

**Generic Features of Eighteenth Century  
American Runaway Slave Advertisements**

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Finnish summary – suomenkielinen lyhennelmä	

## ABBREVIATIONS OF NEWSPAPER TITLES USED IN THE REFERENCES

Virginia Gazette (Parks)	<i>VG:P</i>
Virginia Gazette (Hunter)	<i>VG:H</i>
Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Co.)	<i>VG:PC</i>
Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon)	<i>VG:PD</i>
Virginia Gazette (Rind)	<i>VG:R</i>
Virginia Gazette, or Norfolk Intelligencer (Duncan)	<i>VG_NI</i>
Virginia Gazette (Dixon & Hunter)	<i>VG:DH</i>
Virginia Gazette (Purdie)	<i>VG:Pu</i>
The New-York Gazette	<i>NYG</i>
The New-York Weekly Journal	<i>NYWJ</i>
New-York Weekly Post-Boy	<i>NYWPB</i>
The New-York Gazette, Revived in The Weekly Post-Boy	<i>NYG_RiWPB</i>
The New-York Gazette: or, The Weekly Post-Boy	<i>NYGoWPB</i>
Parker's New-York Gazette; or, The Weekly Post-Boy	<i>NYGoWPB:P</i>
The New-York Mercury	<i>NYM</i>
The New-York Gazette (Weyman's)	<i>NYG:W</i>
The New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury	<i>NYG_WM</i>
Rivington's New-York Gazetteer	<i>NYG:R</i>
The Royal Gazette (New York)	<i>NY_RG</i>
Pennsylvania Gazette	<i>PG</i>

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## **1. Introduction**

The seventeenth century saw the rise of the institution of slavery in Britain's North American colonies, and by the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was already deeply rooted particularly in the Southern colonies. Another novelty which appeared at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in colonial America was the relatively new media of newspapers. The rise of the newspaper also meant the birth of new kinds of text genres, including that of advertisements. These texts formed an integral part of the newspaper from its earliest stages onwards. With the spread of this new media, people had the possibility to draw the attention of other newspaper subscribers to various things, whether it was the marketing of goods to sell or the search for lost property. One "piece of property" that had a tendency to go missing from plantation owners was their human chattel, and advertisements placed by slave owners seeking to regain fugitive slaves were a regular feature in the advertising section of colonial newspapers. These runaway slave advertisements are the object of study in the present thesis.

The approach of this study is based on genre analysis – the purpose is to look at the runaway slave advertisement as forming a particular (sub-)genre and to analyse what characteristics this type of a text has. This includes the typical structure of the advertisement as well as linguistic features like characteristic vocabulary and syntactical constructions. An aim of this thesis paper is to demonstrate to what extent the runaway slave advertisement was a genre with a fixed form and how much variation was tolerated from the typical model. Since the corpus spans over several decades and includes advertisements from three different colonies, the possible variation in regard to time and geography can be observed as well.

These advertisements with their descriptions of runaway slaves also offer a variety of interesting information for a historical study of slavery, but the aim of this study is not to concentrate on these sociological factors but rather the linguistic aspects of the texts. Naturally, some consideration on the historical background of the society that produced these texts is needed in any case.



The corpus of the study is comprised of 190 runaway slave advertisements from 18<sup>th</sup> century newspapers. The advertisements come from Virginia (100 advertisements), Pennsylvania (45 advertisements) and New York (45 advertisements), and the time span covered is from the 1730s to the 1770s.

I will begin this thesis by giving an overview of previous research done on runaway slave advertisements. Chapter three will provide information on the cultural background of the texts, i.e. on slavery in colonial North America. Chapter four contains some general information on 18th century English, with examples from the corpus. In chapter five, I shall present the theoretical concepts integral to this study, mainly focusing on the notion of genre. This leads to reflections on a particular genre, that of the advertisement, in chapter six. Included in that chapter is also some information on the emergence of newspapers in colonial America. Chapter seven introduces the corpus in more detail, and treats the choices made in collecting it. After some basic initial observations of the corpus in chapter eight, chapter nine analyses the advertisements by dividing them into nine possible moves. Chapters ten and eleven continue the analysis, looking at other generic and stylistic features of the texts. Chapter twelve draws the findings together: first, I shall summarize the differences between the advertisements of the three colonies, as well as how the advertisements change in the period of over forty years; secondly, I will look at one particular example and discuss how that advertisement can be considered a prototypical member of its genre.

## **2. Previous research**

Runaway slave advertisements, abundant in early colonial newspapers, have not been ignored by researchers. Academic interest on these texts has, however, mostly focused on historical aspects of the slaves' lives which can be inferred from them. An early study by Greene (1944) examines the information given of New England runaway slaves in advertisements. South Carolina fugitives were the focus of Meaders' (1975) study, in which he looks at the different aspects of the slaves' lives that can be seen with the help

of newspaper texts of the time, particularly runaway advertisements. Prude (1991) and Waldstreicher (1999) also used runaway advertisements as the starting point of their papers. By examining the runaway advertisements, researchers have been able to compile statistics about the age and sex of a typical runaway, the time of the year as well as the manner they most often off (whether alone or in groups), the manner their owners described their appearance and personality, as well as numerous other interesting aspects of the society of the time. The typical contents of runaway advertisements are of course linked to its generic properties, but there do not seem to have been any studies which study the textual aspects of the runaway advertisement from the point of view of genre analysis. This leaves room for the present study.

On the other hand, the birth and development of the advertising genre in general has evoked the interest of several researchers, for example Görlach (2004) and Gieszinger (2000). These studies focus on the commercial advertisement – a subcategory of advertisements that attracts interest because of its prevalence in the modern world and because of the possibility to track its development throughout the last few centuries. This is naturally not possible for the runaway slave advertisement, since that subcategory of advertisements died out with the end of slavery. Ideas from the studies on 18<sup>th</sup> century commercial advertisements have been utilized in this study to the extent to which they are applicable to runaway advertisements as well. Furthermore, studies on early newspaper discourse in general, like Studer's (2003) study on 18<sup>th</sup> century headlines, can offer some useful insights on the study of the advertisements.

### **3. Slavery in Britain's North American colonies**

The runaway slave advertisements are the product of a culture where slavery exists as an integral part of the system. To analyse these texts as a genre, notice must also be taken of the society which produced them, and therefore it is necessary to cast a brief look at the wider cultural background of the institution of slavery in 18<sup>th</sup> century colonial America, and particularly at the individuals who tried to resist servitude by running away.

### **3.1 The establishment of slavery in North America**

Britain founded several colonies on the North American mainland in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and soon had to find a solution to a pressing need for agricultural labourers in particular. Slavery in the mainland colonies saw its start in 1619 with the sale of twenty slaves to Virginia, but for the most part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the majority of the work force in these British colonies constituted of European labourers (Kolchin 1993:10). This work force, especially needed in the tobacco and rice fields of the South, initially came mostly in the form of white indentured servants. Indenturing was common practice in 17<sup>th</sup>-century England, serving functions ranging from poor relief to job training. However, in the case of the colonies, “indentured servitude was transformed into an institution whereby Europeans desiring to come to America but unable to afford passage sold themselves into temporary slavery in exchange for free transatlantic transportation” (Kolchin 1993:8). Especially in the southern colonies this arrangement provided landowners with the required vast amounts of cheap labour, and, simultaneously, indenturing lost much of its protective and educative function. In consequence, these white servants’ situation during their indenture did not vastly differ from that of slaves – they, too, were under the complete authority of their masters and faced harsh punishments for attempted escape (Kolchin 1993:8-9). However, from the 1680s onwards, the amount of new indentured servants lessened in the colonies and was replaced by the wide use of slave labour (Kolchin 1993:11).

In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, Indians briefly formed a considerable portion of the slave population in some colonies, reaching 15% of the total population of South Carolina in 1720 (Johnson 1998:287). However, their importance quickly diminished as tens of thousands of black slaves were brought to the colonies, either directly from Africa or from British plantations of the West Indies. As the number of black slaves swelled, slave codes were established in the various colonies – resulting in laws defining slavery as a hereditary, lifelong, colour-defined status for blacks (Johnson 1998:287).

### **3.2 Regional differences in slavery**

By the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, slavery was already deeply rooted in the Southern colonies, and legally established, though in practice not so prominent, in the Northern ones (Kolchin 1993:18). Since the Southern colonies relied heavily on agricultural production, they were also, due to the intense need for labour, the ones where slavery formed the base of the labour system. Elsewhere, it existed more as a “luxury” than as the basis of the economy (Kolchin 1993:24), and as black bondsmen could cost more than white indentured servants or hired casual labourers, slaves were often purely status symbols (Smith & Wojtovicz 1989:7). For example, among the white elite and prosperous middle class families in New York, black slaves as household servants became the norm in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Davis 2006:129). In the Northern colonies the slaves also typically served in a wider variety of capacities than just as agricultural labourers, which was often the case in the South (Kolchin 1993:27).

Therefore the situation in regard to slavery was not identical in the colonies where the corpus of this study originates, namely Virginia, Pennsylvania and New York. The southern colony of Virginia, located in the Chesapeake area, was the most populous of Britain’s mainland colonies throughout the colonial period and it was characterized by a very widespread use of slave labour. It is estimated that in the end of the colonial period, two-fifths of the population of Virginia constituted of slaves (Kolchin 1993:25). Pennsylvania and New York, on the other hand, belonged to the Northern colonies, or if we want a finer definition, to the Middle colonies. In any case, in this area slaves, though present, “never accounted for the substantial segment of the work force ... that they comprised in the southern ones” (Smith & Wojtovicz 1989:6). The antislavery movement in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which led many masters to manumitting their slaves, was also more influential in Pennsylvania than it was in the South (Smith and Wojtovicz 1989:10).

The following percentages of slaves compared to the total population illustrate the development of the institution of slavery in the three colonies: In 1700 the slave

population of Virginia is estimated to have been around 28 %, rising to 43,9% by the middle of the century and dropping slightly to 42% in 1770. In the case of Pennsylvania, the percentage was 2,4% at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, peaking at 6,5% in 1720 and sinking back to 2,4% by 1770. New York's numbers are as follows: in 1700 slaves formed 11,8% of the population, 15,5% in 1720 and 11,7% in 1770. The numbers alone show a great difference between the three colonies, even though they do not even represent the extreme ends of the phenomenon in the British colonies. For example, in the northern colony of Massachusetts the proportion of slaves never even reached 3% of the total population. On the other end of the spectrum is the Deep South colony of South Carolina, where more than half of the population constituted of slaves for a great part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, reaching 70,4% in 1720. (Kolchin 1993:240).

### **3.3 Slaves as runaways**

Slaves did not always resign to their lot in perpetual servitude and running away offered a popular form of resistance. Colonial newspapers with their numerous runaway advertisements, submitted by slave owners in an attempt to assure the recapture of the fugitives, attest to the pervasiveness of this phenomenon. Fleeing servitude was, however, not limited only to black slaves: white indentured servants also often ran away, sometimes together with slaves, and they, too, were frequent subjects of runaway advertisements. When caught, runaways often faced cruel punishments, but this did not deter many individuals from repeating their bid for freedom. The black runaways were, however, at a disadvantage when compared to the fugitive servants of European origin – it was harder for them to escape servitude, since they were assumed to be slaves on the basis of the colour of their skin unless they could prove otherwise (Kolchin 1993:13). Among the slave population, African-born slaves had lower chances of successful escape, whereas advertisements showed especial concern for light-skinned slaves who could be mistaken as whites, or runaways who were literate and able to forge passes (Davis 2006:134).

The American Revolution affected slavery as well. Davis notes that “[w]arfare always presented slaves with opportunities for escape, sometimes to maroon communities or behind enemy lines, though as valuable property slaves were also likely to be carried off by an invader and sold” (2006:143). During the American revolutionary period (starting in 1775), the British also sometimes encouraged the slaves owned by rebels to run away from their masters, promising them freedom – this policy was, however, not carried out systematically, as the British did not want to upset slaveholding Loyalists, either (Davis 2006:149-150). The amount of runaway advertisements also spikes in the 1770s, which confirms the prevalence of the phenomenon during the revolutionary turmoil.

It should be noted that runaway advertisements alone do not offer a flawless picture of the situation of runaways, since not all fugitives were advertised for in the newspapers. One reason for this is that owners did not always bother placing advertisements for their runaways. They knew that the runaways would often return on their own after a few days of absence. Furthermore, if the slave was old or otherwise of “low value”, the expenses of placing an advertisement were not always justified (Smith & Wojtowicz 1989:4). Advertising was costly, as money had to be given not only to the newspaper, but also to the informer, to the jail warden for storing the runaway, and to the person delivering the slave, which could get especially expensive if the runaway had travelled a greater distance (Meaders 1975:291).

