

CHRYsalis

[kris-uh-lis]

from Latin chrȳsallis, from Greek khrusallis

1. the obtect pupa of a moth or butterfly
2. anything in the process of developing

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COMPARATIVE FUGITIVE SLAVE ADVERTISEMENT ANALYSIS:
PART II

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CHRYsalis was created by Dr. Charmaine A. Nelson as a vehicle to showcase the most innovative, rigorous, and sophisticated research produced by students within the context of her Art History courses at McGill University (Montreal). Since launching in 2014, Nelson has also published the research of students at Harvard University. This volume features articles from students at NSCAD University (Halifax) and the University of New Brunswick (Fredericton). Over the years, Nelson observed that undergraduate students in her courses were more than capable of producing exceptional research on par with that of graduate students, and at times even professional academics. Disappointed that most of these students were faced with a negligible audience (if any) for their incredible work, with the help of her graduate student Anna T. January (MA Art History, McGill University 2014), Nelson came up with the idea to provide another platform for their research dissemination. **CHRYsalis** is that platform! **Chrysalis** has returned with a ninth issue and a new Managing Editor, Emily Davidson (MFA Student, NSCAD University).

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FASHION FOR FREEDOM

Saba Blyden-Taylor

Scholars of Transatlantic Slavery Studies like Steeve O. Buckridge have long observed the vital importance of dress for enslaved people.¹ While Buckridge like Charmaine A. Nelson has explored the relevance of slave dress both as materiality and artistic representation,² significantly, Nelson alongside others like David Waldstreicher have also explored the textual representations of enslaved dress in fugitive slave advertisements.³ In this article I compare two fugitive slave advertisements coming from homes of upper and middle class enslavers in which clothing was exploited as a self-fashioning tool for escape.⁴ During the period of Transatlantic Slavery, running away did not necessarily result in permanent freedom, but often merely an escape from where the enslaved person had been held in bondage.⁵ An escape to freedom, somewhere safer (ie. a ship or another plantation), or to find family.⁶ Running away routinely required disguise to “pretend to be free”⁷ and to do so successfully, required premeditated thought and planning about where to run, how to get there, and what to bring.⁸

According to white enslavers, runaways were not only stealing themselves - what Marcus Woods has called an act of “self-theft”⁹ - but such advertisements often included accusations of the theft of clothing. Chattel under the law, enslaved people were considered property and therefore were routinely barred from owning any belongings. Therefore, according to enslavers and the white-dominated society at large, everything with which an enslaved person fled was stolen, degrading their body to an item worth their value like that of the things they stole.¹⁰ This tendency to accuse the enslaved of theft worked to criminalize them and to degrade their characters, associating blackness with anti-social behaviour like thieving and lying. The pervasiveness of these beliefs allowed whites to falsely assume that all well-dressed black people were not necessarily free, but disguising themselves to pass as free black people or free people of other races.¹¹ The description of clothing worn by an enslaved runaway was often a description of disguise.¹² As Waldstreicher has argued, “advertisements for runaways describe their clothing in great detail: since few people had an extensive wardrobe, describing the clothes was as good as describing the man or woman.”¹³ Surveillance of the enslaved was a daily occurrence across slave majority and slave minority sites alike. But fugitive slave advertisements increased the surveillance of black communities by incentivizing whites to hunt for, incarcerate, and turn over enslaved people to their enslavers for a reward.¹⁴ Thus, it was not just people in one’s city looking for them, but rather anyone who read the advertisement became a potential co-conspirator.¹⁵ In what follows, I compare two fugitive slave advertisements that note the gathering and stealing of higher class items and clothes: that of Nemo and Cash in Quebec (fig. 1) and Ona Judge in Philadelphia. (fig. 2) Arguably, both advertisements make it clear that the skills that benefited their enslavers, also aided the three enslaved people in their escapes.

It is unclear when and if Cash and Nemo were recaptured, but their enslaver Hugh Ritchie reprinted his advertisement across a four week period on November 4, 11, 18 and 25, 1779.¹⁶ All we know of their escape comes from the advertisement and, thanks to Frank

Mackey's research, an inventory for Hugh Ritchie's estate made in 1780 identifying a negro boy in the stable, which is assumed to be Nemo.¹⁷ If this "boy" was indeed Nemo, then one possibility is that Ritchie may not have recaptured Cash.¹⁸ Another is that she died before Nemo and Ritchie and was therefore not listed in the inventory.

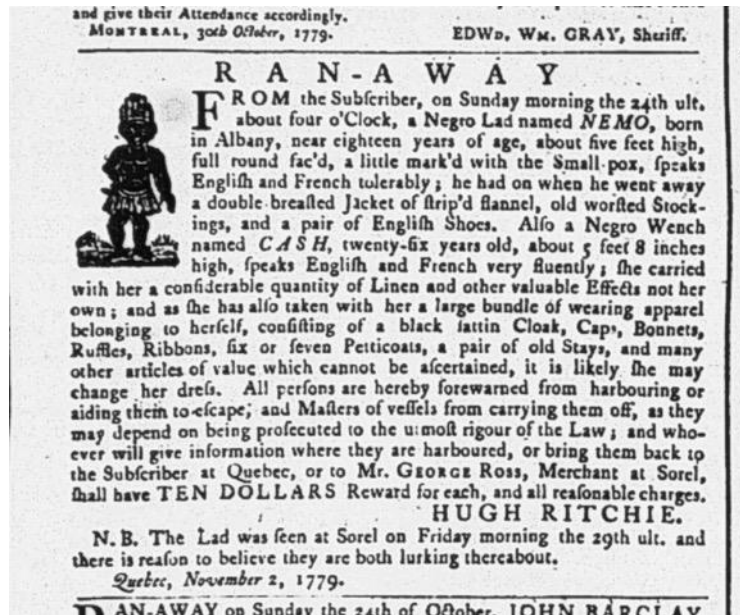


Figure 1: Hugh Ritchie, "RAN-AWAY, From Subscriber, on Sunday morning the 24th ult.," *Quebec Gazette*, 4 November 1779, vol. 740, p. 3; Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANO), Montreal, Canada.

Nemo's recapture may have been in part because he only had one change of clothes that was described in great detail in the advertisement. We will never know. But it would seem that, given the large number of things with which Cash was accused of absconding, it would have been difficult for her to carry all of it on her own. Since most enslaved people were strategically impoverished by their enslavers, running away meant on foot, making their journeys tiresome, arduous, and dangerous.¹⁹ Running away in November in Quebec would have been extremely difficult due to the cold fall temperatures. Runaways would have needed heavier dress and appropriate

foot wear for their escapes and could not simply have left without wearing (bringing or acquiring) seasonally-specific clothing and securing shelter during their flights. According to Nelson, we can surmise that the abundance of clothes and material that Cash and Nemo took were because Hugh Ritchie was a tailor.²⁰ The number of garments shows their well-organized plan to use the clothing for their own dress, for warmth, or to trade or sell articles for whatever was needed during their flights, like shelter. We must also then contemplate the surveillance they avoided to gather these items before they fled.²¹

What is strange about this notice is that the items they took are separated into three groups, "valuable Effects not her own,"²² "apparel belonging to herself"²³ and "many other articles of cannot be ascertained."²⁴ What we learn from this is that Ritchie's tailor business provided Cash with ready access to cloth and garments - many of which she likely had a direct hand in making - but which may not have belonged to her or even to Ritchie, but to his clients. The fact that Ritchie so atypically conceded that Cash departed with things "belonging to herself,"²⁵ when enslaved people normally had one or two changes of dress, indicates perhaps a pang of conscience as regards his theft of her labour in his tailor shop.²⁶ In making her own clothes and "stealing" them before her departure, we can denote Cash's likely decision to participate in what Nelson calls self-fashioning. Cash made the clothes to fit, adorn, and blend in,

and made sure to take them in her escape.²⁷ The advertisement states, “it is likely she may change her dress”²⁸ demonstrating that Ritchie was aware that she could pass for free with the clothes and skills she had. Thus, although clothing was a gateway to catching people, it was also a pathway to freedom.

Ona Judge was brought to Virginia to labour on George Washington’s plantation and displaced again when he moved her to his house in Philadelphia to be his wife, Martha Washington’s, lady maid.²⁹ Ona fled as Washington’s second term was coming to an end because she understood that it would be more difficult for her to seek freedom once back in Virginia.³⁰ As an enslaved woman owned by the president of the United States and his wife, Ona was enslaved within the highest status household in the country. How did her labour as a domestic give her access to upper class clothes and materials to help her start a new life for herself once free? While Ona’s mixed-race identity allowed her to avoid field labour,³¹ her

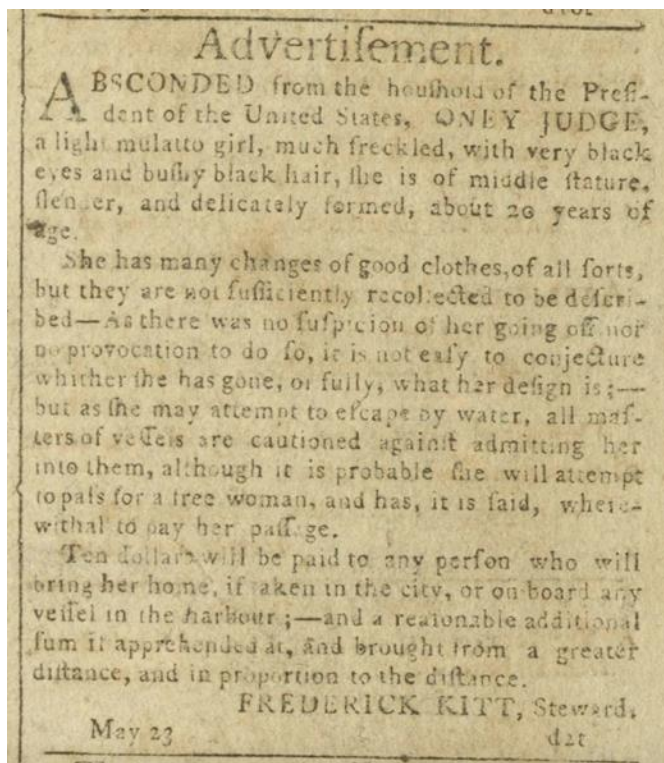


Figure 2: Frederick Kitt, “Advertisement,” *Philadelphia Gazette and Universal Daily Advertiser*, 24 May 1796, p. 1.

mother’s labour as a seamstress was the likely origin of her own skills. Ona’s labour for Martha which would have included making, mending, and perhaps even laundering the First Lady’s clothing, provides us with insight into why Frederick Kitt described her as fleeing with “many changes of good clothes, of all sorts,”³² which may have allowed her to pass as free.³³ With regard to the clothes, the advertisement continued, “but they are not sufficiently recollected to be described - As there was no suspicion of her going off nor no provocation to do so.”³⁴

Ona clearly had a plan, one that entailed lulling her enslavers into a false sense of security *and* absconding with clothing that she had most likely made. Washington claimed, Martha was distraught at the loss of a maid that “was brought up and treated more like a child

than a Servant.”³⁵ This quote by Martha suggests that Ona had more freedom to roam around the house than was normal for an enslaved person, that knew where things were, and that she was not subjected to heightened surveillance.³⁶ What is interesting is that there were no subsequent advertisements placed for Ona, but instead the circulation of the advertisement and knowledge of who she was (being the First Lady’s maid), made her known across different states. “Even in New Hampshire, Judge was not safe. Just a few months after arriving, she was recognized on the street by a friend of Martha’s youngest granddaughter, Nelly Parke Custis.”³⁷ Nelly was the

sister of the person who was to become Ona's enslaver when the Washingtons died.³⁸ The scope of surveillance to which Ona was subjected surpassed the norm due to the celebrity of her enslavers. Therefore, we must recognize how surveillance and the visual description of clothes, dress, and stature both hindered and aided Ona's escape.

If we compare Cash and Nemo with Ona Judge, it is clear that two main factors aided them in their escapes: access to higher class clothing and materials, and the skill in making them. In both cases, it seems that Cash and Ona - as seamstresses - were forced to do domestic labour which allowed them to learn the habits, schedules, and possessions of those who held them in bondage. Both advertisements also tell stories of what seem to be premeditated escapes. Using their enslavers' residences as the staging ground for their escapes, they capitalized upon the lesser surveillance to gather clothing before fleeing. Stealing themselves,³⁹ their belongings, and their trade, both women seemed determined to try to pass as free people and to make a living from what they had once been forced to do. These advertisements allow us to see how surveillance was used to criminalize black people and how dress was used to provide a visual description of the runaway. For both Cash and Ona, skills that were once stolen from them, became their tickets to freedom once on the run.

ENDNOTES

¹ Steeve O. Buckridge, The Language of Dress: Resistance and Accommodation in Jamaica, 1760–1890 (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2004).

² Charmaine A. Nelson, "Tying the Knot: Black Female Slave Dress in Canada," Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art (New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2010).

³ David Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the 18th c. Mid-Atlantic," William and Mary Quarterly (April 1999), pp. 243–72; Charmaine A. Nelson, "Crossing the Great Divide: Slave Dress as Resistance in Canada and the Caribbean," Prefix Photo, issue 42 (November 2020), pp. 12–23.

⁴ For more on the term self-fashioning see note 3 in Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways," p. 244.

⁵ For more on the limits and possibilities of enslaved escape see: Simon P. Newman, "Rethinking Runaways in the British Atlantic World: Britain, the Caribbean, West Africa, and North America," Slavery and Abolition, vol. 38, no. 1 (2017), pp. 51; Charmaine A. Nelson, "The Canadian Fugitive Slave Archive and the Concept of Refuge," English Studies in Canada, *Something Personal: Archives and Methods for Critical Refugee Studies in Canada*, guest eds. Vinh Nguyen and Thy Phu vol. 45, no. 3 (September 2019), pp. 91–115; Charmaine A. Nelson, ed., The Precariousness of Freedom: Slave Resistance as Experience, Process, and Representation (Concord, ON: Captus Press, forthcoming 2023).

⁶ For example, "Abel Hinds was unsure where twenty-nine-year-old George had run to: a skilled musician, George might - his owner thought - be with his wife Jubah on Lancaster Plantation, with another wife in Speightstown or with his mother Hester, another runaway thought to be with her daughters at yet another plantation." Newman, "Rethinking Runaways in the British Atlantic World," p. 53.

⁷ Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways," p. 248.

⁸ For more on the forethought, sophisticated reasoning, and intelligence that underpinned many enslaved flights, see: Charmaine A. Nelson, "He 'is supposed to have with him forged Certificates of his Freedom, and Passes': Slavery, Mobility, and the Creolized Counter-Knowledge of Resistance," Black and Indigenous Speaker Series, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Canada, 4 February 2022 (date of last access 18 March 2022)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dS_idp6jIMA&t=2s

⁹ Marcus Wood, "Rhetoric and the Runaway: The Iconography of Slave Escape in England and America," Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780–1865 (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 79.

¹⁰ Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways," pp. 253–54.

¹¹ For example, “the most successful runaways, like confidence men, probably changed their styles as often as they altered their stories, ... according to his infuriated owner ‘effects to dress very neat and genteel,’” Waldstreicher, “Reading the Runaways,” p. 253. For more on Tom Bell realizing he could pass as Indigenous which would give him a greater chance of freedom running away, see: Waldstreicher, “Reading the Runaways,” p. 244.

¹² According to Waldstreicher, “some of the runaway advertisements also depict slaves pretending to be something else, and, in doing so, becoming something else.” Waldstreicher, “Reading the Runaways,” p. 244 n. 2.

¹³ Waldstreicher, “Reading the Runaways” p. 252.

¹⁴ For a discussion of the nature, function, and reach of fugitive slave advertisements see: Charmaine A. Nelson, “‘Ran away from her Master...a Negroe Girl named Thursday’: Examining Evidence of Punishment, Isolation, and Trauma in Nova Scotia and Quebec Fugitive Slave Advertisements,” *Legal Violence and the Limits of the Law*, eds. Joshua Nichols and Amy Swiffen (New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 68–91.

¹⁵ Charmaine A. Nelson, “Roundtable: Cash’s Bundle: Fugitive Slave Advertisements, Clothing, and Self-Care,” *The Junto: A Group Blog on Early American History*, 14 February 2017 (date of last access 23 March 2022) <https://earlyamericanists.com/2017/02/14/roundtable-cashs-bundle-fugitive-slave-advertisements-clothing-and-self-care/>

¹⁶ I am grateful to Charmaine A. Nelson for informing me about the multiple printings of Hugh Ritchie’s advertisement for Nemo and Cash.

¹⁷ A detailed inventory of tailor Hugh Ritchie’s home in 1780 ended with the following items found in the stable: “a black Stallion, a Cow, Two Calashes mounted, a Cart mounted, a Cart harness, a Harness for the Calash, a Negro boy about the age of [blank].” The negro boy was probably Nemo (BANQ, notary C. Stewart, 11 June 1780). Frank Mackey, “Appendix I: Newspaper Notices,” *Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760–1840* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press), p. 323 n. 34.

¹⁸ Since Nemo would have been nineteen at the time that the inventory was taken in 1780, the use of the term boy was a tactic of infantilization, commonly used against enslaved black males to deny them access to manhood.

¹⁸ For more on the problem of mobility for the enslaved see: Nelson, “The Canadian Fugitive Slave Archive,” pp. 96–97.

¹⁹ For more on the problem of mobility for the enslaved see: Nelson, “The Canadian Fugitive Slave Archive,” pp. 96–97.

²⁰ Charmaine A. Nelson, “Neither Indigenous, Nor Settlers: The Place of Africans in Canada’s ‘Founding Nations’ Model,” *Canadian Issues / Thèmes Canadiens, Who Founded Canada?*, (Summer 2016), p. 46.

²¹ Sosena Tilahun, “Un-covering Slavery, Surveillance and Resistance in the Province of Quebec through Hugh Ritchie’s 1779 Fugitive Slave Advertisement Published in the Quebec Gazette,” *Black Canadian Studies* (date of last access 23 March 2022), p. 2

https://www.blackcanadianstudies.com/cms/tilahun_sosena_for_publication_without_figure_1.pdf

²² Hugh Ritchie, “RAN-AWAY, From Subscriber, on Sunday morning the 24th ult.,” *Quebec Gazette*, 4 November 1779, vol. 740, p. 3; Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ), Montreal, Canada.

²³ Ritchie, “RAN-AWAY,” p. 3.

²⁴ Ritchie, “RAN-AWAY,” p. 3.

²⁵ Ritchie, “RAN-AWAY,” p. 3.

²⁶ I am grateful to Charmaine A. Nelson for her insights on this matter. Tilahun, “Un-covering Slavery,” p. 2.

²⁷ Nelson, “Roundtable: Cash’s Bundle,” (date of last access 23 March 2022).

²⁸ Ritchie, “RAN-AWAY,” p. 3.

²⁹ Arlene Balkansky, “Runaway! Fugitive Slave Ads in Newspapers,” *Headlines and Heroes: Newspapers, Comics and More Fine Print*, Library of Congress, 1 October 2019 (date of last access 23 March 2022)

<https://blogs.loc.gov/headlinesandheroes/2019/10/runaway-fugitive-slave-ads-in-newspapers/>

³⁰ Washington’s Virginia home was a plantation more surveilled and secluded than the city of Philadelphia. Jessie MacLeod, “Ona Judge,” *George Washington’s Mount Vernon* (date of last access 23 March 2022)

<https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/ona-judge/>

³¹ Ona Judge’s father was a white English tailor hired 1772–1784. MacLeod, “Ona Judge,” (date of last access 23 March 2022).

³² Frederick Kitt, “Advertisement,” *Philadelphia Gazette and Universal Daily Advertiser*, 24 May 1796, p. 1

³³ David N. Gellman, “*Never Caught: The Washingtons’ Relentless Pursuit of Their Runaway Slave, Ona Judge* by Erica Armstrong Dunbar (review),” *Journal of Southern History*, vol. 85, no. 3 (August 2019), pp. 672–674.

³⁴ Kitt, “Advertisement,” p. 1.

³⁵ MacLeod, “Ona Judge,” (date of last access 23 March 2022).

³⁶ MacLeod, “Ona Judge,” (date of last access 23 March 2022).

³⁷ MacLeod, “Ona Judge,” (date of last access 23 March 2022).

³⁸ MacLeod, “Ona Judge,” (date of last access 23 March 2022).

³⁹ Nelson, “Roundtable: Cash’s Bundle,” (date of last access 23 March 2022).

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PLATE LIST

Figure 1: Hugh Ritchie, “RAN-AWAY,” Quebec Gazette, 4 November 1779, vol. 740, p. 3; Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ), Montreal, Canada.

Figure 2: Frederick Kitt, “Advertisement,” Philadelphia Gazette and Universal Daily Advertiser, 24 May 1796, p. 1.

‘AT THE SAME TIME WENT OFF A NEGRO WOMAN SLAVE...WHO HE CLAIM’D AS A WIFE, WITH TWO SMALL CHILDREN’: ENSLAVED FAMILIES ESCAPING SEPARATION IN LATE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY NEW JERSEY AND NEW BRUNSWICK

Emily Draicchio

The impending threat of familial separation was an anxiety inducing and destructive feature of Transatlantic Slavery for enslaved people. Over the course of four hundred years, enslaved people, though natively alienated, formed numerous kinship and community relationships with one another as well as with both free white and black people.¹ However, slave marriages and parental bonds were not considered legitimate by the white ruling class; they were not recognized legally nor socially.² Instead, slave owners used separation as a weapon to “strike terror in the hearts of all slaves”³ and in turn force enslaved people to behave according to their demands.⁴ Slave owners would threaten to separate enslaved husbands and wives, couples consisting of both free and enslaved people, as well as enslaved parents from their children. Enslavers also acted upon these threats as a form of punishment or to benefit themselves financially by making a profit from selling enslaved family members.⁵ This damaging practice stripped enslaved people of their kinship and community bonds.

However, enslaved families resisted slavery throughout the transatlantic world by running away from their slave owners as documented in fugitive slave advertisements. Fugitive slave advertisements often provided warnings that enslaved people may be trying to reunite with their family members.⁶ As such, they often included names of relatives and their locations that could be a town or an island away. While enslaved black males routinely fled alone or in pairs, female flights, and those with family groups were far less common.⁷ Rather than experience separation and continue to endure physical, sexual, and psychological violence, enslaved families chose to escape together and in doing so retained some control over their lives.⁸ Although it was easier and more promising to escape alone, they put their families before themselves and ran away together because of the importance of these relationships.⁹ This phenomenon occurred in what some scholars have termed slave societies (i.e., the Caribbean and Southern United States) and societies with slaves (i.e., Europe, Canada, and Northern United States).¹⁰ Family escapes were more common in slave majority, tropical, and semi-tropical regions where enslaved people had more opportunities to form families. In comparison, the minority enslaved populations in the North had an extra layer of trauma surrounding family separation since enslaved people likely feared isolation as a form of suffering.¹¹ As such, the creation and maintenance of families for enslaved people in the North was imperative to survival and a pertinent aspect of regional slave culture.¹²

Although not many families ran away in slave minority societies, the value in studying these fugitive advertisements is significant to expose how separation was used as a weapon against black enslaved families, how these families resisted and developed strategies to escape together, and ultimately to offer a window into the lived experiences of enslaved families in places where slavery has been strategically erased to put forth narratives of exceptionalism.¹³ I

will therefore analyze two fugitive slave advertisements that record enslaved families absconding in US state of New Jersey and the Canadian province of New Brunswick in 1781 and 1792 respectively. These advertisements challenge the narrative of Northern United States and Canadian exceptionalism that romanticize the Underground Railroad to perpetuate an image of themselves as racism-free havens.¹⁴ Canada has been called a “synonym for freedom,” which is ironic given the fact that until 1834 it remained a society from which enslaved black and Indigenous people fled.¹⁵ The same can be said of New Jersey, which, although it was the last Northern state to abolish slavery in 1804, is still perceived as a “benevolent [...] place [...] for enslaved people trying to escape from the South.”¹⁶ Comparing these two advertisements will thus provide us with a better understanding of black kinship bonds and experiences in northern, slave minority societies.

Frank, his wife Phoebe (also spelt Phiboe or Phebe), and their eighteen-month-old son Obadiah ran away from their enslaver John Wilson on 23 July 1781, in Hackett’s Town, New Jersey. Wilson announced their escape in a fugitive slave advertisement that was printed in the *New-Jersey Journal* (Chatham) on 8 August 1781. (fig. 1) There is little information available on John Wilson from Hackett’s Town in Sussex County, however it is possible that he was either married and died before Phoebe and Frank escaped, or that he was a Loyalist.¹⁷ Sources indicate that Phoebe and her family ran away from a Mrs. Wilson (not John Wilson), which could have been his wife Mary Wilson.¹⁸

Another possibility is that John Wilson was a Loyalist farmer who left New Jersey in 1783 for New Brunswick with his wife, three children, and one “servant.”¹⁹ In New Jersey, he was likely a wheat and barley farmer who used enslaved labour for planting and harvesting crops.²⁰ As such, Frank and Phoebe likely lived in a rural region of Sussex County and may have deliberately escaped in the summer during the wheat harvest season to further inconvenience Wilson.²¹

Frank, Phoebe, and Obadiah were likely motivated to escape for several reasons including physical violence, sexual abuse, family separation, being forced to leave for the Maritimes, or, given that they ran away in 1781, they may have viewed the heightening tension from the Revolutionary War as an opportunity to escape for good.²² If the advertisements were

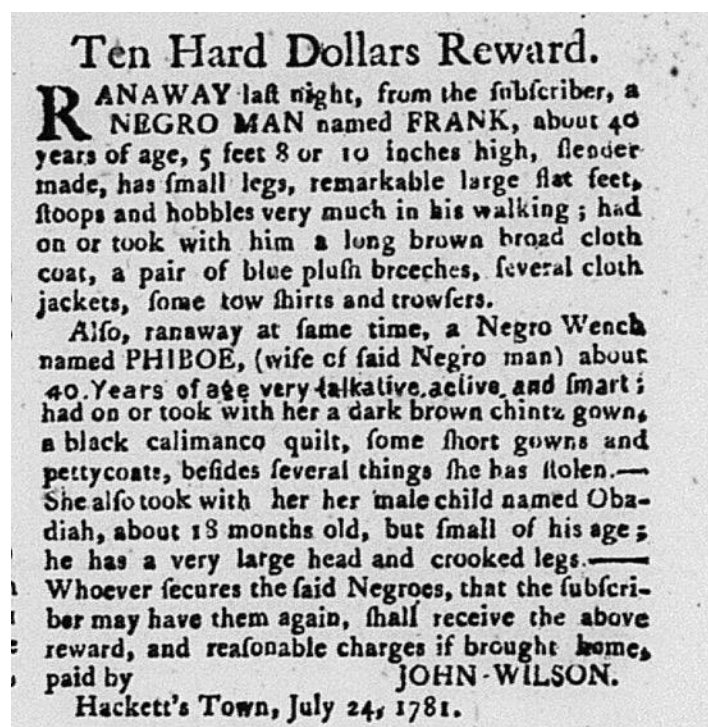


Figure 1: John Wilson, “Ten Hard Dollars Reward,” *New Jersey Journal* (Chatham), July 24, 1781; Library of Congress, Newspaper Microfilm 4542.

written by Mrs. Wilson instead of John, her need for money - as a widow during the Revolutionary War - and the routine exploitation of enslaved people to pay debts or act as credit, may have provided the enslaved family with additional incentive for their flight. Indeed, Mrs. Wilson may have intended to sell Phoebe, Frank, and their son to different people. Although we can only speculate about their motives, it is clear from the fugitive advertisement that Phoebe and Frank had a plan. Phoebe, who was described as an active, talkative, and smart forty-year-old “Negro wench,”²³ packed with her a chintz gown, a calamanco quilt (likely to keep Obadiah warm), several short gowns, a few petticoats, and “several things she has stolen.”²⁴ In producing this advertisement, Wilson both indirectly and directly acknowledged that Phoebe, an intelligent woman, had prepared for the journey ahead. Certainly, enslaved people like Phoebe and Frank frequently outwitted their enslavers and in turn undermined the institution as a whole. Frank, a “Negro man”²⁵ who was “this country born”²⁶ and between forty and forty-five years old, took with him a long coat, pair of blue breeches, several cloth jackets, two shirts, and trousers.²⁷ The quantity of clothing taken by Frank and Phoebe may speak to their plan to pass as free black people in New Jersey.²⁸ This seems plausible when considering that 20 per cent of the black population in 1790 New Jersey was free.²⁹

Another important note to consider is that Frank and Obadiah were described as having physical disabilities. Frank was slender and had “small legs, remarkable large flat feet, stoops and hobbles very much in his walking.”³⁰ Similarly, Obadiah, who was small for his age, had “a very large head and crooked legs.”³¹ These physical impairments and deformities were not only present amongst the enslaved population throughout the transatlantic world, but they were also *produced* by the system of slavery.³² In her research on disability and fugitive slave advertisements, Stefanie Hunt-Kennedy argues that these physical impairments were caused by a range of materially impoverished conditions in which the enslaved were forced to live, which included malnutrition, inadequate clothing and housing, being forced to work in unsanitary conditions, violence, labour accidents, and continual strenuous work on the body.³³ While Frank’s disability would have impacted the speed at which he was able to walk or run (if he could do the latter), it is unclear if Obadiah, at only eighteen months old, was able to walk at all. Therefore, it is possible that Obadiah had to be carried. The descriptions of Frank and Obadiah’s physical disabilities along with the details of stolen clothing in the advertisement thus speaks to Wilson’s hyper surveillance of the enslaved. Wilson intentionally used the information he gathered through surveillance in the advertisement to limit Frank and Phoebe’s mobility and ultimately recapture them. In doing so, Wilson’s advertisement also exposes the violence inflicted upon the enslaved in northern states.

Since Phoebe’s husband and son were physically disabled, they would have experienced difficulties running away quickly on foot. Their slower pace was probably heightened by the heat of July and by the fact that both Phoebe and Frank were in their forties, which was considered old for enslaved people in the United States. For example, between 1716–1783, only 11.15 per cent of enslaved people over the age of thirty-five absconded, which was the lowest number out of all age groups.³⁴ Furthermore, Phoebe and Frank were likely worried about the possibility of

Obadiah crying while on the run. When considering all of the things that possibly slowed Phoebe's family down, it is interesting to consider that, three months earlier on 21 April 1781, Phoebe and Frank had run away with Obadiah and a free man named Cuff on horseback.³⁵ (fig. 2) Wilson, or maybe Mrs. Wilson, noted that they took two horses with them. They probably used the two horses to increase and facilitate mobility since they could cover more ground considering Frank and Obadiah's disabilities. However, the horses would also have made them conspicuous given the value of such animals, the impoverishment of the enslaved, and the association of enslaved mobility with walking.³⁶ Cuff, whose race was not identified but who was recorded as having a free pass, may have helped Phoebe's family by forging, purchasing, borrowing, or stealing free passes for them.³⁷ The fact that they escaped twice suggests that Phoebe and Frank engaged in what Charmaine A. Nelson has called a "creolized counter-surveillance"³⁸ of their slave owner.

