violence, and other forms of public disruption are considered effective means of creating change because they require actors to assume an increased commitment to the actions, and because of the level of uncertainty such actions engender among power-holders (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004: 280). Planters rightly feared violent uprisings of the enslaved, as violence represented not only clear discontent with the conditions of enslavement but a direct reciprocation of the violence that planters inflicted on the enslaved. Enslavers used violence to extract labor power, conversely in some cases “to kill the owner of the slaves’ labor power was the only way in which to regain ownership of that labor power” (Wynter n.d.: 134). Even at the risk of sure execution mandated by the *Code Noir* as punishment for killing or even physically assaulting a white person, bondspeople’s arming of themselves and uprisings against their owners became more frequent as the enslaved population increased.

In August 1758, 13 men and two women armed with guns, machetes, and billhooks attacked Thomas Bouchet of the southern Nippes district.<sup>30</sup> In 1775, a runaway named Francisque killed a plantation accountant.<sup>31</sup> The following year, a group of seven killed their owner named Poncet, a planter in Trou, who may have been some of the slaves’ father. Sannon, a *quarteron*, and Guillaume were sentenced to death and public exposure of their corpses. Several others were charged for their role in Poncet’s murder: a *commandeur* named Saintonge and a miller and coachman named Boussole were sentenced to death by being broken on the wheel; a *quarteron* woman named Sannite or Gogo was sentenced to death by strangulation after the birth of her child; and two “negres *nouveaux*,” Paul and Etienne, were sentenced to assist with the execution of the others and to serve in the chain gang in perpetuity.<sup>32</sup> A black woman named Rosalie killed her owner, Gautarel, with a knife in 1779, for which she was sentenced to having her hands cut off, and to be hanged and burned.<sup>33</sup> Also in 1779, runaways from the plantation La Ferronaye at Grand Rivière du Nord set fire to the sugarcane and poisoned the plantation steward and the overseer.<sup>34</sup> In April 1784, an Igbo man named Saint-Eloy was sentenced to death by strangulation for just hitting a white

man.<sup>35</sup> Lafortune killed his owner at Dondon in May 1786 by stabbing him in the chest and side, and he was sentenced to death at the breaking wheel.<sup>36</sup>

### Bearing Arms

Enslaved people were barred from carrying weapons in the colony but did so routinely, for instance, carrying *mayombo* fighting sticks at *calenda* ritual gatherings or when they were attempting to free themselves. They used work tools such as machetes and sickles, or stole pistols, hunting rifles, and swords as they faced the imminent danger of their journey. This type of hardware was familiar, or at least suitable, to Africans from regions where hand-to-hand combat was most common in warfare. Africans used swords, battleaxes, spears, firearms like muskets, and poison-laced arrows in their fighting styles and would have made effective use of available tools and weapons as maroons and rebels (Thornton 1999). Sixty-four absconders, mostly Africans and other Atlantic creoles, prepared themselves by illegally carrying some sort of weapon like a gun or a machete, and were considered armed and dangerous (Tables 5.1 and 5.3). La Fortune, an Arada *commandeur*, was believed to be armed with a machete when he escaped a Marmelade plantation in on July 1, 1790.<sup>37</sup> In May 1790, four African men from the “Maquoua” nation, Alerte, Adonis, Azor, and Polite, escaped the Mongirard plantation at l’Islet-a-Pierre-Joseph with guns, pistols, gunpowder, lead and other materials.<sup>38</sup> Two creoles, Cambray and Charlot, escaped carrying a sword and a machete.<sup>39</sup> Jannitte, a creole man, had escaped for two months in 1767 with a gun, a machete, and other effects.<sup>40</sup> Pierre Baillard escaped in January 1775 with a machete and two knives.<sup>41</sup> In February 1773, an entire group of armed runaways escaped Quarter Morin in the north: four men, Joseph, Belair, l’Africain, Theodore, and three women, Catherine, Colette, and Leonore; they were all Aradas and each took with them their sickles and hatchets.<sup>42</sup>

### RECLAMATION OF TIME

One of the more critical – or perhaps even the “ultimate resource for collective action” that runaways appropriated and could use for the purpose of organizing other maroons and potential rebels was time. Time is not abstract nor is it infinite, which limits certain social actors from feasibly performing certain tasks in the work of collective action

(Oliver and Marwell 1992: 257). Enslaved people were structurally disadvantaged in organizing themselves for revolt because their time was almost entirely monopolized by the demands of rigorous plantation labor regimes. Labor was highly regimented and in between tasks, there was little time for rest, recreation, or social connectivity until nightfall or Sundays. Some sugar plantations were 24-hour operations where laborers were separated by shifts, getting as little as four hours of sleep per night. *Commandeurs*, other plantation personnel, and the *maréchaussée* closely monitored enslaved people's time that was not spent directly on work to instill social control and prevent escape or any other type of resistance action. Time was socially constructed within a context of extreme inequality and relations of dominance and subordination to reinforce the economic, social, and political power of white slave owners.