Davis (2006:113) notes that in the Chesapeake area owners often showed willingness to negotiate with the fugitive slaves: in the runaway advertisements they addressed their slaves as well, offering forgiveness and the chance to choose new master or return to an old one if they returned voluntarily (Davis 2006:133). Meaders’ study of South Carolina advertisements shows this did not happen particularly often in the Deep South, as he found only 29 instances, from a corpus of 1806 advertisements, of South Carolinian advertisers informing of their willingness to forgive their runaways on their return. (1975:296)

## 4. Features of eighteenth-century (American) English

Although 18<sup>th</sup> century texts are legible to the modern reader to a high extent, there are still some noteworthy differences. Since it is not relevant to give a complete overview of the features of the language of the period here, only those differences which are seen as important in regard to the corpus of this study are treated in this chapter (for a more complete account of 18<sup>th</sup> century English, see e.g. Görlach 2001).

The colonial period also marks the starting point of the history of American English, as the varieties spoken on the different sides of the Atlantic began to drift apart. The most immediate effect was on vocabulary, as the new situation the colonists found themselves in called for new terminology, and as language contacts with native Americans and other immigrant groups brought new words to the language (Algeo 2001b:18). However, real cultural independence, also in the matter of language, emerged only after political independence was gained in the American Revolutionary War (Algeo 2001b:34), and therefore the differences between the two varieties are not particularly significant in the period studied here.

### 4.1 Morphology and syntax

By the 18th century, the change from Early Modern English to Modern English, and, with it, the major changes in English morphology and syntax had already taken place. For example, the change from the third person singular *-eth* to *-s* was nearing its completion. Görlach (2001:102) notes that only the forms *doth* and *hath* still appeared with significant frequency. In the corpus of this study, *hath* is still found in one Virginian and four Pennsylvanian advertisements, whereas the vast majority of the advertisements already use *has*.

One noticeable difference in regard to present day English is the dense use of passive constructions in a number of different genres, including less formal text classes like the

texts found in newspapers (Biber 2001:105). Passives are also quite frequently used in runaway advertisements, and their usage shall be examined in chapter 10.2.2.

As to sentence structure, Görlach notes that sentence length and complexity varied according to genre as well as the personal style of the writer. He nevertheless adds that although “the number of excessively long and heavily punctuated sentences ended after the 17<sup>th</sup> century ... the period between 1700 and 1900 is still remarkably rich in constructions which would be felt inappropriately complex in PDE – especially if they are found in [genres] requiring the ‘middle’ style, such as newspaper reports.” (Görlach 2001:128) The punctuation marks do not markedly differ from present day ones, but the proper use of the colon and semicolon caused confusion even to 18<sup>th</sup> century grammarians (Salmon 1999:47). Therefore, it is no wonder that in the corpus of this study, these punctuation marks are often used in ways unfamiliar to the modern reader, as can be seen from example (1).

- (1) RAN away from the Subscriber, living near Annapolis, in Maryland, a Negroe Man, named Dolphin; he is a lusty, well-set, black Fellow, about 32 Years of Age: Had on when he went away, an Oznabrig Shirt, a Cotton Waistcoat and Breeches, and a Pair of good Shoes; he has a remarkable Set of white Teeth and black Gums: He went away in Company with another Negroe, from whom he parted near Niabsco Iron-Works, in Prince William County. (VG:P Aug 21-28, 1746, emphasis mine)

Example (1) does not represent the style used by all advertisers (or editors, since it is unclear who was responsible for punctuation choices) in the corpus. For example, some use periods in place of the colons, thus using a style more familiar to modern readers.

## 4.2 Spelling

The standardization of spelling was well underway by this period. Early Modern English had been characterized by a great variety of spellings variants, and although this variation took longer to disappear from private writing, it was no longer found in printed texts of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Salmon 1999:44). Görlach claims that this development leaned heavily on the printers (2001:78), whereas Venezky stresses the role of lexicographers



and orthographers, noting that printers had more to gain from flexibility, particularly in line justification, than from a fixed set of spelling rules (2001:343)

As for differences between British and American English, for the most part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century primary models for spelling in the colonies still came from across the Atlantic: books were mainly imports from England and, furthermore, wealthy colonials often sent their children abroad to receive their higher education (Venezky 2001:341-342). By the American Revolution, spelling in the colonies was very close to what it is today, at least among the better educated writers, even though some fluctuation in usage was to be found (Venezky 2001:343). For example, rules for the spelling of *-ick* vs. *-ic*, *-our* vs. *-or* or *-ll* vs. *-l* were finalized only during this century (Görlach 2001:80). The choices made by Webster after the American Revolution, and which then served as models for American English, often differed from the choice made for British English (Algeo 2001b:34).

It is unsure how much the editors of colonial newspapers occupied themselves with the uniformity of spelling in the advertising section. In any case, a lot of the abovementioned variation can be observed in the corpus of this study. An extreme example is the variant spellings that are used for *osnaburg*, a linen cloth typical for slaves' clothing: the Virginian advertisements alternate between the spellings "oznabrig", "oznabrigs", "oznabriggs", "osnabrig" and "osnabrigs". In the New York and Pennsylvanian advertisements, the cloth is referred to as "ozenbrig", "ozenbrigs" and "ozenbrigg". The variation found in the corpus is not surprising, as the *OED* lists several dozen spelling variants for the word.

More typical for the corpus are words, for which there are two spellings used. Alongside the current spelling, "waistcoat" is spelled as "wastecoat" in one New York and many Virginian advertisements up to the 1750s. "Trousers" is spelled as thus in some advertisements, but "trowsers" is a far more popular variant. "Negro(e)" is spelled with or without the "e", and the versions "Mulatto(e)" and "Molatto(e)" are all attested in the corpus. Another often occurring word in the advertisements is "jail". It is spelled in that

form only in some late Virginia advertisements, the more typical spelling being “gaol” or, especially in the Pennsylvanian advertisements, “goal”. There are also spelling variants that occur only in a few advertisements, e.g. “blue” is spelled “blew” in three cases.

Another peculiarity for the modern reader is the apostrophe, which was still used, for example, in verbal inflections in the “phonetic” spelling inherited from Early Modern English (Görlach 2001:80). The corpus offers many examples of this as well: The apostrophe in the past form of verbs (e.g. “suppos’d”) is used frequently alongside the full ending. However, the forms with apostrophes are no longer found in the Virginian and New York advertisements in the latest years of the 1770s; in the Pennsylvanian advertisements they are not found after the year 1752. The following expressions with an apostrophe are also found in the corpus: “’tis” (in 7 advertisements), “stol’n”, “tho’t”, “t’other”, “’em” and “altho’”.

In counting the occurrences of certain words or phrases in later chapters, I will not list all the different spelling variations. They will rather be considered as a group and only the most popular spelling variant is mentioned.

### **4.3 Capital letters and other typographical features**

One feature which may catch the eye of the modern reader is the frequent use of capital letters in 18th century texts. In addition to their use sentence-initially, capital letters were employed to emphasize important words, to mark names and name-like terms as well as to indicate the part-of-speech category ‘noun’, in addition to their use sentence- and line-initially (Görlach 2001:81). Although grammarians advocated the use of capitals only for proper names and words of emphasis, printers often capitalized all nouns (as happens in present day German), perhaps since they were unsure which words ought to be capitalized (Salmon 1999: 51-52). The change from this to the modern usage happened “almost overnight” in some printing offices, but in general, different texts continued to use capitalization for different purposes for a long period of time (Görlach

2001:81). Italics, too, were commonly used in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to emphasize words, but due to the overuse of this typographical feature, it became nearly obsolete in time (Görlach 2001:78).

Capital letters are used to mark all nouns in the earliest advertisements of the corpus. In the *Virginia Gazette*, italics are initially used with proper nouns, i.e. names of people, names of months, geographical names and names of languages. For a time in the 1730s this practise is even reversed: the main text is in italics, the proper nouns in regular font. In the 1750s the layout changes in the Virginian papers. The names of the slave and the subscriber are written in all capital letters, whereas other proper nouns are still italicized. At the same juncture there is also a change from writing all nouns with a capital letter to using capitals only in proper nouns and in the beginning of sentences. All capital letters are sometimes also used to highlight the reward sum. Somewhat inexplicably, one of the three competing *Virginia Gazettes* reverts back into using capital letters for all nouns in the 1770s.

In the New York and Pennsylvania papers the layout seems to have been much less fixed. Italics and capital letters were sometimes used for some names and for emphasising the reward sum, but the newspapers seem to switch between different conventions quite randomly.

#### **4.4 Vocabulary issues**

18th century vocabulary can in some cases also present some problems for the modern reader. In the case of the corpus of this study, this is often the case with words closely linked to colonial culture. Most noticeable is the unfamiliar terminology used for describing clothing, with words like “Monmouth cap”, “Oznabrig Shirt” or “linsey woolsey blue jacket” (more on clothing vocabulary in 10.3.3). Additionally, some familiar-looking words have changed their meaning. For example, the advertisers can warn other people not to “entertain” the slaves, using the word in the now obsolete meaning of ‘to take (a person) *into* one's service; to hire (a servant, etc.)’ (*OED*, s.v.

entertain). Nevertheless, for the most part the vocabulary of runaway advertisements does not cause problems of understanding. In this thesis I have tried to provide definitions for unfamiliar words found in the advertisements when they come across in the analysis.

## **5. Genre**

In historical discourse analysis, the notion of ‘genre’ is frequently used by researchers. However, there exists a fair amount of terminological confusion, as researchers define the terms ‘genre’, ‘text type’ and ‘register’ in various, sometimes contradictory ways (for a thorough discussion on the subject, see, for example, Diller 2001). I have chosen as a starting point the definition of genre by Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993, 2004), and complemented it by the views of Görlach (2004). Görlach himself opts to use the term ‘text-type’, but for the sake of clarity, in this study I use the term ‘genre’ even when discussing his ideas. For example Diller (2001:32) considers that Görlach’s use of the term ‘text type’ is close to what is more often described by the notion ‘genre’.

Swales and Bhatia have their focus on present day genres (Swales on academic and Bhatia on professional genres), whereas Görlach also offers a more historical perspective on the development of several genres.

### **5.1 Genre: definition**

Swales (1990) anchors his definition of genre on the communicative purpose. According to him, “[a] genre comprises of a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes” (Swales 1990:58) He notes that although the communicative purpose is the principal criterion in assigning members to a particular genre, in addition, “exemplars of a genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience” (*ibid*). In other words, the similar communicative purpose of texts belonging to the same genre also leads to similarities in their form. He continues to note that if “all high probability expectations are realized, the

exemplar will be viewed as prototypical by the parent discourse community” (*ibid*). Members of a genre can therefore vary in how closely they follow the expected conventions.

In a similar manner, Bhatia (2004:23) offers the definition that “genre essentially refers to language use in a conventionalized communicative setting in order to give expression to a specific set of communicative goals ... which give rise to stable structural forms by imposing constraints on the use of lexico-grammatical as well as discoursal resources”. Bazerman (1994:82) explains the existence of a genre as being the result of recurring situations which are perceived as similar and which are therefore seen as requiring similar kinds of utterances that often develop standardized formal features. He also notes that “[e]ventually the genres sediment into forms so expected that readers are surprised or even uncooperative if a standard perception of the situation is not met by an utterance of the expected form” (*ibid*). The main criterion for grouping texts into various genres is therefore a similar communicative purpose, but it is noted that this usually also leads to regularities in the form.

Görlach prefers to analyse texts as text types (from here on called genres), which he calls “textual formulae accepted as appropriate to thematically defined texts for specific purposes” (Görlach 2001:196) He defines them as “a specific linguistic pattern in which formal/structural characteristics have been conventionalized in a specific culture for certain well-defined and standardized uses of language” (Görlach 2004:105). According to him, when dealing with texts of a particular genre, readers and writers should be able to recognize “the correct use of linguistic features obligatory or expected” in it, “the adequate use of the formula with regard to topic, situation, addressee, medium, register, etc.” as well as “the identification of intentionally or inadvertently mixed types, or their misuse” (*ibid*).