There is a drastic difference in the reward amount for the two advertisements. While Phoebe's family absconded to remain together because they deeply valued their kinship ties, Wilson clearly valued the horses more since the monetary value of Phoebe's family alone in July was ten hard dollars, whereas the advertisement for April had a fifteen hundred dollars reward.³⁹ When considering these amounts, it becomes clear that Phoebe's family also intended to sabotage Wilson's property by stealing his horses.⁴⁰ In short, for white enslavers like the Wilsons, black enslaved human life was less valuable than horses in New Jersey.

Given the distinct differences between the April and July advertisements in terms of clothing, the inclusion of stolen horses, and a partnership with a free man, we can infer that Phoebe's family was likely captured in April and made a bid to run away again in July. The question remains why again after only three months? I would like to suggest that, given the proximity of the two escapes during the spring and summer months of 1781, one reason could have been that Phoebe and Frank heard of an upcoming sale through which their family would be separated. However, since, as Nelson contends, permanent escape was elusive and the printing cycles of historical newspapers was often weekly (or at least not daily), Phoebe and her family may have escaped on even more occasions that were not documented by Wilson because they were recaptured prior to the next edition of the newspaper.⁴¹ Further archival research in New

Fifteen Hundred Dollars Reward.

RAN AWAY from the subscriber, the 21st infant, a Negro man named Frank, this country born, about forty-five years old; had on a brown broad cloth coat, and blue plush breeches.—Also went off at same time, a Negro woman named Phebe, (wife of said fellow) about forty years old; her clothes cannot be described; had with her a male child, about sixteen months old.—They went off in company with a free fellow named Cuff, about twenty-five years of age; had on a light blue coat, and blue overalls. They took with them two horses, one a large sorrel, and the other a bay, with a long tail, five years old this spring, fifteen hands high.—Whoever takes up said Negroes and horses, shall have the above reward, and reasonable charges, if brought home, paid by **JOHN WILSON.**

N. B. Though the free fellow should have a pass, it is expected he will be apprehended with the rest.

Hackett's Town, April 23, 1781.

Figure 2: John Wilson, "Fifteen Hundred Dollars Reward," *New Jersey Journal* (Chatham), April 23, 1781; Library of Congress, Newspaper Microfilm 4542.

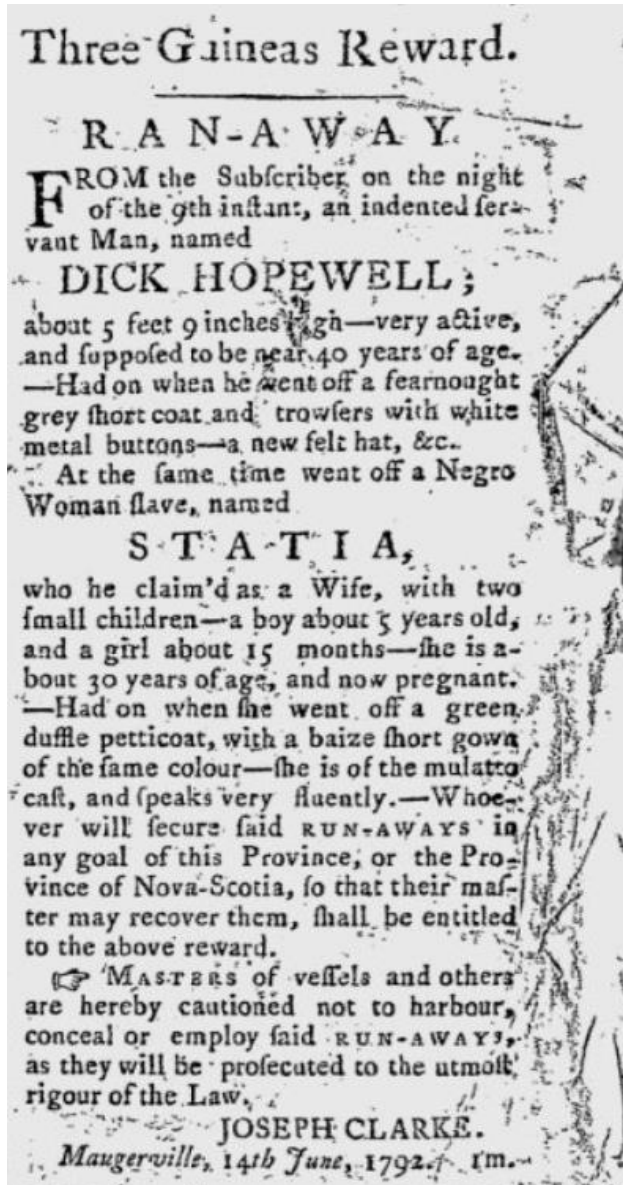


Figure 3: Joseph Clarke, “Three Guineas Reward” *Saint John Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*, 29 June 1792; F4065, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton, Canada.

Jersey would be required to determine whether Phoebe, Frank, and Obadiah were recaptured again and subsequently separated. However, their separation may correlate with the Loyalist ship ledger in which Wilson is listed as entering New Brunswick with one servant two years after their escapes.⁴² Lastly, I suggest that Phoebe and Frank learnt from their mistakes on their first attempted escape in April. Specifically, although they may have covered more ground on horseback and acquired free passes in April, they may have not looked the part because they did not take any extra fine clothing with them, which they did do in July.⁴³

Eleven years after Phoebe’s family’s escape, an advertisement was printed in the *Saint John Gazette and Weekly Advertiser* on 29 June 1792 by Joseph Clarke in Maugerville, New Brunswick seeking the return of Statia, a pregnant “Negro Woman slave,”⁴⁴ her husband Dick Hopewell, a black indentured servant, and two of their children.⁴⁵ (fig. 3) Dick and Statia were one of several mixed enslaved and free couples in the Maritimes that attempted to keep their families together by absconding.⁴⁶ Clarke was born in Stratford, Connecticut in 1734 where he became a surgeon and married Isabella Elizabeth Alleyne.⁴⁷ When the Revolutionary War broke out, Clarke who

remained loyal to Britain, brought his wife and eight children to New York and then to New Brunswick in 1783.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, all records of Clarke’s estate were confiscated and destroyed during the war, thus making it unclear if he owned enslaved people in Connecticut or New York.⁴⁹ However, we do know that Clarke entered New Brunswick with “four servants,”⁵⁰ although these did not include Dick and Statia who came to be enslaved in his household after his family’s arrival in Canada.⁵¹

Statia (also known as Stacey, Stacy, and Patience), absconded with Dick Hopewell (also known as Richard Hopefield Sr.) and her children on 9 June 1792. She was described as a

Supreme Court
 York: Richard Hopfield of Queens County in the Province of
 New Brunswick being duly sworn deposes and saith that
 he was born in the Province of Virginia about twelve years
 prior to the American War, that his Parents as well as
 always understood and believed were also born in the
 same Province of Virginia - That he lived from the
 time of his Birth (until he was afterwards at the age
 of about sixteen, captured by a British Privateer out of
 New York) with one William Wood of Virginia who
 claimed his services as the deponent understood because
 his Woods Father had held the deponents Father and
 Mother as Slaves from their being born in his house
 in Virginia as the deponent has always understood -
 That after the deponents capture by the British Privateer
 as aforesaid he was by the Mayor of New York set at
 liberty altogether and became as he was told a freeman,
 the Vessel in which he had been taken having been
 condemned as lawful prize as the deponent was
 informed and believed, that the deponent has ever
 since continued a free man and some time afterwards
 married Patience his present wife by whom he had
 among other children Richard Hopfield a son now
 held in custody by Stairs Agnew Esquire as a Slave -
 That the said Richard Hopfield his aforesaid son by
 his said wife Patience was born in the City of St. John
 in this Province of New Brunswick shortly after the
 arrival of Governor Carleton in this Province, and
 after his the deponents said wife had been put
 on board a Vessel by one Chinese Leavitt in order as
 the deponent was informed to send her to the West
 Indies to be sold - when she was released by order
 of Governor Carleton who set her at liberty and
 she lived afterwards with the deponent for about
 seven years in a state of freedom in said City -
 St. John when she was forcibly seized on by
 12th

Doctor Joseph Clark and carried off to Magallowick
 Sworn before me the }
 fifth of July 1805 - } (signed) Richard Hopfield
 John Saunders } his mark

Figure 4: Richard Hopefield Sr., "Deposition," Richard Hopfield vs. Stair Agnew, July 5, 1805; RS 42. 9189 and 9190, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton, Canada.

"mulatto cast"⁵² thirty-year-old pregnant woman who "speaks very fluently"⁵³ and was wearing a duffle petticoat and a baize short gown when she ran away.⁵⁴ Dick was described as a "very active"⁵⁵ forty-year-old "indented servant"⁵⁶ (sic) who "claim'd"⁵⁷ Statia "as a wife."⁵⁸ Their children were only described via their age as "a boy about 5 years old, and a girl about 15 months."⁵⁹ Like Phoebe's family, Statia's family was no doubt also slowed down in their escape. Instead of physical disability, Statia was impaired by the fact that she was pregnant in the heat of June and had, along with her spouse, both a toddler and baby to carry. Similarly, Statia was considered old for enslaved black people in Canada where the average life expectancy was 25.2.⁶⁰ Although Dick was active, being forty was likely also old for a formerly enslaved person and for free black people who were typically impoverished in Canada.⁶¹

Compared to Phoebe's family, Statia had some different advantages. Unlike Phoebe and Frank, Statia and Dick did not run away with an abundance of

clothing. Instead, given Statia's mixed-race complexion and her husband's status as a free black person, she may have exploited her fluent language skills and appearance to transcend the lines of race and class by pretending to be a free white woman.⁶² Statia was in a good position to study and emulate white people's behaviours because she likely performed domestic labour.⁶³ In this case, it is possible that Dick pretended to be Statia's "slave." However, since there were no clear-cut categories of complexion and free status due to miscegenation and manumission, it is also

possible that Statia pretended to be a free mixed-race person and that she, her husband, and their children tried to pass as a free black family to maintain their kinship ties.⁶⁴ This performance could have been amplified given Dick's fine clothing, which included a short wool coat, trousers with white metal buttons, and a new felt hat.⁶⁵ Although Clarke does not go into much detail concerning Statia and Dick, he still exposes their intelligence.

Further information concerning their life and if they were recaptured and separated can be gleaned from court documents concerning the *habeas corpus* case of their son Richard Hopefield Jr. versus Stair Agnew in 1805.⁶⁶ Dick Hopewell's (referred to as Richard Hopefield Sr. in the court case) deposition for his son's freedom provides details concerning his life before, after, and while living in Canada. (fig. 4) Dick and his parents were born in Virginia and enslaved by the Wood family. At sixteen, he was "captured by a British Privateer"⁶⁷ after serving

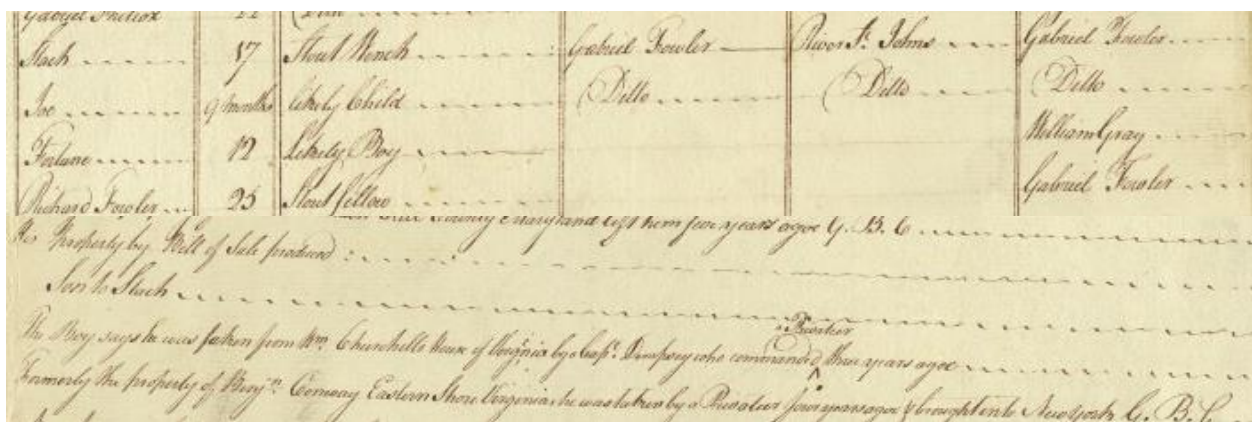


Figure 5: Book of Negroes, Guy Carleton, 1st Baron Dorchester: Papers, Kew PRO 30/55/100, 10427, National Archives, London, UK, pp. 66–67; Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Canada.

his owner during the Revolutionary War and was subsequently brought to New York where "he was told a freeman"⁶⁸ by the mayor.⁶⁹ Dick likely arrived in New Brunswick in 1783 as a free black Loyalist where he married Statia and had several children.

Statia was born around 1765 in New York and was probably previously owned by Gabriel Fowler who, as a Loyalist, fled to New Brunswick in 1783 with two enslaved people, a "stout wench" named Stach and a child named Joe (possibly Stach's son), as well as a free black man named Richard Fowler, who was formerly enslaved in Virginia and "taken by a Privateer four years ago & brought to New York."⁷⁰ (fig. 5) If Statia was owned by Gabriel Fowler and Stach was in fact Statia, is it possible that Richard Fowler was Dick (i.e., Richard Hopefield Sr.), and that Statia and Dick were a couple prior to entering New Brunswick. The ages provided are only a few years off and a newspaper account from the Royal Gazette in 1806 summarizing the case of Joseph Clarke vs. Samuel Denny Street, the anti-slavery attorney who was Hopefield Jr.'s lawyer in 1805, proves this claim to be promising.⁷¹ The newspaper account states that Clarke took Street to court because his "Negro Boy"⁷² had run away and was hiding with Street who denied giving him back. (fig. 8) Clarke won the case by providing evidence of a bill of sale from Gabriel Fowler for the mother of the boy and a permit from the police of New York

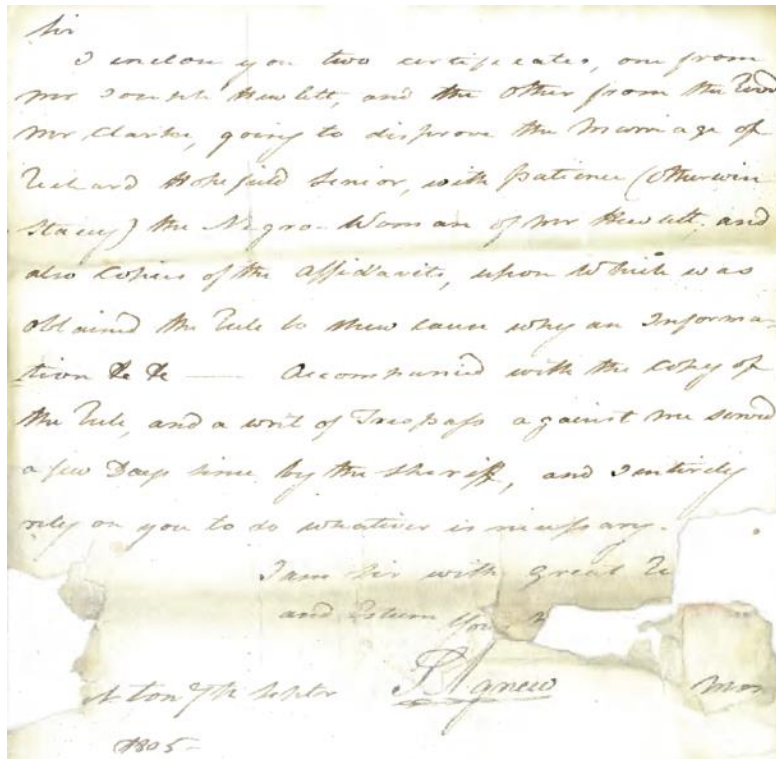


Figure 6: Stair Agnew, "Certificates to Disprove Marriage," *King Vs. Agnew, Stair*, 1805; RS 42. 9196, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton, Canada.

allowing Fowler to "bring the Woman as his Slave to this Country."⁷³ The enslaved boy was born in St. John and his father "was a freeman who had run away from the Plaintiff [Clarke]."⁷⁴

From this information, it seems that the case is referring to Statia, Dick, and their son who, from the outset, intended to stay together.⁷⁵

Prior to the above incident, it appears that shortly after Statia arrived in New Brunswick she was owned by Phineas Lovitt, a member of the House of Assembly, who likely purchased her from Clarke.⁷⁶ According to Dick's deposition, he and Statia were already married when she was purchased as movable property by Lovitt. Dick further

stated that he and Statia were almost separated before their escape from Clarke in 1792. Sometime between 1783–1785, Dick declared that his "wife had been put on board a vessel by one Phineas Leavitt [Lovitt] in order as the deponent was informed to send her to the West Indies to be sold."⁷⁷ Upon discovering this, Dick took his situation to the governor and as a result "she [Statia] was relanded by order of Governor Carleton who set her at liberty."⁷⁸ Statia and Dick "lived afterwards [...] in a state of freedom in said city St. John" where they had Hopefield Jr., whom Statia was pregnant with at the time of her abduction.⁷⁹ Seven years later, Statia "was forcibly seized by Doctor Joseph Clark and carried off to Mougerville," (sic) which correlates with Statia and her family's escape from Clarke in 1792.⁸⁰ What happened to Statia underscores the regular practice of kidnapping, re-enslaving, and separating free black people in the Maritimes since the boundaries between "slave" and "servant" were easily manipulated in favour of white enslavers and employers.⁸¹ From the fugitive advertisement and newspaper account, it seems that after Clarke abducted Statia he employed Dick as an indentured servant. This was likely a strategy adopted by Dick so that he could be with his family.

Unfortunately, the depositions in support of Agnew proved that Statia, Dick, and their children were recaptured by Clarke, who sold Statia to Hewlett and their son Hopefield Jr., possibly the five-year-old boy in the advertisement, to Agnew, officially separating the Hopefield family.⁸² To remain together, Dick used the same strategy above and was hired by Hewlett as an indentured servant before he was discharged in 1805.⁸³ In addition, highlighting

the physical separation of Statia and her family, the Hopefield Jr. versus Stair Agnew case also sheds light on how Statia and Dick's marriage was viewed in the eyes of law. Agnew provided certificates from Joseph Hewlett "to disprove the marriage of Richard Hopefield Senior with Patience (otherwise Stacey) [Statia] this negro woman of Ms. Hewlett."⁸⁴ (fig. 6) Agnew wanted to refute their marriage to counter Street's argument that since Dick was free, his son Hopefield Jr. should also be free. According to Hewlett, who owned Statia at the time of the case, Statia and Dick were not formally married since Dick, while in service to Hewlett, had "purchased from William Peters a negro woman with whom the said Richard now lived and by whom he has had several children."⁸⁵ (fig. 7) Hewlett thought that Dick was Statia's husband. However, according to Hewlett's deposition, Dick "declar[ed] himself not to be the husband of the said Stacey" and "discounts being the father of" Statia's child (i.e., Hopefield Jr.).⁸⁶ Hewlett's claims were taken as factual although it was never confirmed by Dick whether he purchased and married another enslaved woman. If he did purchase another enslaved woman, is it possible that it was his daughter who was fifteen months old at the time of his family's escape in 1792?

Not only were the Hopefields torn apart, but their former owners strategically discounted Statia and Dick's marriage to legally bind their son "to serve the said Stair for his [...] life time."⁸⁷ In other words, because Statia was enslaved and natally alienated, her marriage to Dick was not legally recognized, which in turn had profound emotional and social impacts. Hopefield Jr.'s parentage and Statia and Dick's marital status were at the heart of his habeas corpus case that ultimately failed since, as slavery is a matrilineal institution, the court argued that his mother was enslaved making him enslaved. For slaveholders living in New Brunswick where

New Brunswick Supreme Court

The King } Joseph Hewlet of Queens County maketh
or Statia Agnew } oath that he this Deponent was informed
and believes that Richard Hopefield a
Negro man some years ago purchased from
one William Peters a Negro woman with
whom the said Richard now lives and
as this Deponent has been informed & believes
by whom he has had several children
- That before the said Richard, the said
Negro woman as aforesaid he the said Richard
lived in the family of this Deponent
as a servant the said Richard then being
as this Deponent at that time believed
the husband of a Negro woman the pro-
perty of this Deponent called Patsence
otherwise called Stacey, that in consequence
of the purchase above mentioned and
his the said Richards declaring himself
not to be the husband of the said Stacey, he
this Deponent discharged the said Richard
from his said service and forbade the said
Richard's coming to this Deponent's House
- That the said Richard has not since
the said discharge, to the best of this Depon-
ent's knowledge & belief ever cohabited
with the said Negro woman called Stacey,
still belonging to this Deponent as aforesaid
nor ever been within this Deponent's House
since the said discharge, and this Deponent
further saith that the said Stacey since
the said discharge of the said Richard has
had one child which the said Richard
disowns being the father of

Given the 31st day
of January 1806
Before me Jph Hewlett

Figure 7: Joseph Hewlet, "Certificate," King Vs. Agnew,
Stair, January 31, 1805; RS 42. 9196, Provincial Archives of
New Brunswick, Fredericton, Canada.

At the other Court eleven causes were entered for trial—four of them were accommodated, and the remainder tried. Four of these were of very little importance, except to the parties; but in the other three were involved questions in which the public are interested.

1. The first was an action of *Trover* brought by JOSEPH CLARKE, Esq. against SAMUEL D. STREET, Esq. for a *Negro Boy* claimed by the Plaintiff as his *Slave*. The Plaintiff gave in evidence a bill of sale from one *Gabriel Fowler* to him for the mother of the Boy in question, and a permit from the Police Office of New York, dated in 1783, to *Fowler* to bring the Woman as his *Slave* to this Country. —It appeared that the Boy was born at or near the City of Saint John after the date of the bill of sale, and that his father, (if known) was a *freeman*; that he had run away from the Plaintiff, and was harboured by the Defendant. The conversion was satisfactorily proved by an *implied* refusal to deliver the Boy upon demand. The Counsel for the Defendant moved for a *Nonsuit* upon four grounds, viz. 1st.—That it did not sufficiently appear that the mother of the Boy was a *Slave*. (For the general question of *Slavery* was not agitated.) 2d.—That it appeared that the Boy was a *bastard*, or otherwise that his father was a *free man*; and in either case he must be free, as by the Laws

of England; the issue follows the condition of the *father* and not of the mother.

3d.—That as there was no Law of this Province creative of *Slavery*, and its existence here depended wholly upon the several Acts of the British Parliament, which were silent as to the *Children* born of *Slaves*, they could not be held in *Slavery*, but were entitled, as British subjects, born in this Province, to all the benefits of the Common Law of England, which is the Law of this Country; and therefore, admitting that the Rule of the Civil Law "*that the child follows the condition of the mother*," should prevail, or that both the Parents of the Boy were African *Slaves*, he being a native of this Province must be free.

4th.—That the action of *Trover* would not lie for a *Negro Slave*, because no person could have that *uncontrolled and unlimited property* in a *Slave*, which was necessary to support this action.

The Counsel for the Plaintiff urged in reply, that an action like this had been brought in *Nova-Scotia* by Mr. De Lantey, and quoted the opinion of Mr. *Aplin*, supported by several learned Gentlemen in England; (as appeared by a Pamphlet published in this Province,) but the Chief Justice did not think that case of sufficient authority, and directed the *Nonsuit*, upon the third and fourth grounds moved by the defendant. His Honor was of opinion that the title to the mother was sufficiently established; and as to the second he was silent.

there was no slave code, this case was "undoubtedly a legal triumph for the slave-owning interests. They had received a clear legal verdict in favour of the continuance of Negro slavery."⁸⁸

Given this information, it is possible to paint a more complete picture of Statia and Dick's life and how they coped and resisted multiple family separations beginning at least in 1783. For instance, Statia also went by the name Patience. It is unclear whether she chose to call herself Statia or Patience since Clarke's advertisement called her Statia, the court documents often refer to her as "Patience, otherwise called Stacey," and Dick's deposition called her Patience.⁸⁹ Regardless of which name she self-declared, Statia took part in a common occurrence amongst fugitive

enslaved and newly liberated people since changing one's name signified their new free identities.⁹⁰ In this case, it is probable that Statia also took the last name of her husband, which represented not only self-ownership, but also the legitimacy of her marriage and commitment to Dick Hopewell, who also changed his name possibly from Richard Fowler, to Dick Hopewell, and finally to Richard Hopefield Sr. as per his deposition.⁹¹

Of the 622 fugitive advertisements found in New York and New Jersey newspapers, only 19 enslaved families made a bid for freedom by running away together including Frank, Phoebe, and their child.⁹² In the Maritimes, there are 8 such fugitive slave advertisements for enslaved families running away out of 30, and 3 in which enslaved people escaped with free black people including Statia, her children, and Dick.⁹³ Phoebe and Statia's families were therefore some of the few brave enslaved men, women, and children who, despite being discouraged by northern slaveholders to marry and have chosen families, developed kinship bonds that they intended to maintain at all costs by absconding together.⁹⁴ The fugitive advertisements for Phoebe and

Figure 8: Anonymous, "Newspaper Account," *Royal Gazette* (New Brunswick), September 10, 1806; F3813. Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton, Canada.

Statia's families expose the violence of slavery in northern states and Canada while subverting their romanticised national narratives. They also highlight both the heterogeneity of the enslaved and their intellect in which they developed strategies that used complexion, dress, language, employment skills, networks of free people, and stolen items to assume free identities.⁹⁵ Whereas Statia's family was re-captured and subsequently separated, it remains unknown what happened to Phoebe's family and if their strategies succeeded. Nevertheless, both cases underscore the experiences of how two different, yet equally determined, black enslaved (and partially free) families resisted their bondage in the slave minority societies of late eighteenth-century New Jersey and New Brunswick.

ENDNOTES

¹ Natal alienation is the "alienation of the slave from all formal, legally enforceable ties of 'blood'" and from all "'rights' or claims of birth." Orlando Patterson, Slavery and Social Death (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 5–7.

² Most slave marriages were not legalized in courts or churches because they required permission from their slave owners. However, some enslaved people resisted and married other enslaved people and free black people, yet these acts did not go unpunished. For example, Mary Prince defied her owner's orders not to marry a free black man and as a result, Prince was flogged by her female slave owner; Mary Prince, The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), p. 85.; Patterson, Slavery and Social Death, p. 6.

³ Patterson, Slavery and Social Death, p. 6.

⁴ Patterson, Slavery and Social Death, p. 6.

⁵ Harvey Amani Whitfield, North to Bondage: Loyalist Slavery in the Maritimes, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), p. 76.

⁶ Whitfield, North to Bondage, p. 80. Simon P. Newman, "Rethinking Runaways in the British Atlantic World: Britain, the Caribbean, West Africa and North America," Slavery & Abolition, vol. 38, no. 1 (2017), p. 53.

⁷ Females fled less frequently because they could not bear abandoning their children. Furthermore, families fled less often because "running away required speed and low visibility, and the presence of a child contributed to neither." Jan Kurth, "Wayward Wenches and Wives: Runaway Women in the Hudson Valley, N.Y., 1785–1830," NWSA Journal, vol. 1, no. 2 (Winter 1988–1989), pp. 207–8.

⁸ Harvey Amani Whitfield, Black Slavery in the Maritimes: A History in Documents, (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2018), p. 9.

⁹ Whitfield, Black Slavery in the Maritimes, p. 9.

¹⁰ Charmaine A. Nelson has contested the validity of the scholarly separation and definition of slave societies vs. societies with slaves. See: Charmaine A. Nelson, Slavery, Geography and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica, (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), pp. 15–17.

¹¹ For a comparison of Northern and Southern advertisements concerning runaway enslaved families, see Nicholas Raffoul, "Black Kinship in Slaveholding Societies: Investigating Family Ties in Fugitive Slave Advertisements from Nova Scotia and South Carolina," Chrysalis vol.1, no.8 (2020), pp. 123–131; Whitfield, North to Bondage, pp. 30–31; Charmaine A. Nelson, "'Ran away from her Master...a Negroe Girl named Thursday': Examining Evidence of Punishment, Isolation, and Trauma in Nova Scotia and Quebec Fugitive Slave Advertisements," Legal Violence and the Limits of the Law, eds. Joshua Nichols and Amy Swiffen (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 81.

¹² Whitfield, North to Bondage, p. 27.

¹³ Charmaine A. Nelson, "The Canadian Fugitive Slave Archive and the Concept of Refuge," English Studies in Canada, Something Personal: Archives and Methods for Critical Refugee Studies in Canada, guest eds. Vinh Nguyen and Thy Phu, vol. 45, no. 3 (September 2019), pp. 91–115.

¹⁴ Nelson, Slavery, Geography and Empire, p. 3; Nelson, "The Canadian Fugitive Slave Archive and the Concept of Refuge," pp. 91–115.

¹⁵ T. Watson Smith, "The Slave in Canada," Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society, for the Years 1896–98, vol. 5 (Halifax: Nova Scotia Printing Company, 1899), p. 125.

¹⁶ Gail R. Safian, Slavery in New Jersey: A Troubled History (Durand-Hedden House & Garden Association, 2019), p. 2.

¹⁷ The New Jersey census records from 1790–1820 have not survived and the commonality of his name makes it

difficult to ascertain specific information on John Wilson's life.

¹⁸ If they ran away from Mrs. Mary Wilson, it is possible that this is the same Mary Wilson who enslaved several black people from 1814–1829 in New Jersey. Further primary source research at the New Jersey State Archives is required to confirm this information. "Birth Certificates of Children of Slaves, 1804–1835," New Jersey State Archives, Richard B. Marrin, Runaways of Colonial New Jersey: Indentured Servants, Slaves, Deserters, and Prisoners, 1720–1781 (Westminster, Md.: Heritage Books, 2007), pp. 250, 265; Elmer Tindall Hutchinson, Calendar of New Jersey Wills, Administrations, Etc. Volume IX, 1796–1800 (Trenton, NJ: MacCrellish & Quigley, 1944), p. 347.

¹⁹ Enslaved people were often called servants and Loyalists used the term servants rather than slaves in their documentation when entering Canada. This makes it difficult to discern in the archives who was a free black person and who was enslaved in the Maritimes. Whitfield estimates that between 1,500–2,000 black enslaved people lived in the Maritimes following the Loyalist influx. Whitfield, North to Bondage, p. 12; David Bell, American Loyalists to New Brunswick: The Ship Passenger Lists (Halifax, NS: Formac Publishing Company Limited, 2015), p. 108.

²⁰ Safian, Slavery in New Jersey, p. 3.

²¹ Graham Russell Gao Hodges and Alan Edward Brown, "Pretends to be Free": Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), pp. xiv, xix. Summer escapes, however, were most typical for the enslaved in cold climate regions due to the dangers of exposure and death in cold climate winters.

²² Flights from slavery increased during the war since it provided a cover; Hodges and Brown, "Pretends to be Free," p. xxxii.

²³ Wilson, "Ten Hard Dollars Reward."

²⁴ John Wilson, "Ten Hard Dollars Reward," New Jersey Journal (Chatham), July 24, 1781. Library of Congress, Newspaper Microfilm 4542.

