



'Indubitable signs': reading silence as *text* in New England runaway slave advertisements

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ABSTRACT

Whether they demonstrated slaves' awareness of the politics of their day or recorded aspects of their African past or documented their efforts to preserve family ties, runaway slave advertisements are an invaluable staple of African American Studies. For almost a century, they have revealed complex stories, rich vignettes that exposed varied aspects of black life before emancipation. But perhaps the most nuanced parts of runaway slave advertisements are the multifaceted nature of slave resistance and agency that notices communicated without words. Between the lines of their composition, masters relied on the public's imagination and common sense. Without uttering a single word, slaves made their intentions known; they inadvertently *co-authored* runaway advertisements. Indeed, absent in current scholarship concerning slavery and resistance is the story of how enslaved African Americans used silence to achieved voice, agency, and *text*.

Advertisements for fugitive slaves are complex living pictures or *tableau vivants* that conceal as much as they reveal. Unlike probate inventories that documented evidence of slave families, church records that registered vital statistics or diary entries that occasionally revealed instances of slaves' conduct, newspaper notices for runaway slaves captured powerful tales of African Americans as active actors in history. For almost 100 years, scholars have turned to runaway advertisements to uncover various aspects of African American life in early America. In their studies of slavery, for example, Lorenzo Greene, Gerald W. Mullin, Lathan A. Windley, and most recently Wendy Warren, Christy Clark-Pujara, and Jared Hardesty used runaway slave notices to highlight the fact that African Americans were far from the docile servants once described by U. B. Philips in his *American Negro Slavery*. Benjamin Quarles and Sylvia Frey discovered in fugitive accounts a record that proved slaves' awareness of the politics of their day. During the American Revolution, as Woody Holton observed, slaves not only answered freedom's call, but also forced a hesitant Virginia colony into declaring independence. In Luther P. Jackson and W. Jeffrey Bolster's work, advertisements revealed the existence of a rich maritime culture

in which slaves navigated the assorted waterways of the early American landscape. In Shane White and Graham White, Michael A. Gomez, and Michael T. Coolen's studies of slavery, runaway advertisements documented evidence of how slaves' memories of their African homelands, memories that would shape the development of African American culture in the New World. For Herbert G. Gutman, Philip D. Morgan, and Billy G. Smith, notices registered a record of an enduring black family. In my study, they represented a type of signature, evidence of reading and writing even though most slaves were denied access to literacy. In Marisa J. Fuentes and Erica Armstrong Dunbar's studies, advertisements were used to not only uncover Herstory, but also to challenge traditional notions regarding archival sources. Most recently, Sharon Block used runaway advertisements to reveal a complex history in which ideologies regarding race, class, and health merged.¹

Missing, however, in studies about runaways, perhaps except for the work of David Waldstreicher, is an analysis of them as 'the first slave narratives.' Well before Olaudah Equiano, Frederick Douglass, and Harriet Jacobs published their life stories, the short vignettes concealed in advertisements revealed stories of courageous individuals who dreamt of freedom and ran away to realize those very dreams. Long before the WPA slave narratives were recorded in the 1930s, runaway notices filled newspapers, revealing rich accounts in which enslaved African Americans emerged as the protagonists of their own life stories. Accordingly, this essay builds on Waldstreicher's provocative claim that advertisements were in fact the first narratives as it delves into notices as a type of *tableau vivant*, living pictures filled with dramaturgy. For in addition to providing a general description of runaways, many fugitive advertisements included insightful details about slaves that reflected the intimacy and complexity of most master-slave relationships. Indeed, except for Waldstreicher, few scholars have yet to call our attention to the dramaturgical discourses involved in the composition of notices. By running away, slaves compelled their masters to respond. In the creation of advertisements, both master and slave shared, albeit unintentionally, the laurel of authorship. Reassurances included in several notices certainly suggest this as masters, on occasion, asked their slaves to return on their own. Examining silence as a type of text, this essay explores the ways in which New England slaves, slaves like John Bulkley's Billah, *co-authored*, indirectly through their actions, the advertisements their masters were forced to place in newspapers.²

'A Negro Girl named Billah'

Billah's story began on 7 June 1743 when the following runaway slave advertisement appeared in the *Boston Gazette*:

Ran-away from Capt. John Bulkley of Boston on the 25th of last Month, a Negro Girl named Billah, about 18 Years of Age, short of Stature, and well dress'd. Whoever takes

her up and brings her to her said Master, shall be satisfied to Content. And all Persons are hereby caution'd against entertaining, concealing or carrying off said Servant on Penalty of the Law.³

The story the notice reveals is multi-layered. First and foremost, Billah's story is one of slave resistance. If but for only a brief period of time, she owned herself. She pretended to be free. She denounced New England bondage with her feet. Like most runaways, Billah decided to leave when the weather got better. Determined to be her own master, she fled during the summer months probably to escape the additional obstacle of the colder climes that characterized many New England winters. (Table 1) In addition to stealing herself, the 18-year-old fugitive carried with her only the clothes she wore that day. She left, Bulkley explained, 'well dress'd.' If not a subtle invocation of paternalism, the captain's observation about his woman's clothing might have represented a moment of magnanimity. Unlike some of his contemporaries, he made sure his bondservant had adequate clothing. Despite this, either in the dead of night or in the broad daylight, the young fugitive took matters into her own hands. Amid Boston's assortment of buildings that included the King's Chapel, a prison, the Old Meeting House, the short-statured woman stole away. In her bid to be free, she might have even passed by Samuel Kneeland and Timothy Green's printing shop that would record her flight to freedom.⁴

Almost two weeks would pass before Bulkley went to the print shop on Queen Street, near his house. Prior to that visit, he probably opted to wait. Like most subscribers (See Appendix 1) who placed runaway advertisements in the newspaper, the captain might have elected to give the fugitive time to return on her own volition. Or, before incurring the expense of placing a notice in the paper,

Table 1. Seasons/months of departure for New England fugitives (measured in percentages).

SPRING		
March 5%	April 6%	May 8%
SUMMER		
June 14%	July 13%	August 15%
FALL		
September 10%	October 12%	November 6%
WINTER		
December 4%	January 4%	February 3%

Sources: Lathan A. Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1983. 4 vols; Billy G. Smith and Richard Wojtowicz, *Blacks Who Stole Themselves: Advertisement for Runaways in the Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728–1790*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989; Graham Russell 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, 1994; Antonio T. Bly, *Escaping Bondage: A Documentary History of Runaway Slaves in Eighteenth-Century New England, 1700–1789*. Maryland: Lexington Books, 2012; Readex: America's Historical Newspapers Database; and, Eighteenth-Century American Newspapers in the Library of Congress in Microfilm.

he might have gotten the word out about his runaway through other avenues. If not by word of mouth, he might have *posted* a manuscript copy of the advertisement in certain public spaces. To be sure, as interested parties in Boston labored toward the bondswoman's apprehension and likewise their own monetary gain, news of Billah's bold endeavor to own herself could probably be heard in communal places like taverns, ordinaries, and court yards, if not in the common areas most streets provided.⁵

Bulkley's appeal to the public might have worked. Not long after the advertisement had been printed in the newspaper, deputized citizens may have discovered the fugitive, took her into custody, and collected their just reward. In the absence of additional documentation, however, it is equally plausible that the enslaved woman returned on her own volition. Left with only a few options in the man hunt generated by the printed notice, Billah might have elected to return to her master's place. There, she pleaded for leniency. Either way, after some time, the fugitive woman had been back in Bulkley's possession. The slave owner had been made whole again. Judging from subsequent advertisements that would appear later in the *Boston Gazette*, Billah decided, at least for a time, to stay put.

The détente the two observed came to an end on 13 October 1747. Almost four years had passed before Billah's name reemerged in the newspaper. Despite the coming of winter, she elected to run away again. Besides indicating that the fugitive woman had either been captured or that she decided to return to her master on her own, the runaway advertisement printed in the newspaper on that occasion included additional facts. Billah, for example, survived smallpox. She also learned to speak the King's English tolerably well. As before, the fugitive left well dressed. 'When she went away,' Bulkley explained in more precise terms, she had on 'a purple and white Callicoe Gown, a red and white Callicoe Peticoat, [and] Wooden Heel'd Shoes.' The notice also outlined in more precise terms the reward for the fugitive. Besides 'all necessary charges,' Bulkley promised: 'three Pounds Old Tenor.' In the parlance of the day, the notice concluded much like the one before; 'All Persons are hereby cautioned against concealing or carrying off said Negro on Penalty of Law.'⁶

Despite the many uncertainties that lay before her, Billah persisted in her endeavor to be her own master. Shortly after being captured a second time, she ran away a third. Almost 10 months appears to have passed. During the last month of the summer of 1748, the fugitive woman left Bulkley's place again. In addition to reporting the customary details regarding his runaway, the Boston slave owner told his neighbors that his servant carried with her a new assortment of clothing. She wore, he reported, a 'blue Jacket and a strip'd homespun Petticoat.' Reflecting perhaps the fact that Billah was a few years older, Bulkley decreased the amount of the reward. In addition to 'all necessary charges,' he offered the public modest compensation: 40 shillings, old Tenor. Not surprisingly, two weeks passed. No news of Billah.⁷

Apparently, the captain's neighbors did not take the bait. By mid-October, rather than wait any longer, Bulkley returned to Kneeland and Green's print shop. For two additional shillings, he changed the amount of the reward promised for the return of his bondservant: 'Four Pounds, old tenor,' and, of course, 'all necessary Charges.' Several more days passed; still no news of Billah. For an additional two more shillings, Kneeland and Green reprinted the notice in their *Boston Gazette*.⁸

Presumably, Billah's third flight might have proven the charm. Unwittingly, the town's landscape might have *aided* the fugitive in her flight. Less than a mile from her master's place on Queen Street, she may have made her way to the Long Wharf that extended into Boston Harbor (*Image 1*). There, she could have stowed away aboard a ship anchored in the port and waited for the vessel to set sail. She could have also made her way further northward, perhaps toward one of the many shipyards in the town, where she passed for



Image 1. Billah's Boston. This map illustrates the environment the fugitive woman navigated when she dared to steal herself. Her master resided in a house on Queen Street (highlighted section), the same street where Kneeland and Green's print shop had been located. On the west side of Queen there had been a prison and the church square. Southeast from her master's place had been the Long Wharf, a half of a mile long pier that extended into Boston Harbor. Depending on the breeze, the smell of salt water might have filled the air. "The Town of Boston in New England by Capt. John Bonner, 1722. Aetatis Suae 60. Facsimile map by George Smith after map by John Bonner, printed 1835. Collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society."

free. Considering the nature of most warnings included in runaway advertisements, it is possible that the woman found safe haven among some Boston do-gooders or sympathetic residents who considered slavery contrary to their religious beliefs. If not for religious convictions, like Samuel Sewall who wrote the antislavery pamphlet, *The Selling of Joseph* in 1700, some could have helped the fugitive because they thought slavery intellectually distasteful.