Although Görlach mentions the conventionalization of formal/structural characteristics as a part of his definition of genre, it does not follow that all members of a particular genre are always closely alike. He notes that not all genres are as rigidly controlled in

regard to their structure, mentioning that “[i]t is to be expected that certain [genres] exhibit greater formal homogeneity, and historically a more consistent development towards structural rigidity than others do.” (Görlach 2004:108) Some genres, for example law texts, have very tight regulations on the form of the texts, whereas with other types of text writers have more freedom in formulating their message.

Görlach also stresses the point that if a genre exists, readers and writers should be aware of its designation (Görlach 2004:143). He claims that “[t]he names of [genres] show what categorizations exist: after conventions for the form and function of a specific type become established, a name will eventually be applied to it” (Görlach 2001:196). He adds, however, that words denoting genres can undergo semantic developments over time and, additionally, their referents can also alter their form (*ibid*) – both developments have touched the genre called ‘advertisement’, as will be seen more closely in a following chapter. Swales takes a less strict view on genre labels, noting that although “genre names ... constitute valuable ethnographic communication, [they] typically need further validation” (Swales 1990:58) and claims that the existence of nameless genres as well as genre names without any genres attached to them is a possibility (Swales 1990:57).

In this study, I will use the term genre to refer to a group of texts united by a common communicative purpose and sharing structural properties to a greater or smaller extent. The object of study in this thesis is to examine what these properties are in runaway slave advertisements.

## **5.2 Sub-genres, moves and other aspects to analyse**

Even if communicative purpose is agreed to be the defining feature of genres, the classification process of all texts into their respective genres is not without problems. Genres are seen in relation to one another, and not all texts fall neatly into a particular category, since there can also be overlap between different genres (Bhatia 2004:29). Furthermore, when classifying texts into genres according to their communicative

purpose, we are faced with the question of how far that communicative purpose should be generalized (Bhatia 2004:59). Bhatia notes that “[a]ny major change in the communicative purpose(s) is likely to give us a different genre; however, minor changes or modifications help us distinguish sub-genres” (Bhatia 1993:13) Genres can therefore be divided further on into sub-genres, depending on how many minor variables are taken into account. For example, the genre of commercial advertisements can be seen as containing a seemingly endless network of sub-genres. Runaway slave advertisements also have many closely related sub-genres, which shall be discussed in chapter 6.3.

Although the member texts of a particular genre are regarded as having one main communicational purpose, it is possible to find recurring smaller units that have their own purposes in the texts. For these smaller units, Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993) use the notion of a ‘move’. Texts belonging to a particular genre are characterized by having the same moves, often occurring in a fixed order. For example, Swales (1990) examines the moves that can be observed in the introductions of academic articles. Bhatia notes that “each move ... serves a typical communicative intention which is always subservient to the overall communicative purpose of the genre” (Bhatia 1993:31). These move-level communicative intentions may be realized by using different rhetorical strategies (*ibid*). It is also possible to recognize different moves in the runaway advertisements, and these shall be analysed in chapter 9.

Apart from the presence and order of different moves, there are many other aspects which contribute to the structural regularity of genres. Görlach lists the following linguistic components that a historical linguist can take into account when analysing texts belonging a particular genre:

- a) spelling and typography,
- b) vocabulary (including collocations and meaning)
- c) syntax (especially the use of block language)
- d) style (formality, expressiveness, etc.)
- e) traditions, intertextuality, quotations and allusions (Görlach 2004:143).

These should be considered in connection with evidence from social and cultural history (*ibid*). Out of the aforementioned aspects, spelling and typography were already briefly considered in chapters 4.2 and 4.3, whereas the others will be looked at in the analysis later (excluding the last one dealing with intertextuality, etc., as it does not seem to play a considerable role in the runaway advertisements).

## **6. Advertisements as a genre in the eighteenth century**

The beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century saw the rise of the modern newspaper also in the American colonies. Connected with the emergence of the newspaper was the emergence of several new genres, including that of the newspaper advertisement.

### **6.1 Newspapers in the American colonies**

In London, the history of regularly issued newspapers had started in 1665 with the publication of the *London Gazette*. This innovation was, however, not immediately carried over to the American colonies. The government was generally wary of printing presses, and it was not until 1638 that the first one was set up in the colonies (Mott 1962:6). Before colonial newspapers emerged, news was circulated via letters from one person to another in a neighbouring colony. Sometimes packets of newspapers from England were sent to and passed around in the colonies. Other sources of news for the colonists included official proclamations, pamphlets dealing with public questions and ballads founded on news events (Mott 1962:7-8). Slave-owners wishing to obtain the help of the general population in recapturing their slaves could resort to the “hue and cry” method (Hodges & Brown 1994: xxiv), i.e. official proclamations or gazettes used for catching lawbreakers.

Boston, the largest town in the colonies, was also the first one to get its own newspaper. After a first, failed attempt in 1690, the *Boston News-Letter* began publishing in 1704 (Mott 1962:11). The second largest colonial town in the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (moving on to the first place in the 1740s) was Philadelphia, and it was also the second



city to start the publication of its own newspaper – the *American Weekly Mercury* in 1719 (Mott 1962:24). Third in size as well as in the quest for its own newspaper was New York, where the newspaper business started in 1725 with the *New-York Gazette* (Mott 1962:30).

The southern colonies were a bit slower in the development of the printing industry and newspapers, possibly due to the “tendency towards larger farming units, which hindered the growth of populous towns” (Mott 1962:40). With the publication of the *Maryland Gazette* in 1727, Maryland became the fourth colony with its own newspaper. South Carolina got its own *Gazette* in 1732 and Virginia joined the ranks of colonies with newspapers in 1736 (Mott 1962:40-41). By 1765 all colonies except Delaware and New Jersey had at least one newspaper in operation, with the total of 23 weeklies being published in the American colonies and roughly the same number of papers had by that time been started being published but had subsequently been abandoned (Mott 1962:43).

Mott (1962:59) estimates that around the year 1765 about five per cent of the white colonial families received a weekly newspaper. This estimate is based on a white population of somewhat less than one and a half million and a newspaper circulation of about 14000 weekly. Mott adds, however, that a wider public was reached, since the papers, passed from hand to hand, attained multiple readers (*ibid.*).

## **6.2 On the term ‘Advertisement’**

The term ‘advertisement’ deserves to be examined more closely at this juncture. As was noted in section 4.1, the meaning of a label for a genre can change throughout time, and the term ‘advertisement’ offers a prime example of this phenomenon. The meaning of the term was initially much broader than it is today:

The word [advertisement], borrowed from the French in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, clearly relates to an action intended to draw someone’s attention, which by metonymic extension then came to designate the object that serves this purpose, i.e. a ‘notice’. Accordingly, many 18<sup>th</sup>-century books have advertisements right at the beginning, a [genre] which in modern diction we prefer to call a *preface*, *foreword* or *introduction*. (Görlach 2004:142)

This meaning then later became more specialized, but still retained the idea of “address[ing] the reader phrased in a way that raises and keeps his attention” (*ibid*). The *OED* gives the following definition for the present usage of the word: ‘A public notice or announcement .... usually, in writing or print, by placards, or in a journal; *spec.* a paid announcement in a newspaper or other print’ (*OED*, s.v. advertisement) and the *Collins Concise Dictionary* (1999) defines advertisement as ‘any public notice, as a printed display in a newspaper, short film on television, etc., designed to sell goods, publicize an event, etc.’

As these definitions show, advertisement is synonymous with ‘notice’ and ‘announcement’, even if nowadays the word most often brings to mind commercial advertising. The kinds of advertisements treated in this study are perhaps more typically given the label “notice” these days, but they shall be referred to as advertisements in the context of this study, since this seems to be the term favoured also by other researchers dealing with this kind of material, as well as the term used at the time for these kinds of texts.

The shortened version of the word, “ad”, can be regarded as belonging to a more colloquial register, but, for the sake of convenience, it is occasionally used in the analysis part this study to save space when listing the frequencies of some words and phrases in the advertisements.

### **6.3 The runaway advertisement – a separate (sub-)genre?**

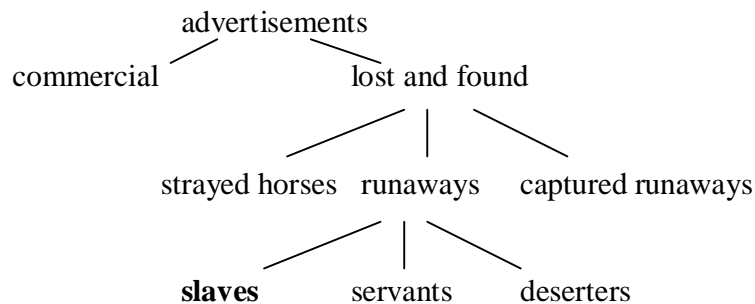
A pertinent question to ask is whether runaway slave advertisements do indeed form a separate sub-genre. It is not clear, whether the term “runaway (slave) advertisement” was used in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and at least the runaway advertisements that form the corpus of this study were found mixed alongside commercial and other kinds of advertisements in the newspaper, usually under the general heading “Advertisements”. But even if the people of the time were content not to divide advertisements into further

subgroups, modern day researchers seem to have the need to do so. For example, the Zurich English Newspaper corpus (ZEN), which contains texts from early British newspapers, divides the texts into separate text classes including “advertisement”, “announcement” and “lost and found” (Fries & Schneider 2000:10). The category of “lost and found” is a text class containing advertisements for lost property, for example horses (Fries & Schneider 2000:16). It would seem that runaway slave advertisements, too, fit well into this subcategory of “lost and found” advertisements, especially since Fries & Schneider also note that even announcements concerning eloped wives, which “are addressed to the general public” and “carry elements of legal announcements” could perhaps be included in this category as well (Fries & Schneider 2000:15-16).

Diller (2001:10) suggests using the notions ‘producers’ genres’ and ‘recipients’ genres’ to clarify the situation, noting that doing so “makes it legitimate for the recipient (and this includes the historian) to arrive at genre distinctions which differ from the author’s”. Therefore, even if the 18<sup>th</sup> century advertisers did not necessarily consciously divide the genre of advertisements into different sub-categories, I find it justifiable to regard runaway slave advertisements as a particular sub-genre in the wider subgenre of “lost and found” advertisements from the present-day researcher’s point of view.

Graphic 1 attempts to map out the field of 18<sup>th</sup> century advertisements, and to illustrate where the runaway slave advertisements are and what neighbouring sub-genres they have. The graphic is not meant to be inclusive, as there are surely also other examples that could be added.

Graphic 1 : *Runaway slave advertisements and related sub-genres*



The runaway slave advertisements can be seen as being closely linked to advertisements on other human runaways – indentured servants as well as military deserters. Eloped wives could probably belong somewhere in the chart as well. Particularly runaway servant advertisements are formally very close to runaway slave advertisements. The advertisements considering captured runaways, in their turn, also deal with the subject of fugitives, but from a slightly different perspective.

The formal and structural features belonging to the sub-genre of runaway slave advertisements shall be examined in the analysis part of this thesis paper.

#### **6.4 Features of eighteenth century advertisements**

As for the characteristics of 18<sup>th</sup> century advertisements, only the parts that are pertinent to runaway advertisements are discussed here, omitting features that are to be found only in commercial advertisements (the main focus of previous studies). Early newspaper texts, advertisements included, differed from their modern day counterparts already in their outer appearance – for one, there was very little typographical variation (Görlach 2001:76). Furthermore, whereas elliptical structures and other features of block language are standard features of modern-day advertisements, Görlach (2001:128) notes that at least commercial advertisements were surprisingly verbose in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The wordiness and visual monotony, were however, sometimes interrupted by illustrations and headlines.

##### **6.4.1 Illustrations**

After a period of visually “dull” newspaper texts, at some point wood engravings began to be used in front of advertisements (Gieszinger 2000:96). Gieszinger mentions that these illustrations in 18<sup>th</sup> century advertisements could be regarded as primary genre markers (Gieszinger, like Görlach, uses the term ‘text type’), i.e. elements which enable the readers to recognize the text as an advertisement at a first glance without having to

even read it (Gieszinger 2000:86). She notes that these illustrations could be seen as having a double function: they signalled, firstly, that the text was an advertisement (since other texts of the time did not carry illustrations) and secondly, the topic of the text (Gieszinger 2000:96). Shipping advertisements could be accompanied with a picture of a ship, and similarly, an illustration depicting a runaway is to be found in some of the advertisements in the corpus of this study. Turner comments on the subject of illustrations and how, after they became popular, they were demanded by nearly all advertisers. This resulted in their effect being lost and a lot of space being wasted, and in consequence many newspapers imposed a ban on illustrations for a long time (Turner 1965:56).