Time was racialized and was a valuable form of capital; enslavers accumulated labor and financial capital through the extraction of enslaved people's time (Mills 2014). Racial time – meaning the temporal inequality that emerged from unequal power relations between racially dominant and subaltern groups (Hanchard 1999) – was the very structure that maroons challenged as they struggled for autonomy by appropriating time, for shorter periods as *petit* maroons or for longer periods as *grand* maroons. Just as time was not innocuous for enslavers, we can assume maroons similarly used their appropriated time to advance their own personal, social, economic, and political interests. As Neil Roberts (2015) has argued, marronnage was not just an act of flight, it engendered liminal spaces of liberation where maroons could garner and use time and other resources at their discretion. In the years preceding the Haitian Revolution, marronnage was an increasingly common tactic to accumulate time (Figure 5.1) and to do the mobilizing labor of establishing and expanding connections with potential rebel recruits and making key decisions regarding the impending revolt.

There were several ways enslaved people appropriated or manipulated time to facilitate marronnage: by remaining at-large for longer periods of time; escaping repeatedly; and aligning their escape according to holidays and changes in season.

### Long-Term Escapes

An important insight the advertisements provide is the approximate length of time the runaways had been missing, which allows us to determine runaways' relative success at absconding. Out of the 12,857

TABLE 5.4. *Maroons' length of escape in weeks (9,888 observations)*

Mean	Median	75% Percentile	90% Percentile	95% Percentile	99% Percentile	Range	Standard deviation
9.03	3	8	17	30	104	780	28.7

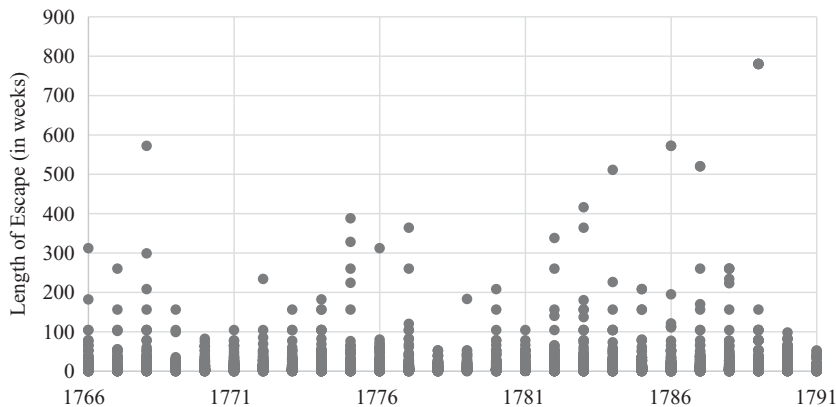


FIGURE 5.1. Length of escape (in weeks) over time

runaways listed in *Les Affiches*, 9,888 of them were described as having evaded escape for a particular period of time, which I measured in weeks, without being captured and jailed then returned to the plantation (Table 5.4). The average escape length was nine weeks, or approximately two months. The median was only three weeks, meaning most advertisements were placed less than one month after a person's disappearance; some advertisements were posted as soon as within the same week. Still, these figures help to distinguish *petit* marronnage – or temporary truancy from *grand* marronnage – the intent to permanently escape. The other half of runaways observed escaped for more than one month, which is longer than the few days of absenteeism typically associated with *petit* marronnage. Five percent of the observations, or 494 runaways, had been missing for 30 weeks, or over six months. Of these, 99 runaways had been missing for over two years. Genevieve, a 30-year-old creole woman, and her two *griffe* sons Françoise and Paule, had the longest reported escapes – 780 weeks or 15 years.<sup>43</sup> Longer lengths of escape clearly indicated a desire to live as a free person, however defined, away from plantation enslavement. Some of these escapees fled to Santo Domingo and



intermarried, some found maroon communities in the mountains, and others passed for free in Saint-Domingue's urban towns.