Then again, morality may have had very little to do with the matter. To a certain kind of shady, would-be employer, Billah's flight offered them the opportunity of securing cheap labor at a rock-bottom price. It is also possible that the defiant woman had been taken up and sold to a slave owner who resided on a plantation in one of the southern colonies, if not somewhere in the British West Indies. It is equally possible that the fugitive had been taken up again and returned to her master who might have decided to sell her for her insolence. Ultimately, what became of the brave runaway slave woman is a mystery.⁹

Besides the obvious, the story of Billah's flights tells us another story, one *almost* hidden in plain sight. In that story, the enslaved woman *wrote* herself into history. That accomplishment represents no small feat considering her background. Judging from her age, her *initial* inability to speak the King's English, and the fact that her master did not indicate that she had been born in the New World, the runaway slave might have been a native of Africa. Her unusual name certainly underscores the possibility of an African past. Of the hundreds of fugitives who absconded in New England during the eighteenth century, almost 20 per cent had African names. (Table 2) Not to be confused with the name 'Bilhah,' who had been Rachel's maidservant, Jacobs's concubine, and Rueben's mistress in the Old Testament, the name Billah reflected not only the presence of Islam in West Africa, but also African traditions in which children were named for specific characteristics. A word of Arabic origin, the name signified a benediction. Literally, it meant someone with God. By contrast, 'Bilhah' in Hebrew meant 'unworried' or 'bashful.'¹⁰

Table 2. Naming characteristics of New England runaways (measured in percentages).

Periods	Naming categories					
	African	Biblical	Classical	Work or Geographical	Anglo or Western	n/a
1730s	27%	20%	15%	5%	21%	12%
1740s	20%	15%	29%	13%	16%	7%
1750s	18%	15%	29%	10%	20%	8%
1760s	13%	22%	23%	13%	20%	9%
1770s	9%	13%	26%	14%	28%	10%

Sources: Lathan A. Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1983. 4 vols.; Billy G. Smith and Richard Wojtowicz, *Blacks Who Stole Themselves: Advertisement for Runaways in the Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728–1790*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989; Graham Russell 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, 1994; Antonio T. Bly, *Escaping Bondage: A Documentary History of Runaway Slaves in Eighteenth-Century New England, 1700–1789*. Maryland: Lexington Books, 2012; Readex: America's Historical Newspapers Database; and, Eighteenth-Century American Newspapers in the Library of Congress in Microfilm.

Even though the rest of Billah's background is hard to discern fully in the absence of additional documentation, another thing seemed apparent. She refused to obey. Like many other runaways, Billah repeatedly absconded. Over the course of five years, she left again and again. On at least three other separate occasions, she absconded; she demanded her freedom. Interestingly, each time, her master preserved the *correct* spelling of her name in print. Perhaps, as her name implies, God (Allah) might have truly been with her.¹¹

Silence as text

Like many runaway notices, the advertisements printed in the *Gazette* for Billah's capture are full of silences. Silence, however, is not a reference to the absence of speech, writing, or print. Rather, it represents a different type of speech. It signifies a different kind of writing. For silence represents the palimpsest that frames historical action. Like R.G. Collingwood's idea about the unseen, constant, unchanging forces that determine nature, or more recently Rhys Isaac's notion about the terrifying power of history and dramaturgical inquiry, silence is the social context that defined and determined human interaction. It is not only evidence referenced inferentially from the remnants left in writing, but also the necessary voids that establishes the form, context, and meaning of texts. For example, though not plainly stated in Bulkley's notices, the pulsating thump of Billah's heart is nevertheless present. It is almost palatable because anxiety and fear are the universal, *natural* consequences of challenging authority. The actual dates of Billah's departure and likewise the dates her name appeared in the paper also underscore the precariousness of her situation even though those particular scenes, scenes in which she artfully negotiated the Boston landscape, are not typeset in print. In other words, like other fugitives, she might have struggled to secure the bare essentials of life (i.e. food and shelter) in a climate in which fugitives were hunted. In the absence of words, silences are extrapolations that lay between black and white, between what James C. Scott defines as the *public* and *hidden transcripts* that fortifies social interactions between those who have power and those who do not. They are interpretations deeply rooted in common sense, sound reasoning, and inductive logic. 'Silences,' Michel-Rolph Trouillot explains,

are inherent in history because any single event enters history with some of its constituting parts missing. Something is always left out while something else is recorded ... As sources fill the historical landscape with their facts, they reduce the room available to other facts.

Near inscriptions in gray, these other *facts*, these silences represent information implicitly expressed. Consequently, like all words on paper, runaway advertisements consist not only of multiple authors, but also of at least two principle texts;

one that is in plain sight, the other concealed, the two a seamlessly intertwined *tableau vivant*.¹²

Let us consider further and critically Bulkley's advertisements for Billah. On the surface, they do not appear to reveal much. Beyond his general descriptions, the Boston resident seemed to have offered little to the public with regards to additional information that would assist would-be slave catchers in their efforts to secure Billah. Between the words printed in the paper, however, the slave owner did in fact provide the public useful intelligence, intelligence he clearly deemed as important as the actual text his advertisement expressed, intelligence that the public at large would have understood and would not have taken for granted. The 'Negro Girl,' he explained, though subtly, rejected the terms of her captivity. By refusing to answer to another name, one forced on her, Billah made a strong impression on her master, one he felt compelled to document. Indeed, the tension or dramaturgical energy underscored by the fugitive's name is almost explicit when one takes into account the fact that only a few enslaved African Americans were *allowed* to keep their old names, names that were more or less memories of their African past. Resonating between the lines of the *tableau vivant* that are collectively the notices Bulkley had placed in the newspaper is the frustration the slave owner felt in his inability to make his brash bondservant yield. Rather than persist in the matter of her name, the captain relented as he probably judged her labor more important than her name. In this manner, Billah *co-authored* the advertisements printed in the newspaper.¹³

In my recent study, her name documents the Afro-Atlantic notion of *pretty* or, more simply put, a real and symbolic moment of slave resistance. Not to be confused with pretty as an expression of beauty, my notion of *pretty* in the Afro-Atlantic world reflected an aesthetic in which downtrodden slaves expressed a sense of somebody-ness as they confronted daily the tragic politics of racial slavery. While some expressed *pretty* by walking in a particular manner, other runaways demonstrated it by pretending to own themselves or pretending to possess certain skills. In Billah's case, her name documented her somebody-ness. Instead of accepting a western name, she fought back. To emphasize the matter, she might have pronounced it in a particular way, a way that reflected her African past or even referenced herself in the third person. Despite the possible threat of violence, violence that made other slaves submit, Billah denied her master the prerogative of naming, a prerogative that is particularly acute when we consider the ways in which masters used names to acclimate new Africans forced into slavery.¹⁴

The Power of a Name

Naming played a significant role in New England slavery. Like slaves in other parts of British North America, Billah's deracination (albeit her efforts proved

more successful than most) probably began with the complex ritual of naming. Naming, Orlando Patterson explains, is ‘a symbolic act’ that strips ‘a person of his former identity.’ While the significance of the new name varied from one slave culture to the next, they all had one thing in common. ‘The slave’s former name died with his former self.’ As in the case of Alex Haley’s supposedly defiant ancestor, Kunta Kinte, who had been beaten and made to answer to the slave name Toby, naming signaled the transformation of a human being into a thing. What is more, when a master died, some slaves might have suffered the indignity of naming twice. That had certainly been true of a New England enslaved African American woman who left one ‘Capt Silvier’ in 1768. In addition to reporting the fugitive’s age, a description of her clothing, and how she had styled her hair, the Cold Lane resident noted that ‘her Name was formerly Redisher.’¹⁵

Eighteenth-century New Englanders proved no different than their counterparts in British North America in this regard. There, most preferred western, geographic, or classical names for their bondservants. For much of the colonial period, over two-thirds of the names recorded in notices demonstrated the natal alienation most slaves endured. Amid notices for missing horses and lots of land for let were numerous advertisements for runaways *named* Cesar or Cato. If not names like Hercules, Cicero, or Chloe, New England masters forced their bondservants to take geographic or place names like London, Boston, or Newport. In this setting, unusual were names like Billah’s. During the decade in which she absconded, 20 per cent of those who left refused to answer to western or biblical names. Like Billah, they managed to keep their original names. For example, a common name among several fugitives, Cuff is an African day that meant that those individuals name were born on Friday.¹⁶ (Table 2)

Billah’s persistence, however, might have come at a price. To be sure, the slave’s African name could have proven her undoing. Like a proverbial Achilles heel, when called by her original name, she probably answered. When taken up and interrogated as to whom she belonged, Billah probably helped her would-be captors inadvertently. If called Bilhah, whose spelling, pronunciation, and meaning differed from Billah, she might have refused to answer. She might have held fast to her sense of somebody-ness by correcting them in their *elocution*. Who better than her owner knew fully the true nature of that somebody-ness. Indeed, the dramaturgical intensity of those moments between the fugitive woman and her master are captured in the advertisements Bulkley had printed in the newspaper. Billah, the captain warned his New England neighbors, might prove *difficult* in apprehending.