Picture 1: *The runaway illustration in the Virginia Gazette*

In the *Virginia Gazette* these illustrations make a brief appearance and then disappear again. The picture of a runaway (as seen in picture 1) is found in 17 Virginian advertisements between the years 1766-70. They are only to be found in one of the two *Virginia Gazettes* published at the time, and seem to accompany all the advertisements placed at the time. Unfortunately it is not possible to examine the popularity of this feature in the New York and Pennsylvanian advertisements. However, the few example pictures of these runaway advertisements show that at least for some time in the 1760s runaway advertisements in *The New-York Gazette; or, the Weekly Post-Boy* had similar kinds of illustrations.

## 6.4.2 Headlines

Studer (2003) has examined 18<sup>th</sup>-century newspaper texts by focusing on the types of headlines found in them, looking at their layout and pragmatic function. Since some of the notions he presents are useful in the present study, the main classifications he uses are shortly presented here. He notes that in the early newspapers “we encounter a confusing graphic layout in which various headline types interact and overlap with the running text” and that the main function of headlines was text structuring, by serving as a visual marker, and only secondarily they served a summarizing function (Studer 2003:22).

Studer divides headlines into five types: “major”, “minor”, “integrated”, “combined” and “embedded”. Major headlines are “clearly marked-off textual sequences which stand out from the immediate textual environment by spacing between the lines and larger, heavier type” (Studer 2003:23). In minor headlines, the text is “visually set off within the first line of the news item” and “a self-contained unit ... separated from the following text by a full stop” (ibid.). An integrated headline is “a headline constituted solely by typographical emphasis on the commencing phrase”. A combined headline has a major head followed by an integrated head (ibid), and the class of embedded headlines “includes texts in which display lettering occurs such that it is virtually impossible to distinguish between the headline part and the main body of text” (Studer 2003:24). The common factor in all headline types is display lettering (Studer 2003:26). Of these types, the integrated headline is by far the most common in the corpus of this study (see picture 2). There are also several instances of a combined headline (see picture 3), where the major head is always a definition of the reward sum that is being offered.

**R**AN away from the Subscriber's Plantation in *King & Queen County*, on the 27th of last Month. Two Negro Men, viz. one named *Cassay*, a lusty well-set Fellow, speaks good English, and had on when he went away, a Cotton Jacket & Breeches, &c. the other named *Bacchus*, a young squat Fellow, speaks good English: They have both been used to the House, and are cunning subtle Fellows; and are suppos'd to be gone towards *Williamsburg* or *Norfolk*, where they came from. Whoever brings the said Runaways or either of them to me in the aforesaid County, shall have a Pistole Reward for each and all reasonable Charges, besides what the Law allows, paid by  
*Alice Needle.*

Picture 2: Example of an integrated headline (VG :P March 14-21, 1744-5)

NATHANIEL W. DANDRIDGE.

*Five Pounds Reward.*

**R**UN away from the subscriber's plantation in *Gloucester County*, in *July* last, a Negro man named *STERLING*, about 6 feet high, who has a large body, though small legs and thighs, stoops very much when he walks, not of a very black complexion, has a blemish in one eye (or rather squints) and the other a large full eye; he carried with him two cotton waistcoats, two osnabrug shirts, two pair of breeches (one of Negro cotton, the other of osnabrug) two striped *Virginia* cloth waistcoats, and a *Dutch* blanket. He is an *African* born, talks very bad, and hard to be understood by those not well acquainted with him, though very sensible. Whoever brings the said Negro to me shall have the above reward.

*CREED HASKINS.*  
 CUMBERLAND, *March 1, 1770.*

Picture 3: Example of a combined headline (VG :PD March 22, 1770)

## 7. Corpus

The corpus of this study consists of 190 runaway slave advertisements. Of these, 100 are Virginian, 45 come from Pennsylvania and the same number from New York. The time span of the advertisements is from the 1730s to the 1770s. In this chapter I shall treat the reasons for choosing this corpus, the decisions that had to be made, as well as several problems that needed to be addressed.

## 7.1 The newspapers

The Virginian advertisements come from the *Virginia Gazette*. In fact, in the latter half of the 1770s, there were three competing papers that went by the same name and, in addition, others which used *Virginia Gazette* as a part of their title. Since the different newspapers were included in the database where the corpus of this study is drawn, the randomly chosen advertisements come from all the three competing *Virginia Gazettes*. The majority (86 ads) come from the oldest one, which was published first by Parks, then Hunter, (then Royle, but none of these advertisements are included the corpus), Purdie & Co., Purdie & Dixon and, lastly, Dixon & Hunter. In 1766 Rind started a competing *Virginia Gazette*, and 7 advertisements come from his paper. The third paper of the same name was started in 1775 by Purdie, and it is the source of 3 advertisements in the corpus. One advertisement comes from the paper *Virginia Gazette, or Norfolk Intelligencer* (published by Duncan).

All of the Pennsylvanian advertisements were originally published in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, a newspaper owned for decades by Benjamin Franklin. Although the *Pennsylvania Gazette* was not the only newspaper to be published in Pennsylvania in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, of all the colony's newspapers it had the widest circulation and it was published during the entire period (Smith & Wojtovicz 1989:5).

The New York advertisements come from several newspapers that were published in the colony of New York at the time. The first *New York Gazette* started publishing in 1725 and was soon joined by competitors – many of which, like was the case in Virginia, preferred to go by the same name. The majority (20 advertisements) come from the newspaper that for the most of the time was published under the name *The New-York Gazette: or, The Weekly Post-Boy*. Other sources include *The New-York Gazette: and the Weekly Mercury* (12 advertisements), *The New-York Gazette* (4 advertisements), *The New-York Weekly Journal* (3 advertisements), *Rivington's New-York Gazetteer*, later called *The Royal Gazette* (5 advertisements) and Weyman's *The New-York Gazette* (1 advertisement).



## 7.2 The compilers of the databases and books

The Virginian runaway notices come from the Virginia Runaways Project database on the Internet. This database has been compiled by Professor Thomas Costa at the University of Virginia's College at Wise. It contains, in addition to some 1000 runaway slave advertisements, advertisements concerning captured slaves, runaway servants and runaway deserters. The advertisements are transcribed, but additionally in most cases they also come with an image of the original text. Images of pages from the *Virginia Gazette* are also available for viewing on the Colonial Williamsburg Digital Library site, which gives the opportunity to see the advertisements in a larger context.

The Pennsylvanian advertisements for this study were taken from the book *Blacks Who Stole Themselves: Advertisements for Runaways in the Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728-1790* compiled by Billy G. Smith and Richard Wojtowicz. The book contains 300 advertisements concerning runaway slaves: most of these are runaway advertisements but some are notices on captured slaves. Additionally, there are 30 advertisements on fugitive indentured servants. The advertisements have been selected by the compilers on the basis of them having "the most varied, interesting, and extensive descriptions", but the compilers nevertheless claim that the sample "accurately reflects the information contained in all of the [some 1000] advertisements" published in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Smith & Wojtowicz 1989:5). Furthermore, the compilers claim that "[e]xcept for occasional silent alterations of punctuation and expansions of abbreviations to facilitate comprehension, the advertisements are reproduced exactly as they appeared in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*" (*ibid.*). As there are no images of the original advertisements, except for a few examples, there is no way to verify the accuracy of the statement. Neither are there any indications as to whether the advertisements contained, for example, illustrations.

The New York advertisements come from the book "*Pretends to Be Free*": *Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey*,

edited by Graham Russell Hodges and Alan Edward Brown. The book contains over 600 runaway slave advertisements concerning New York and New Jersey runaways. The advertisements are drawn from a number of different newspapers, some of which were published in other colonies. There are, for example, advertisements from the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, in cases where the runaway is originally from New York. However, for the present study, only advertisements that were taken from papers published in New York were chosen to represent the New York corpus. The editors claim to have “retained the original spelling, punctuation, and capitalisation” but to have occasionally made alterations of the spacing of the notices (Hodges & Brown 1994:xli). There is once again no indication on whether the advertisements contained illustrations, except for the few original images given as examples which show that at least some advertisements in New York papers did carry them.

### **7.3 Choice of corpus**

The time period of the advertisements studied spans from the 1730s to the 1770s. The 1730s represent the earliest decade from which there are newspapers and thus also runaway advertisements available from the three colonies. The choice to limit the corpus in the other end to the 1770s is mostly due to the availability of the corpus – the Virginian database and the book on New York advertisements do not contain many examples from the 1770s onwards. Furthermore, the 1770s also mark the end of the colonial period (in fact, the last years of the 1770s are more accurately referred to as belonging to the Revolutionary period). It should be born in mind, however, that runaway advertisements did not disappear from American newspapers at this juncture. For example, The Geography of Slavery database ([www.vcdh.virginia.edu/gos/](http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/gos/)) has several examples of Virginian slave owners advertising for their slaves in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century as well.

The choice to pick Virginia, Pennsylvania and New York was mostly dictated by the availability of the corpus, as I was unable to locate collections of runaway advertisements from other colonies. Somewhat unfortunately, these three represent

neighbouring colonies and do not come from extreme ends of the situation in regards to slavery. However, they do offer examples from both Southern and Northern colonies, and give the possibility to observe any differences in the formal aspects this genre may have in different places.

Especially due to the fact that not all colonies had their own newspapers in the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and also because slaves often escaped to neighbouring colonies, it is not uncommon to find advertisements placed by slave owners living in one colony in the newspaper of another colony. Thus, for example the Virginian newspapers can have advertisements on Pennsylvanian or Maryland runaways. However, in this study the advertisements are not grouped according to the origin of the runaway but rather by the place of publication of the newspapers.

As was stated earlier, I have chosen 100 Virginian, 45 Pennsylvanian and 45 New York advertisements, giving the total of 190 advertisements. The aim was to pick a sample with examples from the whole time period covered in the databases. This caused some problems, since the amount of available advertisements is not spread evenly throughout this time period: there are relatively few advertisements from the earlier years (sometimes only a couple per year) whereas in the later years there are several advertisements in every issue – in fact, more than half of the Virginian advertisements in the database come from the 1770s. For the Virginian corpus, 20 advertisements were randomly picked from every decade from the 1730s to the 1770s. Since there are less Pennsylvanian and New York advertisements available, less of them were chosen for the corpus of this study as well: 15 advertisements were picked from the time periods 1730-49, 1750-69 and 1770-1779.

The choice to focus mainly on Virginian advertisements was made for several reasons. Firstly, the presence of the original image in the Virginian advertisements allows for more analysis of the typography and layout of the advertisements, as well as the possibility to verify the accuracy of the transcription and to analyse abbreviations and punctuation. Secondly, as the Virginian database is larger and the selection of the corpus

can be made from all the advertisements available from the time period, instead of a small collection of advertisements that have not been compiled entirely randomly. This is the problem with the New York and Pennsylvania advertisements, as it is reasonable to assume that the compilers have chosen the “most interesting” advertisements in the books. This can skew the results as the interest of this study is to find out what the typical advertisement is like. This problem has been taken into account when examining the results of the analysis.

#### **7.4 Limiting the corpus**

This study has been limited solely to runaway slave advertisements. These are taken to mean advertisements placed by slave owners or other private persons advertising to ensure the capture of fugitive slaves. This means excluding, for example, notices placed by the authorities on runaways who have escaped from jail. Though these advertisements do concern runaway slaves, and they are naturally of value to researchers interested in the history of slavery, I consider their function to be slightly different from the “typical” runaway advertisements. Therefore, their exclusion seems justified, even though they are found grouped in both databases among the other runaway slave advertisements.

Advertisements for white runaway servants were also abundant in the newspapers of the period. A precursory observation would seem to indicate that these advertisements are structurally very much alike to slave advertisements. However, since the source material for the New York and Pennsylvanian advertisements does not include these notices, the choice was made not to include them in this study. I have, however, included in the study advertisements what the Virginian database labels “runaway mixed”, i.e. notices where owners advertise both for fugitive slaves and for fugitive white servants. These advertisements form a minority, but there are 11 instances in my corpus. It should be noted that although the category of runaway slave advertisements in general is rather clear-cut, there are still some borderline cases.

## **7.5 Referring to the advertisements**

In this study, when presenting examples from the advertisements, the name of the newspaper and the date of publication are given. To give a record of all the advertisements used as the corpus of the study, information has been included in appendix 1. For the New York and Pennsylvanian advertisements, the numbers under which they can be found in the books are given. For the Virginia Gazette, such simple reporting is not possible, as the source website does not number the advertisements – therefore, the appendix includes a list of all the advertisement that form the corpus, naming the newspaper and its date of publication. Unfortunately this is not an entirely perfect system, since newspapers of a certain date can contain several advertisements out of which only some are included in the corpus. Despite its slight imperfections, it does make it possible for the interested person to track down the used corpus.