²⁵ Wilson, "Ten Hard Dollars Reward."

²⁶ Wilson, "Ten Hard Dollars Reward."

²⁷ Wilson, "Ten Hard Dollars Reward," and "Fifteen Hundred Dollars Reward," New Jersey Journal (Chatham), April 23, 1781. Library of Congress, Newspaper Microfilm 4542.

²⁸ David Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the 18thc. Mid-Atlantic," William and Mary Quarterly (April 1999), pp. 252–53.

²⁹ Giles R. Wright, Afro-Americans in New Jersey: A Short History (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Historical Commission, Department of State, 1988), p. 23.

³⁰ Wilson, "Ten Hard Dollars Reward."

³¹ Wilson, "Ten Hard Dollars Reward."

³² Stefanie Hunt-Kennedy, "'Had His Nose Cropt for Being Formerly Runaway': Disability and the Bodies of Fugitive Slaves in the British Caribbean," Slavery & Abolition vol. 41, no. 2 (2020), p. 212.

³³ Hunt-Kennedy, "'Had His Nose Cropt," p. 224.

³⁴ Hodges and Brown, "Pretends to be Free," Table 1.

³⁵ Wirtz, "Two Hundred Pound Reward."

³⁶ As Nelson contends, in nineteenth-century Jamaica, for instance, horses were associated with modernity, speed, wealth, and upper-class whiteness and enslaved black people with shoelessness and impoverishment. See: Nelson, Slavery, Geography and Empire, pp. 317, 319, 320, 350, 360, 373, 385 n. 75.

³⁷ Wilson, "Fifteen Hundred Dollars Reward." Hodges and Brown, "Pretends to be Free," pp. xxix, xxvi. Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways," p. 263.

³⁸ Charmaine A. Nelson, "He 'is supposed to have with him forged Certificates of his Freedom, and Passes': Slavery, Mobility, and the Creolized Counter-Knowledge of Resistance," African Studies Students' Association of McGill Lecture Series, McGill University, Montreal, 24 February 2022.

³⁹ Horses were expensive, increased mobility, and were a sign of wealth. \$10 in 1781 is worth \$253.29 today and \$1,500 in 1781 is worth \$37,992.97 today. Nelson, Slavery, Geography and Empire, p. 319. "Inflation from 1781 to 2022," CPI Inflation Calculator.

⁴⁰ Hodges and Brown, "Pretends to be Free," p. xiv.

⁴¹ Nelson, "The Canadian Fugitive Slave Archive and the Concept of Refuge," pp. 91–115.

⁴² Bell, American Loyalists, p. 108.

⁴³ Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways," p. 263.

⁴⁴ Joseph Clarke, "Three Guineas Reward," Saint John Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 29 June 1792; F4065, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton, Canada.

⁴⁵ The reward was set at 3 Guineas for Statia's family, which is the equivalent of 4.04 pounds. In 1790, this was worth 26 days of work for a skilled tradesman. Today, this is worth about £307.04; "Currency Converter: 1270–2017," National Archives (date of last access 21 February 2022) www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/

⁴⁶ See Whitfield, North to Bondage, pp. 80–82.

⁴⁷ Alleyne's parents both belonged to large sugar plantation and slave owning families in Barbados that brought "negro servants" with them to New England. Alleyne 1, MC1, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.

⁴⁸ The Clarke family settled at Mougerville in Sunbury County where Clarke continued to practise medicine. Is it possible that he used enslaved people as test subjects? Bell, American Loyalists, p. 82; Clarke 1, MC1, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.

⁴⁹ Clark 1, MC1, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.

⁵⁰ Bell, American Loyalists, p. 82.

⁵¹ Bell, American Loyalists, p. 82.

⁵² Clarke, "Three Guineas Reward."

⁵³ Clarke, "Three Guineas Reward."

⁵⁴ Although miscegenation (sex between races) was discouraged, it is unclear to what extent this was practised given the many mixed-race enslaved people in Canada. Cross-racial sex often indicated violent, exploitative, and non-consensual sexual encounters between enslaved women and slave owners. It is possible that Statia's mother was raped by her white owner and birthed Statia, an enslaved mixed-race child; Whitfield, North to Bondage, pp. 68–9, 76.

⁵⁵ Clarke, "Three Guineas Reward."

⁵⁶ Clarke, "Three Guineas Reward."

⁵⁷ This language suggests that their marriage was not legally recognized; Clarke, "Three Guineas Reward."

⁵⁸ Clarke, "Three Guineas Reward."

⁵⁹ Clarke, "Three Guineas Reward."

⁶⁰ Marcel Trudel, Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires au Canada français (Québec: Hurtubise HMH, 1990) p. xxvi; Charmaine A. Nelson, Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art, (New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 69–70.

⁶¹ I am grateful to Charmaine A. Nelson for this insight.

⁶² Amani Marshall, "'Will Endeavor to Pass as Free': Enslaved Runaways' Performances of Freedom in Antebellum South Carolina," Slavery and Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies, vol. 31, no. 2 (2010), pp. 166, 170.

⁶³ Canada did not have full-time black enslaved field labourers given that the climate could not sustain all-year plantation slavery. As such, most enslaved people were forced to work as domestic labourers and to do outdoor, field, or agricultural labour. Domestic enslaved people lived in their owner's home and were both male and female. Enslaved Black women working as domestics were victims to numerous incidents of sexual exploitation given their closer proximity to white families. However, it also gave them access to clothing and white behaviours. Nelson, Representing the Black Female Subject, pp. 68–70; Marshall, "'Will Endeavor to Pass as Free'," pp. 166, 170; Charmaine A. Nelson, "An Introduction Canadian Slavery," Confederation Centre of Arts, 15 November 2020 (date of last access 12 March 2022) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8PjPz0o9_-c

⁶⁴ Marshall, "'Will Endeavor to Pass as Free'," pp. 165–6.

⁶⁵ Joseph Clarke, "Three Guineas Reward."

⁶⁶ A writ ordering that a detained person be brought before a court or judge to determine whether such detention is lawful. This case is also discussed by D.G. Bell in "Slavery and the Judges of Loyalist New Brunswick," University of New Brunswick Law Journal, vol.31(1982), pp. 22–6; and Whitfield, Black Slavery in the Maritimes, pp. 58, 119.

⁶⁷ Richard Hopfield vs. Stair Agnew, 1802/1805; Provincial Archives of New Brunswick. RS 42. 9189 and 9190.

⁶⁸ According to his deposition, Dick was granted his freedom after fighting with the British during the American Revolutionary War; Richard Hopfield vs. Stair Agnew, 1802/1805.

⁶⁹ Richard Hopfield vs. Stair Agnew, 1802/1805.

⁷⁰ Bell, "Slavery and the Judges of Loyalist New Brunswick," p. 23. Book of Negroes, Guy Carleton, 1st Baron Dorchester: Papers, Kew PRO 30/55/100, 10427, pp. 66–7, National Archives, London, UK.

⁷¹ "Newspaper Account," Royal Gazette, 10 September 1806; Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, F3813.

⁷² "Newspaper Account," Royal Gazette.

⁷³ "Newspaper Account," Royal Gazette.

⁷⁴ Newspaper Account," Royal Gazette.

⁷⁵ After Hopfield Jr.'s writ of habeas corpus failed against Stair Agnew, he may have run away with his attorney.²⁷

Clarke, who claimed that he owned Statia whom he purchased from Fowler, re-enslaved, and subsequently sold, could have now been claiming Richard Jr. as his property. The court ruled against Street and argued that “the title [slave] to the mother was sufficiently established.” “Newspaper Account,” Royal Gazette.

⁷⁶ Bell, “Slavery and the Judges of Loyalist New Brunswick,” p. 23; Richard Hopfield vs. Stair Agnew.

⁷⁷ Richard Hopfield vs. Stair Agnew.

⁷⁸ Richard Hopfield vs. Stair Agnew.

⁷⁹ Bell, “Slavery and the Judges of Loyalist New Brunswick,” p. 23; Richard Hopfield vs. Stair Agnew.

⁸⁰ Richard Hopfield vs. Stair Agnew.

⁸¹ The case of Hopfield Jr. reveals that Agnew had Dick imprisoned and almost re-enslaved. As a result, Dick attempted to sue for damages. Whitfield, North to Bondage, pp. 13–6; Richard Hopfield vs. Stair Agnew.

⁸² King Vs. Agnew, Stair, 1805; Provincial Archives of New Brunswick. RS 42. 9196.

⁸³ King Vs. Agnew, Stair.

⁸⁴ King Vs. Agnew, Stair.

⁸⁵ King Vs. Agnew, Stair.

⁸⁶ King Vs. Agnew, Stair.

⁸⁷ King Vs. Agnew, Stair.

⁸⁸ Bell, “Slavery and the Judges of Loyalist New Brunswick,” pp. 9, 25.

⁸⁹ Perhaps her name evolved from Stach to Statia/Stacey to Patience. However, enslaved people were often named by slaveholders after personality traits (i.e., Patience) and such names were used to dominate and ridicule the enslaved. As such, it may seem more probable that she changed her name to Statia. Thus, Clarke’s advertisement may have acknowledged her formerly free identity from when he abducted, re-enslaved, and re-sold her. King Vs. Agnew, Stair; Richard Hopfield vs. Stair Agnew.

⁹⁰ Marshall, “ ‘Will Endeavor to Pass as Free’,” p.175. Waldstreicher, “Reading the Runaways,” pp. 260–3.

⁹¹ Dick’s deposition also highlights that he was illiterate since he marked his signature with an “X” (fig. 4). As such, when his family escaped Clarke, Dick probably did not forge free passes, but may have purchased some elsewhere.

⁹² An additional 19 are recorded to have escaped with free black people; Hodges and Brown, “Pretends to be Free,” p. 346.

⁹³ Sarah Elizabeth Chute, “Runaway Slave Advertisements from Loyalist Newspapers of the Maritime Colonies,” (Bellingham: Honors Program Senior Projects, Western Washington University, 2018), p. 55.

⁹⁴ Whitfield, North to Bondage, p. 27.

⁹⁵ Marshall, “ ‘Will Endeavor to Pass as Free’,” pp. 161–80; Nelson, “ ‘Ran away from her Master’,” p. 80.

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PLATE LIST

Figure 1: John Wilson, “Ten Hard Dollars Reward,” New Jersey Journal (Chatham), 24 July 1781; Newspaper Microfilm 4542, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, United States.

Figure 2: John Wilson, “Fifteen Hundred Dollars Reward,” New Jersey Journal (Chatham), 23 April 1781; Newspaper Microfilm 4542, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, United States.

Figure 3: Joseph Clarke, “Three Guineas Reward” Saint John Gazette and Weekly Advertiser, 29 June 1792; F4065, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton, Canada.

Figure 4: Richard Hopefield Sr., “Deposition,” Richard Hopfield vs. Stair Agnew, July 5, 1805; RS 42. 9189 and 9190, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton, Canada.

Figure 5: Book of Negroes, Guy Carleton, 1st Baron Dorchester: Papers, Kew PRO 30/55/100, 10427, National Archives, London, UK, pp. 66–67; Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Canada.

Figure 6: Stair Agnew, “Certificates to Disprove Marriage,” King Vs. Agnew, Stair, 1805; RS 42. 9196, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton, Canada.

Figure 7: Joseph Hewlet, “Certificate,” King Vs. Agnew, Stair, January 31, 1805; RS 42. 9196, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton, Canada.

Figure 8: Anonymous, “Newspaper Account,” Royal Gazette (New Brunswick), 10 September 1806; F3813. Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton, Canada.

ANALYZING AND RESPONDING TO FUGITIVE SLAVE ADVERTISEMENTS: THE CASES OF CLOE AND RICHARD

Iggy Henderson

Introduction

Any attempt to compare or analyze fugitive slave advertisements should first start with some commentary on the general content of these advertisements. As Tamara Extian-Babiuk has argued, these advertisements, placed in an effort to recapture escaped enslaved individuals, “facilitated the codification of the black slave body through the technique of physical description, reliant on a series of ideological systems surrounding race and gender,”¹ reducing enslaved black bodies to a series of buzzwords.

While the printing of these advertisements by white enslavers worked to create an archive of data on enslaved people, I would be remiss not to point out the ways in which that archive is incomplete. As Charmaine A. Nelson has argued, with newspapers being printed on a weekly basis (as opposed to daily), “an enslaved person’s quick recapture foreclosed the need for the printing of a fugitive slave notice, [and] many more people escaped than were ever documented in such notices.”² These advertisements are also lacking because enslavers purposefully presented only the details about the enslaved which they wanted the public to know, details which routinely sought to criminalize the enslaved for daring to seize their freedom through the act of what Marcus Wood has called “self-theft.”³ With no details describing the individual’s personality or anything beyond what was deemed necessary, they provide only a partial portrait of the enslaved.

This restricted language is indicative of the erasure of enslaved people, their personhood and their experiences. These advertisements were likely charged by the word, making shorter notices more affordable. According to Extian-Babiuk, “it must not be forgotten that slave owners were themselves extremely wealthy and could certainly have afforded to place more detailed descriptions of their slaves had they been so inclined.”⁴ Although in Canada, slave owners were also of the middle classes like butchers and tailors, Extian-Babiuk’s point that many of them would have been able to print longer advertisements if desired, still has merit.⁵ The disregard for the individuality and complexity of runaway enslaved individuals is further compounded when their advertisements are compared to those describing fugitive white criminals. Extian-Babiuk contends,

“Because of their function, fugitive ads must attempt to textually create a recognizable picture of the runaway slave. But despite the significance of their role, these notices provide very little detail. One might assume that this is the norm for any text with this intent, which is why a comparison to the notices of escaped white criminals is useful. The contrast between the notices for black and white escapees illustrates that minimal description is not in fact the norm.”⁶

The goal of these advertisements was to create a mental picture, that once visualized by the reader, would let them identify the enslaved individual and then return them for the listed reward. Indeed, Nelson has argued that the nature and intent of the text in such advertisements, turned them into dubious portraits of the enslaved which sought to “capture,” without the consent of the fleeing “sitter,” the visual likenesses of the people who resisted through flight.⁷ Anything that went beyond what would help physically (or orally) identify a runaway was thought of as excessive or unnecessary, and therefore, not worth mentioning.

The following advertisements were chosen for analysis because they go beyond merely cursory and superficial descriptions of the escaped. Furthermore, advertisements for females, like Cloe, are far rarer because as mothers or caretakers of young children, women would not leave their charges behind.⁸ To attempt to escape with children was to raise one’s chances of getting caught.⁹ Lastly, both advertisements mention other individuals either as people assisting in the flight or who had motivated the escape.

Cloe

“RUN-AWAY

From the Subscriber in the Night of the 13th. Instant:

A NEGRO WENCH, named CLOE, about thirty years old, pretty stout made, but not tall; speaks English and French, the latter not fluently. As she has taken all her own cloaths and some which did not belong to her, it is uncertain what dress she may wear. She is supposed to have gone off in a canoe with a man of low stature and dark complexion, who speaks English, Dutch, and French. She got out of a garret window by the help of a ladder. - Whoever will apprehend and return the said wench to the Subscriber at Berthier, or give notice to him, or to the Printer hereof, where she may be found, shall be liberally rewarded, and all reasonable expences paid.

Berthier, 21st. July, 1791.

J. Joseph.”¹⁰ (sic)

The language used in fugitive slave advertisements was intentional in the categorizing and stigmatizing of the black enslaved body. For Cloe, even the description of her as a “wench”¹¹ carried powerful connotations. According to Extian-Babiuk,

“[T]he fact that only a young or unmarried woman of European descent is generally referred to as a wench, while the term is applied to a black woman of *any age*, illustrates the conflation of blackness with an inherently child-like disposition. [...] It is telling that the same term connotes ‘[a] lewd or immodest [European] woman’ and ‘a colored woman of any age’. While a white woman must engage in specific behaviors to earn the label ‘wench’, the black female is assumed to be lascivious and promiscuous by default.”¹²

A significant part of the description that was provided in these advertisements was about the clothing the escapee would likely be wearing.

Cloe, however, took a fair amount of clothes with her, making it harder for her owner to guess what she might be wearing. In the

advertisement placed for her recapture, she is accused of making off with clothes that did not belong to her. Like many other enslaved people, she would have had a very limited wardrobe.¹³ Since descriptions of what they were wearing were then as good as a physical description of what they looked like, escapees would steal clothes and wigs to try and aid in their disguise/transformation, in an effort to be less recognizable.¹⁴

Judah Joseph, who placed the advertisement, (fig. 1) claimed that Cloe had gotten assistance from a “man of dark complexion”¹⁵ to escape by canoe. But interestingly, as Nelson has explained, the nature of his phrasing, “is *supposed* to have gone off,”¹⁶ indicates that he was describing not what he had himself had witnessed, but what had been conveyed to him through a third party.¹⁷ (italics mine) Both the fact that she may have had an accomplice, and the fact that she sought escape via boat are interesting. Nelson has explained,

“[T]he more that the sea became a tried and true avenue of escape, the more slave-owners sought to block this vital route of refuge. Besides the impediments created by slave-owners and their surrogates to obstruct sea access, the enslaved themselves had profound reasons for despising and fearing sea travel.”¹⁸

While many enslaved African-born people would have had little to no recollection of the Middle Passage (depending upon their ages at the points of embarkation), those who did remember would likely have had traumatic memories of sea travel.

Although perhaps a trivial detail, it is interesting that Cloe’s supposed partner/aid is referred to as having a “dark complexion,”¹⁹ but not as explicitly “black” or by a specific race. This leaves us to wonder whether she was helped by a free or enslaved man, and if he was black or of another race. As Nelson has argued, what is clear from Cloe’s daring escape from the upper floor of Joseph’s home (through the garret window), is that she understood his lifestyle,

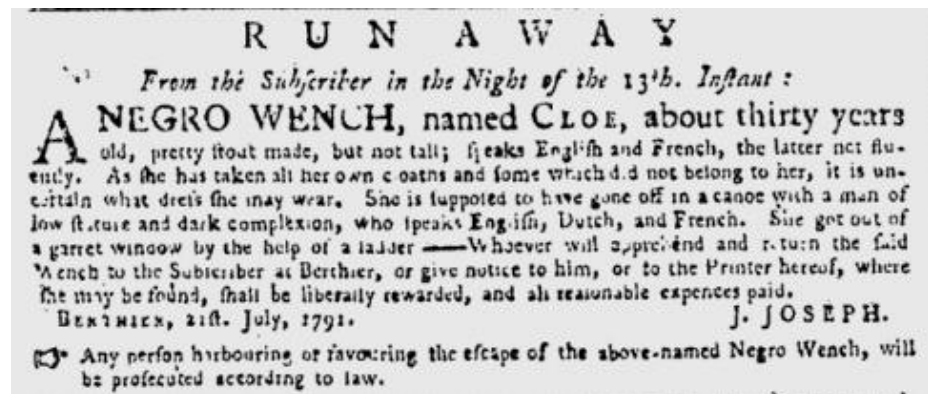


Figure 1: J. Joseph, “RUN AWAY From the Subscriber in the Night of the 13th Instant,” *Quebec Gazette*, 28 July 1791; Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ), Montreal, Canada.

timetable, and the nature of Joseph's possessions (if the ladder was his), had access to the garret or perhaps was even forced to sleep there, and was able to initially escape undetected.²⁰

Richard


“25 Dollars Reward,
WILL be given for the apprehension of RICHARD, a Negro fellow belonging to me, who ranaway from my brother, on his way to Alabama, about the 10th of the present month. Richard is a stout, well-built fellow, about 30 or 33 years old, black skin, 5 feet, 9 or 10 inches high, will weigh, I suppose 170 or 175 pounds, has a tolerably large mouth, small, keen eyes, and very fair, white teeth. He was purchased from some person in Raleigh, whose name I do not remember, and taken to Buncombe, 6 or 8 years ago, and was sold a year or two since, as the property of Col. Richardson, of that county. He had, while in Raleigh, and still has, a free woman of colour for a wife, by the name of Jane Tucker. Jane is a small Mulatto woman, 25 or 30 years old, and, as I am informed, sustained while in Raleigh, a good character. She followed Richard to Buncombe, and then to this county, where she has resided for the last year or so. She is now making arrangements to return to Raleigh, where I have no doubt her husband will attempt also to get. Any information about Richard will be thankfully received by the subscriber, living near Morganton, N.C. who will compensate any person affording him assistance in trying to get this fellow.

Morganton, Nov. 15, 1836.

JOHN E. BUTLER.”²¹

In the advertisement placed for Richard's recapture, (fig. 2) his owner speculates about possible destinations. As Nelson has argued, this is not the only instance of “slave owner interest in the mobility and destinations of the enslaved. The naming of specific settlements or regions clearly demonstrates that slave owners relied upon a network of surrogates to provide intelligence on the direction or location of enslaved people who were on the run.”²² In this case, speculating that Richard may have been attempting to rejoin his wife was not baseless, but indicative of the invasive attention paid to the private lives of the enslaved by their owners. Butler casually detailed Richard's and Jane's suffering across multiple separations, revealing white callousness to black family formation and preservation. Furthermore, Richard's enslaved status and Jane's freedom would have made their attempts to live together (or even in the same vicinity) a matter of Butler's, or other slave owners' discretion.²³ Although the advertisement clearly relates that Jane wanted to live with her husband, neither she nor Richard would have had the power to force Butler to adhere to their wishes. Richard was likely not under any delusions

25 Dollars Reward,



WILL be given for the apprehension of RICHARD, a Negro fellow belonging to me, who ran away from my brother, on his way to Alabama, about the 10th of the present month. Richard is a stout, well-built fellow, about 30 or 33 years old, black skin, 5 feet, 9 or 10 inches high, will weigh, I suppose, 170 or 175 pounds, has a tolerably large mouth, small, keen eyes, and very fair, white teeth. He was purchased from some person in Raleigh, whose name I do not remember, and taken to Buncombe, 6 or 8 years ago, and was sold a year or two since, as the property of Col. Richardson, of that county. He had, while in Raleigh, and still has, a free woman of colour for a wife, by the name of Jane Tucker. Jane is a small Mulatto woman, 25 or 30 years old, and, as I am informed, sustained while in Raleigh, a good character. She followed Richard to Buncombe, and then to this county, where she has resided for the last year or so. She is now making arrangements to return to Raleigh, where I have no doubt her husband will attempt also to get. Any information about Richard will be thankfully received by the subscriber, living near Morganton, N. C. who will compensate any person affording him assistance in trying to get this fellow.

JOHN E. BUTLER.
Morganton, Nov. 15, 1836.

Figure 2: John E. Butler, "25 Dollars Reward," Raleigh Register and North Carolina Weekly Advertiser, 29 November 1836; North Carolina Runaway Slave Notices, 1750–1865, Digital Library on American Slavery, (Greensboro: UNC Greensboro University Libraries).

about what kind of life he was running towards, but like other escapees, he may have reconciled to "living life under slavery but in a location and with people of [his] own choosing."²⁴

John E. Butler describes Richard as being a "Negro."²⁵ According to Extian-Babiuk, "Negro" was not defined by social or cultural practices but entirely by (ascribed) visible physical characteristics."²⁶ While some slave societies produced a variety of terms for a range of (perceived) differences in complexion of mixed-race people, it was still largely appearance-based and had little, if anything, to do with the country of origin of the enslaved person. However, as Nelson has explained, "[s]ince advertisements regularly included descriptions of the dress and speech of the fugitive, even when the slave owner did not explicitly document the regional origins of the enslaved person, they are evidence of the ethnicity of the slave population, their Creoleness or Africanness."²⁷

This language surrounding perceptions of race or degree of blackness is crucial to the conversations around the fugitive slave archive. The limited investment in describing runaways as people

instead of objects, placing the emphasis on superficial qualities and saying little or nothing about who these enslaved men and women were as people was the birthplace for continued patterns of race-based illiteracy. As Nelson has argued, "such notices provide a means of understanding our current practices of racial profiling and abuse in border policing as a product of a centuries-long history."²⁸

Conclusion

While it is extremely unfortunate that the structure of slave societies and colonialism prevented enslaved people from creating their own archive of their lives and experiences, and that the surviving details are filtered through the lens of white superiority, as Nelson contends, "we must reconsider the fugitive slave archive not merely as a record of oppression, but as a means of recuperating the pervasive resistance of the enslaved."²⁹

Making the decision to run away was not an easy choice, and certainly not free of consequences including incarceration, corporal punishment, and even execution. In delving into the record of men, women, and children who attempted, successfully or unsuccessfully, to leave

a horrible situation behind them, it is important that we remember their names and what little we can of their stories while acknowledging the bravery that caused their names to be printed in the first place.

ENDNOTES

¹ Tamara Extian-Babiuk, “‘To Be Sold: A Negro Wench’ Slave Ads of the Montreal Gazette 1785–1805,” (Montreal: MA Art History, McGill University, 2006), pp. 5–6.

² Charmaine A. Nelson, “The Canadian Fugitive Slave Archive and the Concept of Refuge,” *English Studies in Canada, Something Personal: Archives and Methods for Critical Refugee Studies in Canada*, guest eds. Vinh Nguyen and Thy Phu, vol. 45, no. 3, (September 2019), p. 94

³ Marcus Wood, “Rhetoric and the Runaway: The Iconography of Slave Escape in England and America,” *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780–1865* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 79; Charmaine A. Nelson, “‘Ran away from her Master...a Negroe Girl named Thursday’: Examining Evidence of Punishment, Isolation, and Trauma in Nova Scotia and Quebec Fugitive Slave Advertisements,” *Legal Violence and the Limits of the Law*, eds. Joshua Nichols and Amy Swiffen (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 71.

⁴ Extian-Babiuk, p. 25.

⁵ Frank Mackey has recuperated the biographies of many Quebec slave owners in great detail. See: Frank Mackey, *Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal 1760–1840* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010)

⁶ Extian-Babiuk, p. 38.

⁷ Nelson, Charmaine A. “Servant, Seraglio, Savage or ‘Sarah’: Examining the Visual Representation of Black Female Subjects in Canadian Art and Visual Culture,” *Women in the Promised Land?: Essays in African Canadian History*, eds. Wanda Thomas Bernard, Boulou Ebanga de B’béri, Nina Reid-Maroney (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), pp. 48–51.

⁸ Jan Kurth, “Wayward Wenches and Wives: Runaway Women in the Hudson Valley, N.Y., 1785–1830,” *NWSA Journal*, vol. 1, no. 2 (Winter 1988–1989), pp. 199–220.

⁹ Kurth, “Wayward Wenches and Wives,” pp. 199–220.

¹⁰ J. Joseph, “RUN AWAY From the Subscriber in the Night of the 13th. Instant,” *Quebec Gazette*, 28 July 1791; transcribed in Frank Mackey, “Appendix 1: Newspaper Notices,” *Done with Slavery*, p. 324

¹¹ Joseph, “RUN AWAY From the Subscriber.”

¹² Extian-Babiuk, pp. 32–33.

¹³ David Waldstreicher, “Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the 18thc. Mid-Atlantic,” *William and Mary Quarterly* (April 1999), pp. 252–54.

¹⁴ The role clothing, hairstyles and wigs (and their descriptions in fugitive slave advertisements) is discussed further in Waldstreicher, “Reading the Runaways,” pp. 252–54.

¹⁵ Joseph, “RUN AWAY From the Subscriber.”

¹⁶ Joseph, “RUN AWAY From the Subscriber.”

¹⁷ Charmaine A. Nelson, “He ‘is supposed to have with him forged Certificates of his Freedom, and Passes’: Slavery, Mobility, and the Creolized Counter-Knowledge of Resistance,” *Black and Indigenous Speaker Series*, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Canada, 4 February 2022 (date of last access 12 March 2022) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dS_idp6jIMA&t=2s

¹⁸ Nelson, “The Canadian Fugitive Slave Archive,” p. 106.

¹⁹ Joseph, “RUN AWAY From the Subscriber.”

²⁰ Nelson, “He ‘is supposed to have with him forged Certificates,” (date of last access 12 March 2022).

²¹ John E. Butler, “25 Dollars Reward,” *Raleigh Register and North Carolina Weekly Advertiser*, 29 November 1836, p. 3; transcribed in *North Carolina Runaway Slave Notices, 1750–1865*, Digital Library on American Slavery (date of last access 26 March 2022) <https://dlas.uncg.edu/notices/notice/503>

²² Nelson, “The Canadian Fugitive Slave Archive,” p. 100.

²³ As it is recounted in “The History of Mary Prince,” following Prince’s marriage without permission and to a free black man, she was “[flogged] dreadfully with [a] horsewhip” by her master; Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), p. 26

²⁴ Newman, Simon P., “Rethinking Runaways in the British Atlantic World: Britain, the Caribbean, West Africa and North America,” *Slavery & Abolition*, vol. 38, no. 1 (2016), p. 53

²⁵ Butler, “25 Dollars Reward,” p. 3.

²⁶ Extian-Babiuk, pp. 29.

²⁷ Charmaine A. Nelson, "A 'Tone of Voice Peculiar to New England': Fugitive Slave Advertisements and the Heterogeneity of Enslaved People of African Descent in Eighteenth-Century Quebec," Current Anthropology, vol. 61, no. 22 (October 2020), p. S305.

²⁸ Nelson, "The Canadian Fugitive Slave Archive," p. 95.

²⁹ Charmaine A. Nelson, "Canadian Fugitive Slave Advertisements: An Untapped Archive of Resistance," Early Canadian History, 29 February 2016 (date of last access 12 March 2022)
<https://earlycanadianhistory.ca/2016/02/29/canadian-fugitive-slave-advertisements-an-untapped-archive-of-resistance/>

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PLATE LIST

Figure 1: J. Joseph, “RUN AWAY *From the Subscriber in the Night of the 13th Instant*,” Quebec Gazette, 28 July 1791, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ), Montreal, Canada

Figure 2: John E. Butler, “25 Dollars Reward,” Raleigh Register and North Carolina Weekly Advertiser, 29 November 1836; North Carolina Runaway Slave Notices, 1750–1865, Digital Library on American Slavery, (Greensboro: UNC Greensboro University Libraries).