In this setting, Bulkley’s advertisement might have in fact communicated a great deal more. In the silence that surrounded the letters that made up the slave woman’s name, a rich *tableau vivant* emerges. Without additional words in print, he informed the public about his bondservant’s character. Billah, he explained in implicit but nonetheless real terms, took pride in herself. Because

she had refused to let go of her African past, she might prove particularly dogged in her determination to be free. In much the same way she would not yield in terms of what she would be called, Billah might have been equally stubborn in maintaining ownership of herself. Put another way, the fugitive woman would fight: she would not go gently into that good night.¹⁷ (See [Appendix 2](#) for a detailed account of an incident in which a fugitive refused to comply with would be patrols.)

This should come as no surprise. In other parts of British North America, other fugitives also held fast to their Moslem names. In South Carolina, Edmond Ellis' 'Ishmael' refused to answer to another. Ishmael, in Moslem traditions, signified an important figure in Koran. The first-born son of Abraham and his wife's Egyptian servant, Hagar, Ishmael would father 12 tribes that would establish the genealogical foundation of Islam and its relationship with the Abrahamic religions of Judaism and Christianity. For Ellis's recently imported slave, the name reflected a complex history in which Africans had as early as the 7th century *adopted* Islam. The same is likely true of John Frank's slave. Not long after the 30-year-old 'Negro Man' stole himself away, the Pennsylvania resident informed the public at large that his bondservant, 'ALLI,' not only left his place between 'Arch and Race Streets,' but also carried with him an assortment of clothing. John Graham's 'NEGRO FELLOW, 'Mahomet,' also refused to answer to another name. By his master's account, the Georgia fugitive left his master's plantation and likely found refuge among a group of Native Americans who resided nearby. Henry Middleton's 'Kouli-Kan' may have been equally intransigent. In a similar manner, Josiah Smith, Jr.'s 'MOOSA,' an English corruption of Musa who in the Koran led the Hebrews out of captivity in Ancient Egypt, also refused to yield. Rather, as the Charleston, South Carolina slave-owner made plain of his modern-day Moses, the fugitive who had been 'much whipped about the Belly,' proved a proud and unruly slave. A native of the Fullah country in Africa, he left Smith's Austin Plantation in the company of several others. Among the party of strangers in a strange land: Paris, 'a strong made Fellow' who had country marks about his face, Sido, a slave who once worked in 'Sugah Country,' Tarresman, a country-born slave, and Chloe, a 14-year-old, country-born girl. While it is unclear whether Moosa actually led the group to freedom, one thing is undeniable. Despite the presence of additional words in print to clarify the matter, the West African Moslem demonstrated resistance by holding on to his original name, much like Bulkeley's Billah.¹⁸

New England runaways who had surnames tell a similar story. Without expressing it explicitly in print, enslaved African Americans resisted. The dramaturgical power of those moments is captured in fugitive advertisements. For in those unheralded accounts, slaves like Thomas Morro, George Gregory, and others emerged as the protagonist, the confidence men (and women) of their own heroic tales. When he had been apprehended, for example, Benjamin

Green's 'sprightly' man, informed his jailer that he had mistakenly taken into custody a free man who 'calls himself' by two names: Caesar Sambo. Unlike runaway indentured servants or apprentices, most black people rarely enjoyed the privilege of a surname before emancipation. Of the hundreds of New England runaways whose names were reported in the newspapers between 1730 and 1779, roughly seven per cent could boast of having two names.¹⁹

Runaway who had surnames in other parts of British North America related a similar drama hidden in plain sight. In New York, approximately 10 per cent of those who absconded were identified as having two names. Figures recorded for the colonies further south, however, demonstrate lower instances in which fugitives were recognized as full persons – that is in name alone. In Virginia, three per cent of those who ran away in the tobacco region were identified with two names. In South Carolina, runaways who had two names represented less than one full per cent. All in all, like Bulkley's Billah, these fugitives also *co-authored* the advertisements placed in the newspapers for their return by forcing their owners to recognize them by terms of their own design.²⁰ (Table 3)

New England fugitives with creolized names represent yet another silence. On 18 November 1754, for example, Philip Curtis's 'Negro Man Servant' ran away. When he left, he took only the clothes he wore. It had been an assorted allotment: 'a grey Woollen Coat, with Brass Buttons, a strip'd black and white Jacket, and white West coat, Linnen Breeches and Trousers, blue Stockings and old Shoes.' According to the advertisement the resident of Stoughton had printed in the *Boston Gazette*, the fugitive was a man of middle stature and portly. His left arm had been shorter than his right; his complexion, the color of cooper. His teeth were irregular.²¹ Other clues, however, specifically the 24-year-old man's name, Scipio Congo, suggest that he might have been a native of Africa. Like Billah, Scipio Congo's names underscore a silence that might reflect his African past. Much in the same way that his irregular teeth might

Table 3. Surname characteristics of runaways in British North America (measured in percentages).

Periods	North American Colonies Grouping			
	Massachusetts (New England)	New York (Mid-Atlantic)	Virginia (Chesapeake)	South Carolina (Low Country)
1730s	3%	0%	2%	1%
1740s	5%	14%	1%	0.5%
1750s	8%	12%	4%	.8%
1760s	10%	12%	6%	.5%
1770s	9%	13%	3%	.8%

Sources: Lathan A. Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1983. 4vols; Billy G. Smith and Richard Wojtowicz, *Blacks Who Stole Themselves: Advertisement for Runaways in the Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728–1790*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989; Graham Russell 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, 1994; Antonio T. Bly, *Escaping Bondage: A Documentary History of Runaway Slaves in Eighteenth-Century New England, 1700–1789*. Maryland: Lexington Books, 2012; Readex: America's Historical Newspapers Database; and, Eighteenth-Century American Newspapers in the Library of Congress in Microfilm.

also say something of his background, Scipio's names underscore the complex world of a slave. On the one hand, his names might denote social death that is his status as *other* in eighteenth-century New England.²² As his master made plain, the bondservant might have been 'named' Scipio. A derogatory appellation, the name might have been given to him to mock the fact that the African man had been stripped of his previous identity. Unlike Scipio Africanus whose agnomen reflected ancient Rome's glory and the defeat of the Carthaginian Empire of northern Africa in the third century BC, the slave's names represented the opposite. Rather than signifying victory, the name 'Scipio Congo' signified subjugation.²³ On the other hand, however, the slave's names might conceal another, equally plausible account. In that story, Scipio Congo adopted the name for himself, as he might have been a son of Kongo. As recent studies of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade demonstrate, Africans taken from West Central Africa (a region that spans the modern-day states of Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of the Congo, and Gabon) did in fact represent a significant portion of those who were brought to Americas. Between 1519 and 1867, 45 per cent of all Africans brought to the New World came from West Central Africa. Of those who were transported to British North America, West Central Africans accounted for one-quarter.²⁴ (Table 4) Read in this context, Scipio Congo, like other West Central Africans or Bantu peoples, might have fancied his irregular teeth that might have been sharpened.²⁵

Pomp Fleet's names also represented a silence in the advertisement he made his master recognize when he turned to the newspaper for help in securing his servant. Like Scipio Congo, his names also concealed a dramaturgical moment. Indeed, as tensions were stirring between the residents of Massachusetts and Great Britain, the 'sturdy well set Negro Fellow' decided that the time had come to protest with his feet. When he left, the fugitive, who fancied dressing his 'Wool' in the 'Maccaroni' style, carried with him several articles of clothing. Not long after Pomp's flight, slave-catchers took up the runaway, turned him over to the local authorities, and received payment for their efforts. The 27-year-old runaway, however, had other plans. Two days after being imprisoned,

Table 4. Africans brought to America: Central African captives in British North America.

Periods	Northern Colonies	Chesapeake	Carolinas/and Georgia	Total
1701–1710	0	231	0	0
1711–1720	0	220	0	220
1721–1730	0	3,505	306	3811
1731–1740	3,401	9,597	18,362	31,360
1741–1750	878	1,343	287	2,508
1751–1760	0	4,042	3,183	7,225
1761–1770	0	2,307	5,754	8,061
1771–1780	0	681	2,638	3,319
1781–1790	0	0	2,445	2,644

Source: Jelmer Vos, 'Kongo, North America and the Slave Trade,' In *Kongo Across the Waters*, eds., Susan Cooksey, Robin Poynor, and Hein Vanhee (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013), 41.

he broke out of jail. By his master's estimation, Pomp did not go far. For the bondservant, as he told it, had been seen lurking about with an 'Indian Wench' he considered 'his Wife.' Besides his stylized hair, his two names documented his pride or my Afro-Atlantic notion of *pretty* or somebody-ness.²⁶

Other documents reveal a fuller account about the fugitive's story. Pomp had been the property of Thomas Fleet, Jr. who operated a print shop located on Cornhill Lane in Massachusetts. Before that, he had been the property of Fleet's father: Thomas Fleet, Sr. According to Isaiah Thomas's history of printing in America, the senior Fleet owned several slaves, one of whom he trained in the business of printing. 'An ingenious man,' Peter Fleet, cut and fashioned 'on wooden blocks, all the pictures which decorated the ballads and small books of his master.' About town, the slave had also been known by another name: 'Black Peter.' Before his master's death in 1758, Peter fathered two sons whom he taught the art of printing. Like their father, Pomp and Cesar were considered a valuable part of the Fleet family's estate.²⁷

Read in this setting, Pomp's names signify at once several aspects about the slave's life. First, they represent a silence, one that would reemerge in the advertisement printed for his apprehension, one that expresses pride. Secondly, the surname underscores direct familial ties between Peter and his sons as well as fictive bonds between the Fleet family and their slaves. Without a doubt, the name highlights the slave's intrinsic value to both the father and the son. Lastly, within the small slave community in New England, the surname probably reflected another form of prestige in which Pomp set himself apart from other slaves. Between 1730 and 1779, approximately seven per cent of absconding slaves in New England were described as artisans (Table 5).