In the analysis references are given for all longer examples from the corpus. However, if cited words or short phrases occur in several advertisements or when listing example words that can appear in a certain structure the references are sometimes omitted for the sake of practicality and the legibility of the text.

## **8. Runaway advertisements – some general information**

The purpose of this chapter is to present some general statistics on the runaway advertisements before moving on to the actual analysis in chapter 9. This preliminary information includes the typical length of the advertisements as well as the number of the runaways per advertisement. There is also some discussion on the writers and editors of these texts, and how they may have affected the shape of the advertisements.

### **8.1 Length of the advertisements**

The total word count of the corpus is 25942 words, giving the average of about 137 words per advertisement. If we look at the word count of each colony's newspapers

separately, it can be noted that a Virginian advertisement averages 126 words whereas the average word count of a Pennsylvanian advertisement is 173 words and 124 words for New York advertisements. The higher average in the case of the Pennsylvanian advertisements may of course be evidence of the fact that Pennsylvanian notices were typically longer than their counterparts in the neighbouring colonies. However, another, perhaps more likely, explanation can be the primary source used in this study – the compilers of the book may have chosen advertisements that are longer than average, since they offer more interesting information than short, very basic advertisements.

As for development in time, there seems no clear trend. The average word count for the Virginia corpus is lowest in the 1750s (just over 100 words/ad) and it is the highest in the 1730s (146 words/ad) and in the 1770s (144 words/ad). In Pennsylvania, the high point is reached in the 1750s-1760s (179 words/ad), the low in the 1770s (163 words/ad). In New York, too, the longest ads are in the 1750s-1760s (139 words/ad), whereas the shortest ones are the earliest ones from 1730s-1740s (94 words/ad). As the number of advertisements considered in this study is not very great, these findings do not necessarily represent the development in advertisement length accurately.

With 392 words, example (2) from the Virginian corpus is the longest advertisement of the whole corpus. The shortest advertisement, example (3), is 45 words long and comes from a New York newspaper.

- (2) August 17, 1739. RAN away, on the 5th of this Instant August, 1739, from the Subscriber, living in St. Mary's county, on Potowmack River, in Maryland, a Servant Man, nam'd Thomas Macoun, and with him a Negro Fellow, nam'd Robin. Macoun is a slender, neat made impudent Irishman, of a middle Stature, brown Complexion, very dark Eyebrows and Beard, a nimble upright Walk, and can speak broad Scotch. He professes Dancing, Fencing, Writing, Arithmetick, drawing of Pictures, and can play Legerdemain, or slight of Hand Tricks. He had on, when he went away, a large Hat, a brown Cue Wig, a dark colour'd old Cloth Coat, a German Serge Wastecoat, a Pair of short Linnen Breeches, a Pair of long Ditto, Thread Stockings, and a Pair of London Falls; he also took with him a Linnen Coat, and it's suspected, a Silver hilted Sword, 2 ruffled Shirts, one red Cloth Wastecoat, and one blew Ditto, and several other Things. The Negro is a Native of Madagascar, a nimble Fellow, short and slender, has

lost his Fore Teeth, and has a long Cut on one of his Shins: He had with him two dark colour'd Manx Cloth Jackets, one Ditto of Plains, fac'd with red, a red coat with Brass Buttons, and turn'd up with yellow, and an old grey Manx Cloth Great Coat. They went away in a 16 Foot Boat, with Schooner Sails, the Fore-sail very ragged, the Rudder painted red, and a Pair of red Oars. If they should be taken up and secured in Pennsylvania, it is requested, that Notice may be given to Mr. Franklin, Printer, in Philadelphia: If taken and secured in the southern Parts of Virginia, that Notice may be given to Mr. John Taylor, Merchant in Norfolk, or to William Parks, Printer, in Williamsburg: And if they should be taken and secured in Carolina, that Notice may be given to Dr. Abraham Blackhall, at Edenton, for which Notification, a Pistole Reward shall be given by either of the Persons before-mentioned, besides what the Law allows. And Whoever will apprehend the said Servant and Slave, and bring them to me, in St. Mary's County, on Potowmack, or to Major John Waughop, in Northumberland County, Virginia, on Potowmack River, shall have 6 Pistoles Reward, and reasonable Charges, paid by Major Waughop, aforesaid, or by me. Robert Chesley.  
(VG:P, Aug 10-17, 1739)

- (3) Run away from Samuel Tingley, a Negro Man named Andrew; had on when he went away, a blue Cloth Waistcoat, and green Breeches. Whoever takes up the said Negro, and brings him home, shall have Thirty Shillings Reward, and reasonable charges, paid by Samuel Tingley.  
(NYG\_RiWPB June 22, 1747)

The longest advertisement in the Pennsylvanian corpus is 331 words, and in the New York corpus 283 words. The shortest Virginian advertisement is 46 words and the shortest Pennsylvanian advertisement 89 words.

## **8.2 The number of runaways advertised**

Most of the advertisements concern only one runaway, but there are also some advertisers who seek for multiple runaways. This is typical particularly when the runaways have escaped at the same time. Table 1 summarizes the number of runaways advertised in the corpus.

Table 1: *Number of runaways per advertisement*

one runaway slave:	154 advertisements
two runaway slaves:	20 advertisements
three runaway slaves:	3 advertisements
four runaway slaves:	1 advertisement
six runaway slaves:	1 advertisement
slave & servant:	8 advertisements
slave & 2 servants:	1 advertisement
2 slaves & 1 servant:	2 advertisements

The advertisements that concern more than one runaway are generally longer than runaway advertisements for a single slave. The average length of an advertisement concerning only one fugitive is 126 words, compared to 184 words of the ones concerning multiple runaways. This tendency is not without exceptions; there are some advertisements for multiple runaways that are extremely brief. Notably, the advertisement for six runaways is only 61 words in length. The characteristic that often lengthens the advertisements is a detailed listing of clothes, etc., that the runaway took with him or a thorough account on where the runaway has been sighted.

### **8.3 Advertisement writers and editors**

When looking at the runaway advertisements and considering their regular features, it is necessary to consider the people behind the advertisements as well. The literacy rate in colonial America was not very considerable. Algeo notes that 75% of immigrants that arrived in the 17<sup>th</sup> century were indentured servants and therefore most probably illiterate, whereas the ruling elite formed only a small fraction of the population (2001b:10). However, the people behind the runaway advertisements are people who can afford slaves, and therefore it seems safe to assume that they generally belong to the better educated section of the population. Nevertheless, all advertisers probably cannot be assumed to have engaged in writing activities regularly, which may be observable in the stylistic variation of the texts. The advertisers are for the most part men, but there are also several advertisements placed by women.



The editors of the newspapers must also be considered as playing an important role here. The newspapers were generally edited by their printers. Mott (1962:46-47) notes that although many editors, like Franklin (*Pennsylvania Gazette*), Parks (*Virginia Gazette*) and Parker (*New-York Gazette and Weekly Post-Boy*) did their job very professionally, some other colonial printer-editors were “careless, lazy and comparatively illiterate” (Mott 1962:46-47). With the data available it is unfortunately impossible to know to what extent the editors affected the form of the runaway advertisements. As was seen in chapter 4, the use of italics and capital letters seems to have been the choice of the editor at least in the Virginian papers, whereas spelling variants of words were not altogether eliminated. Other than that, without access to handwritten advertisements sent to the printers, it is quite impossible to know how much involvement the editors had in shaping the text.

Possible editorial inclusions are the definition of the month in brackets after the word “Instant” in a few advertisements – possibly because sometimes the advertisement did not come out until the following month, in which case the clarification was needed. Of course these additions, too, can have been added by the advertisers themselves. Also the switch from “RAN away” to “RUN away” (see chapter 10.1.1) seems so sudden that one could suspect some editorial influence in the Virginian papers.

## **9. Move analysis**

### **9.1 Division of the advertisements into moves**

The main communicative purpose of the runaway slave advertisement is for the slave owner to ensure the capture of the runaway by enlisting the aid of his fellow colonists in the search. To do this, he or she must give various sorts of information in the advertisement – most importantly, a description of the runaways and a promise of reward for their capture. These different elements can be observed as separate *moves* of this particular genre. For the purpose of this study, I have distinguished the following

moves in the advertisements. Some of them are to be found in all advertisements, whereas others are not:

- 1) Place and date
- 2) Identifying the type of advertisement
- 3) When, where, from whom
- 4) Describing the runaway
- 5) Reward
- 6) Signature
- 7) Ensuring the runaway will not receive additional help
- 8) Directions on how to treat the runaway upon capture
- 9) Other (unexpected) moves

A runaway advertisement can be divided into these moves in the following manner:

NEW MILL Creek, Aug. 10, 1775.

Move 1

RUN away

Move 2

from the subscriber on Wednesday night, the ninth instant,

Move 3

a negro fellow named PETER, about 5 feet 11 inches high, of a yellow complexion; he hath a long swanking walk, is a little knock kneed and looks vile when attacked; had on when he went away a checque shirt and oznabrig trowsers.

Move 4

Whoever apprehends the said fellow and secures him so that I may get him, shall receive FIVE POUNDS reward if taken in this colony, and TEN POUNDS if taken out of it.

Move 5

I hereby forewarn all masters of vessels from harboring or carrying the said fellow out of the colony.

Move 7

SOLOMON HODGES.

Move 6

(VG\_NI Aug 15, 1775)

Next, I will examine the moves one by one, concentrating on looking at their purpose and whether they seem to be an integral or an optional part of the advertisement.

### 9.1.1 Move 1: Place and date

- (4) West-Pennsborough township, Cumberland county, August 22, 1770.  
(*PG* Aug 30, 1770)

Some of the advertisements have a separate line that contains either simply the date, or both the date and place (as seen in example 4) indicating where and when the advertisement was written. This information is typically right at the beginning; only a few advertisers (5 out of 58) have placed it right at the end of the text. Both place and date are indicated in 21 Virginian advertisements, whereas 15 only have the date. Of the Pennsylvanian advertisements, 19 have the date and place, and 3 have just the date. Only three New York advertisements have the place and date. It would therefore seem that this feature is most typical of Pennsylvanian ads (the percentage of ads with Move 1 is 49 % in Pennsylvania vs. the 36% for Virginia and mere 6% for New York).

In some cases this move does not really bring new necessary information, as the date of the runaway's escape and the place are later defined in the body of the text (usually in Move 3). When the date of the escape is not mentioned later, it can perhaps be assumed to be the one mentioned here. In Move 3 there can also be phrases like "3 weeks ago" or "yesterday morning", in which case the date expressed in Move 1 is needed as reference (the date of the publication of the paper is often very close, but it is not necessarily identical to the date on the advertisement). Mentioning the place serves its function, since not all advertisers later define where they can be found or where the slave should be returned. However, only one text overtly refers to Move 1 in the body of the text: "Brandon, April 16, 1745. MY Mulatto Coachman ... ran away from this Place, this Day" (*VG:P* May 9-16, 1745, emphasis mine).

### 9.1.2 Move 2: Identifying the type of advertisement

- (5) RUN AWAY, on Tuesday the 9<sup>th</sup> Inst. from the Subscriber, living at Turtle-Bay, a Mulatto Wench named Lens... (*NYGøWPB:P* June 18, 1761, emphasis mine)

Since the advertising section of a colonial newspaper contains all kinds of advertisements next to each other, it seems logical that the type of advertisement is identified to the reader as quickly as possible. In the corpus of this study, the main text (ignoring a possible heading stating the reward – dealt with in 9.1.5) most typically starts with the phrase “RAN away” or “RUN away” (as seen in example 5), thus giving away the type of advertisement. As it starts the advertisement, the first word is usually written in all capital letters, serving as an integrated headline.

This kind of an opening phrase is used in all but 12 advertisements. Of the twelve exceptions, two start with “STOLEN, or ran away” (*VG:H* Jan 30, 1752 and *VG:H* Apr 18, 1755), one “STOLEN, Stray’d, or Run-away” (*PG* Sept 18, 1740) and one with “Stol’n away” (*VG:P* Oct 5-12, 1739). The last example is one of the borderline cases of runaway advertisements, since it is possible to argue that this advertisement is not really a runaway advertisement, since the advertiser seems sure the slave has not run away on her own but has been stolen. However, it did not seem justified to exclude such advertisements from the corpus, since in all other ways they are alike to the others.