APPRAISAL OF PROPERTY: AN ANALYSIS OF TWO FUGITIVE SLAVE ADVERTISEMENTS

Nicole Hughes

Introduction

Fugitive slave advertisements were commonly placed within the paid announcement section of North American newspapers during the 1700's by enslavers promising a handsome reward for the recapture of the escapee.¹ Runaway advertisements followed a prescribed formula, providing precise details regarding six descriptive categories, including biological profile (i.e., sex, age, race), language and literacy, occupation, clothing, disease markers, and countenance.² Although the immediate purpose behind fugitive advertisements was the successful identification, recapture, and re-enslavement of runaways, the type of information and descriptions provided can also inform on the profitability of people who were considered to be chattel.³ According to Matthew Mason and Rita G. Koman, ultimately, the "rewards slaveowners offered suggest something of the way slaves were valued."⁴ Specifically, larger monetary rewards indicate that the escapee had highly valued attributes and the enslaver was eager to have their "property" returned to them.⁵ However, comparing the reward price of two fugitive advertisements is unfeasible given the temporal breadth of fugitive slave advertisements, the gulf in reward prices, slave societies in North America lacked a universal or standardized currency,⁶ which is further complicated by economic upheaval caused by the American Revolutionary War. Therefore, instead of studying the price gap size between rewards, evaluating the rationale behind the reward price and how it was established can be ascertained by assessing the six descriptive categories.⁷

Biological Profile

The two fugitive slave advertisements discussed in this analysis were placed for Peter from Nova Scotia, Canada⁸ and Dan from Pennsylvania, United States.⁹ Peter and Dan were both male¹⁰ which is unsurprising since most runaway advertisements were for male fugitives.¹¹ Enslaved females were less able to run away because they were often mothers and escaping with children would have been an incredible risk and liability.¹² Regardless, females do appear in runaway advertisements but were often priced lower on average than male escapees because of their subordinate status in white slave societies.¹³ Similarly, enslaved individuals within their "prime age," between 15 and 25 years, were sold at slave auctions for higher prices.¹⁴ It is reasonable that Peter, who was "about Seventeen Years of Age,"¹⁵ as well as Dan, who was "about 24 or 25 years of age,"¹⁶ would have been priced higher by their enslavers compared to an older escapee beyond prime age. Within North America, the heterogeneity of enslaved skin colour is clearly demonstrated in fugitive slave advertisements. For example, Nova Scotia enslavement notices used "Black," "Negro," and "mulatto" to describe "discrete" categories of race based on complexion and phenotypic traits.¹⁷ Both Peter and Dan are listed as "Negro,"¹⁸ a

designation used to describe an individual of African ancestry with no racial admixture, particularly European heritage.¹⁹ If we assume, based on their “Negro” classification, that Peter and Dan were dark-skinned, this may have increased their reward price given that many enslavers believed “the blackest slaves were the healthiest.”²⁰ In fact, pro-slavery medical physicians believed that “mixed race” people were feeble or prone to ill health.²¹

Language and Literacy

Regarding language, the enslaver Hugh Kirkham claimed that Peter spoke “broken English.”²² Although this may have been Kirkham’s way of intentionally devaluing Peter’s language capabilities,²³ it is more likely that Peter was born in Africa and had not spent much time in the colonies. In fact, “his Country marks on his back in the form of a Square”²⁴ indicating scarification he obtained in Africa, the result of a common cultural practice of bodily adornment and modification among African born enslaved people.²⁵ Since Peter was not fluent in English and unable to read or write in English, it would have been easier for Peter’s enslaver to keep him ignorant of anti-slavery discourse and other reported escape attempts. Kirkham may have valued Peter’s ignorance and preliteracy, thus increasing Peter’s reward money. In comparison, as a Creole Dan was “country born, and talks the English and German languages”²⁶ demonstrating his fluency from being born and spending many years in the colonies.²⁷ However, this description is only one indication of Dan’s potential literacy in his runaway advertisement. Dan’s enslaver, Christian Wirtz, feared that Dan “will if possible procure a pass, probably change his name, and endeavour to pass as a freeman.”²⁸ Although Wirtz was speculating and clearly uncertain about Dan’s literacy and therefore his ability to attempt such a forgery,²⁹ it is quite possible that Dan was literate enabling him to create a pass and change his name, transforming his identity. Additionally, it is unclear whether Dan’s enslaver was unaware that Dan could read and write or if he purposefully omitted Dan’s literacy within his runaway advertisement.³⁰ If Dan’s enslaver was aware of his literacy, Dan may have performed “high-end” tasks in the urban white world,³¹ thereby increasing his reward price. Alternatively, Dan’s language and literacy could have decreased his reward price because literacy was often associated with freedom and resistance among the enslaved.³² Dan’s enslaver may have been wary of Dan exploitation of his competency and literateness to revolt against him, attempt future escapes, and engage in identity transformation.³³

Occupation

Undoubtedly, skilled enslaved individuals were considered valuable investments because they provided their enslaver specialized trade skills which were rare among the vast enslaved population.³⁴ However, Jonathan Prude’s analysis of runaway slave advertisements in the United States revealed occupation was rarely noted because it did not considerably contribute to the detailed description aimed at successful recapture and re-enslavement.³⁵ Among advertisements

which list occupation, there is a disproportionate bias towards skilled and semi-skilled enslaved escapees³⁶ because individuals who laboured in a skilled trade (i.e., shoemaker, mason, sailor, carpenter, etc.) had more freedom and were more likely to escape compared to field and domestic workers.³⁷ Therefore, it is remarkable that both Peter and Dan have listed trades, but it is unsurprising that their trades require specialized skills. In his runaway advertisement, Peter “has been used to the carpenters business”³⁸ (sic) indicating that he spent a considerable amount of time as a labouring woodworker, becoming proficient in his craft. Walter Johnson revealed that light skinned or “mulatto” enslaved adolescents were occasionally assigned a trade to master.³⁹ However, due to the comparatively smaller sizes of enslaved minority populations in northern and temperate climate regions, slave owners may not have had the luxury of assigning tasks or taring the enslaved based upon biases about complexion. Therefore, despite Peter’s African birth and his description as a “Negro BOY,”⁴⁰ he may have been assigned the carpenter trade at a young age, contributing to a higher reward price. However, Peter was 17 years old upon escape, suggesting he had not mastered the complex skills of his trade, potentially decreasing his reward price compared to an expert, generally considered a skilled man of about 45 years of age.⁴¹ In comparison, Dan “can work a little at the saddler’s trade”⁴² indicating he was not considerably accomplished or skilled in saddle-making, perhaps a consequence of Dan’s “Negro” race,⁴³ potentially decreasing his reward price. Presumably, Dan was dark-skinned, preventing him from being assigned to master a trade at a young age but was provided the opportunity to acquire a few skills labouring for his current or former enslaver. However, enslavers were known to devalue and underrate enslaved accomplishments within runaway advertisements out of fear that the escapees valuable skills would entice other enslavers and kidnappers.⁴⁴ Therefore, Dan’s enslaver may have intentionally described his saddler skills as “little” and set Dan’s reward price lower to dissuade rival enslavers from capturing Dan and exploiting such skills for themselves. Dan also had the ability to play the violin and bowed “with his left-hand when performing on the violin.”⁴⁵ White enslavers benefitted handsomely by owning a musically talented enslaved individual because they could rent out individuals considered to be chattel as entertainment “at parties, in taverns, and at various public ceremonies,”⁴⁶ another reason why Dan’s advertisement reward is remarkably high.

Clothing

In fugitive slave advertisements, the most common physical characteristic denoted is clothing,⁴⁷ providing the white public extraordinary descriptions of the escapees dress to assist them in the process of recapture.⁴⁸ Clothing was categorized based on what items the runaway “had on” when they left and which items they “took with” them upon escape.⁴⁹ Within eighteenth-century European-American colonies, clothing of any quality had value.⁵⁰ Urban and rural individuals possessed a limited variety of garments and affluent members of the community would demonstrate their wealth via the quality of their clothes.⁵¹ Enslaved individuals were given “one or two sets of cloth or clothing annually”⁵² by their enslaver which comprised their

common apparel. In Peter's case, Wirtz described him as "had on when he went a way a blue jacket, round hat, New Trousers of white Duck, new Shoes, and large plated buckles."⁵³ (sic) Peter's trousers and shoes were noted as "new" which may indicate they were recently made and acquired by Peter or that he had stolen them upon flight. Enslaved men fleeing with finer clothes, including waistcoats, shoes, stockings, or breeches were considered "higher-status" runaways because they were likely to pass as free or be unrecognized.⁵⁴ Similarly, skilled labourers like Peter often had more apparel than unskilled enslaved persons such as field hands.⁵⁵ Therefore, it is surprising he only took his common apparel with him. Peter's common apparel of durable quality likely did not factor into his reward price set by his enslaver who would not have significantly valued his clothing as a further economic loss.

In contrast, Wirtz was unsure of Dan's worn apparel at the time of his escape but provided remarkable detail of the items Dan took with him, including "two coats, a light saggathy, and a brown with yellow buttons, three jackets, light blue, brown, and striped linen, a pair of new buckskin breeches, several pair of old striped and two pair of tow trowsers, three pair of stockings, three good shirts, and a round hat."⁵⁶ Dan's advertisement is dissimilar to Peter's because Dan took a substantial quantity of good quality clothing with him indicating he intended to pass for free or create various unrecognizable disguises.⁵⁷ For example, Dan brings high quality items including "a pair of new buckskin breeches"⁵⁸ and "three pairs of stockings"⁵⁹ suggesting Dan is a "higher-status" enslaved individual.⁶⁰ Additionally, the astounding amount of clothing Dan took with him suggests he had access to many clothing items, possibly attributed to his skilled status or that Dan stole the clothes to expand his wardrobe upon escape.⁶¹ Since most enslaved individuals had controlled and limited access to clothing, Dan's enslaver may have increased his reward price to accommodate for the additional economic loss of Dan's wardrobe.

Disease and Immunity

Smallpox was endemic during the early eighteenth-century slave trade with repeated outbreaks on the African coast, on board slave vessels, and within European-American colonial-settler communities.⁶² The disease was characterized by high fever, body aches, vomiting, and a full-body pustular rash followed by scabbing.⁶³ Smallpox was a highly contagious virus transmitted via infected droplets (i.e., sneeze, cough),⁶⁴ contact with smallpox scabs and sores, or contact with objects and materials that have been contaminated by scabs and sores, including bedding and clothing.⁶⁵ Although smallpox had a high mortality rate, individuals who recovered and survived had life-long immunity against the lethal virus.⁶⁶ Undeniably, enslaved individuals who survived contracting smallpox were valuable and in good demand because their immunity permitted them to attend to smallpox patients, both the enslaved and enslavers, and they were unlikely to contract the virus again during smallpox outbreaks that raged within the colonies.⁶⁷ Dan's runaway advertisement mentioned that he was "something pitted with the small-pox"⁶⁸ indicating Dan had deep-pitted smallpox scars, a common long-term effect that predominantly

affects the face. Although Dan's enslaver likely included this additional descriptor to help with Dan's identification and recapture,⁶⁹ it also indicates Dan's immunity, making him more valuable as chattel and potentially increasing his reward price.

Inoculation was introduced in early eighteenth-century Europe and the Americas as a medical intervention to prevent the further spread of smallpox.⁷⁰ This medical procedure involved infecting an individual with a mild case of the smallpox virus allowing the body to produce antibodies and gain a degree of immunity to prevent severe infections and death.⁷¹ Medical doctors in the United States calculated the savings immune enslaved individuals would yield in attempt to convince enslavers to have their chattel inoculated.⁷² As a result, inoculation slowly spread within European-American slave societies to safeguard slave owner investments in their profitable enslaved chattel.⁷³ There is no evidence that Peter contracted smallpox naturally. However, there is a possibility Peter was vaccinated as part of the inoculation campaign, but that his immune status was not included in his runaway advertisement because it would not have contributed to his detailed physical description. If Peter had been inoculated, his enslaver may have increased his reward price compared to someone who was not vaccinated and susceptible to infection. However, inoculation was costly and impeded slave labour because newly vaccinated individuals had to isolate for at least four weeks while the mild infection was contagious in order to prevent a catastrophic outbreak.⁷⁴ Additionally, there was a six to seven percent risk of death following inoculation which would have caused great economic loss to the enslaver.⁷⁵ Therefore, if Peter was inoculated, his enslaver may have lowered his reward price as a means to "offset" the costs of vaccinating and isolating Peter while he was contagious.

Countenance

Occasionally, fugitive slave advertisements note the escapee's countenance as "smiling," "looking down," "artful," "cunning," "sly," "knaveish," "daring," and "shrewd."⁷⁶ These descriptions were formulated based upon the enslaver's perception of the escapee's mind and behaviour to "characterize" the enslaved individual, helping community members positively identify and successfully recapture their enslaved chattel.⁷⁷ Peter is characterized by a "remarkable smile on his countenance"⁷⁸ when spoken to. For the enslaver and white members of the slave community, Peter's smile was likely perceived as compliance and devotion to his enslaver or as a pleasant feature of his personality.⁷⁹ If either reason were true, Peter's enslaver may have increased his reward price because controlling someone compliant would have been less arduous compared to a disobedient enslaved individual. Alternatively, Peter's enslaver misinterpreted his smile for compliancy when it may have been a "response to the situation of being addressed by a white person."⁸⁰

Dan is described as "a shrewd cunning fellow, and will if possible procure a pass, probably change his name, and endeavour to pass as a freeman."⁸¹ Similarly, "cunning," like "artful," "designing," and "sly," has a negative connotation, but this term was used to illuminate the escapee's intelligence in runaway advertisements.⁸² There are other allusions to Dan's

intelligence, including Dan's fluency in English and German, ability to play the fiddle, intention to disguise himself with many articles of clothing, and his possible ability to write by procuring a pass and changing his name.⁸³ Based on this information, it is clear Dan's enslaver was attempting to characterize Dan as a "bad" artful type of enslaved person who was likely to attempt escape and create a self-fashioned identity in the pursuit of obtaining freedom.⁸⁴ Since Dan was a "bad" enslaved person, Dan's enslaver may have incorporated Dan's disobedience into his reward price by decreasing its value. However, intelligent and skilled enslaved individuals were also highly sought after because they were independent and did not require substantial supervision to perform tasks.⁸⁵ In this sense, Dan's enslaver may have listed a higher reward price based on the economic advantages of Dan's self-sufficiency.

Conclusion

Fugitive slave advertisement reward prices provide unique insights into the economic dynamics of how enslavers valued the enslaved people they held in bondage. However, not all runaways generated advertisements if the escapee returned to their enslaver prior to them taking out a notice⁸⁶ or if the enslaver could not afford to pay for an advertisement since newspapers often earned a brokering fee.⁸⁷ As for Peter and Dan, they had many characteristics which influenced the rationale behind their reward price, including sex, age, being Creole or African born, literacy level, specialized trade or skills, clothing quality and quantity, smallpox immunity, and perceived character. However, factors pertaining to the enslaver (i.e., personal wealth, number of enslaved people owned) and article characteristics (i.e., newspaper notoriety and distribution, length of advertisement, advertisement run time, illustration included) were not considered in this analysis. Lastly, it would be prudent to compare the reward price of two advertisements posted in the same city within a given year to mitigate the economic limitations of currency standardization and inflation.

ENDNOTES

¹ Hannah Walser, "Under Description: The Fugitive Slave Advertisements as Genre," American Literature, vol. 92, no. 1 (March 2020), p. 64.

² Walser, "Under Description," p. 64.

³ Conor Lennon, "Slave Escapes, Prices, and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850," Journal of Law and Economics, vol. 59, no. 3 (August 2016), p. 17; Rebecca Schneider, "'He says he is Free': Narrative Fragments and Self-Emancipation in West Indian Runaway Advertisements," European Romantic Review, vol. 29, no. 4 (July 2018), p. 438.

⁴ Matthew Mason and Rita G. Koman, "Complicating Slavery: Teaching with Runaway Slave Advertisements," OAH Magazine of History, vol. 17, no. 3 (April 2003), p. 31.

⁵ Gad Heuman, "Runaway Slaves in Nineteenth-Century Barbados," Slavery and Abolition, vol. 6, no. 3 (June 2008), p. 97.

⁶ James Powell, "A History of the Canadian Dollar," Bank of Canada, (December 2005), p. 111.

⁷ Lennon, "Slave Escapes, Prices, and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850," p. 5.

⁸ Hugh Kirkham, "RAN AWAY a smart Well looking Negro BOY named Peter," Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax), 20 May 1783; transcribed in Harvey Amani Whitfield, Black Slavery in the Maritimes: A History in Documents (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2018), p. 32. See transcription: Document 1, p. 49 of this journal.

⁹ Christian Wirtz, "Two Hundred Pound Reward," New-Jersey Gazette (Burlington), 4 January 1780; transcribed in

Freedom on the Move Project, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2022). See transcription: Document 2, p. 49 of this journal.

¹⁰ Kirkham, "RAN AWAY;" Wirtz, "Two Hundred Pound Reward."

¹¹ Heidi Elisabeth Bollinger, "'Runaway from the Subscriber': Teaching Slave Narratives Using Wanted Advertisements for Fugitive Slaves," Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture, vol. 18, no 2 (April 2018), p. 380.

¹² Bollinger, "'Runaway from the Subscriber'," p. 381.

¹³ Eugene Choo and Jean Eid, "Interregional Price Difference in the New Orleans Auctions Market for Slaves," Journal of Business & Economic Statistics, vol. 26, no. 4 (October 2008), p. 502; However, slave owners who were focused on breeding to increase their work force would have valued females, particularly at child-bearing ages and who were proven to be fertile, for their ability to produce enslaved offspring.

¹⁴ Walter Johnson, Soul by Soul: Life inside the Antebellum Slave Market (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 138.

¹⁵ Kirkham, "RAN AWAY."

¹⁶ Wirtz, "Two Hundred Pound Reward."

¹⁷ Charmaine A. Nelson, "A 'Tone of Voice Peculiar to New England': Fugitive Slave Advertisements and the Heterogeneity of Enslaved People of African Descent in Eighteenth-Century Quebec," Current Anthropology, vol. 61, no. 22 (October 2020), p. 310.

¹⁸ Kirkham, "RAN AWAY;" Wirtz, "Two Hundred Pound Reward."

¹⁹ Charmaine Nelson, Slavery, Geography and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 30.

²⁰ Johnson, Soul by Soul, p. 139.

²¹ Johnson, Soul by Soul, p. 140.

²² Kirkham, "RAN AWAY."

²³ Tom Costa, "What Can We Learn From A Digital Database of Runaway Slave Advertisements?," International Social Science Review, vol. 76, no. 1/2 (2001), p. 41.

²⁴ Kirkham, "RAN AWAY."

²⁵ Megan Vaughan, "Scarification in Africa: Re-Reading Colonial Experience," Cultural and Social History, vol. 4, no. 3 (2007), p. 389.

²⁶ Wirtz, "Two Hundred Pound Reward."

²⁷ Schneider, "'He says he is Free'," p. 438.

²⁸ Wirtz, "Two Hundred Pound Reward."

²⁹ Shaun Wallace, "Fugitive Slave Advertisements and the Rebelliousness of Enslaved People in Georgia and Maryland, 1790–1810," (Stirling: PhD Arts and Humanities, University of Stirling, 2017), p. 233.

³⁰ Wallace, "Fugitive Slave Advertisements," p. 216.

³¹ Janet Cornelius, "'We Slipped and Learned to Read': Slave Accounts of the Literacy Process, 1830–1865," Phylon, vol. 44, no. 3 (1983), p. 174.

³² Cornelius, "'We Slipped and Learned to Read'," p. 181.

³³ Wallace, "Fugitive Slave Advertisements," p. 223.

³⁴ Johnson, Soul by Soul, p. 150.

³⁵ Jonathan Prude, "To Look Upon the 'Lower Sort': Runaway Ads and the Appearance of Unfree Laborers in America, 1750–1800," Journal of American History, vol. 78, np. 1 (June 1991), p. 140.

³⁶ Costa, "What Can We Learn," p. 39; Heuman, "Runaway Slaves in Nineteenth-Century Barbados," p. 99.

³⁷ Costa, "What Can We Learn," p. 38.

³⁸ Kirkham, "RAN AWAY."

³⁹ Johnson, Soul by Soul, p. 150.

⁴⁰ Kirkham, "RAN AWAY."

⁴¹ Johnson, Soul by Soul, p. 151.

⁴² Wirtz, "Two Hundred Pound Reward."

⁴³ Wirtz, "Two Hundred Pound Reward."

⁴⁴ Johnson, Soul by Soul, p. 151.

⁴⁵ Wirtz, "Two Hundred Pound Reward."

⁴⁶ Jarden Ross Hardesty, "'The Negro at the Gate': Enslaved Labour in Eighteenth-Century Boston," New England Quarterly, vol. 87, no. 1 (March, 2014), p. 81.

⁴⁷ Prude, "To Look Upon the 'Lower Sort'," p. 143.

- ⁴⁸ David Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Mid-Atlantic," William and Mary Quarterly, vol. 56, no. 2 (April 1999), p. 252.
- ⁴⁹ Prude, "To Look Upon the 'Lower Sort'," p. 143.
- ⁵⁰ Prude, "To Look Upon the 'Lower Sort'," p. 148.
- ⁵¹ Prude, "To Look Upon the 'Lower Sort'," p. 147.
- ⁵² Prude, "To Look Upon the 'Lower Sort'," p. 148.
- ⁵³ Kirkham, "RAN AWAY."
- ⁵⁴ Prude, "To Look Upon the 'Lower Sort'," p. 145; Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways," p. 253.
- ⁵⁵ Prude, "To Look Upon the 'Lower Sort'," p. 145.
- ⁵⁶ Wirtz, "Two Hundred Pound Reward."
- ⁵⁷ Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways," p. 253.
- ⁵⁸ Wirtz, "Two Hundred Pound Reward."
- ⁵⁹ Wirtz, "Two Hundred Pound Reward."
- ⁶⁰ Prude, "To Look Upon the 'Lower Sort'," p. 145.
- ⁶¹ Prude, "To Look Upon the 'Lower Sort'," p. 148.
- ⁶² Costa, "What Can We Learn," p. 37.
- ⁶³ Elizabeth A. Fenn, Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775–82 (New York: Hill & Wang, 2002), p. 41.
- ⁶⁴ Philip Ranlet, "The British, Slaves, and Smallpox in Revolutionary Virginia," Journal of Negro History, vol. 84, no. 3 (Summer 1999), p. 217.
- ⁶⁵ Fenn, Pox Americana, p. 38.
- ⁶⁶ Rajesh Kochhar, "Smallpox in the Modern Scientific and Colonial Contexts 1721–1840," Journal of Biosciences, vol. 36, no. 5 (September 2011), p. 761.
- ⁶⁷ Kochhar, "Smallpox," p. 761.
- ⁶⁸ Wirtz, "Two Hundred Pound Reward."
- ⁶⁹ Bollinger, "'Runaway from the Subscriber,'" p. 378.
- ⁷⁰ Ranlet, "The British, Slaves, and Smallpox," p. 218.
- ⁷¹ Ranlet, "The British, Slaves, and Smallpox," p. 217.
- ⁷² Larry Stewart, "The Edge of Utility: Slaves and Smallpox in the Early Eighteenth Century," Medical History, vol. 29, no. 1 (January 1985), p. 67.
- ⁷³ Stewart, "The Edge of Utility," p. 68.
- ⁷⁴ Ranlet, "The British, Slaves, and Smallpox," p. 222.
- ⁷⁵ Niklas Thode Jensen, "Safeguarding Slaves: Smallpox, Vaccination, and Governmental Health Policies among the Enslaved Population in the Danish West Indies, 1803–1848," Bulletin of the History of Medicine, vol. 83, no. 1 (Spring 2009), p. 99.
- ⁷⁶ Wallace, "Fugitive Slave Advertisements," p. 148; Walser, "Under Description: The Fugitive Slave Advertisements as Genre" p. 76.
- ⁷⁷ Walser, "Under Description: The Fugitive Slave Advertisements as Genre," p. 79.
- ⁷⁸ Kirkham, "RAN AWAY."
- ⁷⁹ Walser, "Under Description: The Fugitive Slave Advertisements as Genre," p. 76.
- ⁸⁰ Walser, "Under Description: The Fugitive Slave Advertisements as Genre," p. 81.
- ⁸¹ Wirtz, "Two Hundred Pound Reward."
- ⁸² Bollinger, "'Runaway from the Subscriber,'" p. 379.
- ⁸³ Wallace, "Fugitive Slave Advertisements," p. 233.
- ⁸⁴ Bollinger, "'Runaway from the Subscriber,'" p. 380; David Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways," p. 261.
- ⁸⁵ Bollinger, "'Runaway from the Subscriber,'" p. 380.
- ⁸⁶ Prude, "To Look Upon the 'Lower Sort'," p. 129.
- ⁸⁷ Jordan E. Taylor, "Enquire of the Printer: Newspaper Advertising and the Moral Economy of the North American Slave Trade, 1704–1807," Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal, vol. 18, no. 3 (Summer 2020), p. 296.

DOCUMENTS

Document 1: Hugh Kirkham, “RAN AWAY a smart Well looking Negro BOY named Peter,” Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax), 20 May 1783; transcribed in Harvey Amani Whitfield, Black Slavery in the Maritimes: A History in Documents (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2018), p. 32

RAN AWAY a smart Well looking Negro BOY named Peter, about Seventeen Years of Age: had on when he went a way a blue jacket, round hat, New Trousers of white Duck, new Shoes, and large plated buckles; he is round faced, speakes broken English, and when spoke to has a remarkable Smile on his Countenance, short and stout made, has been used to the carpenters business, and may attempt to pass for a free Man, this is [to?] warn all Masters of Vessels and Others not to harbor or Carry [off] said Negro as he is the property of the Subscriber; any one that will apprehend the said Negro so that his Master may receive him, Shall receive Eight Dollars Reward from

HUGH KIRKHAM

N.B. If he is stript he has his Country marks on his back in the form of a Square, thus.

Any Person harbouring or Concealing Said Boy will be prosecuted to the utmost rigor of the Law - if he returns of his Own Accord there will be nothing done to him.

Document 2: Christian Wirtz, “Two Hundred Pound Reward,” New-Jersey Gazette (Burlington), 4 January 1780; transcribed in Freedom on the Move Project, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2022)

Lancaster, December 14, 1779. Two Hundred Pounds Reward. RUN away from the subscriber on the evening of the 20th June last, a negro man named DAN, about 24 or 25 years of age, 5 feet 5 or 6 inches high, something pitted with the small-pox; his dress when he went off is uncertain, as he took sundry clothes with him, amongst which are, two coats, a light saggathy, and a brown with yellow buttons, three jackets, light blue, brown, and striped linen, a pair of new buckskin breeches, several pair of old striped and two pair of tow trowsers, three pair of stockings, three good shirts, and a round hat. Said negro is this country born, and talks the English and German languages, is fond of playing the fiddle, is naturally left-handed, and what is very remarkable, he bows with his left-hand when performing on the violin; he can work a little at the saddler's trade, is a shrewd cunning fellow, and will if possible procure a pass, probably change his name, and endeavour to pass as a freeman. Whoever takes up and secures said slave in any gaol, so that his master may have him again, shall receive the above reward. CHRISTIAN WIRTZ.

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GAPS IN THE ARCHIVAL BODY: EXAMINING EVIDENCE OF FROSTBITE IN FUGITIVE SLAVE ADVERTISEMENTS FROM QUEBEC AND NEW BRUNSWICK

Jillian Koudry

As scholars like Graham White, Shane White, Marcus Wood, and Charmaine A. Nelson have argued, the bodies of enslaved people became marked and scarred over time by the brutality of corporal punishment inflicted upon them by their enslavers.¹ But such bodily damage and debility was also produced by hazardous labour conditions and neglect. As Nelson has noted, a part of this neglect was created through the material deprivation visited upon the enslaved through substandard clothing. While in the tropical colonies, this mainly took the form of shoelessness and cloth rations of cheap and coarse oznaburgh fabric, in places like Canada, the practice of giving the enslaved second-hand clothing and footwear (which was often old and worn) led to dangerous exposure to cold weather, especially in the winter.²

This essay investigates fugitive slave advertisements published in Canada that mention frostbite on the body of the enslaved runaway. Slave minority sites in temperate climates represent an understudied area of Slavery Studies, and the harsh winters of these regions demonstrate how the system of slavery adapted to the climate to create forms of violence that were unique to the north. The nature of fugitive slave advertisements required their author to identify traits of the enslaved that may have aided in their recognition and thus recapture. Many of the traits identified speak to the violence inflicted upon the body - scars, burns, branding marks, missing limbs, missing digits, and other deformities - suffered at some point between birth to the point of escape. Descriptions of marks on the body of the enslaved, identified in these advertisements, serve only as the surface point from which the rest of the body and story must be uncovered. Marisa J. Fuentes's discussion of archival silences and violence is relevant to this analysis, as she reminds us that the violence inflicted on the body is transferred into the archive, and that this is how we receive them today.³ In my analysis of parts missing from the body, conveyed through advertisements written by white slave owners, it is important to keep in mind the multiple ways in which the body we receive is "fragmented and disfigured."⁴

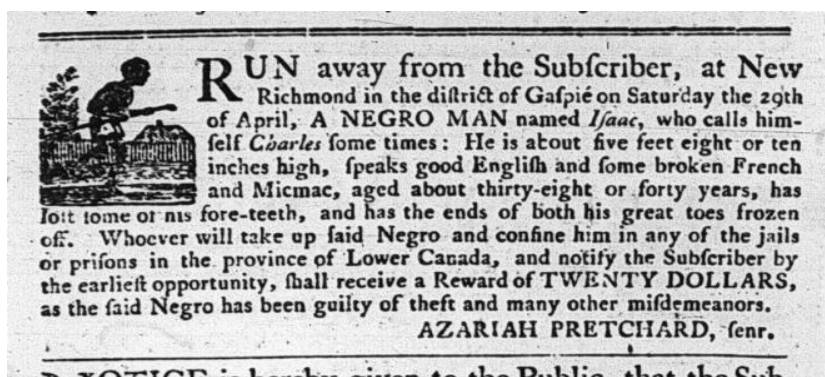


Figure 1: Azariah Pretchard, "RUN away from the Subscriber," *Quebec Gazette*, 22 May 1794, no. 1506, p. 5; Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ), Montreal, Canada

A notice for a runaway named Isaac, who "calls himself Charles some times"⁵ (sic) was posted in the *Quebec Gazette* in 1794 by Connecticut Loyalist and slave owner Azariah Pretchard.⁶ (fig. 1) Although Pretchard claimed that Charles was a criminal, "guilty of theft and many other misdemeanors,"⁷ self-naming could indicate an act

of resistance, or attempt to claim an existence outside of the identity that Pretchard produced in this advertisement. Pretchard was also forced to acknowledge that Charles spoke “good English and some broken French and Micmac”⁸ and such linguistic ability could have allowed Charles to further manipulate the image imposed upon him in the advertisement.⁹ Additionally, language ability leads us to more information about Charles’ background - speaking Mi’kmaw language could indicate how much time he had spent around Mi’kmaw people. Pretchard describes the man’s height and age, then reveals that he “has lost some of his fore-teeth, and has the ends of both of his great toes frozen off.”¹⁰ Missing front teeth would be obvious to anyone first meeting Charles, but frostbitten toes could be easier to hide, except in the case of a physical examination for the purpose of sale or possibly for identifying the runaway. While missing front teeth may have been caused by violence inflicted onto Charles as punishment, such damage could also have been the result of malnourishment or a lack of time to devote to self-care and bodily hygiene. However, since it was rather common for white enslavers to comment on the beautiful white teeth of the enslaved, as when Michael Wallace of Halifax explained in a fugitive advertisement from 1794 that the enslaved black man Bill from South Carolina had “very white teeth,”¹¹ it is less likely that Charles’ missing teeth were a product of his own neglect.