Additional records reveal more details about the slave named Pomp Fleet. Extant copies of Thomas Fleet, Jr.'s 'The Prodigal Daughter' might include an illustrated title page initialed by the fugitive. (Image 2) Like his father, Pomp not only learned the business of typesetting letters, but also the art of illustrating books. Like his stylized 'Wool,' Pomp's *signature* signified pride. His *signature*

Table 5. Fugitive work characteristics of New England runaways (measured in percentages).

Periods	N/A	Occupations		
		Skilled	Domestic	Semi Skilled
1730–1739	87%	7%	6%	0%
1740–1749	83%	8%	5%	4%
1750–1759	81%	8%	9%	2%
1760–1769	84%	6%	9%	2%
1770–1779	86%	4%	9%	2%

Sources: Lathan A. Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1983. Avols; Billy G. Smith and Richard Wojtowicz, *Blacks Who Stole Themselves: Advertisement for Runaways in the Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728–1790*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989; Graham Russell 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, 1994; Antonio T. Bly, *Escaping Bondage: A Documentary History of Runaway Slaves in Eighteenth-Century New England, 1700–1789*. Maryland: Lexington Books, 2012; Readex: America's Historical Newspapers Database; and, Eighteenth-Century American Newspapers in the Library of Congress in Microfilm.

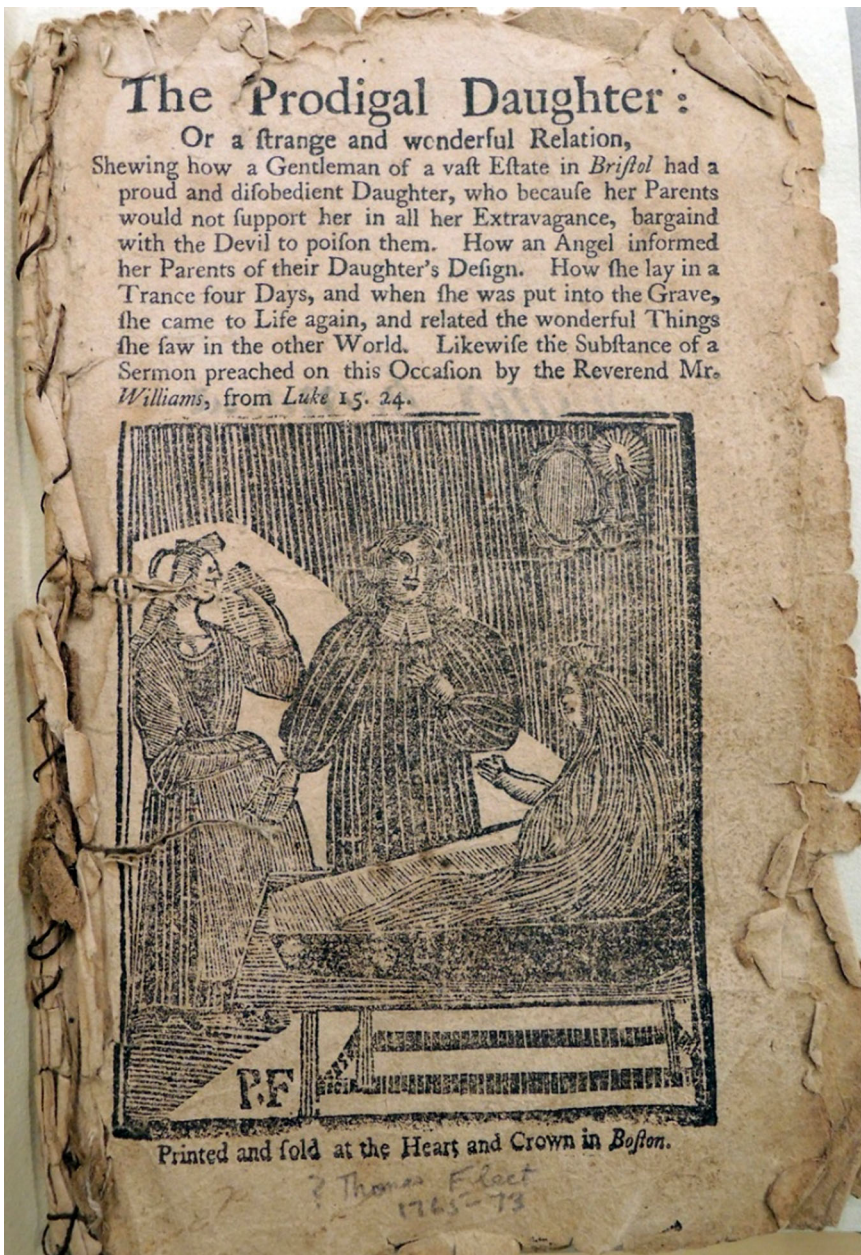


Image 2. 'The Prodigal Daughter.' Title Page. 1769. Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Courtesy of Princeton University Library.

also appeared in other documents. No long after the evacuation of Boston during the American Revolution, Pomp finally succeeded in emancipating himself by siding with the British. His name appeared later in a list of Black Loyalists leaving New York at the end of the War. Like other African Americans who sided with the crown, Pomp moved to Nova Scotia and started life anew. Eventually, Pomp, his wife (possibly Sucky Coleman), and their son Sam Fleet made

their way to the new British colony in Sierra Leone. In 1791, their names appeared in a list of African Americans who migrated from Birch town to the West African country.²⁸

Besides Pomp's story, notices in which masters unintentionally recorded slaves' preferences with regard to their names highlight another silence. On 15 September 1749, for example, 'a Spanish Negro Man named Andrew' left 'his Masters, John Salmon and Company.' Like Billah, the man carried with him only the clothes he wore that day. In addition to reporting that the 'thick square set' man who spoke 'broken English' (possibly a precursor to a type of *Gullah* in the North) and had been 'between 30 and 40 Years of Age,' the Boston merchant informed the public about his slave's preferred name. He had been 'named' Andrew, he noted, 'but calls himself Andress.' This dramaturgical moment is a powerful one.²⁹

Because clearly in the runaway's mind; the two names meant two different things. From his perspective, Andress, a variant of the Greek name 'Andreas,' that signified manliness, was not the same thing as Andrew, an Anglicized deviation or corruption of Andreas. Whether or not Andress knew of the classical origins of his name is unclear. His preference is a different matter altogether. Indeed, on occasion, he might have even corrected his master who apparently came to consider the matter of his name quite significant. For in each of the reprints Salmon had printed in the newspapers, he recognized his slave's preference. Presumably, the bondservant made an impression on his master. In spite of his owner's efforts to the contrary, Andress refused being called Andrew. Read in this context, he too co-authored the advertisement posted for his capture.³⁰

Other New England slave owners also noted the preferences of their bondservants. Four days before Benjamin Reed employed the services of Samuel Kneeland, his 'Negro Man Servant, named Sambo' absconded. By his master's account, the slave 'pretends to be a Doctor' and 'speaks good English.' The self-professed physician also carried with him 'a Bible ... and some other Books.' As his master's advertisement suggested, the stout man could probably read – a fact that registers another silence in the text. In other words, the silence surrounding the reading materials underscores the fact that Sambo had achieved some degree of literacy. Like Salmon's Andress, Reed's Sambo expressed a preference in what he would be called. Although named Sambo, an African name given to second sons, the fugitive 'calls himself Samuel Hank.' In 1775, when Quamono (a variation for an African day name for children born on Saturday) left, Nehemiah Skillings also informed the public that his '23 Years old' man preferred the name Jack. Almost two years later when a slave named London absconded, his owner, James Ames, told the *readers* of the *Massachusetts Spy* that his servant calls 'himself Harry.' During the aftermath of the American Revolution, a country-born slave 'named Cuff' also took his freedom by protesting with his feet. Before he ran, however, he let his master, William Seymour, know that he preferred the name Tom.³¹

Gestures as Silence

Besides these complex dramaturgical scenes, references in runaway advertisements demonstrate other silences. For instance, another way in which New England fugitives *co-authored* notices had been through the use of their bodies to express their displeasure. References to slaves' demeanor indeed reveal additional examples of slaves influencing the words that appeared in print. Compared to the implicit references where they refused to answer to another name, these recorded displays seemed more explicit in nature. Consider the runaway notice Jonathan Haszard had printed in the *Newport Mercury* as the first of several examples. On 11 April 1763, the slave owner reported, his 'Mustee Boy, about thirteen Years of Age' ran away from his place in South-Kingston. Like Billah, the 'thick sett Fellow' absconded with only the clothes he wore that day. But perhaps most important had been Haszard's description of his bondservant's demeanor, a countenance he characterized as being 'something hard.' In those few words, the Rhode Island slave owner warned the public about his slave's penchant to express himself. Without uttering a word, Hazard's unnamed man registered his discontent with his master. While not directly challenging his master's authority, Haszard's fugitive slave did nonetheless *co-author* or inform his owner's choice of words when it became necessary to employ the services of a printer.³²

In their analysis of slave behavior and gestures, Shane White and Graham White explored how in a myriad of understated ways slaves resisted their plight. Instead of talking back, for example, some rolled their eyes. Others closed their eyes when being spoken to. A few stared intensely at their owners.³³ New England fugitives proved no less defiant in that regard. In 1745, for example, Joseph Hale's 'Negro man named Cato' ran away. His flight robbed his master of his property – in more ways than one. Before he left, Hale explained, the 22-year-old slave learned to 'read and write.' He also learned 'Farming Work.' When he went away, he also carried with him additional articles of clothing, a black wig, a violin, and an extra pair of shoes. In addition to documenting his *losses*, the Newbury captain commented on the 'short and small' man's temperament. Cato, he reported, had 'a sly Look.' The advertisement Timothy Greenleaf had printed in the *Boston Evening Post* had been a little bit more exact. When his slave ran away, Greenleaf told the public that his man, named Newport 'had a sly Look with his Eyes.'