A slightly different wording is found in the advertisement starting “MADE his escape from the subscriber....” (*PG* Jan 18, 1770). The deviance here may be explained by the situation – in this case the slave had escaped from the advertiser as he was bringing him home from a jail. The advertisement is about two runaways, and the second paragraph dealing with the second runaway starts “Likewise run away”. This would seem to indicate that under normal conditions the advertiser would choose “run away” as the starting phrase for the notice.

In advertisements where Move 2 can be considered as being missing, the first words of the advertisement do not reveal the advertisement to be a runaway advertisement: Two advertisements start by mentioning the runaway: “MY Mulatto Coachman, named Robin, ran away” (*VG:P* May 9-16, 1745) and “My Negro Man Slave, named Anthony, ran away” (*VG:H* Nov 30, 1759). One advertisement starts: “LATELY absented from his master’s service, and is lurking about this city” (*PG* Feb 13, 1750). Two others, examples (6) and (7), start with the word “whereas”, which is a typical way to start e.g. news items in early newspapers, but it is not so common in advertisements.

- (6) Whereas a Negro Boy named Tom, belonging to Capt. Thomas Godwin, of Nansemond County, was sent on an Errand on the Thirteenth of this Instant, to a Place, about Three Miles distant from his Master's Plantation, and has not since been heard of.” (*VG:P* Dec 15-22, 1738)
- (7) WHEREAS Negroe Jo (who formerly liv’d with Samuel Ogle, Esq; then Governor of Maryland, as his Cook) about 13 Months ago run away from the Subscriber, who was then at Annapolis, and has since been out a Voyage in one of the Privateers belonging to Philadelphia, and is returned there (*PG* Oct 31, 1745)

In both of these cases the situation again is not the most typical one. In the first one, the advertiser does not call the boy a runaway but supposes he has been “decoy’d away”. The second situation, too, can perhaps be considered slightly unusual, since the advertiser (on account of having been on a voyage) places the advertisement over a year after the slave ran away.

Two advertisements upset the usual order further, by starting with Move 5. These cases will be examined in more detail in 9.2. Even though these untypical starts occur occasionally, it should be noticed that 94% of the advertisers stick to the prototypical opening. Starting the advertisement with “RUN away” enables the reader to know immediately that the advertiser is seeking a runaway – either a runaway slave or a servant.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Other members in “the lost and found” category seem to favour different starting phrases: advertisements dealing with military deserters usually start with “DESERTED”, whereas advertisements on lost horses start “STRAYED away” or “STOLEN”

As was mentioned in an earlier chapter, the illustration, too, immediately indicates to the reader what kind of an advertisement he or she is dealing with, furthermore separating fugitive slave notices from fugitive servant ones. The illustration can therefore be seen as forming a possible part of Move 2. It is found in 17 Virginian advertisements between the years 1766-70, and has possibly occurred in some of the New York and Pennsylvanian advertisements as well. In addition to this purpose of identifying the type of advertisement, it can also be seen as functioning as an eye-catcher.

### 9.1.3 Move 3: When, where, from whom

- (8) RUN AWAY, on Tuesday the 9<sup>th</sup> Inst. from the Subscriber, living at Turtle-Bay, a Mulatto Wench named Lens (NYGoWPB:P June 18, 1761, emphasis mine)

Typically, the third move in the advertisements announces when, where and from whom the runaway has escaped. This information is important, since it can also indicate in what area the runaway may possibly be found and if found, where and to whom he or she should be delivered. However, not all advertisers give all the information in Move 3, as some choose to indicate only the date and/or the place at this point.

Table 2: *Mentioning from whom the runaway has escaped in Move 3*

	Virginia	New York	Pennsylvania
"from the Subscriber('s plantation/etc.)"	73	11	26
name	10	26	13
neither	17	8	6

Typically, the advertiser's name is not mentioned here, but rather the phrase "from the subscriber(s)", or, more rarely e.g. "from the subscriber's plantation" is used. This happens in 73% of the Virginian and 58% of the Pennsylvanian advertisements, but only in 24% of the New York ads. The New York advertisements favour mentioning the actual name of the advertiser already in this move, as happens in 58% of the New York advertisements. In most cases the name then is later repeated in Move 6. Of the Pennsylvanian advertisements 29% mention the advertiser's name already in this move.

It seems that in the Pennsylvanian corpus this style becomes less used in the later advertisements as “from the Subscriber” gains in popularity. Only 10% of Virginian advertisements mention an actual name at this point, and some of these cases are ones where the person placing the advertisement is not the person from whom the slave has escaped (therefore making the use of “from the subscriber” impossible). In the cases where neither of the abovementioned options are used, a place can be named without any reference to the person, or the person can be indirectly pointed at with phrases like “from my House” (VG:P Oct 29-Nov 5, 1736).

#### **9.1.4 Move 4: Describing the runaway**

- (9) a very Black Mundingo Negro Man, called Jumper, aged about 30, of a middle Stature, and well set; has a long Scar on the Back of one of his Hands, and is bow leg'd. He has been in the Country about 2 Years, but talks pretty good English. He had on, when he went away, a white Plains Jacket and Breeches, an Oznabrigs Shirt, a Felt Hat, a Linen Cap, border'd with Callicoe, Shoes and Stockings. (VG:P Apr 14-21, 1738)

An important move is naturally the description of the runaway – as the advertiser is hoping others will help him catch the runaway slave, the need to identify the particular individual is evident. Example (9) shows a rather typical instance of Move 4. This move is also the most heterogeneous in the advertisements. Some advertisements contain a very detailed description of the fugitive’s appearance and other features, whereas others characterise the runaway only with a few words. This can be partly explained as a result of different situations: a plantation owner with many slaves working as field hands can find it difficult to remember particulars on one runaway, whereas a man whose only household servant has run off can give more information on the looks and behavioural quirks of the fugitive.

Previous studies (as mentioned in chapter 2) particularly focus on the information that is given in this part, as it is the one that gives the greatest insights into the slaves’ lives. These studies have concerned themselves with providing statistics on e.g. the age, the skills or physical characteristics mentioned. Both the source books used for the New

York and Pennsylvanian advertisements offer statistics on the runaways featured in the books' advertisements. As such studies have been conducted before, these aspects are not the principal focus of the present study. However, a general overview of the contents of Move 4 is needed, and it is presented in the following subchapters.

#### 9.1.4.1 Initial characterisation and name

In the beginning, the runaway is identified as a “negro” or a “mulatto”<sup>2</sup>, followed by the definition of the sex of the runaway, sometimes with some descriptive adjectives. E.g. “a young dark Mulatto fellow” (*VG:PD* June 1, 1769); “a likely Negroe Wench” (*VG:H* June 18, 1752) or “a Negro Man Slave” (*PG* July 2, 1772). This initial phrase is usually followed by “named [name of fugitive]”. Only in a few cases is the name mentioned first. Rare, too, is to mention the runaway's name only later on in the description, but it does happen occasionally, as example (10) demonstrates.

- (10) a new Negroe Girl about 16 or 18 Years of Age, short Stature, branded upon the Breast N R mark'd round the Neck with three Rows like Beads, suppos'd to be a Whedaw Negroe; has on a check'd Cotten Petticoat and a Seersucker Jacket. Her name is Rose. (*PG* June 27, 1734)

As the example is the earliest from the Pennsylvanian corpus, it is tempting to suspect the deviance in this case has to do with norms not yet being quite so fixed for such advertisements and their typical organization.

There are some advertisements where the runaway is not named. This is often the case with Virginian slaves that are recent purchases and have not been long in the country. Sometimes the owner lists several names for the runaway, e.g. “named Guy, alias James” (*PG* Feb 19, 1756) or “The said Negroe is named Jupiter, though it is likely he may call himself by his Negroe Name, which is Mueyon, or Omtee” (*PG* Oct 27, 1763).

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<sup>2</sup> There are also a few New York and Pennsylvanian advertisements that mention the slave being partly Indian, e.g. “a Mollato servant Man of the darkest hue, half Indian, half Negro” (*NYWJ* July 30, 1744) and “Negroe man ... has some Indian blood in him” (*PG* Oct 1 1747)



This is needed when the advertiser suspects that the fugitive will not go by the name he has been officially given.

Meaders, in his study of South Carolinian advertisements (1975:312), notes that “[p]lanters relied on fugitives’ names more than any other identification”. In the corpus of this study, there are some cases where this seems to be the case, as the advertiser gives no further description:

- (11) Run away from John Pell of the Mannor of Pelham, a Negro wench named Bell, a boy named Janneau, a girl named Tamar, another named Dianah, another named Isabel, also a Negro Man named Lewis. (*NYG\_RiWPB* Nov 14, 1748)
- (12) Likewise run away from the subscriber, an old Negroe man, named Philip. (*PG* June 28, 1770)

Possibly the advertiser expects that the fugitives, if captured, will tell their names, which will permit their return to their master. Another possible explanation for the lack of other kinds of description in example (11) could be that, since the group is rather large and has ran away together, it is most easily identifiable as a group – therefore, additional individual information is not seen as necessary. Example (12) comes from the end of an advertisement that contains a detailed description of another runaway. It can be that this Philip, an old slave, is not worth advertising for individually, but a mention of him is added into the advertisement as an afterthought.

#### **9.1.4.2 Physical description**

As was seen in the previous section, some advertisers are content only naming the slave; however, most do give some description of the physical appearance of the runaway. There is great variety in what is mentioned in the advertisements. Often included are the age and height of the fugitive (either in feet and inches, or in more general terms, like “tall” or “middle stature”). Other comments on body structure include for example “likely”, “well-set” or “slender”. The skin colour is often described as well. A more thorough look at the typical adjectives will be in chapter 10.3.1.

Apart from the general physical appearance, there can be comments on more precise aspects of the escapee's outer appearance. This includes remarks on, for example, the runaway's hairstyle (e.g. "bushy Hair") or some particular parts of the body (e.g. "thick Lips", "small Eyes" or "small Forehead"). As the slaves, frequent runaways in particular, were often subject to cruel corporal punishments, a very common aspect of physical description is the mentioning of scars, burn marks, missing teeth or other bodily disfigurements.

Comments on the "look" of the slave are for example "sly", "down" or "bold" "look/countenance". These comments are evidence of the owners grouping their slaves into perceived elementary personality types, as is noted by Smith and Wojtovicz (1989:3) and Meaders (1975:309). Although interesting, this is not further studied in the present thesis, as it does not touch the generic aspects of the texts very directly. However, it is perhaps worth noting that the compilers of the book on New York advertisements mention that advertisers in the North generally avoided these general, highly subjective statements, and preferred to describe more clearly distinguished physical aspects (Hodges and Brown 1994:xxxi).

#### **9.1.4.3 Skills and behaviour**

The advertiser can also include information on the behaviour and skills of the runaway. Especially frequently there are comments on language skills, which are often connected to whether the slave is e.g. "Virginia born" or how long he or she has already lived in the colonies. Most often it is commented that the slave "speaks/talks (very/pretty) good English". Many runaways are also reported speaking "broken English". The Virginia corpus also has relatively many runaways who "can't speak English", and, for example, one advertiser informs that his runaway "speaks but little English, and I believe he can't tell his Masters Name" (*VG:P* Sept 19-26, 1745). In the Pennsylvanian and New York advertisements, the slaves' English skills seem to be generally better, and several slaves are mentioned speaking other languages as well: mostly Dutch (not unexpectedly, since New York in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was a Dutch colony) but sometimes also Spanish, French

and “Indian”. Other comments on speech include a tendency to stutter, and one advertiser even notes that the fugitive “in conversation frequently uses the words moreover and likewise” (*VG:Pu* March 22, 1776).

Some advertisements mention the trade (cooper, blacksmith, etc.) or work skills possessed by the slave (e.g. “understands most parts of the farming business” *PG* July 20, 1774). Other skills that are often mentioned are the ability to read and write, the latter often in connection with the assumption that the runaway may have forged a pass and now “pretends to be free”. Several advertisers also inform the reader of the slave’s proficiency with different musical instruments.