The second advertisement, written by slave owner Frederick William Hecht in July of 1784, identifies a man named Hector, “by trade a cooper”¹² and “tall and slender.”¹³ (fig. 2) Hector was said to “speak English like the West India Negroes,”¹⁴ and was also deemed by his master to be “very talkative.”¹⁵ While the first detail here informs the reader that Hector likely spent time in the West Indies or Caribbean prior to Quebec, the second detail could be a forced admission by Hecht of a verbal fluency that would abet Hector’s escape by allowing him to easily pretend to be someone else. The next detail of this

advertisement reveals Hector’s long and difficult passage to Quebec from the West Indies: “he came from St. Augustine to this place, via. New York, in December last, and had his feet frostbitten on the passage,”¹⁶ and probably as a result, “has a very lazy gait.”¹⁷ Further research reveals that Hecht was a New York Loyalist, who had likely purchased Hector in Florida, then travelled to New York, and from New York travelled with Hector and two other enslaved people to St John’s in December of 1783.¹⁸ That Hecht was unafraid to print the details of his forced migration of Hector for public consumption is a demonstration of both enslaver control of enslaved mobility and the impunity with which enslavers operated.¹⁹ If Hecht and his family

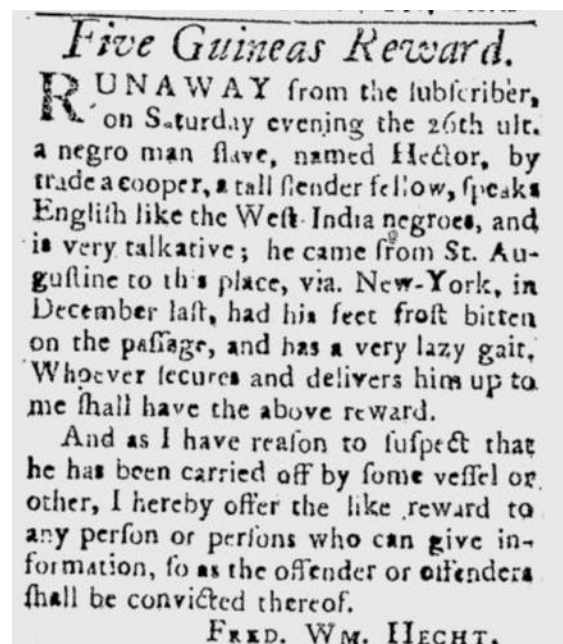


Figure 2: Fred. Wm. Hecht, “Five Guineas Reward,” *Royal St. John’s Gazette and Nova Scotia Intelligencer*, 15 July 1784, vol. 1, no. 32, p.2

made the journey to New Brunswick with Hector, one should question what the passage looked like for the family, and what it looked like for the enslaved, or what precautions Hecht took to protect his family from frostbite, but not those he enslaved.

The cases of frostbite mentioned here are far from isolated incidents. A particularly striking account written by an enslaved man named William Johnson recounts his journey north from Virginia to Canada. In part it reads,

“I look upon slavery as I do upon a deadly poison. The slaves are not contented nor happy in their lot. Neither on the farm where I was in Virginia, nor in the neighborhood were the slaves satisfied. The man I belonged to did not give us enough to eat. My feet were frostbitten on my way North, but I would rather have died on the way than to go back.”²⁰

He then states that after having arrived in Canada, he was not able to work “on account of my frozen feet,—I have lost two toes from my right foot.”²¹ Another account by Henry Morehead details his escape with his wife and three children from Kentucky to Canada. Henry and his family fled Kentucky after learning his wife and children would be sold.²² He states, “I would rather have followed them to the grave, than to the Ohio River to see them go down.”²³ In evading fugitive advertisements offering 500 dollars for recapture of Henry, his wife, and his three children under the age of four, travelled along the Underground Railroad, where “the weather was cold, and my feet were frostbitten, as I gave my wife my socks to pull on over her shoes.”²⁴ Still, “with all the sufferings of the frost and the fatigues of travel,” Henry asserts “it was not so bad as the effects of slavery.”²⁵ Many other accounts mention walking barefoot in January, traveling through two feet of snow in February, blisters and sores on the feet and ankles, and numerous other injuries and sickness due to whips of enslavers, attacks from dogs, exposure to elements, and corporal punishment when runaways were caught.²⁶

In temperate climates with dramatic seasonal shifts, escape from slavery during cold, snowy weather was much less common due to the harsher conditions which were endured with little or seasonally inappropriate clothing. In places like Montreal where the harbour froze in the winter,²⁷ cold weather also meant reduced or zero maritime shipping as potential routes of escape and increased reliance on the assistance of others, creating more risk for the fugitive.²⁸

Additionally, missing limbs or digits due to frostbite could disqualify a runaway from work.²⁹ All of this underscores the gravity of the decisions made by those who ran away in cold weather. The case of a fugitive enslaved man named Joe who escaped from Quebec presents a notable example - three of Joe’s five documented escapes from William Brown (printer of the Quebec Gazette), took place in the winter and one of the two advertisements for his last known escape in 1786 explained that he had broken out of jail in February.³⁰ As is emphasized several times in the narratives mentioned above, the decision to escape was hardly a choice, as death lay in every direction, and the missing body parts of the enslaved serve to demonstrate how close death came in every step of the journey.

RUN-AWAY from the subscriber, about a week past, a negro man named JACK; had on when he went away, a soldier's coat and petticoat trowsers; in a square well-set fellow, about 5 feet 6 inches high, much pitted in the face with the small-pox, one of his feet frost-bitten, speaks good English. Any person that will apprehend and bring him to me, or the warden of the work-house, shall have FIVE POUNDS reward; and if discovered to be harboured by a white person, TWENTY POUNDS; if by a negro TEN POUNDS, to be paid on conviction. Masters of vessels are cautioned against carrying him off, as they must answer the consequence. I have been informed that he gives himself out for a free man, lately from England, and wants to ship himself.

September 6, 1771. MEYER MOSES.

Figure 3: Meyer Moses, "RUN AWAY from the subscriber," *South-Carolina Gazette and Country Journal* (Charles-Town), 1 October 1771

Cases of frostbite were not limited to journeys north, as is shown by mention of frostbite in a fugitive slave advertisement published in South Carolina for a man named Jack, (fig. 3) "much pitted in the face with small pox, and one of his feet frostbitten."³¹ (sic) While frostbite may have been possible during a South Carolina winter without proper clothing and shoes, it could also point to severe conditions prior to arriving in South Carolina, namely on ships arriving from Africa to the Caribbean or Southern colonies. The timing of these voyages

was determined by many seasonal factors, such as the wet and dry seasons of the crops used for feeding the enslaved onboard ships, as well as the cycles of the crops in the region of the ships' arrivals, which determined how much labour was needed and when.³² Despite the belief that winter voyages were rare due to increased risk of mortality, Stephen D. Behrendt's analysis of quarterly slave exports by region reveals great variability in when slave ships began their voyage. In fact, Behrendt notes that Jamaica and other American colonies "imported more slaves during the dry season harvest,"³³ including harvests from December to May in the West Indies and Guianas, and "December to February in Bridgetown, Barbados, Montego Bay, Jamaica"³⁴ and parts of Saint Domingue.³⁵ These slave voyages to the Caribbean and West Indies represent one of the earliest points where frostbite could have occurred.

In addition to harsh conditions on board the first transatlantic passage, many suffered further in "transshipments" from the Caribbean to North America.³⁶ For example, Caribbean voyages supplied most slaves arriving in temperate New York until the 1740's, "when direct African shipments rather suddenly took over."³⁷ For individuals like Charles and Hector, this was not even the final leg of their passage, as they travelled even further north from the Southern colonies to arrive in Canada, by foot and/or ships. Port records often described enslaved people who had spent time in the Americas as "seasoned," meaning they may have been slightly more adjusted to the climate, but there was a large preference for "unseasoned" enslaved people coming from the Caribbean to North America.³⁸ Greater time spent in the "new disease environment of the Americas" meant higher risk of death, and some planters were suspicious of seasoned enslaved people as "used commodities."³⁹ In such a rush to move the enslaved from the Caribbean to the North American colonies, season or climate may not have been a factor in timing of voyages, resulting in another potential window for exposure to the elements. Following the abolition of slave imports in 1808 by the United States, Florida exploited the opportunity for clandestine trade of enslaved people.⁴⁰ Voyages smuggling captives illegally were probably even less concerned with risk of injury or mortality because their main concern was not being caught.

Even after arriving in Southern, Mid-Atlantic or Northern colonies, there was potential for lost limbs or digits due to the cold. Frederick Douglass' account of life on a plantation in

Maryland could suggest even greater potential for frostbite in more Southern colonies, where winter may have meant only a matter of injury or ailment, but not death.⁴¹ Douglass writes, “I suffered much from hunger, but much more from cold. In hottest summer and coldest winter, I was kept almost naked—no shoes, no stockings, no jacket, no trousers, nothing on but a coarse tow linen shirt, reaching only to my knees.”⁴² He adds what kept him from death was that,

“the coldest nights, I used to steal a bag which was used for carrying corn to the mill. I would crawl into this bag, and there sleep on the cold, damp, clay floor, with my head in and feet out. My feet have been so cracked with the frost, that the pen with which I am writing might be laid in the gashes.”⁴³

Susan E. Klepp’s study of racial differences in mortality in temperate Philadelphia reveals, “late fall and winter were most deadly to African-Americans,” while hot humid summers were more fatal to European-Americans.⁴⁴ Additionally, in the North and South it was observed that “blacks seemed much more likely to contract pneumonia and other respiratory diseases.”⁴⁵ Housing of the enslaved varied from South to North and played a large role in determining their chance of survival. While domestic servants may have slept in “a closet, hallway, or the kitchen” others resided in barns or other outbuildings.⁴⁶ Even emancipated black people “died from exposure...without any comforts, save the bare floor, with the cold penetrating between the boards”⁴⁷ or in “cold, wet and damp cellars.”⁴⁸ In the case of the North or the South, “housing in both regions afforded only minimal protection from the climate.”⁴⁹

This research strives to fill in the numerous gaps left within the advertisements about where Charles and Hector came from, where they suffered frostbite, when they suffered frostbite, as well as the silences outside of the advertisements about how many more suffered frostbite, how many died from exposure, at what point in their endless voyage did it occur, and at whose hands. The documents we are left with narrate the lives of the enslaved through the lens of property, where slave owners were willing to negotiate with the body of the enslaved until no longer profitable, until death. Mild disability may have been less significant in Northern colonies where the enslaved were more likely to work inside the home than in a field. Across various climates within Transatlantic Slavery, the body of the enslaved was left at the mercy of its environment for as long as it remained profitable. These violent assaults on the bodies of the enslaved entered into the archive only because they were considered to be missing property. How many other cases of frostbite or exposure never entered into the archive at all because the bodily harm and loss endured resulted in “damaged goods” that did not warrant recapture or resale? Implicit in the construction of this archive is an even higher prevalence of whatever violence survives it. Numerous other fugitive slave advertisements that mention a lazy gait like Hectors, missing toes, fingers, feet, or hands, may have been lost due to exposure, neglect, or intentional violence and punishment, yet remain as gaps in the archive and in the body.

ENDNOTES

¹ Shane White and Graham White, “Slave Hair and African American Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth

Centuries,” *Journal of Southern History*, vol. 61, no. 1 (February 1995), p. 48; Marcus Wood, “Rhetoric and the Runaway: The Iconography of the slave escape in England and America,” *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780–1865* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 81;

Charmaine A. Nelson, “‘Ran away from her Master...a Negroe Girl named Thursday’: Examining Evidence of Punishment, Isolation, and Trauma in Nova Scotia and Quebec Fugitive Slave Advertisements,” *Legal Violence and the Limits of the Law*, eds. Joshua Nichols and Amy Swiffen (New York: Routledge, 2017).

² Charmaine A. Nelson, *Slavery, Geography, and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica* (London, UK: Routledge/Taylor & Francis, 2016), pp. 350, 360, 373, 385 n. 75; Emma Bardes, “The Great White North: Visual and Material Evidence of Black Slavery in the Quebec Winter,” *Legacies Denied: Unearthing the Visual Culture of Canadian Slavery*, ed. Charmaine A. Nelson (Montreal: Printed for author by McGill Copy Service, 2013).

³ Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), p. 5.

⁴ Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, p. 1.

⁵ Azariah Pritchard, “RUN away from the Subscriber,” *Quebec Gazette*, 22 May 1794, no. 1506, p. 5; Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ), Montreal, Canada.

⁶ Mario Mimeault, “PRITCHARD, AZARIAH,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (date of last access 22 February 2022) http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/pritchard_azariah_6E.html

⁷ Pritchard, “RUN away from the Subscriber,” p. 5.

⁸ Pritchard, “RUN away from the Subscriber,” p. 5.

⁹ An advertisement posted in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* by the enslaver Nicholas Everson claimed that the runaway enslaved man named Tom would attempt to “pass for an Indian.” See: David Waldstreicher, “Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century Mid-Atlantic,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 56, no. 2 (April 1999), p. 243.

¹⁰ Pritchard, “RUN away from the Subscriber,” p. 5.

¹¹ Michael Wallace, “Twenty Dollars Reward,” *Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle* (Halifax), Saturdays, 8 February 1794, vol. 7, no. 402, p. 1; MFM 8165, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Canada; see also: Bruno Bertilotti Barreto, “An Unlikely Pairing: The Study of Slavery and Oral Hygiene,” *Chrysalis*, vol. 1, no. 3 (winter 2016), pp. 3–13.

I am grateful to Charmaine A. Nelson for introducing me to these sources.

¹² Fred. Wm. Hecht, “Five Guineas Reward,” *Royal St. John’s Gazette and Nova Scotia Intelligencer*, 15 July 1784, vol. 1, no. 32, p. 2.

¹³ Hecht, “Five Guineas Reward,” p. 2.

¹⁴ Hecht, “Five Guineas Reward,” p. 2.

¹⁵ Hecht, “Five Guineas Reward,” p. 2.

¹⁶ Hecht, “Five Guineas Reward,” p. 2.

¹⁷ Hecht, “Five Guineas Reward,” p. 2.

¹⁸ Stephen Davidson, “The Many Legacies of Frederick William Hecht,” *United Empire Loyalists Association of Canada* (date of last access 22 February 2022) <https://uelac.ca/loyalist-trails/loyalist-trails-2021-06/>

¹⁹ For more on enslaver control of enslaved mobility see: Charmaine A. Nelson, “He ‘is supposed to have with him forged Certificates of his Freedom, and Passes’: Slavery, Mobility, and the Creolized Counter-Knowledge of Resistance,” *Black and Indigenous Speaker Series*, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Canada, 4 February 2022 (date of last access 7 March 2022) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dS_idp6jIMA

²⁰ Benjamin Drew, *A North-Side View of Slavery. The Refugee: or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada. Related by Themselves, with an Account of the History and Condition of the Colored Population of Upper Canada* (Boston: John P. Jewett and Company, 1856), p. 29.

²¹ Drew, “North-Side View of Slavery,” p. 30.

²² Drew, “North-Side View of Slavery,” pp. 180–182.

²³ Drew, “North-Side View of Slavery,” p. 181.

²⁴ Drew, “North-Side View of Slavery,” p. 181.

²⁵ Drew, “North-Side View of Slavery,” p. 181.

²⁶ Drew, “North-Side View of Slavery,” p. 30, 165, 216, 228, 302.

²⁷ Nelson, *Slavery, Geography, and Empire*, p. 15.

²⁸ Charles Foy, “Ports of Slavery, Ports of Freedom: How Slaves Used Northern Seaports’ Maritime Industry to Escape and Create Trans-Atlantic Identities, 1713–1783,” (New Brunswick, NJ: PhD History, Rutgers University, 2008), pp. 195–96.

- ²⁹ Foy, "Ports of Slavery," pp. 195–96. Physical disability often put the enslaved at greater risk of harm through violence or neglect since enslavers prioritized care of those from whom they could benefit economically.
- ³⁰ The advertisement, placed by the local sheriff James Shepherd and jail keeper John Hill, claimed that Joe had broken out of jail with the help of a white criminal named John Peters on 18 February 1786. Later in the spring of the same year, Brown began running his own advertisements from 4 May 1786, according to Nelson, an indication that Joe was yet to be apprehended. See: James Shepherd and John Hill, "BROKE out of his Majesty's Goal," Quebec Gazette, 23 February 1786 and William Brown, "BROKE out of His Majesty's Gaol," Quebec Gazette, 4 May 1786; transcribed in Frank Mackey, "Appendix I: Newspaper Notices," Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal 1760–1840 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), pp. 328–29; Charmaine A. Nelson, "'He...has the ends of both his great toes frozen off': Enslaved and Free Black Presence, Experience, and Representation in the Quebec Winter," Universities Art Association of Canada, keynote address, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada, 15 October 2020; Nadir Khan, "Guardians of Bondage: Enforcing Slavery in New France and Barbados, c. 17th–18th," (Montreal: MA History, McGill University, 2017), p. 38.
- ³¹ Meyer Moses, "RUN AWAY from the subscriber," South-Carolina Gazette and Country Journal (Charles-Town), 1 October 1771.
- ³² Stephen D. Behrendt, "Ecology, Seasonality, and the Trade," Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents, 1500–1830, eds. Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L Denault (Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2009) p. 68.
- ³³ Behrendt, "Ecology, Seasonality," pp. 75–76.
- ³⁴ Behrendt, "Ecology, Seasonality," pp. 75–76.
- ³⁵ Behrendt, "Ecology, Seasonality," pp. 75–76.
- ³⁶ Gregory E. O'Malley, "Beyond the Middle Passage: Slave Migration from the Caribbean to North America, 1619–1807," William and Mary Quarterly, vol. 66, no. 1 (2009), pp. 125–72.
- ³⁷ O'Malley, "Beyond the Middle Passage," p. 129.
- ³⁸ O'Malley, "Beyond the Middle Passage," p. 136. According to Nelson, "seasoned" or "broken" also meant that the enslaved had been subjected to harsh physical punishment, surveillance, and prohibitions which had altered their behaviour and presumably made them less resistant. When John Wentworth, then surveyor general of the King's woods in North America (later appointed the lieutenant governor of Nova Scotia in 1791), shipped nineteen enslaved black people from Halifax to Surinam (Dutch Guiana), he described them as "well seasoned." See: William Renwick Riddell, "Slavery in the Maritime Provinces," Journal of Negro History, vol. 5, no. 3 (July 1920), p. 366; Nelson, "He 'is supposed to have with him forged Certificates,'" (date of last access 7 March 2022)
- ³⁹ O'Malley, "Beyond the Middle Passage," p. 136. Nelson argues that there is also evidence of the reverse, a preference for "seasoned" or Creole enslaved people (those born in the Americas) over African-born enslaved people. See: Nelson, "He 'is supposed to have with him forged Certificates,'" (date of last access 7 March 2022).
- ⁴⁰ O'Malley, "Beyond the Middle Passage," p. 156.
- ⁴¹ Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave. Written by Himself, (Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1849), p. 26–27; transcribed in "Original Documents: Living Conditions," Slavery and the Making of America (date of last access 22 February 2022) <https://www.thirteen.org/wnet/slavery/experience/living/docs6.html>
- ⁴² Douglass, "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass," p. 26–27.
- ⁴³ Douglass, "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass," p. 27.
- ⁴⁴ Susan E. Klepp, "Seasoning and Society: Racial Differences in Mortality in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia," William and Mary Quarterly, vol. 51, no. 3 (1994), p. 478.
- ⁴⁵ Christian Warren, "Northern Chills, Southern Fevers: Race-Specific Mortality in American Cities, 1730–1900," Journal of Southern History, vol. 63, no. 1, Southern Historical Association, 1997, p. 48.
- ⁴⁶ Warren, "Northern Chills," p. 39.
- ⁴⁷ Warren, "Northern Chills," p. 39.
- ⁴⁸ Warren, "Northern Chills," p. 39.
- ⁴⁹ Warren, "Northern Chills," p. 39.

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PLATE LIST

Figure 1: Azariah Pretchard, “RUN away from the Subscriber,” Quebec Gazette, 22 May 1794, no. 1506, p. 5; Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ), Montreal, Canada.

Figure 2: Fred. Wm. Hecht, “Five Guineas Reward,” Royal St. John’s Gazette and Nova Scotia Intelligencer, 15 July 1784, vol. 1, no. 32, p. 2.

Figure 3: Meyer Moses, “RUN AWAY from the subscriber,” South-Carolina Gazette and Country Journal (Charles-Town), 1 October 1771.

ALL EYES ON PORTS: ESCAPE BY SHIP IN NOVA SCOTIA

Colleen MacIsaac

During Transatlantic Slavery, slave ships were used as functional instruments of terror, mobile prisons that stole people away from the lives they knew and transported them both to and via horrific circumstances of forced servitude.¹ However, ships also had the potential to become instruments of freedom. Fugitive enslaved people, men in particular, were on occasion able to use ships as a means of escape, evading the eyes and reach of the local individuals and communities who attempted to force them back into captivity.² This potential of escape by sea was heightened in relatively small maritime peninsulas such as Nova Scotia, where the ocean is never that far away, and seaside communities regularly formed around ports. Add in a harsh climate and geography which “conspired against” those who sought an inland escape into densely forested areas,³ and the idea of escaping on a ship becomes even more alluring - a possibility that was recognized by enslaved people and slave owners alike. Although the subject of maritime paths of escape is much larger than can be covered in the scope of this paper, I would like to focus in on two particular examples from Nova Scotia in the late 1700’s as documented through fugitive slave advertisements, with a particular lens on their potential ship-based paths to freedom.

The two advertisements I will focus on are from Shelburne, Nova Scotia on 6 July 1786,⁴ (fig. 1) and Halifax, Nova Scotia on 8 February 1794.⁵ (fig. 2) These two advertisements, appearing respectively in the Nova-Scotia Packet and General Advertiser and the Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle, were both placed by slave owners trying to recapture enslaved black men who were in their late twenties, named Tom and Bill respectively. In the latter case, the enslaver Michael Wallace actually initially identified the man as Belfast, only to concede that he called himself Bill. Both escaped men brought several different items of clothing with them (with Bill being noted also having “other clothes secreted in town”),⁶ both escaped while being leased by the men who owned them (a common practice in Nova Scotia and other parts of the transatlantic world at the time), and both escaped from

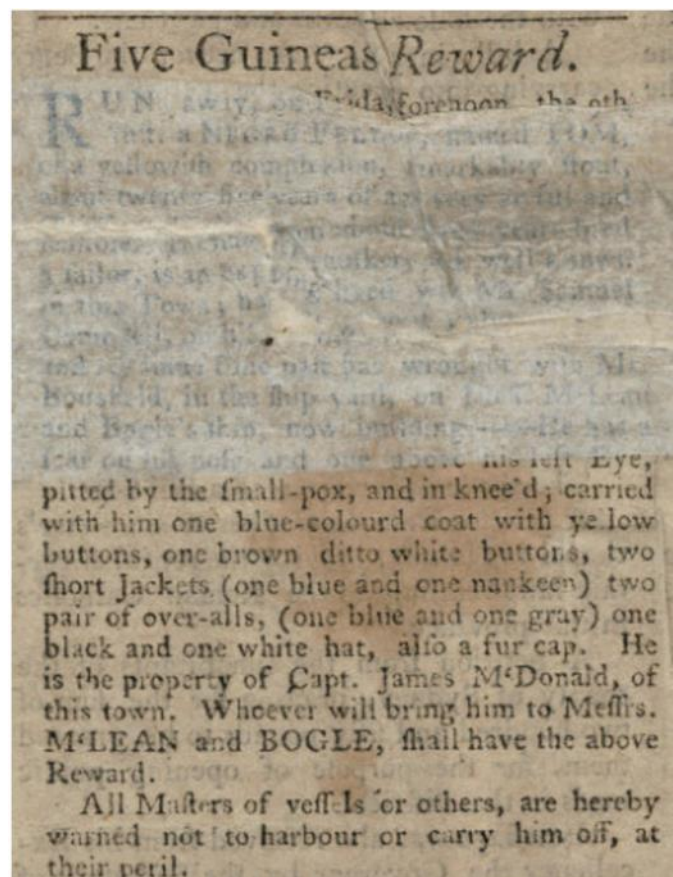



Figure 1: Bogle and McLean, “Five Guineas Reward,” Nova-Scotia Packet and General Advertiser (Shelburne, NS), vol. 1, no. 62, 6 July 1786, p. 1; Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Canada.

Twenty Dollars Reward.



RAN Away, on Thursday evening, the 18th inst. a Negro Man Servant, the property of the Subscriber, named BILL-FAST; but who commonly goes by the name of BILL.-----At the time of his elopement he was in the service of William Forsyth, Esq; and had meditated an attempt to get on board a ship that night which lay in the harbour, bound to Newfoundland; but was frustrated: It is probable, however, he may still endeavour to escape that way, therefore, the masters of all coasters going along shore, or other vessels bound to sea, are hereby forewarned from carrying him off at their peril, as they will be prosecuted, if discovered, with the utmost rigour of the law.

The above reward will be paid to any person or persons who shall apprehend and secure him, so that I may recover him again.

He is a likely, stout-made fellow, of five feet eight or nine inches high, and about 27 years of age; of a mild good countenance and features, smooth black skin, with very white teeth; is a native of South Carolina, speaks good English, and very softly, and has been in this Province ten years.

When he went off, he wore an old Bath-Coating short coat, of a light colour, wore out at the elbows; brown cloth or duffil trowsers, also much wore at the knees; a round hat, and an old black silk handkerchief about his neck:—But as he had other cloaths secreted in town, he may have changed his whole apparel.

He will no doubt endeavour to pass for a free man, and possibly by some other name.

MICHAEL WALLACE.

Michael Wallace, "Twenty Dollars Reward," Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax), 8 February 1794, vol. 7, no. 402, p. 1; MFM 8165, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Canada.

port cities along the southern coast in the aftermath of the Loyalist influx to the area. Although we do not know if either man was ultimately successful in achieving permanent escape, the attention that both of their pursuers gave to the likelihood of a ship-based escape gives us valuable insight into the methods of egress that may have been available to black fugitives at the time.⁷

The history of black communities in the area was by this time over a hundred years old - black people had been living and working in the area of Mi'kma'ki, known now as Nova Scotia, since the early 1600's. In the late 1700's, there had already been multiple migrations of free black people to Nova Scotia and by 1769 there were already over one hundred free black individuals living in Nova Scotia. But the number of enslaved black people at the time was

difficult to specify.⁸ In 1784, an estimate by Robert Morse stated that "there were 1,232 'servants' at the Loyalist settlements"⁹ in the Shelburne area. At the time Nova Scotia (and its neighbour New Brunswick, formed in 1784) did not have statute law that supported or opposed slavery, despite the number of people still living under enslavement,¹⁰ so specific differentiation between the enslaved and servants was not always legally transparent. This also may have been a way to shield slave owners conduct and activity from abolitionist eyes since the anti-slavery movement vehemently objected to the ownership of human beings.¹¹

The advertisement placed in the Nova Scotia Packet and General Advertiser in July of 1786 gives us a particular insight into the escape of Tom, a "Negro Fellow"¹² of "yellowish complexion"¹³ who was the "property of Capt. James M'Donald"¹⁴ of Shelburne. Pitted with the ravages of smallpox and scarred multiple times on his face (in what could be an indication of the abuse he received from the man who claimed to own him), Tom managed to escape from those who had leased his services at the local shipyard.¹⁵ The advertisement designed to result in his recapture advised, as did many advertisements in Nova Scotia at the time, that "All Masters of

vessels or others, are hereby warned not to harbour or carry him off, at their peril.”¹⁶ What this peril might specifically have been is unstated in this advertisement, though despite the lack of stated laws around slavery, Shelburne’s courts in particular did tend to be a force that “re-enslaved black people and reinforced slavery generally,”¹⁷ so the threat of legal recourse was not necessarily an empty one. After 1800, as the practice of slavery declined, courts of law became less willing to punish enslaved fugitives,¹⁸ despite the kinds of threats that may be seen in advertisements such as the ones posted by McLean, Bogle, and Wallace. But the possibility of punishment for the enslaved and those who aided them was always present, propelled by racism, capitalism, and colonial interests.

The particular context of Shelburne at this time is indeed crucial to our reading of the notice which McLean and Bogle printed.¹⁹ By 1784, just two years before Tom’s escape, Shelburne had quickly grown to become the largest town in British North America with a population of over twelve thousand,²⁰ and was the site of escalating racial tensions, leading to what scholars have typically called the Shelburne Race Riots in the summer of 1784, a direct and vicious attack on free black Loyalists and their supporters.²¹ However arguably, just as in the case of Tulsa, Oklahoma race massacre of 1921, what occurred in Shelburne, Nova Scotia was not a race riot but a deliberately orchestrated act of racial terror against a free black community.²² The lack of jobs, resources, and poor farming conditions in the area, exacerbated by the harsh climate and lack of governmental support were challenges faced by both white and black Loyalists, however the barriers of racism and white entitlement and generational trauma from enslavement ensured that the black settlers were ill-equipped, given sub-par farming land, and discriminated against by the same white Loyalists that they may have fought alongside in the American Revolution.²³ Although the black community called Birchtown (located outside of Shelburne) was technically one of the most populous free black settlements in North America, a large number of the free black Loyalists there worked as indentured servants under conditions that were at times hard to distinguish from slavery.²⁴ In this context, Tom was not alone in his flight. During this time, many enslaved and otherwise persecuted black people reversed the popular narrative of north-bound travel on the grassroots systems of the Underground Railroad, heading south from Nova Scotia to New England, or even (in the case of the 2,500 black Loyalists who rejected the unfair and harsh conditions they were subjected to), journeying to Sierra Leone in hope of better prospects.²⁵ While some scholars have characterised the treatment of enslaved people in Canada and other temperate climates as less directly brutal than the plantation culture in the southern United States, as Catherine Cottreau-Robins points out, we need to look beyond the archive from an interdisciplinary perspective to find the details of life in enslavement.²⁶ Certainly, the conditions in Shelburne at the time were harsh enough for Tom to seek out a better life, even at great risk to himself.

McLean and Bogle may or may not have been incorrect in their assumption that Tom favoured a maritime means of escape, but in a relatively remote community such as Shelburne, escaping on a ship was indeed likely to have been a viable option to travel far from where one might be recognized as being “owned” by a particular white individual. There were free and

enslaved black sailors in the transatlantic world, into which enslaved fugitives wished to blend by asking the captains to pass them off as legitimate crew. Free black people sometimes would be employed as cooks on ships, and there are documented examples of black sailors in this time period.²⁷ By specifically mentioning vessels, McLean and Bogle give us some insight into the primary ways that white slave owners may have worried about losing their escaped “property” for good. This assumption is supported by the fugitive slave advertisement placed in Halifax’s Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle in 1794 by Michael Wallace, eight years after Tom’s escape in Shelburne. A black man “named BELFAST; but who commonly goes by the name of BILL,”²⁸ also escaped, this time while being leased from the slave owner Michael Wallace to one William Forsyth. The advertisement paints us a clearer picture of Bill’s intentions than the one placed for Tom. Wallace was apprised of Bill having “mediated an attempt”²⁹ to take advantage of the darkness of night and board a vessel in the Halifax Harbour bound for Newfoundland, an attempt which was apparently thwarted, though how it was stopped is not specified. In the advertisement, Wallace states that “[i]t is probable, however, he may still endeavour to escape that way,”³⁰ meaning by sea, and, like McLean and Bogle before him, warned any captains or sailors not to assist in Bill’s escape, threatening that “they will be prosecuted, if discovered, with the utmost rigour of the law.”³¹ The cold climate of Nova Scotia in February was a rare time for someone to attempt escape, considering the risk of death or harm from exposure to the elements.