With their eyes, both runaways registered dramaturgical moments: they made strong impressions on their masters. The same appears to have been true of Simon Elliot's fugitive. When the New England slave left his owner, Samson did not leave empty-handed. According to his master, he 'stole betwixt fifty and sixty pounds in Continental and other bills.' He also carried with him a variety of clothing. He 'had on when he went away,' his master continued, 'a blue coat & scarlet jacket, and white linnen breeches,

and stockings, and a new fashion cock'd hat.' A dandy in his own right, the 'five feet eight inches high' Samson spoke 'good English' and 'is sprightly and active.' Moreover, judging from the advertisement Greenleaf had been forced to have printed in the newspaper, the bondsman proved quite unruly in his own right. 'When he speaks,' Elliot explained, 'he has a learing under look with his eyes.'³⁴

In addition to their facial expressions, slaves used their bodies to voice their displeasure. While the gestures reflected in Hazzard's mulatto boy's hard countenance are perhaps universal in nature, specifically those that register discontent, slave gestures might represent an invocation of African traditions. Studies by Graham White and Shane White, Robert Farris Thompson and more recently that of Barbaro Martinez-Ruiz and Yolanda Covington-Ward provide us with an alternate way of reading runaway advertisements in this regard. Put another way, Hazzard's slave's 'hard' countenance might conceal a symbolic but expressive intersection where European and African customs found common ground of slaves using their bodies to express a type of language that their masters noted but in the fewest number of words, maybe because of the expense.³⁵

Among the BaKongo people of modern-day Angola, *Pakalala* is an akimbo gesture where individuals place their hands defiantly on their hips. The universal message that it communicates is that the person is 'ready to accept the challenges of a situation.'³⁶ The meaning of such a gesture would not have been lost on colonial New Englanders who more than likely observed this stance before in others whom they considered impertinent. Without uttering a word, Hazzard's boy might have appeared insolent. If not *pakalala*, Hazzard's slave might have gestured *tuluwa lwa luumbu*. This pose symbolized a power stance in which the individual symbolically walled themselves in against psychological assault.³⁷ In other words, the mulatto slave demonstrated resistance by simply crossing his arms. In a similar fashion, *Telama* represents another gesture in which slaves might have used their bodies to register displeasure. *Telama*, according to Robert Farris Thompson, signified at once control and redirection. A Kongo akimbo gesture in which a person extends one's arm out in front of another person, motioning stop while the other hand rests on their hip, *telama* is a gesture where slaves managed to defy their masters, without direct physical confrontation. Rather, before they decided to abscond, many slaves probably deployed this stance to express annoyance. When forced to turn to print to retrieve their property, many masters probably used words like hard, insolent, or impertinent when describing their slaves' comportments. The dramaturgy such descriptors conceal is nonetheless almost palatable as they register a sense of defiance their masters could not deny when they turned to print.³⁸

Other New England slaves also told their masters that they would not submit. On 11 January 1754, for example, a country-born man, 'named Dan,' left his master. Besides noting that the man had been marked by smallpox, the New

England proprietor enumerated an assortment of clothes the 20-year-old bond-servant carried with him. Equally important, however, had been the well-dressed and well-set man's manner. Both had clearly made an impression on his master. Dan, Stone reported, 'has a very stern Countenance.' When Captain Thomas Lawton's 'Molatto Slave named Caesar' ran away, he too made a similar impression on his master. As the Bristol resident told it, his bondservant exhibited 'a down Look and surly Countenance.'³⁹

In the silence of Lawton's description of his runaway's demeanor is a multi-faceted narrative in which the fugitive unambiguously demanded his humanity from his master who in turn had little choice but to recognize that fact subtly in print. That is to say, if read in a literal way, Caesar's down-looking gaze does not fit well with his defiant manner his master described as surly. Reading between the lines, the man had at once a deferential and an insubordinate nature. Clearly, the bondservant's posture not only made an impression on his master, but also betrayed the fact that the master and the slave might have routinely clashed with one another over their respective roles in the relationship. Like other New England slaves, Caesar used his body to redirect the intentions of his owner. If but for only a short moment, he fought back.

Unlike those slaves who displayed a hard or insolence disposition, Cato's 'surly countenance' might represent an even more explicit reference to slave resistance. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, surly meant bad tempered or unfriendly. It also meant portentousness and arrogance. A word used to characterize a person's behavior as discourteous, surly branded its recipient: brusque, impolite, and disrespectful. As early as the fourteenth century, the word had been a part of the European lexicon. Derived from the word sirly that connoted status, surly represented a manner in which those who embodied its characteristics demanded respect. In that manner, several fugitive slaves might have gained a certain degree of human dignity. Much in the same way that Thomas Lawton thought Caesar surly, other New England slave owners also thought of their bondservants in similar terms. When a slave named DICK' left his master in 1782, Job Mulford, described him as a 'pretty surly.'⁴⁰

Perhaps the most common gesture used by slaves to express themselves in silence is also the most misunderstood, if not oversimplified: *Nunsa*. Head averted, lips pursed, *Nunsa* signifies direction and misdirection.⁴¹ At once, it expressed deference and disregard. In numerous fugitive advertisements, this BaKongo gesture is probably what many New England slave masters had witnessed firsthand when they described their bondservants as displaying a down-cast look. When Isaac Fowler's 'dark Mustee Fellow, named Caesar,' absconded the North Kingstown resident recounted that the well-set man had 'thick short neck, and a down Look.' Without a direct verbal challenge to his master's authority, Caesar's 'down Look' might have expressed resistance, albeit subtly. His averted head redirected his master's angry gaze or verbal assault. When compelled to employ the services of a printer, Fowler certainly did not think his slave's

gesture a small matter.⁴² Far from it, without uttering a single word, New England slaves like Caesar told their masters that they were not happy. Not only that, they also told them that they were prepared to fight. In most of those instances, however, fighting did not mean violence or rebellion or even the act of running away or truancy. Instead, fighting meant standing one's ground in a situation, refusing to relent for a time. In these subtle contests that clearly must have occurred routinely between masters and slaves, silence and certain body gestures probably represented the best and the most effective weapon a slave had at their disposal. When that did not work, they protested with their feet. When forced to print a notice to reclaim their stolen property, many slave owners revealed unwittingly their slaves' humanity via the words they chose. Succinct in what they reported about their bondservants, they exposed the complex nature of the institution that would make a person into a thing. Typically, one advertisement cost almost a full quarter of a yearly newspaper subscription, if not that than certainly one-quarter the amount of a reward to capture a runaway.⁴³

The more precise their descriptions were the lesser the expense. Because most people were probably already familiar with the assortment of ways in which bondservants used their bodies to protest, the subtext of masters' choices of words had not been lost on those who decided to answer masters' public cries for help. Like slave owners elsewhere, most New Englanders understood how to read the silences that lay in between the lines. Indeed, theirs had been a world in which it had been commonplace to read newspapers aloud, rendering the text more vivid in its depiction of colors, textures, movement, objects, and gestures. These performances in print might partly explain why some printers included stock images of runaways in notices, transforming printed accounts of slaves' flights into an even more nuanced *tableau vivant*.⁴⁴

Beyond Words

Ultimately, like slaves in other parts of British North America, New England runaways managed the cruel politics of slavery artfully, using silence as a powerful tool in which to express themselves. Much in the same way that 'riot' represented, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. would observe well over 200 years later, an indispensable part of 'the language of the unheard,' silence proved an essential part of the language of the socially dead. For silence or the absence of letters concealed complex moments of dramaturgy.⁴⁵ Like most slaves who made otherwise unspeakable things spoken, their gestures and their willingness not to utter a single word provided them with powerful tools of communication. That is, before deciding to protest with their feet, they denounced their plight in a variety of subtle ways. Rather than resort to poisoning or arson or other acts of day-to-day resistance, slaves made their true feelings known by deploying silence. Despite slave owners' attempts to deny them their humanity, they *communicated* a great deal more and in so doing made it impossible for their owners to fully ignore them.

As their masters' world had been one largely defined through the possession of property, a slave's decision to run away represented a significant occurrence, one that did not necessarily require verbosity in print. To be sure, in many instances, slaves not only stole themselves, but also other valuable commodities. While some stole money or a horse or tools, many more carried away additional articles of clothing. In 1775, for instance, Elizabeth Symonds lamented in the newspaper the loss of her property. Not long after New Englanders had adopted non-importation accords, her 'negro man named Pomp' left, taking away not only himself, but also a considerable amount of goods. He carried away, she exclaimed,

a green coat with metal buttons, a handsome hat, cut small, a durey coat, 2 kersey jackets lined with red baize, a black serge jacket, a lapel'd striped holland jacket, a sailor's white knotted jacket, a white holland shirt, a striped cotton and linen shirt, 2 check linen shirts, 2 woolen ditto, a pair of black knit breeches, 2 pair of shoes, [and] a pair of silver shoe and knee buckles.