In addition to openly assaulting their owners and taking their property, the enslaved increasingly sought permanent refuge from the plantation system altogether. The histogram in Figure 5.1 shows a gradual increase in escape lengths over time, proving an escalation of *grand* marronage leading up to the Haitian Revolution. The rapid increase of the enslaved population after 1783 also signaled a steady increase of length of runaways' escapes reported in *Les Affiches américaines*; more runaways were reported missing for months and sometimes years. People were becoming knowledgeable about how to escape and were applying that knowledge to their freedom treks. A limitation to our understanding of *grand* marronage and runaways' length of escapes is the issue of underreporting. Plantation managers often failed to mention issues of marronage to planters who lived abroad, likely to avoid questions about mishandling of the enslaved workforce.<sup>44</sup> While private inventories and other records may indicate that plantations were missing laborers, these runaways do not always show up in *Les Affiches* advertisements.

For example, a 1775 inventory of the largest of the Galliffet sugar plantations, Grande Place, indicates there were seven people at large: François, a *mulâtre* missing since 1749; Augustin, age 57, Samuel, 60, and Andre Igbo, 53, all missing for "a very long time;" Mingo age 54; and Mathieu age 53 and Neptune *dit* Anga, 35, were both missing for four years. Eight years later, a 1783 inventory of the same plantation shows that Samuel, Andre, Mingo, François, Mathieu, and Neptune were still fugitives, or at most they may have been *de facto* *affranchis* who were colloquially referred to as *libres de savanne*. Others mentioned in this list had also committed *grand* marronage: Paul, age 33, was missing since September 9, 1775 and Marie-Françoise, *griffe*, since 1749. The 1783 inventory for Habitation Desplantes, another Galliffet property, shows that Michel, a 45-year-old Kongolese man, had been "en marronage" for a long time, as well as Alexandre, 26, who escaped in 1778. In the 1786 inventory for Grand Place, Blaise was added to the list of maroons. He was 32 and escaped on September 10, 1784, during a trip to the hospital. It seems that he was probably subsequently captured because, with the exception of Blaise, the original ten Grande Place and Desplantes runaways were still listed as maroons in January 1791.<sup>45</sup> This case serves as an example of the fact that some plantation managers and owners simply gave up looking for runaways with any real earnest, allowing fugitives to make out on their

own for years at a time, potentially having children and reproducing, and forming self-contained maroon communities or passing for free in nearby towns.

Besides plantation managers' negligence, other factors like group escapes, maroons' destinations, and their oppositional actions contributed to the ability of individuals to successfully escape. The differences in average lengths of escape between individual maroons and homogeneous and heterogeneous group escapes were not that large (Table 5.5). However, heterogeneous group escapes yielded a slightly longer length of escape of 9.8 weeks. This shows that racial solidarity and the various skills and forms of knowledge runaways carried with them were important resources that contributed to a slightly above-average length of escape. When looking at the average length of escape between runaways using neighborhood ties or journeys to other destinations – family, labor sites, former plantations, Spanish territory, and other fugitives – there was only a statistically significant difference in escape durations between labor/skills and the Spanish territory in facilitating escape (Table 5.6). The difference between them was 21 weeks: labor/skills contributed to an average of 10.6 weeks of escape, whereas those who escaped to Santo Domingo had an average of 31.86 weeks of escape. Thus, on average, runaways who decided to flee Saint-Domingue altogether, though a rarity, were the most “successful” runaways. The second most successful plan was to be harbored at other plantations, runaways hiding at plantations in the living quarters of their comrades had an average of 15.68 weeks of escape. Having family connections and linkages to other runaways had similar success rates of contributing to an average of approximately 14.3 weeks of escape.

The duration of escape for runaways who were passing for free was well above the average for the entire sample, which was 9.03 weeks (Table 5.4), meaning that passing as free was the most successful

TABLE 5.5. *Kwallis one-way tests of variance, groups' average lengths of escape (in weeks)*

	Mean	Standard deviation	Frequency
Individual escapes	9.19	24.81	6,154
Homogeneous group escape	8.18	37.01	2,432
Heterogeneous group escape	9.81	28.04	1,302
<b>Total observations</b>			<b>9,888</b>

Note:  $p = 0.0001$ .