It may seem strange that a person who could have possibly escaped to one of the multiple free black communities in Nova Scotia would have taken their chances on the cold waters of the North Atlantic, in vessels not too different from the ones in which African captives had been forcibly sailed to the Americas, but there are many reasons why an escaped individual may have desired to put distance above all else between themselves and their former “masters.” Although fugitive slave advertisements were sometimes placed in port cities to which enslaved people may have potentially fled, hoping to alert this new community towards their escape, the anonymity that distance could create would aid the fugitives and increase the chances of their “passing” as a free black person. This performance of freedom could be key to escaping recapture.³²

While Newfoundland at this time may have been similar to Nova Scotia in its attitudes towards black individuals, the chance of recapture would be much slimmer than if Bill had stayed in Halifax, or Tom in Shelburne. Locally, the departure of black Loyalists from Nova Scotia for Sierra Leone in 1792 certainly provided a template for a black self-directed transatlantic voyage that held some promise of better living conditions, and may have had an impact on Bill’s possible plans two years later to escape via ship. Once on a vessel, so long as you made it to the next port safely, the possibility of further distancing grew. The choice of Newfoundland as the ship’s destination may have been intentional, or it may be that Bill was looking for a friendly captain headed anywhere that was not Halifax.

We learn from the advertisement for Bill (as far as it can be presumed trustworthy, with its white slave owning writer) that he was a native of South Carolina and supposedly “Of a mild good-countenance and features, smooth black skin, with very white teeth.”³³ Bill was also noted

to speak “good English, and very softly.”³⁴ At this point, he had been in the province for ten years, but we do not know if he spent the first seventeen-odd years of his life in South Carolina, or elsewhere. Since South Carolina was a state to which slave ships arrived directly from Africa, there is a good chance that Bill had been born in Africa. Regardless, he certainly had spent enough time in Nova Scotia to get a sense of what options he might have regarding escape routes. Having been a local for ten years, knowing that his “owner” leased him out at least once, and that he was able to set up an attempt to board a ship, we can infer that perhaps Bill would have been easily recognized in Halifax or at least that recognition provided enough of a threat to him that he sought escape via ship where he might be taken to other ports at which he might more easily be able to “pass” as a free man. Furthermore, Wallace’s mention of South Carolina was also indicative of his knowledge that Bill may have been attempting to run back into a space of greater peril to reunite with family and kin from whom he had been separated by his forced relocation to Halifax.³⁵ We can read intelligence and diligence in the planning of the escape in Bill’s frustrated attempt, drawing on the connections he may have had from ten years in town to “secret”³⁶ away clothes and possibly other provisions for his journey, using the cover of night to mask his first (albeit unsuccessful) attempt to board a vessel, and escaping in February when due to the harshness of Canadian winters, Wallace (as other slave owners) were far less likely to anticipate a flight. If Bill did manage to find a way to freedom via a ship in the harbour, we do not know. But from reading the fugitive slave advertisement, he certainly seemed to have the intelligence and planning skills required to permanently escape to whatever refuge he eventually (hopefully) found.

Both Bill and Tom brought multiple articles of clothing with them in their escape. Bill’s reasoning for this may have been partly based on the temperatures of the month of February (the initial date of posting) and March in which Charmaine A. Nelson has concluded that he was likely still on the run.³⁷ But as David Waldstreicher has argued, the “other clothes”³⁸ he had access to in town suggests that Bill understood that clothing could serve as a disguise which would allow him to perform a new identity as a free man as well as a shield against the cold climate.³⁹ Tom, despite his mid-summer departure, brought with him a fur cap along with multiple other hats, coats and overalls, layers that could potentially provide warmth and comfort whether in the woods of Mi’kma’ki or on the deck of a ship, that could serve as disguise or enable multiple transformations, and also could be useful as items that could possibly be sold to provide money for other purposes. If Tom attempted to head to another port city, markets and trading posts would provide multiple options for sale or trade of such items.⁴⁰ While it is difficult to tell due to a tear in the newspaper document, Tom may have been “bred a sailor,”⁴¹ giving him special insight into what clothing may have been expected of a man at sea. Since neither advertisement mentions that the enslaved men stole any of the clothing items (though the phrasing “carried with him”⁴² could denote a theft on Tom’s part), we are left to assume that either the clothing was their own, or simply that it paled in value when compared with the value of the absconded “human property” that the “owners” sought to recapture and was not worth

trying to reclaim. Indeed, who were these men who would pay money for advertising to try to regain control of the human beings they regarded as chattel?

Tom's master Captain James McDonald, presumably familiar with ships with his title of Captain, and who may have been the "early Scottish settler"⁴³ who was the namesake of Jintown in Antigonish County,⁴⁴ may or may not have had other enslaved people in his control. As a man who seemed to travel from one side of the province to the other, presumably by sea (if the name does indeed represent the same person), McDonald's path might easily have led him to other port cities. Tom seems to have worked at the Shelburne docks as leased labour, and was possibly "bred a sailor,"⁴⁵ so it is likely that he was familiar with ships and their workings, at least to some extent. It is also true that perhaps he would avoid vessels as a means of escape, if it meant a higher chance of running into McDonald. However, Tom's knowledge of McDonald's motivations and activities produced through the living conditions of the enslaved in Canada - often in the same homes as their enslavers - meant that Tom may have had opportunity to see McDonald's habits and reasoning methods first hand.⁴⁶ As such, Tom may have planned his escape with direct knowledge of McDonald's schedule in mind and therefore an understanding of when McDonald's pursuit of him would begin. McDonald did not state where this "Negro"⁴⁷ man of "yellowish"⁴⁸ complexion was from, nor his specific relationship to seafaring vessels. We know he is "in-knee'd"⁴⁹ and "pitted by the small-pox,"⁵⁰ but as for how long James McDonald "owned" this man, or where he acquired him from, the advertisement did not disclose.

Of Michael Wallace, the slave owner who considered Bill his property, there is somewhat more certainty. Wallace was very likely the same Scottish-born Michael Wallace that moved from a role of merchant and representative for Halifax County at the provincial House of Assembly in the 1780 and 90's to eventual Treasurer of the Province in the early 1800's,⁵¹ living in a "first class" home on Hollis Street and being a member of Halifax's Grand Jury.⁵² He was also tasked with several assignments of note, including, in the year 1791, coordinating some of the logistics of the exodus of the black Loyalist community to West Africa. That year,

"a number of black people from different parts of the province were brought to Halifax, to be removed to Sierra Leone. Michael Wallace was agent, who on 5th December, advertised for 1000 tons of shipping, for the purpose. Ships 'Venus,' 'Parr,' 'Eleanor,' Brigs 'Betsy,' 'Beaver,' 'Mary,' 'Morning Star,' 'Catherine,' 'P. W. Henry,' Schrs. 'Liberty,' and 'Two Brothers,' the whole commanded by Lieutenant Clarkson, having on board the colored people, all sailed for Sierra Leone on 15th January, 1792."⁵³

Bill, presumably, would have been aware of and privy to this - perhaps even direct witness to - large number of free black folks heading out on ships for hopes of a better life on Africa's West Coast while he remained the "property" of Wallace in Halifax.⁵⁴ It was just over two years later that Bill escaped in 1794 (although as Nelson has argued, it appears he had escaped at least once before in 1790).⁵⁵ That Wallace does not make mention of earlier escapes in his advertisement is

not unusual since slave owners understood that announcing that an enslaved person was chronically resistant would hamper their ability to sell them in the future. Although corporal punishment was employed by slave owners (especially as a deterrent for acts of resistance such as running away), Wallace also does not detail any marks or scars on Bill's body from such physical assaults.⁵⁶

Did Bill see the waves of black people leaving Nova Scotia for Sierra Leone and decide to follow their lead and cross the Atlantic? Was travel by boat the best way to get far away from his "owner" Michael Wallace, a well-known public figure who wielded considerable influence in Nova Scotia's judicial and political systems? Did he have a particular connection to Newfoundland, or was it merely a means of fleeing to another destination as quickly as possible? Without further evidence of his motives, we may never know. More uncertain still is the potential fate of Tom - with no record of his recapture or death, we are left to guess at where he may have fled presuming that, like Bill, he may have tried to "pass as a free man," whether at sea or on land. Did he avoid the reach of racist or desperate community members and their desire for a reward? Did he do this through escape by sea, or by land? Did he disappear only to change his name and emerge within a free black community somewhere else in the province? Did he die in his attempt at freedom? Or did his knowledge of sailing aid him in his bid at a new life through an escape at sea? Regardless of their fates, one thing that we can be sure of is that seafaring vessels were an option for both of these men as they made their escapes, and regardless of which routes they took, the possibility of leaving on a ship towards new circumstances and liberty was one that may have at least tempted both men, as evidenced by their enslavers' fears of their escapes by sea.

ENDNOTES

¹ Marcus Rediker, "The Evolution of the Slave Ship," *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), p. 44.

² Sarah Elizabeth Chute, "Runaway Slave Advertisements from Loyalist Newspapers of the Maritime Colonies," (Bellingham: Honors Program Senior Projects, Western Washington University, 2018), p. 98.

³ Anonio T. Bly, "A Prince among Pretending Free Men: Runaway Slaves in Colonial New England Revisited," *Massachusetts Historical Review*, vol. 14 (2012), p. 99.

⁴ Bogle and McLean, "Five Guineas Reward," *Nova-Scotia Packet and General Advertiser* (Shelburne, NS), vol. 1, no. 62, 6 July 1786, p. 1; Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Canada. See transcription: Document 2, pp. 72–73 of this journal.

⁵ Michael Wallace, "Twenty Dollars Reward," *Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle* (Halifax), 8 February 1794, vol. 7, no. 402, p. 1; MFM 8165, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Canada. See transcription: Document 1, p. 72 of this journal.

⁶ Wallace, "Twenty Dollars Reward," p. 1.

⁷ Evidence exists that Bill had been previously escaped and been caught only to escape again. Charmaine A. Nelson has found the name Belfast listed for "a black man" in the 1790 Halifax "Account of Persons Committed to the Work House," prepared by Hugh Kelly, keeper of the work house. Amongst those listed as incarcerated between 1 January and 31 December 1790 was a black man identified as Belfast. Although no master's name was recorded as paying the fine to collect him, the absence of a family name and his identification as black increases the likelihood that he was enslaved. Both workhouses and jails were the customary places where enslavers requested that the public incarcerate fleeing enslaved people. The oddity of the first name Belfast potentially identifies him as the same man who Michael Wallace hunted in the fugitive slave advertisement of 1794. See: Charmaine A. Nelson, "'Ran away from her Master...a Negroe Girl named Thursday': Examining Evidence of Punishment, Isolation, and Trauma in Nova Scotia and Quebec Fugitive Slave Advertisements," *Legal Violence and the Limits of the Law*, eds. Joshua

Nichols and Amy Swiffen (New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 76–77.

⁸ Wanda Taylor, It's Our Time: Honouring the African Nova Scotian Communities of East Preston, North Preston, Lake Loon/Cherry Brook (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing 2021), p. 3.

⁹ Harvey Amani Whitfield, "The Struggle over Slavery in the Maritime Colonies" Acadiensis, vol. 41, no. 2 (Summer/Autumn 2012), p. 21.

¹⁰ Whitfield, "The Struggle over Slavery in the Maritime Colonies" p. 20.

¹¹ T. Watson Smith, "The Slave in Canada," Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society, for the Years 1896–98, vol. 5 (Halifax: Nova Scotia Printing Company, 1899), p. 23.

¹² Bogle and McLean, "Five Guineas Reward," p. 1.

¹³ Bogle and McLean, "Five Guineas Reward," p. 1.

¹⁴ Bogle and McLean, "Five Guineas Reward," p. 1.

¹⁵ Michael Wallace, "Twenty Dollars Reward."

¹⁶ Bogle and McLean, "Five Guineas Reward," p. 1.

¹⁷ Whitfield, "The Struggle over Slavery in the Maritime Colonies," p. 21.

¹⁸ Marcel Trudel, Canada's Forgotten Slaves: Two Hundred Years of Bondage, trans. George Tombs (Montréal: Véhicule Press, 2013), p. 76.

¹⁹ Bogle and McLean, "Five Guineas Reward," p. 1.

²⁰ Taylor, It's Our Time, p. 10.

²¹ Jesse Robertson, "Shelburne Race Riots," Canadian Encyclopedia, 7 October 2021 (date of last access 20 February 2022) <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/the-shelburne-race-riots>

²² Chris Messer, "The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921: Toward an Integrative Theory of Collective Violence," Journal of Social History, vol. 44, no. 4 (Summer 2011), pp. 1217–32; Stanley Nelson and Marco Williams, "Black Wall Street Established in Tulsa, Oklahoma," Tulsa Burning: The 1921 Race Massacre (New York: History Channel, 2021), 6:40 minutes, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nyrHcgwMleA>

²³ Neil MacKinnon, This Unfriendly Soil: The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia 1783–1791 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986), p. 39.

²⁴ Maya Jasanoff, Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), p. 172.

²⁵ Robin W. Winks, "Negroes in the Maritimes: An Introductory Study" Dalhousie Review, vol. 48, no. 4 (November 1969), p. 457.

²⁶ Catherine M.A. Cottreau-Robins, "Searching for the Enslaved in Nova Scotia's Loyalist Landscape," Acadiensis, vol. 43, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2014), pp. 125–36; Nelson also argues that on top of the physical brutality and surveillance of slavery, enslaved black people in Canada (especially those born in Africa, the Caribbean, and the American South) also had to contend with adapting to the temperate climate, and new types of labour, food, and living arrangements, as well as the trauma of isolation from self and community. See: Nelson, " 'Ran away from her Master'," pp. 68–91.

²⁷ Marcus Rediker, "The Evolution of the Slave Ship," The Slave Ship: A Human History (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), p. 60; Frank Mackey, Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760–1840, "Appendix I: Newspaper Notices," (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010).

²⁸ Wallace, "Twenty Dollars Reward," p.1.

²⁹ Wallace, "Twenty Dollars Reward," p.1.

³⁰ Wallace, "Twenty Dollars Reward," p.1.

³¹ Wallace, "Twenty Dollars Reward," p.1. For more on the use of threats directed towards ship captains by slave owners see: Charmaine A. Nelson, "The Canadian Fugitive Slave Archive and the Concept of Refuge," English Studies in Canada, *Something Personal: Archives and Methods for Critical Refugee Studies in Canada*, guest eds. Vinh Nguyen and Thy Phu, vol. 45, no. 3 (September 2019), pp. 91–115.

³² David Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the 18th c. Mid-Atlantic," William and Mary Quarterly, vol. 56, no. 2 (April 1999), pp. 259–261.

³³ Wallace, "Twenty Dollars Reward," p.1.

³⁴ Wallace, "Twenty Dollars Reward," p.1.

³⁵ See: Nelson, "The Canadian Fugitive Slave Archive," pp. 91–115.

³⁶ Wallace, "Twenty Dollars Reward," p. 1.

³⁷ Nelson has surmised this by recuperating the additional printing of Wallace's advertisement for Bill which include: 15 February 1794, vol. 7, no. 403, p. 1; 22 February 1794, vol. 7, no. 404, p. 1; and 15 March 1794, vol. 7, no. 407.

³⁸ Wallace, "Twenty Dollars Reward," p. 1.

- ³⁹ Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways," p. 261.
- ⁴⁰ Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways," p. 252.
- ⁴¹ Bogle and McLean, "Five Guineas Reward," p. 1.
- ⁴² Bogle and McLean, "Five Guineas Reward," p. 1.
- ⁴³ Thomas J. Brown, Place Names of the Province of Nova Scotia (Sydney, Nova Scotia: 1922), p. 72
- ⁴⁴ Brown, Place Names of the Province of Nova Scotia, p. 72
- ⁴⁵ Bogle and McLean, "Five Guineas Reward," p. 1.
- ⁴⁶ Sarah Elizabeth Chute, "Bound to Slavery: Economic and Biographical Connections to Atlantic Slavery between the Maritimes and West Indies after 1783," (Burlington: MA History, University of Vermont, 2021), p 19.
- ⁴⁷ Bogle and McLean, "Five Guineas Reward," p. 1.
- ⁴⁸ Bogle and McLean, "Five Guineas Reward," p. 1.
- ⁴⁹ Bogle and McLean, "Five Guineas Reward," p. 1. The term "in-knee'd" could refer to the condition of knock-kneed, which is a condition in which the knees bend inward, a condition in children which is usually grown out of, but can last into adulthood when exacerbated by disease, infection, or physical trauma - all very likely conditions for someone living in slavery.
- ⁵⁰ Bogle and McLean, "Five Guineas Reward," p. 1.
- ⁵¹ D.A. Sutherland, "WALLACE, MICHAEL" Dictionary of Canadian Biography (date of last access 20 February 2022) http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/wallace_michael_6E.html
- ⁵² Thomas B. Akins, History of Halifax City (Halifax: Nova Scotia Historical Society, 1895), pp. 103, 110, 120.
- ⁵³ Thomas B. Akins, History of Halifax City, p. 102.
- ⁵⁴ Michael Wallace, "Relinquishment from Michael Wallace to Government of certain lands in Preston for the use of the Black Refugees. Contains a relinquishment of dower but has no certificate of having been recorded," Commissioner of Public Records collection Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 30 April 1818, RG 1 vol. 419 no. 104, pp. 1–4. Although nothing has been found clarifying if Bill was recaptured, we do know that in 1818 Wallace did engage with black people by relinquishing lands that had been "promised" him by Governor Wentworth and setting them aside as the use for black refugees, although an examination of the reasons behind and context around this move are beyond the scope of this paper.
- ⁵⁵ Nelson, " 'Ran away from her Master.'"
- ⁵⁶ For more on the nature of corporal punishment and other tactics of slave control and abuse in Canada see: Nelson, " 'Ran away from her Master.'"

DOCUMENTS

Document 1: Bogle and McLean, "Five Guineas *Reward*," Nova-Scotia Packet and General Advertiser (Shelburne, NS), vol. 1, no. 62, 6 July 1786, p. 1; Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Canada.

Five Guineas Reward.

RUN away, on Friday [*]forenoon, the 9th [this,*] a Negro Fellow, named TOM, of a yellowish complexion, remarkably stout, about twenty five years of age, very artful and [****ore?], [mo**?] [*on **** year?] bred a sailor, is an [exp**ing] lived with Mr. Samuel in this Town, {ha****}{*****} and {*****} [***o} past [*as] wrought with Mr. Bousheld**, in the ship-yard, on **** McLean and Bogle's ship, now building -*-* He has a scar on his [*os*] and one above his left Eye, pitted by the small-pox, and in knee'd; carried with him one blue-colour'd coat with yellow buttons, one brown ditto white buttons, two short Jackets (one blue and one nankeen) two pair of over-alls, (one blue and one gray) one black and one white hat, also a fur cap. He is the property of Capt. James McDonald, of this town. Whoever will bring him to Messrs. McLean and Bogle, shall have the above Reward.

All Masters of vessels or others, are hereby warned not to harbour or carry him off, at their peril. (sic)

Document 2: Wallace, Michael, "Twenty Dollars Reward," Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax), 8 February 1794, vol. 7, no. 402, p. 1; MFM 8165, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Canada.

Twenty Dollars Reward.

RAN away, on Thursday evening, the 18th inst. A Negro Man Servant, the property of the Subscriber, named BELFAST; but who commonly goes by the name of BILL. ——— - - At the time of he [sic] elopement he was in the service of William Forsyth, Esq; and had meditated an attempt to get on board a ship that night which lay in the harbour, bound to Newfoundland; but was frustrated : It is probably, however, he may still endeavour to escape that way, therefore, the matters of all coasters going along shore, or other vessels bound to sea, are hereby forewarned from carrying him off at their peril, as they will be prosecuted, if discovered, with the utmost rigour of the law.

The above reward will be paid to any person or persons who shall apprehend and secure him, so that I may recover him again.

He is a likely, stout-made fellow, of five feet eight or nine inches high, and about 27 years of age; of a mild good countenance and features, smooth black skin, with very white teeth; is a native of South Carolina, speaks good English, and very softly, and has been in this Province ten years.

When he went off, he wore an old Bath-Coating short coat, of a light colour, wore out at the elbows; brown cloth or duffil trowsers, also much wore out at the knees; a

round hat, and an old black silk handkerchief about his neck:— But as he had other cloaths secreted in town, he may have changed his whole apparel.

He will no doubt endeavour to pass for a free man, and possibly by some other name.

MICHAEL WALLACE.

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PLATE LIST

Figure 1: Bogle and McLean, “Five Guineas *Reward*,” Nova-Scotia Packet and General Advertiser (Shelburne, NS), vol. 1, no. 62, 6 July 1786, p. 1.

Figure 2: Michael Wallace, “Twenty Dollars Reward,” Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax), 8 February 1794, vol. 7, no. 402, p. 1; MFM 8165, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Canada.

INTIMATE RELATIONS IN THE TEMPERATE CLIMATES OF TRANSATLANTIC SLAVERY: NEW BRUNSWICK TO MARYLAND

Britt Moore-Shirley

Temperate climates in North America like those that would become the Northern United States and (Eastern) Canada have avoided labeling, understanding, and remembering their roles within Transatlantic Slavery. These histories of slavery in “the North” are pregnant with false memories and romantic myths that personify Northern locations as a sanctuary for runaway enslaved persons who fled away from the dehumanization, objectification, and physical danger of slavery.¹ However, as Charmaine A. Nelson has argued, what is forgotten is that during the two-hundred-year history of Canadian Slavery, enslaved people were routinely fleeing south away from their Canadian enslavers.² In reality, this so-called Canadian and northern United States history inaccurately depicts thirty years of abolitionist activity that appeases white guilt by ignoring two hundred years of temperate climate slavery in Canada. As Nelson has explained, contemporary northern societies position white northerners as “anti-slavery heroes who saved enslaved African Americans from the deadly machine of plantation slavery in the American South.”³ According to Rhea Rollmann, temperate climate locations positioned enslavers in “most socio-economic classes of white society” resulting in an influx of enslaved peoples working across artistic, business, farming and fishing industries.⁴ All-year plantation based slave economies in Canada were unsustainable due to the fluctuation of temperatures and weather throughout the year. Instead, enslaved peoples lived in “family” slavery structured around the proximity of enslaved peoples and enslavers.⁵

Despite canonical depictions, the varying structures of slavery were never indicators of better conditions or more considerate slave owners. A primary example of these conditions was seen in fugitive slave advertisements. These advertisements publicly criminalized runaway enslaved peoples and anyone who harboured or concealed them.⁶ Valuable information was included like appearance, speech, relationships, skills, and history; insights that were otherwise never provided by enslavers in other types of documents. While it is true that these advertisements present crucial experiences and attributes of enslaved peoples, the contradictory or omitted information serves as a reminder that these accounts are incomplete. Fugitive slave advertisements were never authored by the enslaved, instead they acted as unauthorized portraits⁷ gesturing towards a person that was designated as chattel.⁸ This article aims to recognize the gaps in these histories while analyzing two fugitive slave advertisements depicting groups who ran away together. I will explore the complexities of relationships found within “family” bondage; the alliances between enslavers that served as surveillance and control, the paternalistic violence from enslavers that was visited upon the enslaved, and finally relationships between enslaved peoples as opportunities for resistance.

On 19 June 1787, Thomas Lester from Waterborough, New Brunswick published a fugitive slave advertisement entitled “RUN-AWAY”⁹ where he posted a reward in exchange for the return of Sam, Beller, and Tony Smith. (fig. 1) There are also three additional men referenced in this advertisement: Thomas Lester the subscriber of the advertisement located in New Brunswick and Ezra Scofield, and Judge Peters (Charles Jeffrey Peters) two additional enslavers located in New Brunswick as well.¹⁰ This advertisement exemplified the ways in which relationships were vital to both the enslaved and enslavers. “RUN-AWAY” calls to our attention to the fact that enslavers had visible relationships with each other and provided extended surveillance of black individuals and communities across large regions. While Lester’s mention of Judge Peters served to highlight Beller’s previous residence and possible kinship and community connections, Scofield was cited as a person to whom people with knowledge of the trio could report. Orlando Patterson states “an isolated master faced grave risks” and feared anger and resentment from enslaved peoples that could have occurred when he was outnumbered.¹¹ The advertisement mentioned both Ezra Scofield and Thomas Peters who lived in St. Johns, New Brunswick a location that was home to British Loyalists and the people they enslaved. Various shipyards in the Maritimes served as a site to which exiled enslaved peoples were sent and the numerous auction houses were instrumental in the dissemination of enslaved peoples across what is now known as eastern Canada.¹²

Lester gave specific mention to Beller and Tony Smith’s histories. Beller, Sam’s sixteen-year-old sister, had previously lived with Judge Thomas Peters in St. Johns. Beller’s forced movement between two provinces and households emphasizes the commerce and trading of Transatlantic Slavery and acknowledges that this economic system was upheld by enslavers working together to facilitate the dehumanization and degradation of black peoples.¹³ The mention of Sam’s violin playing was likely meant by Lester to alert readers to one of the ways that the trio may have sustained themselves financially while on the run.¹⁴ Although Lester did not indicate that there was a connection between Beller’s facial scar and her impaired speech, this was certainly a possibility. However, clearly the mention of her scar was also simply meant to provide the reading public with another way of identifying her. According to Lester, Tony too

RUN-AWAY,
IN a BIRCH-CANOE, from the subscriber two negro Men and one Wench; who have taken sundry things with them. S A M, between a black and dark Mulatto 17 or 18 years old, midling tall and slim, quick spoken, attempts to play the VIOLIN, has a London brown colured coat, ticking trousers and other clothes.
BELLER, a fiftier to SAM, between a black and mulatto, 16 years old, midling tall and slim, is raw-bon'd has a scar between her eye and temple, is slow in her speech, has a black cover'd hat with white lining, and lived formerly with Judge Peters, at St. John.
TONY SMITH, some call him JOE, a free fellow, but hired for a time; he is tall and slim, between a black and mulatto, speaks broken, wears a blue or brown coat, ticking trousers, and has other clothes with him.—Two of the above servants were raised in the family. Any person apprehending them or giving information to Mr. EZRA SCOFIELD, in King-street, St. John, or the subscriber, shall have One GUINEA for each, and if taken out of St. John, reasonable charges paid—if taken out of the province, it is requested that they may be confined in Jail until called for. All masters of vessels and every other person is forwarned not to carry any of the said negroes off or from harbouring or concealing them, as they will answer it at their peril.
THOMAS LESTER,
 Waterborough, 19th June 1787.

Figure 1: Thomas Lester, “RUN-AWAY,” Royal Gazette and New Brunswick Advertiser (St. John), 10 July 1787.

had difficulties with his speech. However, the description “broken” was commonly used to indicate a lack of language mastery, rather than an impediment caused by a disability. We must therefore consider if Tony was from another region, perhaps the continent of Africa, and had not resided long enough in New Brunswick to become fluent in English. Since Lester named Sam and Beller as siblings, it is likely that he would have mentioned a family connection between Tony and the others, if one existed. Instead, it seems most likely that Tony had met and developed relationships with Sam and Beller while in Lester’s employ. Significantly then, the advertisement sheds light on the relationships and joint resistance of free and enslaved black people to their employers and enslavers in New Brunswick.

Just over fifty-five years later, another group escape was taking place south of the border in Maryland. A fugitive slave notice entitled, “TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD”¹⁵ placed in the Baltimore Sun in 1842 by H. W. Hunter listed four black men who had fled together from Prince George county, James Bowser, James Baker, and Charles Warick owned by Hunter, and a fourth man named Sam, who was enslaved by Mr. Walker. (fig. 2) This is the third mention of these four enslaved men. The first was a less detailed advertisement published on 27 October 1842 which was followed by four more publications that copied the more detailed advertisement published on 5 November 1842. Searching the Library of Congress’ archives yielded a map of Prince George County, Maryland that suggests Hunter (R Hunter) and Mr. Walker’s (S Walker) properties may have been located next to each other. (fig. 3) Knowing these locations, substantiates my claim that while enslavers traded of and borrowed enslaved peoples, the enslaved were collaborating with each other despite having different enslaver. These collaborations between black runaways occurred regardless of status as free or enslaved. Tony Smith, mentioned in the “RUN-AWAY” advertisement of 1787 above, was a “free fellow, but hired for a time”¹⁶ who ran away with Sam and Beller. This offers potential insight into the lack of difference in “the way black servants and slaves were treated by their masters or employers.”¹⁷ It also emphasizes the

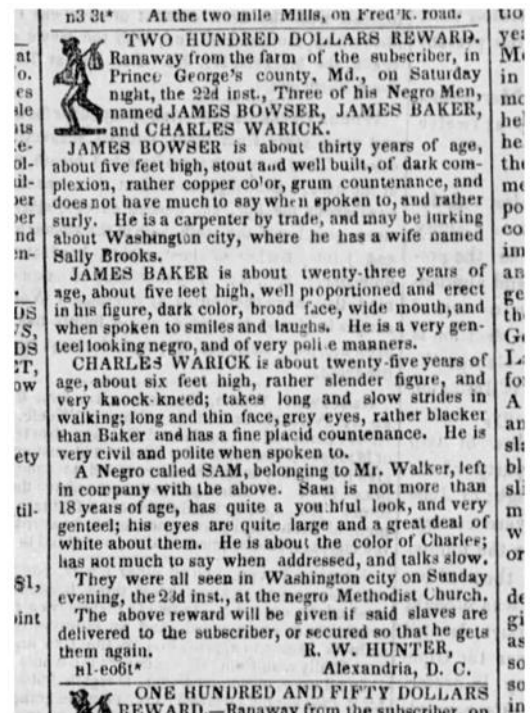


Figure 2: H. W. Hunter, “TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD,” Baltimore Sun (Maryland), Saturday, 5 November 1842, p. 1.

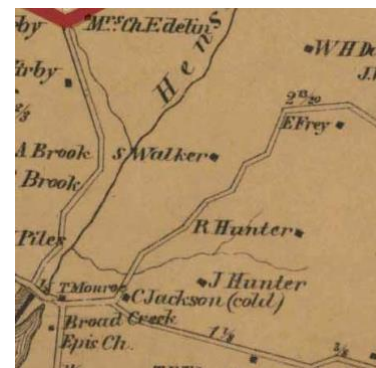


Figure 3: Simon J. Martenet, “Martenet’s Atlas of Maryland,” 1861, Library of Congress, MSA SC 1213-1-118; detail.

importance of relationships where black enslaved peoples and servants found common causes with each other during Transatlantic Slavery.