He also took, 'a piece of sprig'd stuff.' According to Linda Baumgarten's study of eighteenth-century textiles, sprigged stuff had been 'a type of textile, muslin embellished with a decorative pattern.' At a time when refined, manufactured goods were probably scarce and politicized, Pomp's flight represented at once an act of grand larceny, provocative act of rebellion, and a loaded moment of dramaturgy in which the slave co-wrote the very advertisement printed for his return.⁴⁶

Some slaves left with their children. In 1783, 'on [a] Sunday night ... a Negro man named TACK, about 25 years of age, midling stature, likely, active, and well made' ran away from his master Thomas Seymore. Besides stealing himself and, of course, the clothes he wore, the country-born man did not leave empty-handed. He 'plays well,' his master observed 'on the Flute and Fife.' Though not explicitly stated, the fugitive slave probably carried with him those musical instruments. More important than either his flute or fife, the defiant slave also took his family. When he 'went off,' his New England master explained, he left 'in company with a Negro Wench of Mr. Platt's of this town, who carried her cloaths and female child.' Despite the passage of time, Seymour's resentment is still almost evident. Sullen, the Hartford resident also reported, that the '40 years old' woman 'pretends to be his wife.' In the silences of the advertisement he had printed in the *Connecticut Courant*, he also recorded unintentionally a rich dramaturgical scene where his proud man servant probably used his body, more so than actual words, to make plain his love of his wife to his master who thought her nothing but a woman of low rank and status.⁴⁷

Regardless, not long after Tack and many others had absconded, slave masters turned to the public square for help. By word of mouth or manuscript advertisements posted in communal places, they got the word out. Typically, many slave owners in New England waited several weeks before they made a visit to the local print shop. Almost 80 per cent probably judged themselves good stewards of

their slaves, giving them some time to return on their own volition. While away, they reasoned, slaves might have visited family. They might have reconnected with dear friends. They might have pursued a romantic interest. Ironically, by contrast, Virginian masters proved more *magnanimous*. There, one-third of the fugitive advertisements were printed within a few weeks of a slave's flight; another third between one to two months after a slave had left (See [Appendix 1](#)). However, when compelled to turn to print, masters in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire were as deliberate as anyone else in their composition of advertisements. Almost like a poem, that conveys a great deal of information in few words, their notices captured cleverly a world in motion. Although fixed in black and white, the words they chose could not hope to contain *fully* the rich scenes of everyday life they only marginally recorded. Not discounting the fixed language of the postscripts in which the public had been warned against harboring, concealing, and abetting runaways, fugitive notices communicated *true intelligence* about slaves for would-be patrols. In many instances, they also reported nuanced aspects about slaves' personalities that in turn reflected complex moments of dramaturgy in which masters and slaves *negotiated* the terms of their complex relationships. Just like other slave owners in British North America, New Englanders relied not only on the actual words in print, but also on the *words* expressed inferentially: silences. Writing over 100 years after Billah's flight, Harriet Beecher Stowe probably explained the absence of words in advertisements best when she characterized silence as a 'flashing eye,' a 'gloomy and troubled brow ... part of a natural language that could not be repressed,--indubitable signs, which showed too plainly that the man could not become a thing.'⁴⁸

Notes

1. Lorenzo Greene, *The Negro in Colonial New England* (1942; rep., New York: Kennikat Press, 1966); Gerald W. Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-century Virginia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); Lathan A. Windley, *A Profile of Runaway Slaves in Virginia and South Carolina from 1730 through 1787* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1995); Wendy Warren, *New England Bound: Slavery and Colonization in Early America* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2016); Christy Clark-Pujara, *Dark Work: The Business of Slavery in Rhode Island* (New York: New York University Press, 2016); Jared Ross Hardesty, *Unfreedom: Slavery and Dependence in Eighteenth-century Boston* (New York: New York University Press, 2016); Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961); Sylvia Frey, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Woody Holton, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Luther P. Jackson, 'Virginia Negro Soldiers and Seamen in the American Revolution', *Journal of Negro History* 27, no. 3 (July 1942): 247-87; W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Shane White and Graham White,

- Stylin'*: *African American Expressive Culture, from its Beginnings to the Zoot Suit* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Michael A. Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Michael T. Coolen, 'Senegambian Influences on Afro-American Musical Culture', *Black Music Research Journal* 11, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 1–18; Herbert G. Gutman, *Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750–1925* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976); Philip D. Morgan, 'Colonial South Carolina Runaways: Their Significance for Slave Culture', *Slavery and Abolition* 6 (1985); Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), Billy G. Smith, 'Black Women Who Stole Themselves in Eighteenth-century America', in *Inequality in Early America*, ed. Carla Gardina Pestana and Sharon V. Salinger (Hanover and London: University Press of America, 1999), 134–59; Antonio T. Bly, "'Pretends He can Read": Runaways and Literacy in Colonial America, 1730–1776', *Early American Studies* 6 (2008): 261–94; Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Erica Armstrong Dunbar, *Never Caught: The Washingtons' Relentless Pursuit of their Runaway Slave, ONA JUDGE* (New York: Atria, 2017); and, Sharon Block, *Colonial Complexions: Race and Bodies in Eighteenth-century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018). Interestingly, Jared Ross Hardesty's recent study offers a provocative reassessment of New England slavery in general and fugitive slaves in particular. Comparing slavery to other institutions of labor in eighteenth-century Boston (i.e. Amerindian slavery, indentured servitude, and apprenticeship), Hardesty argues that slaves sought agency over freedom. Faced with the uncertainty of owning themselves in an otherwise racist and violent world, slaves ran away as a tool to renegotiate the politics of their status. That might have been true in some instances. Billah's flight, however, and of course that of other fugitives, suggest otherwise. In many instances, slaves planned their escapes. While some had a destination in mind, others did not. For most of them, if not all, freedom represented not so much a particular place, as it did a real or symbolic space. *Unfreedom*, 6–8, 105–8, 155–6.
2. David Waldstreicher, 'Reading the Runaways: Self-fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the Eighteenth-century Mid-atlantic', *William and Mary Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (April 1999): 247. Rhys Isaac, 'On Explanation, Text, and Terrifying Power in Ethnographic History', *Yale Journal of Criticism* 6 (1993): 217–9; Rhys Isaac, 'Dramatizing the Ideology of Revolution: Popular Mobilization in Virginia, 1774 to 1776', *William and Mary Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (July 1976): 357–9. Isaac's use of the term dramaturgy highlights the underlining and unwritten subtext that inform the production of traditional, written archival records. New England slave-owner James Dwyer included the following note in an advertisement for the return of his unruly man: 'If the said Scipio will of his own Accord (without putting me to the Charge of the above Reward) return home, he shall be kindly received, and having his absconding himself forgiven.' In addition to illustrating the complexities of most master-slave relationships, this postscript, and others like it, highlights slaves' influence over their owners. It also highlights another silence in the text, that is, Dwyer's suspicion that his slave would discover his offer to return. Antonio T. Bly, *Escaping Bondage: A Documentary History of Runaway Servants in Eighteenth-century Virginia* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012), 98.
 3. Bly, *Escaping Bondage*, 61. There had been more than one John Bulkley who had resided in Massachusetts. Captain John Bulkley, also spelled Bulkeley, was born in Concord, Massachusetts on 10 July 1673. He married Mary Meers in Boston on 25

- October 1705. The couple had eight children. Extant Custom House notices that appeared in Massachusetts newspapers indicate that Bulkley had been a shopkeeper, a mariner, and an active participant in the Atlantic economy. Before his death in 1764, he traveled back and forth between ports in the West Indies, the Mediterranean, and Great Britain. *Boston News-Letter*, 23 September 1717; *Boston News-Letter*, 27 October 1717; *Boston Gazette*, 20 June 1720; *Boston Gazette*, 9 October 1721; *Boston News-Letter*, 18 December 1721; *Boston Gazette*, 14 January 1723; *Boston News-Letter*, 10 October 1723; *Boston News-Letter*, 7 January 1725; *New England Weekly Journal*, 1 January 1728; *Boston News-Letter*, 26 December 1728; *Boston News-Letter*, 13 February 1729; *Boston News-Letter*, 7 January 1731; *New England Weekly Journal*, 15 February 1731; *Boston News-Letter*, 25 November 1731; *New England Weekly Journal*, 26 February 1733; and *New England Weekly Journal*, 15 April 1734. Readex: America's Historical Newspapers Database; Donald Lines Jacobus's *The Bulkeley Genealogy*: Rev. Peter Bulkeley (New Haven: The Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Company 1933), 29, 149. Incidentally, Jacobus's *Genealogy* suggest that Bulkley died the year before a notice appeared in the *Boston News-Letter*, noting his death, that also of his wife and Thomas Hancock as the administrator of their estates. *Boston News-Letter*, 10 May 1764. Readex: America's Historical Newspapers Database.
4. Clearly, weather not only affected the lives of enslaved African Americans in New England; it also informed when most slaves absconded. Christian Warren, 'Northern Chills, Southern Fevers: Race-specific Mortality in American Cities, 1730-1900', *Journal of Southern History* 63 (1997): 24-5. Incidentally, the second time Billah ran away, the notice for her capture revealed that Bulkley resided in a house in Queen Street. This new detail gives us a sense of the geography the fugitive had to navigate when she absconded. *Boston Gazette*, 3 November 1747. Readex: America's Historical Newspapers Database.
 5. John Campbell, the printer of the *Boston News-Letter*, the first continuous newspaper in British North America, established the price for advertisements. In an advertisement for advertisements, he judged 'twelve pence to five shillings' a reasonable sum for a notice. Thirty years later, the price remained relatively the same. In Virginia, William Parks, the printer of the *Virginia Gazette*, charged three to five shillings for advertisements; two shillings for reprints. Typically, depending on one's occupation, five shillings represented a considerable amount. Over the course of the eighteenth-century, New England slave owners considered 20 shillings an adequate reward, besides all necessary charges incurred in business of capturing a runaway. *Boston News-Letter*, Monday 17 April to Monday 24 April 1704, 2; *Virginia Gazette* (Parks), 8 October 1736, 4.
 6. *Boston Gazette*, 3 November 1747. Readex: America's Historical Newspapers Database.
 7. *Ibid.*
 8. *Boston Gazette*, 11 October 1748. Readex: America's Historical Newspapers Database.
 9. *Boston Gazette*, 27 September 1748; *Boston Gazette*, 11 October 1748; and *Boston Gazette*, 18 October 1748. Readex: America's Historical Newspapers Database.
 10. In the first notice, Bulkley did not indicate if Billah could speak English. Four years later, he did. By his account, she spoke 'good English.' That observation would be repeated in subsequent advertisements. *Boston Gazette*, 3 November 3 1747; 27 September 1748; and 11 October 1748. Readex: America's Historical Newspapers Database. Genesis 29:29 and 35:22. Maneka Gandhi and Ozair Husainly, *The Complete Book of Muslim and Parsi Names* (1994; repr., New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 90.
 11. Considering that Bilhah and Billah differed in spelling, intonation, and meaning, it stands to reason that the fugitive's articulation of the difference more than likely informed