TABLE 5.6. *Kwallis one-way tests of variance, length of escape (in weeks) by social ties and destinations*

	Mean	Standard deviation	Frequency
Family	14.28	31.43	105
Labor/skills	10.56	35.79	1,268
Former plantations	15.68	44.73	118
Spanish territory	31.86	95.47	65
Other maroons	14.26	25.24	65
<b>Total observations</b>			<b>1,621</b>

Note:  $p = 0.0498$ .

TABLE 5.7. *Kwallis one-way tests of variance, length in escape (in weeks) by oppositional actions*

	Mean	Standard deviation	Frequency
Passing as free	22.81	59.10	434
Appropriation of goods	3.1	4.63	320
Bearing arms	5.23	6.1	56
Repeat escape	8.74	16.36	42
<b>Total observations</b>			<b>852</b>

Note:  $p = 0.000$ .

oppositional action that contributed to a longer length of escape – 22.8 weeks (Table 5.7). This is a testament to the existence of the modicum of social fluidity in Saint-Domingue that allowed a minority of enslaved people, particularly Saint-Domingue-born creoles, to change their social status from maroon to de facto free person of color. A distant second most influential oppositional action was repeated escape, which led to an average of 8.74 weeks of relative freedom. Though enslaved people who attempted to free themselves repeatedly probably learned new tactics with each unsuccessful escape, their durations of escape were still below average for the entire sample. Similarly, the appropriation of goods and bearing of arms – actions that Africans, Atlantic creoles, and young boys most commonly took – did not result in an above-average duration of escape, which suggests they were less than effective means of escape.

While most runaways were reported within a short window of time, fugitives were slowly beginning to find ways to be more successful at escape. Increasingly, enslaved people were leaving plantations for months and years, rather than days or weeks, at a time. There was a steady increase in

the number of outlier durations between the years 1783 and 1786, with advertisements for 416 and 572-week long escapes appearing. Additionally, heterogeneous group escapes were also becoming more frequent, showing that there was a slowly increasing sense of racial solidarity among the enslaved population. The skills, information, and experience shared by individuals from diverse backgrounds was valuable knowledge to add to their marronnage repertoire toolkit. The longest recorded length of maroon escape, 780 weeks or 15 years, was advertised in the year 1789, the same year that saw the largest group escape, composed of 22 runaways who were from widely different birth origins – Kongo, Igbo, Senegambian, Bambara, and creole. This supports the finding that heterogeneous group escapes contributed to a slightly above-average duration of escape (Table 5.5). Before the colonial situation, these groups probably would never have encountered each other on the African continent, but conditions in Saint-Domingue prompted them to interact in work arrangements, living quarters, familial units, and ritual gatherings, forging relationships across cultural, geographic, and linguistic boundaries. For example, Chapter 8 discusses another group of Kongolese, Mina, and creole maroons established an independent living zone on a coffee plantation in Cayes de Jacmel, hiding in plain sight for more than three years without detection.

### Repeat Escapes

Fifty-eight runaways were noted to have escaped then were returned on more than one occasion – an offense that could have resulted in whipping, branding with the fleur-de-lys, mutilation of ears or other body parts, or execution. Advertisements were placed for perpetual maroons – people who were captured after an initial escape then ran away again. For example, A Kongolese man escaped in October of 1774 and was quickly captured by the *maréchaussée*, but then escaped again the following December.<sup>46</sup> Another Kongolese man named Chaudiere escaped, then was imprisoned for one month, then escaped again after being taken back to Jérémie.<sup>47</sup> Although repeat escapees constituted only 0.45 percent of the sample, women were more likely than men to be repeat runaways. Other examples of repeat runaways come from plantation records, including a creole woman named Zabeth, who in 1768, left a Léogâne sugar plantation manager exasperated at her constant escapes. Zabeth took every opportunity to sneak away – she feigned illness and promptly attempted to steal another woman's clothes so she could run away. After being caught in the act, she promised not to take flight again, but did

shortly thereafter. When it was realized that she was legitimately sick, Zabeth was sent to a plantation infirmary; yet she took off again once the manager sent her another change of clothes. She fled twice more, both times after having been chained up and and becoming ill nearly to the point of death.