Part of the reason I compare the “RUN-AWAY” advertisement with the “TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD” advertisement is because of the transportation of enslaved peoples from southern states like Maryland into the Maritimes. This facilitated a relationship built around trading and selling enslaved peoples regardless of designations of North and South.¹⁸ Plantation-based slavery was inhumane in large part because of the transportation of black people when enslavers sought more labourers or wanted to destroy potential threats to the continuation of slavery.¹⁹ The forced relocation of black people was a central facet of the horror of slavery, and exemplifies the ways that disparate regions were connected and dependent.²⁰

Hunter did not indicate if or how the four men were related beyond a common bond of slavery in the same region or property. However, for James Bowser, Hunter’s mention of a wife in Washington City, acted much the same way as Lester’s mention of Beller’s previous enslavement in St. John by Peters. It was a way to alert the reading public to a possible direction of flight, and a destination, by providing a motivation for such decisions.

We see last names listed in both advertisements. For black servants the ability to claim a surname would have indicated their moving beyond enslavement, but it was uncommon to see enslaved peoples, like those in Hunter’s advertisement be referred to by surnames. I believe this to be a result of newspapers printing information for the general public at the same time enslaved persons were finding (although limited) a form of agency upon running away. Fugitive slave advertisements could not simply describe black people in traditional chattel language and instead had to refer to the ways in which they styled and dressed themselves alongside their personalities, demeanour, and relationships. Hunter may have known that Bowser, Baker, and Warwick would have used their surnames upon escape and felt the best chance of having his property returned was to give the most information possible even if he would not have normally referred to them as such. What then does the language associated with each person from both of the aforementioned advertisements tell us about the relationship between enslaved individuals and their communities?

Relationships between black enslaved peoples facilitated cultures of resistance. It is within the fugitive slave advertisements that this resistance becomes visible. In “TWO HUNDRED DOLLAR REWARD” all three of the enslaved men approach disruption and resistance differently.²¹ Bowser is described as having a “grim countenance,”²² (sic) and being “rather surly”²³ with little “to say when spoken to.”²⁴ This visible display of dissatisfaction was a powerful counteractant to the expectation that slave owners controlled “how slaves reacted when spoken to”²⁵ and often required them to possess a “cheerfulness in their work, wherever and whatever it is.”²⁶ We can better understand these expectations when we consider that even people who thought of “slavery as a lamentable evil”²⁷ often disregarded critiques of the system through ignorant and false claims that “Negroes had at all times abundant food; the sufferings of fireless winter were unknown to them; medical attendance was always at command...”²⁸ as antebellum enslavers created systems they hoped would produce industrious, efficient,

manageable, and contented enslaved people.²⁹ In contrast, Baker was described as “smiles and laughs,”³⁰ “of very polite manners,”³¹ and “genteel”³² and Warick as having “a fine placid countenance”³³ and “very civil and polite when spoken to.”³⁴ And yet, they both also resisted Hunter by appealing to his sensibilities, or perhaps even performed deference and respect as a tactic of placating their enslaver and lulling him into a false belief in their contentment.³⁵ By appeasing Hunter’s desire for control, Baker and Warwick may have seemed less suspicious than the “surly”³⁶ Bowser and alluded Hunter’s surveillance. Although slave owners equated enslaved politeness and appearances of contentment with obedience, clearly, the apparently (to Hunter) contented Baker and Warick fled alongside the outwardly disrespectful Bowser. Attempting to escape enslavement while on Hunter’s “good” side may have also resulted in a lenience if the runaways were caught.³⁷

Also referred to in the Baltimore advertisement is Bowser’s wife Sally Brooks from whom he had been forcibly separated. Hunter listed her as being associated with Washington City; presenting another location for enslavers to search. Marriages between enslaved peoples were not uncommon, although they were seldom recognized by enslavers. As noted by Robyn N. Smith, enslaved women frequently took their husbands’ names, but enslavers did not value these relationships and slave marriages were illegal (without enslaver permission).³⁸ Therefore, Sally having a different last name, Brooks, than her husband, James Bowser, was not an oddity.³⁹ Indeed, the surname, Brooks, may have also referred to the enslaver who owned Sally and Hunter’s faithful printing of the name, was a recognition of the other enslaver’s legal rights to her body and labour. Regardless we can assume that Hunter was performing the enslaver tasks of destroying black relationships and family through forced separation and that Bowser was resisting this violent attack on his intimate personal choices.⁴⁰

Both the Maryland and New Brunswick advertisements make mentions of locations that the enslaved could have been fleeing towards. The distance from Prince Georges County, Maryland to Washington City is approximately sixteen kilometres which amounts to around six or eight hours of walking using contemporary roads and geography. The specifics may have been slightly different, but the advertisement does place all four of the runaway men leaving Prince George County on Saturday night and then having been identified in Washington City on Sunday evening. Obviously, this distance would not have been impossible to cover on foot, but it is important to note that without the relationships between the four men it could have been a lot more difficult for Warick to escape on his own since he is described as being “knock-kneed”⁴¹ and having a “long and slow stride.”⁴² Since Hunter’s advertisement claimed that they were *all* seen in Washington City on the Sunday (one day after their escape), we can surmise that whatever bonded these four men, Bowser, Baker, and Sam were willing to risk being apprehended to assist the slower Warick in also escaping alongside them. In the same way, Tony Smith in “RUN-AWAY” had increased his risk of recapture and punishment by escaping with Sam and Beller, “two people whose legal status was far worse than his.”⁴³ Although information regarding the locations of where Sam, Beller, and Tony Smith may have fled is limited, as

mentioned above, we can wonder if the mentions of St. John were perhaps in relation to previous family or community that was left behind by Beller who was previously owned by James Peters.

“TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD” was published a total of five times between 27 October 27th and 12 November 12th 1842, after those dates I was unable to locate any information relating to James Bowser, James Baker, Charles Warick, or Sam.⁴⁴ Similarly, there was very little to be found relating to Sam, Beller or Tony Smith from the “RUN-AWAY” advertisement. Fugitive slave advertisements grant us entry into the intimate aspects of Transatlantic Slavery that amplified the dehumanization of black peoples even if they do still lack in completing the narrative as a whole. Our archives and institutions fail to disrupt white supremacy’s claim to history; slave narratives and fugitive slave advertisements provide entry points into understanding the relationships found within Transatlantic Slavery, as well as bridging the gaps that allow white northerners to avoid accountability and further disguise the connections between North and South cultures of slavery.

ENDNOTES

¹ Michael Todd Landis, “These Are Words Scholars Should No Longer Use to Describe Slavery and the Civil War,” History News Network (date of last access: 10 February 2022) <http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/160266>

² Charmaine A. Nelson, “The Canadian Fugitive Slave Archive and the Concept of Refuge,” English Studies in Canada, Something Personal: Archives and Methods for Critical Refugee Studies in Canada, guest eds. Vinh Nguyen and Thy Phu, vol. 45, no. 3 (September 2019), pp. 91–115.

³ Charmaine A. Nelson, “Canadian Slavery and the Diversity of Blackness,” Jillian Harris, 25 March 2021 (date of last access 10 February 2022) <https://jillianharris.com/canadian-slavery-and-the-diversity-of-blackness/>

⁴ Rhea Rollmann, “Newfoundland in the Black Imaginary,” Independent, 9 September 2016 (date of last access 12 February 2022) <https://theindependent.ca/news/newfoundland-in-the-black-imaginary/>

⁵ Harvey Amani Whitfield, Black Slavery in the Maritimes: A History in Documents (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2018), p. 5. Whitfield’s classifying of Black slavery within the Maritimes as family bondage is likened to that same structure that consumed most parts of the Middle Colonies like for example the many States located in the Northern United States.

⁶ Whitfield, Black Slavery in the Maritimes, p. 51

⁷ Charmaine A. Nelson, “Servant, Seraglio, Savage or ‘Sarah’: Examining the Visual Representation of Black Female Subjects in Canadian Art and Visual Culture,” Women in the Promised Land?: Essays in African Canadian History, eds. Wanda Thomas Bernard, Boulou Ebanda de B’béri, Nina Reid-Maroney (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), pp. 49–50.

⁸ William D Piersen, “Family Slavery,” Black Yankees: The Development of an Afro-American Subculture in Eighteenth-Century New England, pp. 25–36

⁹ Thomas Lester, “RUN-AWAY,” Royal Gazette and New Brunswick Advertiser (St. John), 10 July 1787; transcribed in in Harvey Amani Whitfield, Black Slavery in the Maritimes: A History in Documents (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2018), p. 51.

¹⁰ I am grateful for the research conducted by Katelyn Clark, Research Assistant at the Institute for the Study of Canadian Slavery, for providing the identities and general locations of the three enslavers listed in the Royal Gazette (New Brunswick) which proved integral to my understanding of Sam and Beller’s escape efforts.

¹¹ Orlando Patterson, “Authority, Alienation, and Social Death,” Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982)

¹² Rhea Rollmann, “Newfoundland in the Black Imaginary.” Specifically, Afua Cooper mentions that hundreds of enslaved peoples from New York would have been exiled to Newfoundland during the purported conspiracy that aimed to launch a slave rebellion in New York in 1741.

¹³ Matthew Desmond, “In order to understand the brutality of American capitalism, you have to start on the plantation,” New York Times, 14 August 2019.

¹⁴ Lester’s phrasing about Sam’s violin playing, he “*attempts to play the violin*,” can also be viewed as Lester’s way of denigrating Sam’s skills, typical behaviour for enslavers. (italics mine)

- ¹⁵ H. W. Hunter, "TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD," Baltimore Sun (Maryland), Saturday, 5 November 1842, p. 1
- ¹⁶ Hunter, "TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD."
- ¹⁷ Whitfield, Black Slavery in the Maritimes, p. 51
- ¹⁸ Whitfield, Black Slavery in the Maritimes, p. 103
- ¹⁹ Jay R Mandle, "The Plantation Economy: An Essay in Definition," Science & Society, vol. 36, no. 1 (Spring 1972), p. 49–62.
- ²⁰ Edwards, S.J. Celestine, "Life as a Slave," From Slavery to a Bishopric, or, The Life of Bishop Walter Hawkins of the British Methodist Episcopal Church, Canada (London: John Kensit, 1891), pp. 35–52.
- ²¹ I am grateful to Charmaine A. Nelson for bringing to my attention how unique and stark the descriptions of countenance and manner are in this fugitive notice.
- ²² Hunter, "TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD."
- ²³ Hunter, "TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD."
- ²⁴ Hunter, "TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD."
- ²⁵ Shane White and Graham White, "Slave Hair and African American Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," Journal of Southern History, vol. 61, no. 1 (February 1995), p. 49
- ²⁶ White and White, "Slave Hair and African American Culture," p. 49
- ²⁷ James Spence, "Causes of Disruption.—The Slavery Question," The American Union: Its Effect on National Character and Policy, with an Inquiry Into Secession as a Constitutional Right, and the Causes of the Disruption (Richmond, VA: West and Johnson, 1863); Larry E. Hudson, "To Love and to Cherish: The Slave Family," To Have and to Hold: Slave Work and Family Life in Antebellum South Carolina (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1997), p. xix
- ²⁸ James Spence, "Causes of Disruption.—The Slavery Question," p. xix
- ²⁹ James Spence, "Causes of Disruption.—The Slavery Question," p. xix
- ³⁰ Hunter, "TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD."
- ³¹ Hunter, "TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD."
- ³² Hunter, "TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD."
- ³³ Hunter, "TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD."
- ³⁴ Hunter, "TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD."
- ³⁵ Charmaine A. Nelson, ed., "Introduction," The Precariousness of Freedom: Slave Resistance as Experience, Process, and Representation (Concord, ON: Captus Press, forthcoming 2023)
- ³⁶ Hunter, "TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD."
- ³⁷ Examples of this can be found in numerous fugitive slave advertisements one of the most notable examples being the 22 May 1781 advertisement "This Day RAN AWAY" from Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle wherein the enslaver Abel Michener offers to show mercy to James if he returns of his own will. Abel Michener, "This Day RAN AWAY," Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax), 22 May 1781; transcribed in Harvey Amani Whitfield, Black Slavery in the Maritimes: A History in Documents, (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press 2018), p. 30.
- ³⁸ Robyn N. Smith, "The Complexity of Slave Surnames," Reclaiming Kin (date of last access 2 February 2022) <https://reclaimingkin.com/the-complexity-of-slave-surnames/>; Meaghan E.H. Siekman, "Slave surnames," Vita Brevis American Ancestors (date of access 2 February 2022) <https://vitabrevis.americanancestors.org/2021/05/slave-surnames/>
- ³⁹ Smith, "The Complexity of Slave Surnames," (date of last access 2 February 2022); Siekman, "Slave surnames," (date of access 2 February 2022)
- ⁴⁰ Emily West, "Masters and Marriages, Profits and Paternalism: Slave Owners' Perspectives on Cross-Plantation Unions in Antebellum South Carolina," Slavery & Abolition, vol. 21, no. 1 (2000), pp. 56–72.
- ⁴¹ Hunter, "TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD."
- ⁴² Hunter, "TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD."
- ⁴³ Whitfield, Black Slavery in the Maritimes, p. 51
- ⁴⁴ Although it should be noted, there is a very famous James Bowser who fought in the American Revolution and was discharged in 1782. He is recognized as having reared a large family of free-born citizens. There are no direct ties to the James Bowser mentioned in the Baltimore Sun. Information is available at: <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=108147>

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PLATE LIST

Figure 1: Thomas Lester, “RUN-AWAY,” Royal Gazette and New Brunswick Advertiser (St. John), 10 July 1787.

Figure 2: H. W. Hunter, “TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD,” Baltimore Sun (Maryland), Saturday, 5 November 1842, p. 1.

Figure 3: Simon J. Martenet, “Martenet’s Atlas of Maryland,” 1861; Library of Congress, MSA SC 1213-1-118

FUGITIVE SLAVE ADVERTISEMENTS AND THE MOTHERLESS CHILD

Amanda Trager

Fugitive slave advertisements offer shards of light into the personal circumstances of enslaved individuals. Prototypes for long-form first-, or second-person slave narratives, they constitute their own terse yet evocative narrative form. The information they provide is rendered in brief, cost-effective formats, like the “Wanted” advertisements posted by authorities hunting suspected criminals, advertisements that exist to this day. Indeed, fugitive slave advertisements *were* “Wanted” posters since they criminalized enslaved people (considered chattel under the law) for the defiant act of what Marcus Wood has called “self-theft.”¹ Although quite literally sketchy, the advertisements also needed to be simultaneously accurate. Every detail counted.

Deeper comprehension of the life and experiences of the individuals described in fugitive slave advertisements can be gleaned by way of responsible, informed speculation based in careful research.² Creating a hard line between well-grounded research and speculation can be challenging, even counterproductive. Given the near total absence of material that gives robust voice to millions of enslaved people from our past, the space between these approaches is where this work must happen.³

The very young, seemingly autonomous children described in certain fugitive slave advertisements most particularly lend themselves to this dichotomous methodological approach. Lacking capacity to form and execute plans, small children were not self-emancipators. Never runaways, they are always and accurately described in these advertisements as being “taken away.” Instead of amplifying their individual voices, the circumstance of their utter dependency forces researchers to focus on the actions or agency of the surrounding adults - free or enslaved, black or white. This should not be perceived as decentring the experience of the enslaved. It is, instead, an opportunity to understand wide interactions from the vantage point of the enslaved child. Complex layers of affect between all involved in the Transatlantic Slave Trade and its aftermath can be gleaned.

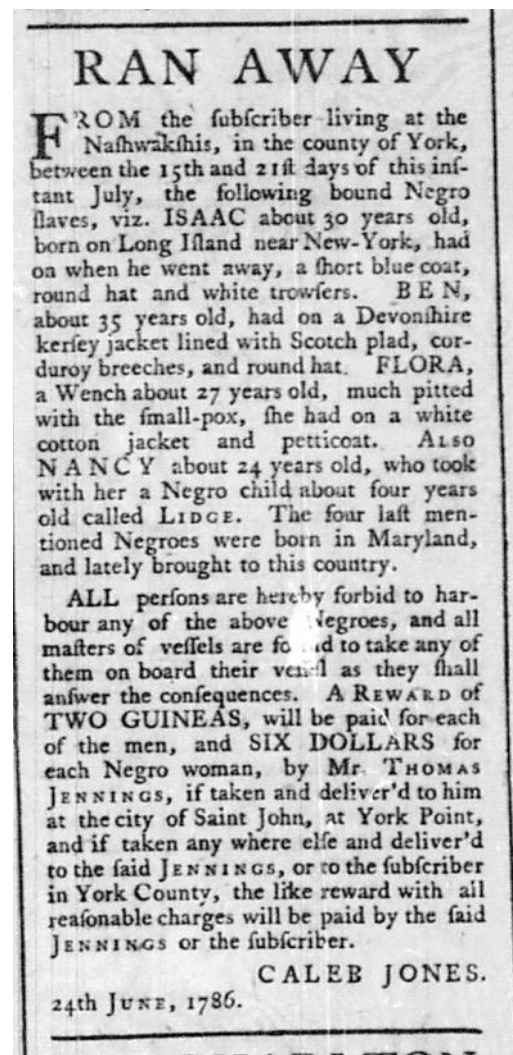


Figure 1: Caleb Jones, “RAN AWAY,” *Royal Gazette and New Brunswick Advertiser* (St. John), 24 June 1786, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton, Canada.

Background: Lidge and Rose

This comparative fugitive slave advertisement study focuses on 4-year-old Lidge and 5-year-old Rose - two enslaved children living in temperate climate/slave minority territories in the mid-1700's to the early 1800's. We know much less about Rose than we do about Lidge, whose life circumstances have been researched by Harvey Amani Whitfield by way of two fugitive slave advertisements separated in time by thirty years. (figs. 1 and 2)

Whitfield's research has been aided by the litigious actions of Lidge's enslaver, Caleb Jones, whose legal documents are numerous and provide detail about several of the enslaved adults that populated Lidge's life (including Ben, and most notably Nancy).⁴

In contrast, Rose appears to be documented only once in the archive. Her largely undocumented life took place in a relatively urban area. As described in the advertisement, two of the adults populating Rose's world were free white men.

Wanted, more or less: priorities in fugitive slave advertisements

Lidge

We know that Lidge lived in Nashwakshis (currently Nashwaaksis), near Fredericton, New Brunswick. A primary meeting place for indigenous people, the area was and is still a heavily wooded part of the world, a little over 100 kilometres from the Bay of Fundy and the Atlantic Ocean, with an abundant number of lakes and rivers. The predominant Saint John River, running roughly west-east, was a shipping and transport corridor integral to the fur trade.⁵

In the 1786 advertisement, we first learn of Lidge as a child Nancy "took with her"⁶ in a failed attempt to self-emancipate. Nancy is not described as being Lidge's mother. Jones provides details regarding Nancy and three other enslaved black adults in a group of which Lidge was a part. While the first to be listed, Isaac, was described as a thirty-year-old originally from Long Island, New York, the other three (along with Lidge) were described as natives of Maryland who had been "lately brought to this country."⁷ The casual nature of Jones' admission of kidnapping is a demonstration of the power that white enslavers wielded over the mobility of enslaved people.⁸ Significantly, Jones related that the group had absconded sometime between 15 and 21 July 1786, a clear indication that he did not know the precise date or time of their flight, things commonly detailed in such advertisements.

Descriptions of the adults' clothing, physical markings, and possible destinations were given. But, beyond his name, age, and the fact of his being "Negro,"⁹ very few words were used

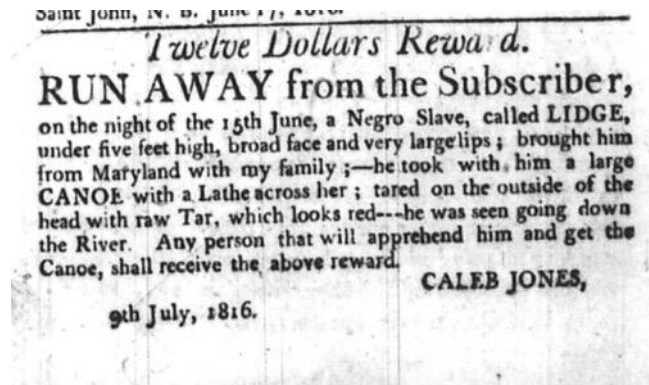


Figure 2: Caleb Jones, "Twelve Dollars Reward," *New Brunswick Royal Gazette* (Fredericton), 9 July 1816; Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton, Canada.

to describe Lidge. Jones, in fact, does not even share information about Lidge's gender. We only know Lidge to be male because of a second fugitive slave advertisement placed in 1816. The scant language used in the first advertisement may be attributable to the fact that the adult members of Lidge's group represented a much greater, immediate financial loss to Jones. Yet the wording - "A reward of TWO GUINEAS, will be paid for *each of the men*, and SIX DOLLARS for *each Negro woman*"¹⁰ (italics mine) - raises questions. Genderless 4-year-old Lidge is neither a man nor a "Negro woman."¹¹ Are we therefore to conclude that Jones had nothing to offer for Lidge's return? Or, was Nancy as his mother or mother-figure so inseparable from Lidge in Jones' mind, that the two were a "package deal." Although enslavers across the Americas put enslaved black children to work at a very young age, children were not economically valued as highly as adults because they could not do the same amount labour and therefore, could not produce the same profit for enslavers.

Although possibly a negligible oversight, this lack of focus on Lidge suggests an ambivalence regarding his return, an attitude sustained thirty years later through language used in the 1816 advertisement. In Lidge's second documented flight, he was a thirty-four-year-old man, and he fled by way of a canoe, owned, of course, by Jones. In an echo of the 1786 advertisement, more detail is lavished upon this canoe ("a large CANOE with a Lathe across her ; tared on the outside of the head with raw Tar, which looks red") (sic) than upon Lidge himself ("under 5 feet tall, broad face, very large lips").¹² Once again, the wording "Any person that will apprehend him *and get the Canoe*, shall receive the above award"¹³ (italics mine) raises the following questions: If someone had apprehended Lidge without returning the canoe, would they have *not* received the twelve dollars? Did Jones deem Lidge to be worthless on his own?

Rose

The tiny shard of knowledge we have about Rose is from a fugitive slave advertisement appearing in the Boston Gazette on 2 August 1743. The advertisement reads as follows:

"Taken away from Mr. James Dolebeare of Boston, Braslet, some few Days ago, a Negro Female Child called Rose, aged about five Years, had on a green Petticoat, and a white Wastcoat, and has a large Scar on one of her Breast. If any Person can give information to said Dolbeare, where said Negro may be found; it being apprehended that she is concealed by some ill minded and malicious Persons, the Person that makes the Discovery shall be suitably rewarded. And all Persons are hereby forewarned from entertaining said Negro on any Pretense whatever at their Peril, even Mr. Benjamin Babbidge himself."¹⁴ (sic)

Contrary to Lidge, Rose seems unambiguously sought after, indeed coveted, even as a dependent five-year-old girl. Her given name of Rose, and the careful arrangement of adjectives used in describing her ("Negro Female Child called Rose"¹⁵) are possible indicators of Rose's status as a child who was, at the very least clearly seen, recognized, and not described in relation to any

other people, enslaved or not. She appears as a singularity. There are no obvious signifiers of contempt in her given name as was so often the case in naming conventions of enslavers and their enslaved.¹⁶ Her “green Petticoat,”¹⁷ and “white Wastcoat,”¹⁸ were not described (as was common) as being well-used, soiled or torn.¹⁹ To the contrary, the clothing as described seems at the very least adequate if not even elegant. Money was being spent on this black enslaved child.

Where are the women?

Rose’s world, as depicted in the 1734 advertisement, is solely made up of two free white men - Dolebeare, the enslaver, and Babbidge who may have stolen Rose (in Dolebeare’s assessment). There is no mention of a mother, surrogate-mother, or a white mistress. But the description of Rose as being “taken away” from James Dolebeare (as opposed to a Mrs. Dolebeare, a black mother, or surrogate-mother) is common enough within this world, as Dolebeare was Rose’s legal owner.

It is the appearance of Babbidge’s name that raises questions. Dolebeare’s explicit naming of Benjamin Babbidge as the prime suspect in Rose’s theft (“And all Persons are hereby forewarned from entertaining said Negro on any Pretense whatever at their Peril, even Mr. Benjamin Babbidge himself”)²⁰ is striking. We know that Benjamin Babbidge, endowed with the title of “Mr.” before both a first and last name, is a white man. Why would one white man steal a five-year-old girl from another white man? There is not enough information provided in the notice to draw conclusions on this point.

Towards formulating the contours of Rose’s life even roughly, archival research beyond the scope of this article would be needed. However, points of comparison can usefully be made to other, more amply documented histories. But certain details in the advertisement raise frightening implications for small Rose. What are we to make of the *large* scar on her breast? What of the suggestion that she might be “concealed by some ill minded and malicious Persons?”²¹ Sadly, sexual predation of and acts of sadistic violence against small children have been common across documented human histories and racially-motivated cross-racial sexual violence and pedophilia were pervasive within the context of Transatlantic Slavery due to the systemic legal and social devaluation and hypersexualization of black people.²² In a less monstrous scenario, Rose may have been the subject of an extra-legal patrimony dispute between her legal owner, Dolebeare, and Babbidge - either of whom may have had impregnated Rose’s unnamed mother.²³ However, if Rose was a mixed-race enslaved child, why was she not described, as was common, as a Mulatto? These are but two of innumerable possibilities that might have served as motivations Rose’s theft.

The history of Phillis Wheatley,²⁴ possibly a contemporary of Rose’s and similarly situated in Boston, suggests yet another and, at first glance, a more fortuitous possibility. John Wheatley was a wealthy Boston merchant and tailor known throughout New England as a progressive - even while owning human beings. Despite her status as a slave, Phillis was taught to read and write by John and his wife Susanna’s children. Upon discovering her talent and

aptitude as a poet and thinker, the Wheatleys encouraged and promoted young Phillis, yet failed to immediately emancipate her. She went on to become the first African American author of a published book of poetry. Her work brought acclaim from the likes of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin in America, Voltaire in Europe, and many other extremely eminent people of the day.

What was the context of Phillis' unusual life? Does it inform what might have befallen Rose? The scholarship of Robert E. Desrochers, Jr., provides some grounding information. Even while describing Boston as the "hub" of the slave trade, he has written about the decline of the institution of slavery in Massachusetts as beginning in the 1740's, the time of Rose's abduction. While Desrochers stress is on "serious problems with and questions about the institution [of slavery] as a functioning labor system,"²⁵ these practicalities dovetailed in complicated ways with growing abolitionist sentiment.²⁶ There were anti-slavery activists in Boston, and Massachusetts was the first state to end the ban on interracial marriage in 1743, the year of Rose's abduction.

While all these events slightly predate the 1761 transport of Phillis Wheatley to Boston, is it possible to picture Babbidge as a New England progressive or even abolitionist, perhaps with a wife who desired to raise, educate, and liberate the young Rose as a surrogate daughter? This is perhaps too much of a stretch. The Babbidges, if such a couple did exist, would at the very least have had to exit Boston to realize such a family. In a town of something over 16,000 people, the white elite and tradesmen were likely known to one another at least to some degree. Furthermore, Dolebeare, in any case, was on the look-out.

To be wanted or not - how did it serve the motherless child?

Whatever the reasons, Rose was indisputably wanted. If the quality of desire for her possession ran along lines even somewhat like those of Phillis Wheatley's - in other words, a best-case scenario - how might it have served her in comparison to Lidge and his circumstance of not being particularly wanted at all, even if only by the metrics of his enslaver, Caleb Jones? It should be noted, however, that Jones wanted Lidge at least enough not to sell him. Lidge's situation and Jones' desire to re-capture him or not, also compels us to think about the limits and dimensions of white motivations for possessing other human beings. What value was economic, and what purely symbolic? What motivations were fueled by power and spite, and what by misguided ideas of benevolence?²⁷ In formulating an answer to these questions, it is helpful to continue to "think with" Phillis Wheatley's life in relation to Rose's. Other parts of Wheatley's story must be retold to make sense of this approach.

Wheatley's legacy as a poet has been met with ambivalence.²⁸ While her status as an eighteenth-century black enslaved writer promoted by white patrons was extremely unusual, any claims her poems may have had to black radicality by the today's standards or Wheatley's time have been disavowed by many. Critics see a comfortable coexistence with anti-black sentiment as attested to by a poem like "On being brought from Africa to America" in which she refers to

Africa as “Pagan” and to her “benighted” soul as being redeemed through Christian teachings and identification with white “refinement.”²⁹ But dismissal of Wheatley as an “Uncle Tom” has been contested through both close readings of her writing, and analysis of her actions in the world.³⁰

In any case, it is unlikely that the undervalued Lidge suffered any such similar affective consequences, given the unique circumstances of Wheatley’s life and her access to, if not embrace by the world of her enslavers. Growing up as an enslaved person with the likes of Nancy (known for a famous court case through which she advocated for her freedom)³¹ as a probable surrogate mother, and Ben, who attempted to escape at least twice (as did Nancy), it is hard to imagine Lidge ever positively identifying with white ideology or striving for white acceptance, much less its “refinement.” In fact, it is not impossible to imagine a determined, adult Lidge, capable of planning and executing an escape plan. It is not even difficult to imagine Lidge carefully timing this second documented escape so that it would fall on the exact day of the thirty-year anniversary of his first attempt.³²

Phillis’s name was chosen for her when she was a seven or eight-year-old by the Wheatleys, shortly after they had purchased her following her arrival from the West Coast of Africa, where she had been taken and thrown onto to a slave ship that was, coincidentally, called The Phillis. Phillis Wheatley was not, ultimately, supported by her throngs of eminent white admirers. She died, at the age of 31, in 1784, having spent her later years working as a scullery maid at a boarding house, work she had not done before. Her second book of poetry went unpublished, the poems from this part of her life largely lost to past and future audiences. It is worth taking this in regardless of wherever one may stand in debates regarding her relevance to anti-Racist struggles. What does her history say about even the best-case scenario for Rose’s abduction, and the possibilities for Rose’s life as an adult?

Lidge’s life after his 1816 flight is another story. Whitfield writes that Lidge’s fate was “unclear,” but that slavery had begun to slowly die out in New Brunswick and was “being replaced by various forms of servitude or wage labour.”³³ Caleb had, in any case, died five months after posting that last advertisement, and without leaving a will. Can we imagine Lidge making his way to a coastal town in Massachusetts and creating some kind of life for himself in the growing space of relative liberty there? Or gliding north, or west, in his canoe, from Nashwakshis along the St. John River, finding work in the fur trade, finding community amongst the Wolastoqi or Mi’kmaw peoples, finding freedom, or some lesser degree of unfreedom, in the cool New Brunswick woods?

Conclusion

Diasporic Africans were, again and again, profoundly, and fundamentally rendered motherless. The state of motherlessness, beginning with being wrenched from an African motherland as a people continued throughout the entire duration of their enslavement across four centuries in the Americas, as individuals were wrenched from mothering arms. Described by Harriet Jacobs with extraordinary vividness,³⁴ the fact of familial separation was anything but extraordinary within the practice of slavery.