Although many advertisements give only brief descriptions, it is in the advertiser’s own interest to come up with descriptions on unique qualities of the particular runaway. This can be difficult, as noted by one advertiser, who, after giving general information on the runaway’s outer appearance, states:

- (13) I recollect nothing to distinguish this fellow by, more than is mentioned, except a remarkable turning of his eyes and winking, with some hesitation before he replies upon being spoken to. (*VG:Pu* Sept 6, 1777)

Other unique behaviour patterns reported by advertisers include, for example “he chews tobacco and is very apt to ask any person he sees use it for a chew” (*PG* Aug 16, 1775) or “She is fond of Liquor, and apt to sing indecent and Sailor Songs when so” (*VG:PD* Jan 20, 1774). Reporting these patterns of behaviour is done to make identifying the fugitive easier, or perhaps also in some cases to highlight bad personality features (more in 10.3.2).

#### **9.1.4.4 Clothing**

Many advertisements include an extremely detailed listing of the clothes the runaways had on, as well as any additional clothing they may have taken with them. Only 18 Virginian, 3 New York and 9 Pennsylvanian advertisements fail to make any reference at all to the clothing of the fugitives. Some of these cases are of runaways that have been

missing for months or even over a year, in which case a description of clothing can hardly be expected. This sub-part of the description almost always starts with “(He/she) had on” (see chapter 10.1.2), after which follows the list of clothes, often mentioning everything from shirts to stockings, from trousers to hats, and sometimes including even handkerchiefs. The advertisers sometimes also mention additional items (like guns, horses or money) that the runaways have stolen and/or taken with them.

The list of clothes is sometimes presented even when the advertiser supposes the fugitive has already changed them.

- (14) Had on when he went away, a Cotton Waistcoat, dy'd yellow, a striped Virginia-Cloth Jacket and Breeches, a Virginia Cotton Shirt, an old Pair of Shoes and Stockings; but I am since informed he has changed his Apparel. (VG:P March 27-April 3, 1746)

Example (14) and other comments like “his clothes uncertain” (PG June 28, 1770) which do not really bring helpful information seem to indicate that the list of clothes is seen as such a fixed feature in the advertisements that some advertisers feel the need to mention it even when it does not help to identify the runaway in any way. The vocabulary used in this part is treated in chapter 10.3.3 in more detail.

#### **9.1.4.5 Previous owners and suspected heading**

The advertiser sometimes also lists places where the runaway has been sighted since his or her escape, or the way they were seen heading. Some advertisements give information on the previous owner(s) of the runaway, and express the suspicion that the runaways may be attempting to return there. Even when it is not overtly stated that the runaway is thought to be heading that way, it is probably the reason why the previous owners are mentioned. The suspicion that the runaway may seek to get on board some vessel is also often brought up.

The advertisers sometimes offer explanations on why they suspect the fugitive to be heading to the mentioned place. Most typically the reason is family connections the slave has had to leave behind, e.g. “It is suppos'd he is gone to Richmond County, where he has a Wife.” (*VG:P* March 20-27, 1746). One advertiser even mentions the fugitive is aiming for Great Britain “from a knowledge he has of the late determination of Somerset's case” (*VG:R* June 30, 1774), referring to a legal case about the abolishment of slavery there.

Although one advertiser feels the need to point out of the runaway that “As he was only landed in the country three days before his elopement, he could therefore have no particular route to prosecute” (*VG:PD* June 23, 1768), most advertisers do not offer any guesses on where the runaway may be headed. In other words, this sub-part of the description is not a very fixed feature, when compared to, for example, the description of clothing.

### **9.1.5 Move 5: Reward**

- (14) Whoever secures him, and delivers him to me, shall receive FIVE POUNDS reward, if taken in this colony, and TEN POUNDS if taken in any other. (*VG:PD* Feb 11, 1768)

Whereas the previous moves were mostly concerned with giving the readers of the advertisement the means to find and identify the runaway, this move gives them the incentive to do so. The promise of a reward is an integral part of the runaway advertisements, and it is found in all the advertisements of the corpus. This move has two parts: firstly, it is delineated under what conditions the reward can be collected, and secondly, the size of the reward is defined. Many advertisements also explicitly state who will pay the said reward. If the advertiser suspects the slave has been stolen, additional rewards may be offered for the capture of the thief or for information allowing the advertiser to prosecute him.

The promised reward is either expressed explicitly (in pistoles, shillings, pounds or dollars) or, more rarely, in vaguer terms. These vague terms appear in 11 Virginian advertisements and are more popular in the earlier advertisements. Three New York advertisements do not precise the reward, whereas all Pennsylvanian advertisements mention some precise sum. The vague terms used include, for example, “handsomely rewarded” (*VG:P* Sept 19-26, 1745) or a “reasonable Reward” (*NYG\_RiWPB* July 10, 1749).

The advertiser may list several different reward sums, depending, for example, on how far the runaway has travelled or on whether he is returned to his master or just secured to the nearest jail. A few Virginian advertisers who have had their slave outlawed offer different sums depending on whether the slave is killed or brought home alive. Even when a precise reward sum is mentioned in the advertisement, most of the advertisers give the promise to pay even more to ensure people will go through some additional trouble to get their slaves. One advertiser phrases it in the manner seen in example (15).

- (15)       and also a reasonable Allowance for the Charge of bringing them, in Case they should be taken at any great Distance (*PG* Sept 21, 1738)

However, most advertisers favour expressing this more concisely, promising to pay “(all) reasonable charges” in addition to the reward offered. This phrase is used particularly in the New York and Pennsylvania advertisements, whereas the Virginian advertisements are characterized by another phrase, “besides what the Law allows” (more in chapter 10.1.3).

Precise sums are probably favoured over vaguer expressions because expressions like “handsomely rewarded” are subjective and the readers cannot be sure capturing the runaway will really be worth their trouble. However, naming a precise sum has its drawbacks, too: the advertiser does not know how far the slave has escaped and a bigger sum may be needed to motivate the readers to bring the slaves back from a great distance. Trying to define different prices for different distances can result in long and quite complicated sentences, as can be seen from example (16).

- (16) Whoever apprehends the said slave, and has him secured in a gaol, shall have 40 s. if taken up on the north side of James river, 5 l. if taken up on the south side, and 4 d. a mile if delivered to me in Spotsylvania, besides the reward for taking up. *VG:PD* (May 21, 1767).

The easiest solution seems to be to promise the payment of “all reasonable charges” on top of the named reward. That way the readers are given a minimum sum they will be sure to receive and a promise of a flexible extra on top of it.

Some advertisers also place the reward sum already in a headline in the beginning of the advertisement. This happens in 3 *Virginian*, 7 *New York* and 15 *Pennsylvanian* advertisements. All of these advertisements come from the 1760s or the 1770s, and it seems that at least in Pennsylvania in the 1770s the “reward as a headline” became almost the standard. It could be that this practise became more common as more and more people placed runaway advertisements in the papers, and the need to attract the readers’ attention became more critical.

### **9.1.6 Move 6: Signature**

- (17) all reasonable charges, paid by me, FRANCES HOLLAND. (*NYG\_WM* July 10, 1775, emphasis mine)

The majority of the advertisements end with the advertiser’s name. Typically only one person is the subscriber, but occasionally there are two or three names in the end. The name of the advertiser can either be totally set apart from the rest of the text or it can form the end of the sentence concerning the reward, as is seen in example (17). Even in the cases, where the signature forms a part of the last sentence, it is usually slightly set apart from the main text at least in the *Virginian* advertisements. For the *New York* and *Pennsylvanian* corpus, where the original images are not available, these matters of layout cannot be so simply observed.

Table 3: *Placement of Move 6 in the advertisements*

	category 1:	category 2:	category 3
Virginia	25	35	40
New York	5	30	10
Pennsylvania	5	40	0
	category 1: signature set seperately		
	category 2: signature at the end, but forming part of the previous sentence		
	category 3: no separate signature		

Of the Virginian advertisements, 60 contain Move 6. All Pennsylvanian advertisements have this move, as do 35 (i.e. 77%) of the New York ones. In the cases where there is no Move 6, often the name of the person mentioned in Move 3 can be assumed to be that of the advertiser. The only highly puzzling advertisement is example (18):

- (18) WILLIAMSBURG, January 7, 1773. RUN away, last Monday Night, a new Negro Boy about five Feet two or three Inches high, fifteen Years old, or thereabouts, very likely, and speaks but few Words of English; he had on, when he went away, a new brown Bearskin Jacket with large white Metal Buttons, old blue Breeches with Lining, Country knit brown Stockings, and a light Pair of Shoes with Straps. He was purchased last November of Mr. Adam Flemming, Merchant at Cabin Point, when in Williamsburg. Whoever secures him so that he may be had, or delivers him at the Post Office, shall be rewarded according to the Trouble they may be at.  
(VG:PD Jan 7, 1773)

This example does not seem to contain the advertiser’s name anywhere, which, unless it is an error made by the writer or the printer, is highly unusual. In some cases, the name can also be deeply integrated into Move 5, e.g. “Whoever takes up the said Negroe, and conveys him safe to Col. Daniel Parke Custis, in New-Kent County, shall have a Pistole Reward, besides what the Law allows” (VG:P Apr 3-10, 1746, emphasis mine) – I have grouped cases like these into category 3, i.e. as not having Move 6. This is due to the fact that, without a separate signature, it is sometimes unclear who exactly has placed the notice. This is the case e.g. in example (19).

- (19) Ran away last Night from the Sloop Walter, William Price, Master, lying in Rotten Row; a Negro Man, named Ralph ... Any Person taking up the



said negro, and bringing him to Mr. Waddel Cunningham, Merchant, New-York, or to Mr. Alexander Hamilton, Merchant in Philadelphia, shall receive 5 dollars reward, and reasonable charges. (*NYGoWPB* Dec 26, 1757)

Even though many other advertisers, too, mention several people the runaway can be returned to, they usually mention their own name separately at the end, e.g. “Whoever conveys him to me in Culpeper, or to Mr. Joseph Holladay, inspector in Fredericksburg, shall receive TWO POUNDS reward. THOMAS GRAVES.” (*VG:R* Sept 29, 1768). In these cases it is evident who the person who has placed the notice is.

In the cases where there is a clear Move 6, the New York and Pennsylvanian advertisements favour having it as the ending of the previous sentence (only 5 advertisers in both colonies chose to place the signature entirely separately from the rest of the text). In the Virginian advertisements, this preference is not so marked, as 35 advertisers choose this option, and in 25 advertisements the name is not part of the previous sentence.

### **9.1.7 Move 7: Ensuring the runaway will not receive help**

- (20) N.B. All Persons are forbid to harbour or entertain said Wench at their peril. Likewise, all Masters of Vessels are forbid to carry her off. (*NYGoWPB:P* June 18, 1761)

In addition to attempting to enlist the help of people to capture the runaway, some advertisers also seek to make sure nobody will be inclined to help the runaway further. This means warning people, masters of vessels in particular, not to transport the fugitive, or to “harbour” or “entertain” him or her. The advertisers often add a threat of legal action in case their warnings are not heeded. As is seen in example (20), this is typically expressed by the phrase “at their Peril” (as happens in 13 ads), although some advertisers, like the one in example (21), stress the point even more:

- (21) N.B. All Masters of Vessels are forbid to carry off said Servant, as they would not escape the utmost Rigour of the Law in that case made and provided. (*NYGoWPB* Oct 15, 1753)

Warnings and threats are the usual way to accomplish Move 7 when it is present. However, example (22) shows that advertisers could also choose a different approach to accomplish this move.

- (22) N.B. It is earnestly requested and presumed no gentlemen will harbour the said run away negro. (*NYG\_WM* Sept 22, 1777)

There are no threats or warnings, but the inference is that if the reader counts himself a “gentleman” he will not be aiding the runaways. The different speech acts found in the advertisements will be examined more closely in chapter 11.1.1.

This move is found in only a minority of the advertisements. It occurs only in 8 Virginian advertisements (i.e. 8%). It is more popular in New York and Pennsylvanian corpus. The New York corpus contains 10 (i.e. 22%) and the Pennsylvanian one 11 advertisements (i.e. 24%) with such moves. In all the cases, this move is more likely to appear in the later years, and no advertisements from the 1730s and 1740s have it. As these warnings typically concern masters of vessels, such warnings are not included if escape by water is not suspected. Hodges and Brown (1994:xxi) note that from the 1750s onwards many New York masters hired out their slaves as sailors; furthermore, “sea captains and wharfingers enlisted crews with few questions about background”. This provided opportunities to runaways, and the need for advertisers to issue warnings to the masters of vessels.

### **9.1.8 Move 8: Instructions on the treatment of the captured runaway**

Apart from the basic instructions given in Move 5, i.e. information on where the slave should be taken to claim the reward, some advertisers give additional directions on how the runaway should be treated. These directions are treated here as a separate move, Move 8. One instruction that some advertisers feel the need to give is that the runaway

must be secured with extra caution. This happens only in three advertisements of the corpus. Example (23) shows one instance of this.