In May 1774, the same planter who owned Zabeth, Madame du Fort, sent a group from a sugar plantation in Léogâne to her coffee plantation in Abricots. During the exchange, the coffee plantation manager wrote to her indicating that three people escaped – Jasmin Barbe-Blanche, his wife Nanette, and a younger man named Marquis. It was suspected that they went to Cayemittes and advertisements were placed for them at Jérémie and Tiburon. A month after their escape, all three were discovered to be in jail in Jérémie. Soon after being returned to du Fort's manager, Jasmin ran away again. This time he did not make it far, due to starvation and sickness. Before Jasmin died in late September, he admitted that he was familiar with the Grande Anse area and planned to pay another black man with a silver cufflink to take him across a river. Despite the hardship Jasmin endured, Marquis still ventured to run away again in October. He had stolen chickens belonging to other blacks and used for subsistence, presumably to sell them for himself.<sup>48</sup>

Some runaway advertisements were published multiple times and across different publications. The *Gazette de Saint Domingue* and *Courrier Nationale de Saint Domingue* carried a small number of the same notices that were placed in *Les Affiches américaines*. Repeated advertisements were not counted in the current dataset for quantitative analysis; however, their frequency has qualitative implications regarding the length of time runaways escaped, or those who were captured then escaped again after their return. For example, Jasmin, a 25- to 26-year-old Kongo man was reported as a runaway on January 18, 1783, one week later on January 25, then again four weeks later on February 22, suggesting that he avoided capture for at least one month.<sup>49</sup> Advertisements for Victoire, a creole woman, ran on July 15, 1789, July 22, and July 29.<sup>50</sup> Over time, *Les Affiches* runaway advertisements seem to have run repeatedly with increasing frequency, especially as the Haitian Revolution drew nearer. Out of 798 advertisements placed in the year 1790, over 300 of them had been repeats of previously published advertisements. On the other hand, there were only 11 repeated advertisements for the years 1766 through 1768 combined. It seems that reporting became more negligent because the number of repeated advertisements increased alongside the growing number of Africans imported to Saint-Domingue.

### The Timing of Marronnage

Part of runaways' strategy in escaping was to deliberately time their flight to align with windows of opportunity when there would be less attention paid to the goings on of the enslaved population. Weekends, holidays, and natural disasters created enough distractions for absconders to slip away without detection. Colonial planters allowed enslaved people to have leave from work to attend parties on Christmas, Easter, New Year, and other Catholic celebrations. Temporary absenteeism after these events was expected, either due to dalliances with romantic partners or a long weekend stay at a different plantation's party. Planters kept track of who was missing at their end-of-year account books but were measured in giving out punishments for escapes during the holiday seasons. Analysis of the runaway advertisements shows that escapes were most frequent during high summer months and least frequent at the end of the year. Overall, the 25th, 29th, and 30th weeks of the year saw the highest numbers of reported runaways, overlapping with June 20–26, July 18–24, and July 25–July 31, respectively. Higher productivity on plantations may have contributed to an uptick in marronnage during the summer, since harsh weather made hard labor unbearable. Other Catholic festivities during those weeks were for Saint Jean-Baptiste in Trou and Jean-Rabel (June 24); Sainte Marguerite in Port-Margot (July 20); Saint James the Greater (July 25); Sainte Anne in l'Anse-a-Veau (July 26); Saint Pierre in Limbé (July 29); and Sainte Marthe in Marmelade (July 29). In addition to being moments of distraction for plantation personnel, these locally celebrated holidays would also have been gathering times for enslaved people to partake in their sacred rituals and, as I argued in Chapter 3, to enhance oppositional consciousness and influence marronnage through seditious speech about freedom and liberation.

### CONCLUSION

Maroons' micro-level repertoire actions reflected their politicized, oppositional consciousness that directly countered the dispossession and oppression of slavery. Maroons reimagined their status and identities, appropriated goods and technologies, exhibited militancy, and reclaimed their time – demonstrating their intentions to be free, and to assert ownership of themselves, their human capital, and other resources. The current and previous chapters have shown that maroons leveraged their cultural and ritual spaces, knowledge pools and labor skills, social

networks, and other tangible and intangible resources within their immediate vicinity to facilitate their escape. The following chapter will examine maroons' understanding of Saint-Domingue's geography as part of their repertoire of knowledge and action. Examination of the locations from where maroons escaped and the destinations they had in mind can help us better understand the colony itself and the ways enslaved people and maroons carved out their own geographies of subversion, even in the shadows of slavery.