- Bulkeley's *effort* to secure his property. As will be demonstrated in this essay, slaves had their own ideas about what names they would answer to. This version of Billah's story is based on two earlier papers I presented: 'Billah's Story: Runaway Women in Eighteenth-Century America.' Colonial Society of Massachusetts December Meeting, Boston, Massachusetts, 20 December 2018; 'Politics of Her Feet: A Study of Women Fugitives in Colonial New England' (Omohundro Conference, Williamsburg, Virginia, 15 June 2018).
12. 'Nature', R.G. Collingwood noted, 'has no history. The Laws of nature have always been the same, and what is against nature now was against nature two thousand years ago.' Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 239; Isaac, 'On Explanation, Text', 217–9; Isaac, 'Dramatizing the Ideology of Revolution', 357–9; and, James C. Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance: Hidden Transcript* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 1–4. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 49. Most recently, both Stephanie E. Smallwood's, 'The Politics of the Archive and History's Accountability to the Enslaved' (2016) and Marisa Fuentes's, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (2017) has expanded on Trouillot's notion of silences as a construction of power in the production of historical records. Conceptually, ever since Tillie Olsen's, *Silences* (New York: Delcorte Press, 1979) appeared in print, scholars have wrestled with the ways in which the absence of text informs words on parchment and paper. For insightful studies of silences, see Cherly Glen's, *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004), Cheryl Glenn and Krista Ratcliffe's edited collection of essays, *Silence and Listening as Rhetorical Arts* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2011), and Elaine Hedges and Shelley Fisher Fishkin's edited collection of essays, *Listening to Silences: New Essays in Feminist Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
 13. Much in the same way that Venture Smith related the facts about his life to Elisha Niles, the same is true of Billah whose persistence survived the vestiges of time.
 14. Antonio T. Bly, 'Pretty, Sassy, Cool: Slave Resistance, Agency, and Culture in Colonial New England', *New England Quarterly* 89, no. 3 (September 2016): 462–9. Third person reference is another example of *pretty*. A manner of resistance in which slaves and later the descendants of former slaves would articulate a sense of identity and somebody-ness, *pretty* represented a subtle way of reclaiming a humanity denied them largely because of race. While third person referencing (*illeism* to use a colloquium) is not exclusively an African American expression, its use nonetheless reflects a complex and tragic history in which people of African descent have been subjected to slavery or have been victims of institutional racism. For a useful discussion of New England naming patterns, see Robert K. Fitts, *Inventing New England's Slave Paradise: Master/Slave Relations in Eighteenth-century Narragansett, Rhode Island* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998), 168–9; 171–3.
 15. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 55; Alex Haley, *Root: The Saga of an American Family* (1974; repr., Boston: Da Capo Press, 2014), 275–6. Bly, *Escaping Bondage*, 139. Significantly, in his autobiography, Olaudah Equiano discussed the politics of naming and power. By his own account, he had been named and renamed several times. Before he would eventually arrive in Virginia, he had been named twice by his captors; first Jacob, then Michael. Later, when he became the property of Michael Pascal, he would be named Gustavus Vassa. Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself* (London, 1789), 1: 93–6.
 16. Bly, *Escaping Bondage*, 21, 123, 222, 43, 96. For a fuller account of slave naming practices, see Newbell Niles Puckett, *Black Names in America: Origins and Usage* (Boston:

- G. K. Hall & Co., 1975), 347–469; Lorenzo D. Turner, *Africanism in Gullah Dialect* (1949; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1969), 31–190; J.L. Dillard, *Black English: Its History and Usage in the United States* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 123–35; Cheryll Ann Cody, ‘There was No “Absalom” on the Ball Plantation: Slave-naming Practices in the South Carolina Low Country, 1720–1865’, *America Historical Review* 92 (June 1987): 563–96; Thornton, ‘Central African Names and African-American Naming Patterns’, *William and Mary Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (October 1993): 727–42; and Jerome S. Handler and JoAnn Jacoby, ‘Slaves Names and Naming in Barbados, 1650–1830’, *William and Mary Quarterly* 53, no. 4 (October 1996): 685–728.
17. Jonathan Prude, ‘To Look upon the “Lower Sort”: Runaway Ads and the Appearance of Unfree Laborers in America, 1750–1800’, *The Journal of American History* 78, no. 1 (June 1991): 126.
 18. Lathan A. Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1983), 3: 691; 4:56; 3: 264–5; and 3:605.
 19. Bly, *Escaping Bondage*, 106, 267, and 239. Runaway servant advertisements in eighteenth-century Virginia, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and, Rhode Island all indicate that masters of apprentices and indentured servants who absconded typically acknowledged them in print by both of their names. Antonio T. Bly and Tamia Haygood, *Escaping Servitude: A Documentary History of Runaway Servants in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015); Farley Ward Grubb, *Runaway Servants, Convicts, and Apprentices Advertised in the Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728–1796* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 1992); Maureen Alice Taylor, *Runaways, Deserters, and Notorious Villains* (Camden; Maine: Picton Press, 1995); Richard B. Marrin, *Runaways of Colonial New Jersey: Indentured Servants, Slaves, Deserters, and Prison, 1720–1781* (Maryland: Heritage Books, 2007).
 20. This information had been extrapolated from the Inter-Colonial Runaway Slave Database. The database consists of approximately 5,000 notices. In compiling that database, Lathan A. Windley’s, *Runaway Slave Advertisements* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983) 4 vols.; Billy G. Smith and Richard Wojtowicz’s, *Blacks Who Stole Themselves: Advertisement for Runaways in the Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728–1790* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989); Graham Russell Hodges and Alan Edward Brown’s, *Pretends to be Free: Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey* (New York: Fordham University, 1994), Readex’s America’s Historical Newspapers Database and the Library of Congress’s Eighteenth-Century American Newspapers collection on microfilm were consulted.
 21. Bly, *Escaping Bondage*, 95–6.
 22. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 13.
 23. B.H. Liddell Hart, *Scipio Africanus: Greater than Napoleon* (1929; repr., Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2004), 186. Considering the fact that Scipio defeated Hannibal, a man of northern Africa and most likely of African descent, Curtis’s choice of names for his slave might have best captured in his mind his man’s predicament as a conquered person. J.A. Rogers, *World’s Great Men of Color* (1946; repr., New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 1: 98–109.
 24. Although the numbers vary, Central West Africans represent a significant portion of the African captives transported to the Americas. Susan Cooksey, Robin Poyner, and Hein Vanhee, eds., *Kongo Across the Water* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013), 4. Jelmer Vos, ‘Kongo, North America and the Slave Trade’, in *Kongo Across the Water*, ed Susan Cooksey, Robin Poyner, and Hein Vanhee (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013), 40–9. Linda Heywood and John K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585–1660* (New York:

- Cambridge University Press, 2007), 250–3; 281; and, Linda M. Heywood, ed., *Central African and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 8–14.
25. West Central Africans considered sharpened teeth a mark of beauty. T.D. Stewart and John R. Groome, 'The African Custom of Tooth Mutilation in America', *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 28, no. 1 (January 1968): 31–42; William S. Pollitzer, *The Gullah People and their African Heritage* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1999), 83.
 26. Bly, *Escaping Bondage*, 158. Within the context of my study of slave resistance, agency, and culture, Fleet's hair signified *sass*. Not to be confused with *sass* as an expression of an attitude, *sass* represented ways in which enslaved African American achieve agency by using materials available to them to realize some semblance of humanity. In this instance, Fleet's hair facilitated agency. Bly, 'Pretty, Sassy, Cool', 469–75.
 27. Isaiah Thomas, *The History of Printing in America, with a Biography of Printers, and an Account of Newspapers* (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, Jr. 1810), 1: 294–5.
 28. The question surrounding whose initials were included in *The Prodigal Daughter* is not a settled one, as the initials could have also belonged to Pomp's father who died around 1743. While inconclusive is the view of the curators of the rare and special collections at the Princeton University library who own several copies of the 'Prodigal Daughter,' several book historians believe that the initials are indeed Pomp's. If they are in fact his, they represent another example of the brashness of the enslaved man who had been known for his particular hair style about Boston. <https://graphicarts.princeton.edu/2013/08/31/was-the-prodigal-daughter-illustrated-by-pompey-fleet/>; E. Jennifer Monaghan, *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 306–7; Hugh Amory and David D. Hall, eds., *A History of the Book in America: The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1: 50, 534 (note 52). Agnes Lugo-Ortiz and Angela Rosenthal, eds., *Slave Portraiture in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 97; Hardesty, *Unfreedom*, 159. Alan Gilbert, *Black Patriots and Loyalists: Fighting for Emancipation in the War for Independence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 197; 'The Book of Negroes', in *Black Loyalist*, <http://www.blackloyalist.info/source-image-display/display/35>; and, 'List of Blacks in Birch Town Who Gave their Names for Sierra Leone in November 1791', in *Black Loyalists*, <http://www.blackloyalist.info/source-image-display/display/109>.
 29. Bly, *Escaping Bondage*, 59.
 30. Patrick Hanks, ed. *Dictionary of American Family Names* (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1: 39.
 31. Bly, *Escaping Bondage*, 93; 169; 238. Puckett, *Black Names in America*, 341–2; Bly, *Escaping Bondage*, 93. Quamono's name might be a deviation of Quamino which in the language of the Hausa people means Saturday. Puckett, *Black Names*, 434.
 32. Bly, *Escaping Bondage*, 258.
 33. Shane White and Graham White, 'Reading the Slave Body: Demeanor, Gesture, and African-American Culture', in *Varieties of Southern History: New Essays on a Region and its People*, ed. Bruce Clayton and John Salmond (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), 42–5.
 34. Bly, *Escaping Bondage*, 63; 89; and, 171.
 35. To some extent, gestures reflecting anger and displeasure are transgressive, if not universal. This does not mean, however, that some gestures do not reflect specific cultures. Robert Farris Thompson and Joseph Cornet, *The Four Moments of the Sun: Kongo Art in Two Worlds* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1981), 168–9; Barbara

- Martinez-Ruiz, 'Kongo Machinery: Graphic Writing and Other Narratives of the Sign' (PhD diss., Yale University, 2003), 269–309; Barbaro Martinez-Ruiz, 'Kongo Atlantic Body Language', in *Performance, Art et Anthropologie* (2009), <http://actesbranly.revues.org/462>; and, Yolanda Covington-Ward, *Gesture and Power: Religion, Nationalism, and Everyday Performance in Congo* (Durham: Duke University Press 2016). Also, see Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg, eds., *A Cultural History of Gestures* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992). It is significant to note here that the above-referenced studies of gestures reflect retentions and continuities between BaKongo peoples and their descendants in the Americas in modern settings.
36. Thompson and Joseph Cornet, *The Four Moments of the Sun*, 171.
 37. *Ibid.*, 167.
 38. *Ibid.*, 175.
 39. *Ibid.*, 39.
 40. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 7th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 734; Bly, *Escaping Bondage*, 249. Incidentally, in colonial vernacular, the word countenance denoted a person's facial expression, bearing, or demeanor.
 41. In John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger's study of runaway slaves, the down look gesture reflected at once fear, submissiveness, and deference. *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 224–6. Except for White and White's, 'Reading the Slave Body', most other studies characterized the gesture in the same way. 'Reading the Slave Body', 45–6. For a fuller account of those studies regarding the gesture as a sign of deference, see Michael P. Johnson, 'Runaway Slaves and the Slave Communities in South Carolina, 1799 to 1830'. *The William and Mary Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (July 1981): 432–3; Alex Bontemps, *The Punished Self: Surviving Slavery in the Colonial South* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2001), 13–5; Gwenda Morgan and Peter Rushton, 'Visible Bodies: Power, Subordination and Identity in the Eighteenth-century Atlantic World', *Journal of Social History* 39, no. 1 (Fall 2005): 47. For a penetrating analysis of the psychology that lies underneath the gesture, see Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 83–9; 242–5.
 42. Bly, *Escaping Bondage*, 112.
 43. Notices and reprints represented a considerable expense. As a result, slave owners tended to be quite exact in their choice of words. According to David A. Copeland, that amount for an advertisement represented about a tenth of an average person's salary. David A. Copeland, *Debating the Issues in Colonial Newspaper: Primary Documents of the Period* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2000), x.
 44. Konstantin Dierks, *In My Power: Letter Writing and Communications in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), xvii; 141–88; Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Person, Houses, Cities* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 46–58; 90–1; David S. Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (Chapel Hill: University Press of North Carolina, 1997), 11–40. Also, see Sandra M. Gustafson's study of as oratory and literacy in early America. By her account, orality (i.e. reading aloud) and print went hand and hand, underscoring a type of public performance. Gustafson, *Eloquence is Power: Oratory and Performance in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), xiii–xxv.
 45. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (1968; repr., Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 119.
 46. Bly, *Escaping Bondage*, 192; Linda Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 36; 52. Originally, I read Symnods's reference as one pertaining to tobacco. But as the

result of a chance meeting I have since revised that reading to include other possibilities. Here, I would like to acknowledge Jeanne Pickering (MA, Salem University) who during the 2016 Omohundro conference at George Washington's Mount Vernon brought to my attention that Symnods's reference to 'sprig'd stuff' might in fact reference a type of textile, muslin that has a decorative pattern.

47. Bly, *Escaping Bondage*, 230.
48. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or Life Among the Lowly* (1852; repr., Boston, John P Jewett, 1853), 27. Interestingly, Stowe's observation had been about George Harris, Eliza's husband, Harry's father, a tragic mulatto, and a brilliant slave artisan who became a fugitive to save his family.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Placement intervals (by months) for advertising fugitive slaves (measured in percentages).

Massachusetts							
Periods	>1	1	2	3–5	6–12	<1	n/a
1730s	80%	3%	0%	3%	0%	0%	14%
1740s	77%	2%	3%	2%	4%	1%	11%
1750s	78%	10%	1%	1%	2%	2%	6%
1760s	76%	6%	3%	0%	0%	3%	12%
1770s	78%	3%	5%	1%	1%	1%	11%
Virginia							
1730s	54%	25%	9%	6%	3%	0%	3%
1740s	22%	26%	11%	7%	15%	0%	19%
1750s	43%	26%	4%	6%	13%	4%	4%
1760s	23%	20%	11%	14%	8%	5%	20%
1770s	26%	22%	10%	16%	8%	2%	16%

Sources: Lathan A. Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1983. 4vols; Billy G. Smith and Richard Wojtowicz, *Blacks Who Stole Themselves: Advertisement for Runaways in the Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728–1790*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989; Graham Russell 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, 1994; Antonio T. Bly, *Escaping Bondage: A Documentary History of Runaway Slaves in Eighteenth-Century New England, 1700–1789*. Maryland: Lexington Books, 2012; Readex: America's Historical Newspapers Database; and, Eighteenth-Century American Newspapers in the Library of Congress in Microfilm.

Appendix 2

Almost all of the newspaper advertisements that appeared in colonial newspapers in British North America included a warning to the public not to abet, conceal, or harbor a fugitive. In addition to demonstrating early American societies were communities of surveillance, these postscripts highlighted the precarious nature of taking up runaways. In itself, that precariousness is yet another silence concealed in the language or the text of advertisements. The notice below, however, makes explicit what most of those postscripts referenced implicitly.

BOSTON, September 14.

We have the following melancholy Account of a barbarous Murder committed at Brantrey on Tuesday last, about Noon, as related by some that were of the jury of Inquest, viz. An Indian Fellow belonging to one Mr. Howard of Bridgewater, (formerly to Maj. Quincy of Brantrey) having Run-away, Advertisements were issued out after him, and a Reward to take him up, and bring him home, one Mr. Rogers of Pembroke, being at Weymouth, on his way home happen'd to see one of the Advertisements, took it, and returned back to look for the said Indian, and on Monday Evening last, after some enquiry, found him; and lodging that Night at Brantrey, the Indian got away again on Morning Mr. Rogers, finding the Indian was gone, he offered Ten Shillings to a Man to find him again, who accordingly went, and soon brought him back: Mr. Rogers, having the Indian with him, set out on his Journey homewards, and when they had got about Five Miles, Mr. Rogers stopt and went into the House of one Mr. Scot with the Indian, and call'd for a Dram, but they had none; and while they were talking together in the House, the Indian went and stood outside by the Door; and Mr. Scot seeing him pass by the Window, told Mr. Rogers, the Indian wou'd get away; upon which he went out, and seeing him at a little Distance from the House, going towards a Corn Field, he ran after him: the Indian looking back and seeing him coming, took a Jack-Knife and open'd it, as Mr. Scot tho't by the Motion of his Arms, and when Mr. Rogers had got near, the Indian suddenly turn'd about, and made up to him, and then stab'd the knife into his left Breast, as 'tis tho't, up to the Haft, the Wound being very deep and open: Mr. Scot and a Negro in the House seeing Mr. Rogers assaulted, ran up to assist him, and finding the Indian with the knife in his Hand, which Mr. Rogers had then hold of and let go, they with much difficulty, after bending the Knife double, got it from him: Mr. Scot seeing them both bloody, ask'd Mr Rogers whether it was his, or the Indians blood, three times before he made any Answer, and then only said, I am either stab'd, or wounded, and fell down and dy'd immediately. The Indian got away again, while they were looking after Mr. Rogers, but the Negro pursu'd him, and soon catch'd him and held him, till Mr. Scot went and brought others, and then secur'd him. Mr. Rogers was a Widower, of about 43 Years of Age, and has left three Children. The Coroner's Inquest charges the said Indian with the Murder, and he was Yesterday towards Evening brought to Town, and committed to Goal.

Sources: *Boston News-Letter*, 14 September 1732. Readex: America's Historical Newspapers Database. Antonio T. Bly, *Escaping Slavery: A Documentary History of Native American Runaways in Early America, 1700-1789* Lanham: Lexington Books (in press).