The foundational aspect of this historical fact and its aftermath is viscerally felt, underscored and understood upon listening to a rendition of “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child,” the authorless Negro Spiritual.³⁵ While the Negro Spiritual likely arose in the earliest instances of Transatlantic Slavery, this particular song first came to the attention of white audiences in the 1870’s, when it was performed by the original assembly of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, an African-American a cappella group who toured along the Underground Railroad route in the United States, as well as in England and Europe.³⁶ On hundred and fifty years later, this song is still widely known and performed. The song’s enduring popularity speaks perhaps to the unfinished business of adequately addressing the pernicious and ongoing effects of the practice of slavery across the Americas.

This range of speculative modes of affect regarding motherlessness is wide. They encompass the feelings between Lidge and Nancy, Ben, Isaac, and Caleb Jones, and between Phillis Wheatley and her enslaver/emancipator parents. They include Dolebeare’s and perhaps Babbidge’s feelings towards Rose.

The lives of enslaved, motherless children deserve further study within sources like fugitive slave advertisements and other primary and secondary materials. More broadly, the figure of the motherless child has the benefit of serving as an all-encompassing metonym for the range of black affective experience in the Americas and beyond. Scholarship, taken together with creatively interpretive instantiation, hold a key to the complex, global web of emotions, from love to loathing, that existed and exist still between humans whose skin pigmentation range within historically reified constructs of white and black.

ENDNOTES

¹ Marcus Wood, “Rhetoric and the Runaway: The Iconography of Slave Escape in England and America,” *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780–1865* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 79.

² I am grateful to Charmaine A. Nelson for this insight on how to best produce research about enslaved populations who routinely did not have the opportunity to leave traces of their own lives.

³ Walter Johnson, a professor of History and African and African American Studies at Harvard, is quoted as saying: “If somebody smudges the ink on a [slave] ledger, you have to imagine a person writing that. And once you imagine a person writing that, you’re imagining the extraordinary power that those words on a page have over somebody’s life. That somebody’s life and their lineage is actually being conveyed by that errant pen stroke. *And then that takes you to a moment where you have to imagine those people.*” (italics mine) Jamelle Bouie, “We Still Can’t See American Slavery for What It Was,” *New York Times*, 28 January 2022 (date of last access 20 March 2022) <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/28/opinion/slavery-voyages-data-sets.html>

⁴ Harvey Amani Whitfield, *North to Bondage: Loyalist Slavery in the Maritimes* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016)

⁵ Anonymous, “Fredericton,” *Tourism Fredericton* (date of last access 20 March 2022) <https://www.tourismfredericton.ca/en/city-at-the-edge-of-nature>

⁶ Caleb Jones, “RAN AWAY,” *Royal Gazette and New Brunswick Advertiser* (St. John), 24 June 1786; Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton, Canada.

⁷ Jones, “RAN AWAY.”

⁸ See: Charmaine A. Nelson, “He ‘is supposed to have with him forged Certificates of his Freedom, and Passes’: Slavery, (Im)mobility, and the Creolized Counter-Knowledge of Resistance,” special issue: *Humanity on the Move in the Era of Enlightenment and Colonisation*, *Global Intellectual History* (2022)

⁹ Jones, “RAN AWAY.”

¹⁰ Jones, “RAN AWAY.”

¹¹ Jones, “RAN AWAY.”

¹² Jones, “Twelve Dollars Reward.”

¹³ Jones, “Twelve Dollars Reward.”

¹⁴ James Dolebeare, “Taken Away from Mr. James Dolebeare,” Boston Gazette, 2 August 1743; transcribed in Antonio T. Bly, ed., Escaping Bondage: A Documentary History of Runaway Slaves in Eighteenth-Century New England, 1700–1789 (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), p. 76.

¹⁵ Dolebeare, “Taken Away from Mr. James Dolebeare.”

¹⁶ Enslavers often bestowed the names of Greek gods (such as Hercules) upon the enslaved. In so doing, they expressed their contempt in that the name solely referenced an enslaved person’s use-value to their enslaver, thus reifying Master-Slave relations. Another contemptuous and habitual practice was bestowing the name of the Middle Passage ship that brought the enslaved to the Americas, as was the case in Phillis Wheatley’s “slave” name.

¹⁷ Dolebeare, “Taken Away from Mr. James Dolebeare.”

¹⁸ Dolebeare, “Taken Away from Mr. James Dolebeare.”

¹⁹ Descriptions of the clothing of enslaved people as soiled, torn, or generally well-used appear in fugitive slave advertisements wherever they appear, including in Canada. See: Frank Mackey, “Appendix I: Newspaper Notices,” Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal 1760–1840 (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010) and Frédéric Limoges and Chris J. Gismond, “Analysis: Bill of Sale for Isabella/Bell (1779),”

Bills of Sale for Enslaved People: Quebec, Canada, ed. Charmaine A. Nelson (Montreal: Black Canadian Studies, 2020). “However, while slave owners in tropical sites like Jamaica often gave enslaved females rations of cloth to produce clothing for the enslaved population, in Canada, it seems that slave owners gave the enslaved their second hand garments. This is evident in the routine description of slave dress in Canadian fugitive slave advertisements as ‘worn’, tattered, or discoloured.” Limoges and Gismond, “Analysis: Bill of Sale for Isabella/Bell (1779),” p. 16.

²⁰ Dolebeare, “Taken Away from Mr. James Dolebeare.”

²¹ Dolebeare, “Taken Away from Mr. James Dolebeare.”

²² See: Charmaine A. Nelson, “Racing Childhood: Representation of Black Girls in Canadian Art,” Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art (New York: Routledge, 2010)

²³ Ken Donovan, “Female Slaves as Sexual Victims in Île Royale,” Acadiensis, vol. 43, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2014): 147–156. While Donovan discusses the sexual degradation with a gendered and geographic focus, he also asserts and substantiates how this particular form of abuse was a key tenet of racialized slavery generally.

²⁴ Vincent Carretta, Phillis Wheatley: Biography of A Genius in Bondage (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011)

²⁵ Robert E. Desrochers, Jr., “Slave-for-Sale Advertisements and Slavery in Massachusetts, 1704–1781,” William and Mary Quarterly, vol. 59, no. 3 (July 2002), p. 626.

²⁶ Desrochers, Jr., “Slave-for-Sale Advertisements and Slavery in Massachusetts, 1704–1781,” p. 626.

²⁷ I am grateful to Charmaine A. Nelson for sharing these considerations with me.

²⁸ Elizabeth Winkler, “How Phillis Wheatley Was Recovered Through History,” New Yorker, 30 July 2020 (date of last access 20 March 2022) <https://www.newyorker.com/books/under-review/how-phillis-wheatley-was-recovered-through-history>

²⁹ Phillis Wheatley, “On Being Brought from Africa to America,” Poetry Foundation (date of last access 20 March 2022) <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45465/on-being-brought-from-africa-to-america>

“Twas mercy brought me from my *Pagan* land;
Taught my benighted soul to understand;
That there’s a God, that there’s a *Saviour* too;
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew;
Some view our sable race with scornful eye,
‘Their colour is a diabolic dye.’

Remember, *Christians*, *Negroes*, black as *Cain*,
May be refin’d and join th’ angelic train.”

³⁰ David Waldstreicher, “The Wheatleyan Moment,” Early American Studies, vol. 9, no. 3 (Fall 2011), pp. 522–51.

³¹ Whitfield, North to Bondage, p. 34.

³² This is a distinct possibility. The 1816 advertisement plainly states that Lidge’s second flight happened on June 15th. The 1786 advertisement which detailed five people fleeing over a course of a week, is accordingly more entangled and may contain an error. It begins by saying “From the subscriber living at the Nashwakshis, in the county of York, between the 15th and 21st days of this instant July, The following bound Negro slaves...” Yet the advertisement was posted on June 24th. So, while Jones (or the printer) cites July as the month in which the flights occurred, June was very probably the actual month. Whitfield tacitly supports this by putting June in brackets in his transcription of the advertisement. Lidge could have originally fled with Nancy that first day, 15 June 1786. He also could have remembered that day. Nancy and Ben and Isaac and Flora could have made sure he remembered that

day. Is it heartening to imagine Lidge purposely planning his second documented escape to fall on the thirty-year anniversary of the first, perhaps to bring good luck, or as a subtle commemoration to mark his enduring determination? See: Harvey Amani Whitfield, Black Slavery in the Maritimes: A History in Documents (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2018), p. 47.

³³ Whitfield, Black Slavery in the Maritime, p. 70.

³⁴ Harriet A. Jacobs and Lydia Maria Francis Child, *Incidents in The Life of a Slave Girl. Written by Herself*, ed. Lydia Maria Francis Child, electronic ed. (Chapel Hill, NC: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2003), pp. 26–27. “On one of those sale days, I saw a mother lead seven children to the auction block. She knew that some of them would be taken from her; but they took all. The children were sold to a slave-trader, and their mother was bought by a man in her own town. Before night her children were all far away. She begged the trader to tell her where he intended to take them; this he refused to do.”

³⁵ As a Negro Spiritual that is well over 150 years old, the lyrics to this song are in a constant state of change. The version performed by American singer, actress, guitarist, lyricist, and a civil and human rights activist Odetta, are particularly minimalist and poignant:

“Sometimes I feel like a motherless child
Sometimes I feel like a motherless child
Sometimes I feel like a motherless child
A long way from home, a long way from home
Sometimes I feel like I'm almost done
Sometimes I feel like I'm almost done
Sometimes I feel like I'm almost done
And a long, long way from home, a long way from home
True believer
True believer
A long, long way from home
A long, long way from home”

Anonymous, “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child,” Genius (date of last access 20 March 2022) <https://genius.com/Odetta-sometimes-i-feel-like-a-motherless-child-lyrics>. Congruent with methodology developed by American cultural theorist, poet, and scholar Fred Moten, this short essay would not be complete without listening to African American singer-songwriter Richie Havens’ rendition of “Motherless Child” which he performed live at Woodstock in 1969. The sight and sound of a centuries-old authorless song being embraced by an ecstatic, faceless crowd has special resonance when considered within the context of this essay: Anonymous, “Richie Havens - Freedom at Woodstock 1969 (HD)” YouTube (date of last access, 21 Feb 2022) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rynxqdNMry4>.

³⁶ The group and its tour were originally organized in 1871 as a fundraising effort for Fisk University, the historically black college in Nashville, Tennessee. See: Tim Brooks and Dick Spottswood, Lost Sounds: Blacks and the Birth of the Recording Industry, 1890–1919 (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

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Fig 1: Caleb Jones, “RAN AWAY,” Royal Gazette and New Brunswick Advertiser (St. John), 24 June 1786; Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton, Canada.

Figure 2: Caleb Jones, “Twelve Dollars Reward,” New Brunswick Royal Gazette (Fredericton), 9 July 1816; Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton, Canada.

FUGITIVITY, MOBILITY, AND NORTHERN CLIMATE ENSLAVEMENT IN THE BRITISH IMPERIAL WORLD: LATE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY RUNAWAYS ON THE NORTH EASTERN SEABOARD

Brody Weaver

Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Transatlantic Slave Trade saw the movement and exchange of people, raw materials, and trade goods to a degree previously unmatched in human history. In his striking history of the slave ship as a historic vessel for the advent of capitalism, Marcus Rediker highlights the centrality of sea travel to the drastic mobility of people, trade goods, and raw materials across the Atlantic:

“The ship was thus central to a profound, interrelated set of economic changes essential to the rise of capitalism: the seizure of new lands, the expropriation of millions of people and their redeployment in growing market-oriented sectors of the economy; the mining of gold and silver, the cultivating of tobacco and sugar; the concomitant rise of long-distance wealth and capital beyond anything the world had ever witnessed.”¹

Rediker’s passage underscores a nexus of colonial mercantile capitalism that relied principally on the enslavement and expropriation of millions of Africans to the imperial “New World,” - present day North, South, and Central America, and the Caribbean. In this essay, the lives of two runaway eighteenth-century enslaved men will be called upon consider how their respective inhabitation of major northern British port cities both afforded opportunities to escape and

undermined the kind of life that might have been available to these men as runaways.

This will entail an analysis of their fugitive runaway advertisements printed and distributed in the newspapers of the colonies they inhabited. On 25 March 1771, slaveowner Hugh M’Lean placed an advertisement in the Massachusetts Gazette, and the Boston Post-Boy and Advertiser offering six dollars to encourage the recapture of Peleg Abby, an enslaved black man who had absconded from the area around Boston, Massachusetts. (fig. 1) Just over two decades later, in 1794, slave owner Michael Wallace placed an advertisement in the Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly



Figure 1: Hugh M’Lean, “RAN away from Hugh M’Lean of Milton, a Negro Man named Peleg Abby...” Massachusetts Gazette, and the Boston Post-Boy and Advertiser, 25 March 1771, p. 3.

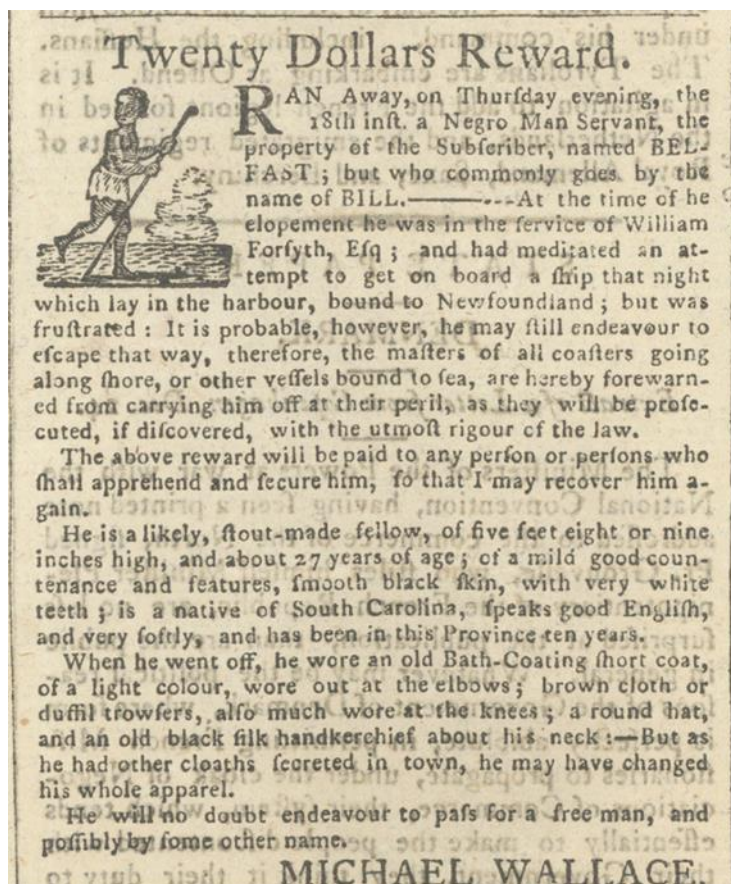


Figure 2: Michael Wallace, "Twenty Dollars Reward," Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle (Halifax), 15 March 1794, p. 1. Nova Scotia Public Archives, Halifax, Canada.

Chronicle offering twenty dollars to facilitate the re-capture of Belfast/Bill,² an enslaved black man who fled from Halifax. (fig. 2) These advertisements reveal crucial information about how black enslaved subjects navigated escape in white majority northern climates with particular conditions of enslaved labour that differed from southern plantation economies.

Situated in port cities deeply involved in the slave trade, they contain evidence of forced displacement and its technologies of oceanic transportation as a fact of life for enslaved subjects, and importantly, a potential means of mobility. To consider the lives and acts of escape of Peleg Abby and Belfast/Bill in relation to the maritime industries ubiquitous in their locales is to, as Charmaine A. Nelson argues, "look for and

acknowledge the signs of colonial trade and exchange, of militarization and settlement, of ethnic and racial differentiation, and of transoceanic connection."³ Historian David Waldstreicher describes fugitive advertisements as "the first slave narratives,"⁴ and their publication in the newspapers across the transatlantic world offer what Shane White and Graham White have referred to as, "the most detailed descriptions of enslaved African Americans available."⁵ Fugitive advertisements are a form of epistemic violence, whereby ruling class whites produced knowledge about enslaved black people, allowing Africans to enter the colonial archive as what Nelson has called, "partial and incomplete entries; the objects or 'stock' owned by another."⁶ As texts intended to aid the recapture of runaway enslaved subjects, the fragmented but historically rich archive of fugitive slave advertisements enlists detailed description of the runaway, typically around the following categories: clothing, trade and skills, linguistic ability or usage, ethnic or racial identity and figurations of how and where the fugitive may have been heading, and thus, captured.⁷ Peleg Abby and Belfast/Bill were contemporaneous subjects of enslavement in a northern Atlantic world marked by a mobile, skilled, creolized population of labourers (black, white, racially-mixed, free, indentured, and enslaved) whose mobile labour and the trade goods it produced connected seemingly separate geographic communities.⁸ This article will analyze what

is revealed through the particular conditions of northern enslaved labour and speculate about the two men's supposed escape routes, methods, and places of origin as they underscore the interconnection of the Atlantic world.

A fitting starting point for the comparison of Peleg Abby and Belfast/Bill is the following enslaved sale advertisement from the mid-eighteenth century which underscores the mercantile connection between port cities and evidences the active, normalized, and networked participation of northern cities such as Halifax and Boston in the public sale of enslaved Africans,

“JUST arriv'd from Halifax, and to be sold, Ten hearty strong Negro Men, mostly tradesmen such as Caulkers, Carpenters, Sailmakers, Ropemakers: Any Person inclining to purchase may enquire of Benjamin Hallowell in Boston.”⁹ (sic)

In addition to the two colonies interconnectivity as port cities during the rise of mercantile capitalism, Halifax and Boston are situated in geographic vicinity and colonies of New England and the Maritimes make up the near entirety of the northeastern seaboard of North America. (fig. 3) Landscape renditions of these two port colonies made during the late eighteenth century centralize colonial ships and naval architecture, picturing the sea as a lucrative market and route of transportation. (figs. 4 and 5) Peleg Abby and Belfast/Bill inhabited these northern port cities and this afforded particular conditions through which to escape.

In his 1771 fugitive advertisement, Hugh M'Lean advised local legal authorities and those hoping to reap the six-dollar reward for Peleg Abby's re-capture that he “was born in Rhode Island Colony” but had lived in the Boston area, specifically, “at St. Georges at Eastward a burning Lime.”¹⁰

This suggests that at the time of absconding, Peleg Abby was not residing with M'Lean. At the same time, the advertisement was issued from Milton, but printed and re-printed in Boston newspapers three times from the first issuing on 25 March 1771.¹¹ In northern regions like Boston and Halifax, it was common practice to rent out enslaved labour to recuperate



Rigobert Bonne. “L’Isle De Terre-Neuve, L’Acadie ou La Nouvelle Ecosse,” cartographic print, 22.8 x 33 cm, *Atlas de Toutes les Parties Connues du Globe Terrestre, Dressé pour l’Histoire Philosophique et Politique des Établissements et du Commerce des Européens dans les Deux Indes* (Genève: Pellet, 1780), np.



Figure 4: François Xaver Habermann, *Vue de Boston vers le cale du port*, (177–?), hand-coloured etching, 37.8 x 55.3 cm, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC, United States.

financial loss comparative to the southern, tropical climates where year- round mono-crop plantations accumulated excessive capital.¹² This economic model and approach to enslaved labour in northern climates is markedly different than southern plantation economies where agriculture dominated and the spatial layout of the plantation often saw enslaved subjects and enslavers living in separate quarters. While the northern practice of renting out the enslaved was of financial

benefit for the slave owning classes, it was also a liability. For the enslaved, this practice came with increased possibilities for freedom. As historian Robert E. Desrochers has suggested in his analysis of sale advertisements for enslaved people in Massachusetts during the eighteenth century, “the benefit of hiring came at the cost of a subtle erosion of masters’ control over *mobile and more autonomous slaves*, who parlayed the social capital they gained on the job into dynamic new understandings of their status, *the value of their labour*, and the possibilities for freedom.”¹³ (italics mine) This same practice is evidenced directly in Michael Wallace’s 1794 fugitive advertisement for the re-capture of Belfast/Bill, wherein he noted that “at the time of elopement, he was in



Figure 5: Joseph Fredrick Wallet, *A View of the Town & Harbour of Halifax, from Dartmouth Shore*, (1781), aquatint with etching, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC, United States.

the service of William Forsyth.”¹⁴ Later in Wallace’s advertisement, he advises that Belfast/Bill’s escape was pre-planned, stating that “he had other cloaths secreted in town,”¹⁵ and it is arguable that this was principally possible because of his mobile labour. Wallace’s admission that Belfast/Bill absconded while temporarily performing labour outside of his direct surveillance alerts us to the reality of the unstable nature of enslaved labour in northern climates where servitude and enslavement were more spatially and socially integrated.

Alongside the particular nature of enslaved labour in northern regions, Peleg Abby and Belfast/Bill’s fugitive advertisements contain speculation about their places of origin and expressions of slave owner anxiety about escape by ship. Nova Scotia, and Halifax in particular, became an integral part of the transatlantic trading system between Europe, North America, and the Caribbean and as a result had incoming and outbound ships to many Atlantic regions.¹⁶ The molasses brought to New England from the Caribbean. This rum travelled once more across the Atlantic and was used to barter for enslaved Africans to bring to British North America.¹⁷ This picture of transatlantic trade destabilizes the typical telos of transatlantic movement from Europe to the West Coast of Africa to the Caribbean, reminding us that northern locales forged their own unique trade routes to leverage commercial pay-offs.¹⁸ This anxiety of the possibility of escape by sea is evidenced clearly in Belfast/Bill’s fugitive advertisement, wherein Michael Wallace writes “the masters of all coasters going along shore, or other vessels bound to sea, are hereby warned from carrying him off at their peril.”¹⁹

The description of their places of origin likewise obliquely point toward potential sea or inland travel; in Hugh M’Lean’s advertisement he states that Peleg Abby was born in Rhode Island, another New England colony along the northeastern seaboard of America.²⁰ This suggests that while enslaved by M’Lean, Peleg Abby was forced to relocate from Rhode Island to the Boston area. At the same time, the two locations mentioned in Peleg Abby’s advertisement are rather close compared to the huge geographic swathes travelled during the Transatlantic Slave Trade by Bill/Belfast who had previously resided in South Carolina. One could walk from Milton, Massachusetts to Newport, Rhode Island, in just over a day as the two locales have under one hundred kilometres between them. Due to the physically proximate locations of these two sites, it is reasonable to surmise that Peleg Abby may have taken flight for Rhode Island where re-capture would have been more likely than if he had utilized port cities such as Boston and Newport to access transatlantic travel, and thereby, more put distance between himself and M’Lean.

While there is no direct warning to shipmasters, it was a relatively common practice that fugitives, especially men for whom seafaring was a common trade, sought relocation through employment on ships headed for various destinations.²¹ Michael Wallace’s advertisement for Belfast/Bill goes into considerable detail regarding his known intention to abscond via the sea. In the advertisement, we learn that Belfast/Bill had already devised an escape plan via ship to Newfoundland, and that “he may still endeavour to escape that way.”²² He is described as “a native of South Carolina”²³ which suggests he may be absconding towards the deep South if his goal was to be reunited with previous community. After all, Wallace lists Belfast/Bill as “about

27 years of age”²⁴ and even gleans that he has been in the province of Nova Scotia for a decade, meaning that he could have spent the majority of his life in Southern Carolina.²⁵ It is technically possible that Belfast/Bill was African born and had spent enough time in the region to learn the “good English”²⁶ that Wallace attributed to him. If this was the case, Belfast/Bill would have survived not only the Middle Passage from Africa to the American South, but what Nelson has called, a Second Middle Passage from the American South to Nova Scotia.²⁷ As Nelson notes, while the very act of running away and its strategies of concealment and “passing” were methods used by black enslaved subjects to create physical and social distance from their enslavement and chattel status, fugitive advertisements were a method for enslavers to “not only *reconstitute* this connection, but *naturalize* it.”²⁸ (italics mine) Beyond acting directly and practically as technologies of surveillance and re-capture that were ubiquitous across urban/rural and temperate/tropical slaving regions, fugitive advertisements did the work of criminalizing and devaluing the lives of the enslaved. The legal status of the enslaved as the property of their enslavers underscores enslavement as both forced labour and a process of dehumanization or “thingification,”²⁹ wherein running away was “an act of theft, albeit a paradoxical form of self-theft”³⁰ and whereby forced transatlantic relocation was a de facto aspect of life.

To close this analysis of the fugitive advertisements of Peleg Abby and Belfast/Bill, it is important to critically frame what “freedom” could be for eighteenth-century black runaway fugitives in white majority locales. As Harvey Armani Whitfield attests, “maritime slavery must be understood as part of several overlapping systems of black labour exploitation throughout the British world.”³¹ Understanding enslaved labour in temperate locales like Halifax and Boston as versatile, flexible, and fluid calls to mind Simon P. Newman’s assertion that running away did not always constitute a defiant act of liberty and entrance into free life, but was taken up in heterogeneous ways across the transatlantic world and complete freedom was not always possible as an end goal.³² Newman warns that “by focusing upon the quest for freedom as a rebellious political act, we may risk de-historicising slavery and losing site of enslavement as a remarkably malleable labour form, exercised, experienced, and escaped from.”³³ It was not always a simple telos from enslaved to free, and often involved movements from sale to servitude to fugitivity to freedom and back to enslavement again. Conditional freedom stood in for an impossible complete freedom and the mobility described in this article was itself a struggle to access, particularly for enslaved women whom were tasked with child rearing and did not readily have access to mobile forms of labour such as seafaring trades.³⁴ It is within the archive of fugitive enslaved advertisements from northern, temperate climates that we see not just the simple rise or decline of slavery but its “North Americanization.”³⁵ The notices for the escape of Peleg Abby and Belfast/Bill provide critical historical evidence regarding the articulation and application of more socially and spatially integrated forms of enslavement and servitude while containing fragmentary glimpses into the ubiquitous experiences of relocation via sea travel and the mobile northern world this enabled.

ENDNOTES

¹ Marcus Rediker, “The Evolution of the Slave Ship,” *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Penguin

Books, 2007), p. 43.

² Michael Wallace, "Twenty Dollars Reward...", *Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle* (Halifax), 15 March 1794, p. 1. Wallace's admission that Belfast rejected his given name and preferred to be called Bill is an example of resistance. Hereafter, I will refer to him as Belfast/Bill to honour his self-naming. It was a common practice for enslavers to rename people whom they had enslaved as a means of further dehumanization. For example, the enslaver William Gilliland of New York, named an enslaved, African-born man "Ireland." See: Frank Mackey, "Appendix I: Newspaper Notices," *Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760–1840* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), p. 318.

³ Charmaine A. Nelson, "Introduction," *Slavery, Geography, and Empire in Nineteenth Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica* (London, UK: Routledge/Taylor & Francis, June 2016), p. 7.

⁴ David Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the 18th c. Mid-Atlantic," *William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 56, no. 2 (April 1999), p. 247.

⁵ Shane White and Graham White, "Slave Hair and African American Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Journal of Southern History*, vol. 61, no. 1 (February 1995), p. 49.

⁶ Charmaine A. Nelson, "'Ran away from her Master...a Negroe Girl named Thursday': Examining Evidence of Punishment, Isolation, and Trauma in Nova Scotia and Quebec Fugitive Slave Advertisements," *Legal Violence and the Limits of the Law*, eds. Joshua Nichols and Amy Swiffen (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 72. For an analysis of the violent and fragmentary nature of the archives of slavery, also see Marisa J. Fuentes, "Introduction," *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

⁷ Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways," p. 248 and Mackey, "Appendix I: Newspaper Notices," pp. 308–09.

⁸ Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways," p. 245.

⁹ Anonymous, "JUST arriv'd from Halifax," *Boston Post-Boy*, 23 September 1751, transcribed in Harvey Armani Whitfield, *Black Slavery in the Maritimes: A History in Documents* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2018), p. 24.

¹⁰ Hugh M'Lean, "RAN away from Hugh M'Lean of Milton, a Negro Man named Peleg Abby," *Massachusetts Gazette, and the Boston Post-Boy and Advertiser*, 25 March 1771, p. 3.

¹¹ M'Lean, "RAN away from Hugh M'Lean" also ran in *Boston Evening Post* on 25 March 1771, 1 April 1771 and 8 April 1771; Antonio T. Bly, ed., *Escaping Bondage: A Documentary History of Runaway Slaves in Eighteenth-century New England, 1700–1789* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), p. 155.

¹² Charmaine A. Nelson, "The Canadian Fugitive Slave Archive and the Concept of Refuge," *English Studies in Canada, Something Personal: Archives and Methods for Critical Refugee Studies in Canada*, guest eds. Vinh Nguyen and Thy Phu, vol. 45, no. 3 (September 2019), p. 105.

¹³ Desrochers, "Slave-for-Sale Advertisements and Slavery in Massachusetts," p. 658.

¹⁴ Wallace, "Twenty Dollar Reward," p. 1.

¹⁵ Wallace, "Twenty Dollar Reward," p. 1.

¹⁶ Whitfield, *Black Slavery in the Maritimes*, p. 3.

¹⁷ Lorenzo Johnston Greene, *The Negro in Colonial New England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), pp. 25–26.

¹⁸ See: Charmaine A. Nelson, *Slavery, Geography, and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica* (London, UK: Routledge/Taylor & Francis, 2016)

¹⁹ Wallace, "Twenty Dollar Reward," p. 1.

²⁰ M'Lean, "RAN away from Hugh M'Lean," p. 3.

²¹ Charles R. Fory "Ports of Slavery, Ports of Freedom: How Slaves Used Northern Seaports' Maritime Industry to Escape and Create Trans-Atlantic Identities, 1713–1783," (New Brunswick, NJ: PhD History, Rutgers University, 2008), pp. 286–343.

²² Wallace, "Twenty Dollar Reward," p. 1.

²³ Wallace, "Twenty Dollar Reward," p. 1. For a theorization of this second Middle Passage, see Nelson, "Introduction," p. 7.

²⁴ Wallace, "Twenty Dollar Reward," p. 1. For a theorization of this second Middle Passage, see Nelson, "Introduction," p. 7.

²⁵ Nelson, *Slavery, Geography, and Empire*, pp. 7, 85, 127. Wallace, "Twenty Dollar Reward," p. 1.

²⁶ Wallace, "Twenty Dollar Reward," p. 1. For a theorization of this second Middle Passage, see Nelson, "Introduction," p. 7.

²⁷ Nelson, "Introduction," p. 7.

²⁸ Nelson, "'Ran away from her Master,'" p. 71.

²⁹ Aimé Césaire, Discourse on Colonialism (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), p. 42.

³⁰ Marcus Wood, "Rhetoric and the Runaway: The Iconography of Slave Escape in England and America," Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780–1865 (Manchester, UK: University Press, 2000), p. 79.

³¹ Whitfield, Black Slavery in the Maritimes, p. 3.

³² Simon P. Newman, "Rethinking runaways in the British Atlantic World: Britain, the Caribbean, West Africa, and North America," Slavery and Abolition, vol. 38, no. 1 (2017), pp. 50–55, 61–64.

³³ Simon P. Newman, "Rethinking runaways in the British Atlantic World," p. 50.

³⁴ Nelson, "The Canadian Fugitive Slave Archive," p. 96.

³⁵ Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways," p. 271.

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