- (23) Whoever takes up the said Negroe, is desired not to trust him a Moment till he is put in Irons, and secured in some of His Majesty's Goals, otherwise (his Crime being great) he will certainly give them the slip (*PG* Oct 22, 1761)

The need for extra caution is usually justified by noting that the runaway is particularly “artful” and prone to escape. Another feature, which in my corpus appears in three Virginian advertisements, is the definition of a punishment that the owner wishes the runaway to receive.

- (24) N.B. As he ran away without any Cause, I desire he may be punish'd by Whipping, as the Law directs. (*VG:P* Mar 20-27, 1746)

The slave owner in example (24) feels the need to justify the punishment by claiming that the runaway escaped “without any Cause”. The other two advertisers who express their desire for the runaway to be whipped do not bother giving a particular reason for the punishment. Such justification was in fact not really needed, as the slave code did affirm whipping as punishment to runaways.

### **9.1.9 Move 9: Other (unexpected) moves**

Some advertisers incorporate somewhat surprising moves into their runaway advertisements. The advertiser in example (25) uses the advertisement to make a declaration.

- (25) I am informed he has a general pass, signed William Smith, and goes for a freeman, under the name of Robert Alexander; he likewise pretends to have a discharge, and says he served his time in Augusta country; but, I do hereby certify, he is a slave for life; (*PG* Dec 30, 1772)

It seems that this move is made not only to ensure the capture of the slave this time, but also to prevent him from making an easy escape at a later time by claiming to be a free person.

As was mentioned in the treatment of Move 5, advertisers can offer rewards on information that leads to the prosecution of people who have stolen or helped the particular runaway. One Pennsylvanian advertiser, in example (26), gives a call for more general information, not pertaining only to the runaway advertised in the main part of the advertisement.

- (26) N.B. As the subscriber is certain there are people that encourage her Negroes, by giving them liquor, and harbouring them in their houses, to her great detriment and loss; and as she hath forewarned them of such underhand dealings by advertisement, published in Dutch and English some time ago: She hereby now offers a reasonable reward to any one who will make information, or discover to her the name or names of such persons, who act in so unjustifiable a manner, that she may prosecute them according to law. (PG July 28 1748, emphasis mine)

At least two advertisers (examples (27) and (28)) also try to make sure their advertisements will have a maximum effect.

- (27) N.B. As inserting the Advertisement in the several News-Papers is judged the most expeditious Method of spreading them far and near, if any Gentleman will be so kind, when they have read their Papers, to cut out the Advertisement, and set it up in the most publick Place, it will be esteemed a Favour; (PG Oct 22, 1761, emphasis mine)
- (28) N.B. The subscriber requests this advertisement may be carefully kept and taken notice of for several years. (PG July 24, 1776, emphasis mine)

Example (27) wants to reach as many people as possible, including people who do not even subscribe to the newspaper. The advertiser in example (28) seems to be trying to avoid having to place new advertisements pertaining to the same runaway in the case that the slave escapes again or remains at large for a longer time. The advertiser in example (28) lives in Maryland, which further explains his eagerness to avoid repeated advertising in Pennsylvanian papers.

All the abovementioned moves, though not usual, are all still connected to the general purpose of the runaway advertisement genre. They all in some way make the slave's escape harder. This is not the case in example (29), which can be found at the end of a runaway advertisement placed by one Peter Low.

- (29) N.B. The said Peter Low, continues to make and sell, CHOCOLATTE at his House the upper end of Maiden-Lane. (*NYGoWPB* March 18, 1771)

This move can be classified as a mini-sized commercial advertisement. I have run into a couple of similar cases in the Virginian database even though none occur in the corpus of the present study. It is most likely a case of getting two advertisements for the price of one. Since the small commercial advertisement is tacked to the end of the actual runaway notice, it probably does not add to the cost of placing the advertisement.

## **9.2 The organization of the moves**

As was already mentioned, Move 4 (description of the runaway) and Move 5 (reward) are the most integral to the advertisement. Move 2, which identifies the advertisement to be a runaway advertisement, is also to be found in the beginning of nearly every text in the corpus. Move 3 (where, when and from whom) overlaps partly with Moves 1 (date and place) and 6 (signature). This means that some of them (most typically Move 1) can be omitted, if all the necessary information is given in the others. The rest (Moves 7, 8 and 9) are more optional, and occur only occasionally in the advertisements.

As for their respective order, Move 1, when present, is usually the first or otherwise the very last. Next come Moves 2, 3, 4 and 5. There are only two New York advertisements, examples (30) and (31), that reverse the order of the two main moves, i.e. the reward and the description, in the corpus.

- (30) Forty Dollars reward and all reasonable charges shall be paid to any person that secures and brings to William Kelly of the City of New York,

merchant, a negro man named Norton Minors who ran away from his masters, Messrs. Bodkun and Farrall on the Island of St. Croix, on the first Day of July last; **is by trade a Caulker and Ship Carpenter, has lived at Newbury in New England, was the property of Mr. Mark Quayne, who sold him to Mr. Craddock at Nevis, from whom the above gentlemen bought him about three years ago, is about five feet eight inches high, aged about 37, speaks English, reads and writes, and is a very sensible fellow.** (*NYGoWPB:P* Nov 20, 1760, emphasis mine)

- (31) Forty Shillings reward, with all reasonable charges will be given to any person who will bring to JOHN DE LANCEY, in the delivery, or secure in New-York or county of Westchester, a Negro man, who has left his mistress. **He is a good looking fellow, about five feet eight or nine inches high, civil spoken, a great cockscomb, and one of the best waiters at a table in this country; plays upon the French horn, is a tolerable good cook, coachman and groom, but his vanity proving more powerful than his honesty, he fraudulently obtained a silver watch, which being discovered it is imagined occasioned his going off. He has several suits of good cloaths, was generally called Cæsar, but names himself Joseph Low.** (*NYG\_WM* Nov 27, 1775, emphasis mine)

The order of moves in these advertisements is Move 5 (underlined in the examples), Move 3 (although it is not very prominent in example (31)) and Move 4 (bolded in the examples). The reason for this unusual order is probably the desire to reveal the reward straight away to capture the reader's attention. As was already mentioned, this is in some other advertisements done by placing the reward sum as a headline – however, in those cases the order of Moves 3 and 4 is not reversed, and the reward sum is mentioned again in Move 4.

Move 6 (the signature), when present, follows Move 5 (in many cases forming the end of the sentence concerning the reward, as was noted previously). Moves 7, 8 and 9, as they are not that fixed, do not seem to have a fixed position either. They are sometimes placed before Move 5, sometimes between it and Move 6. Most often they are found in a separate post-script right at the end of the advertisement.

### 9.2.1 Post-script

Some advertisements contain information after the signature. This information set apart in the post-script usually starts with the Latin abbreviation *N.B.* The Virginian advertisements contain 13 such additions (i.e. it is found in 13% of the ads). They are more common in the two other colonies, with 11 advertisements in New York (i.e. 24%) and 19 in the Pennsylvanian corpus (i.e. 42%). Of all these, only 5 do not start with *N.B.*; one Virginian post-script starts with a symbol made of 3 dots, and as for the other colonies, since the original images are not available, it is possible they have some kind of marking symbols at the beginning, too. Apart from the Moves 7, 8 and 9, some other kinds of information the advertiser wants to highlight can be placed here. This usually means that information that could also be placed in Move 4 is mentioned here: particular items, like horses, canoes or fake passes, the runaway has with him, the slave being outlawed, some particular habits of the runaway (e.g. “is very fond of the Fiddle” *NYG:R* Nov 3, 1774) or his suspected destination.

It would seem that at least in one case, example (32), the post-script was in fact written at a later time and added to an advertisement that had already been published once.

- (32) *N.B.* Since he first went away, he came privately into the House in the Night, and has taken away the rest of his cloathes, viz. A blue camblet Coat, a Pair of Leather Breeches, shoes and stockings, so that he may possibly change his dress and appear in them. All masters of Vessels, are hereby forewarned not to carry him off, and all Persons are forbid to harbour him, as they shall answer it at their peril. (*NYM* March 12, 1764)

The date of escape mentioned in Move 2 of the advertisement where example (32) comes from is February 24<sup>th</sup>, and the paper came out on March 12<sup>th</sup>, which supports this theory. In most cases, however, the *N.B.* seems to have been written at the same time as the rest of the advertisement.

### 9.2.2 Organization in advertisements for multiple runaways

As was mentioned, although most notices concern only one runaway, advertisements dealing with multiple fugitives are not uncommon either. In the multiple runaway advertisements the advertisers have organized the moves in several different ways. One possibility is to mention the number of runaways right at the beginning, after which they are named and described individually, as happens in example (33).

- (33) RUN away from Westover, on Friday Night last, three young Negro men, ditchers by trade. HARRY, a likely stout fellow, above the middle size, has a surly look, and generally wears his beard long. NICK, a dark Mulatto, of the middle size, well made, and very sensible; he has a remarkable white lock of hair in the fore part of his head. GEORGE, a tall slim black fellow. (VG:PD Dec 3, 1767, emphasis mine)

In other cases, there is no indication in the beginning, whether the advertisement is about one or multiple runaways. After one runaway is described, a new one is introduced by “Also” (as in example (34)) or “Also run away” (as in example (35)).

- (34) RUN away from the subscriber, in King & Queen county, a Negro man named BEN about six feet high, a very black fellow, his right knee so much bent in, that when he walks it knocks much against the other. Also a Negro woman named ALICE, about five feet eight inches high, of a yellow complexion; and has remarkable large eyes. (VG:R Aug 10, 1769, emphasis mine)
- (35) RUN away from the subscriber, on the 17<sup>th</sup> instant, a Negroe lad, called Ned ... Also run away the 20<sup>th</sup> instant, from the subscriber, a Spanish Negroe man, called Mona (PG July 28, 1748, emphasis mine)

Usually Move 5 follows right at the end, after all the runaways have been described. However, two advertisements in the corpus have a sentence defining the reward following all the runaway descriptions separately, as is seen in example (36).

- (36) RUN away from the subscriber's plantation, on the 3d instant, two Negro men: One of them named ROBIN; a very likely fellow ... Whoever conveys the said slave to me shall have 40 s. reward, if taken out of the county, and if out of the colony 10 l. Also DANIEL, a very likely fellow ...



Whoever brings the said fellow to me shall have 10 s. reward, besides what the law allows. JOHN FOX. (VG:PC March 21, 1766, emphasis mine)

Other advertisers favour mentioning all the rewards in one sentence, even when defining different rewards for different runaways.

## **10. Other generic features of runaway advertisements**

### **10.1 Fixed phrases**

As has already been suggested in the analysis of the various moves, the advertisements are often characterized by phrases that are repeated in identical or nearly identical form in most of the advertisements. The most popular of these fixed phrases are examined in this chapter. They are presented in the same order as they usually occur in the advertisements.

#### **10.1.1 *Ran/run away***

The first fixed phrase occurs already in Move 2. It is the “ran/run away” that is found in the beginning of 178 advertisements (i.e. 94 % of the ads). The difference between “ran away” (60 ads) and “run away” (118 ads) is closely linked to time. “Ran away” dominates the Virginia advertisements up to 1755 (with only one advertisement<sup>3</sup> starting “run away” in 1738). The change to “run away” happens suddenly, as all the following advertisements start with that phrase (with only two exceptions<sup>4</sup>). Such a rapid and thorough change could perhaps suggest editorial involvement. In New York, “ran away” is used quite rarely (only 6 ads vs. 37 ads with “run away”) and mostly in the early years. Pennsylvanian advertisements only use the wording “run away”.

One reason for shift to the form “run away” could be its connection to the noun “runaway”. Many New York advertisements actually spell the initial phrase with a

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<sup>3</sup> (VG:P Feb 2-9, 1738 [1739])

<sup>4</sup> (VG:R Apr 27, 1769) and (VG:R Feb 6, 1772)

hyphen (“Run-away”), but as the following sentence gives the date and place in the same manner as in the other advertisements, this phrase has been considered as just a spelling variant of the verb phrase and not as a noun phrase.

### **10.1.2 *Had on, when (s)he went away***

As was mentioned before, Move 4 almost always (i.e., in 160 ads out of 190, or 84%) includes some kind of description of the runaways clothes. Although there are several possible ways to indicate clothing, e.g. “his Cloaths were dyed Cotton” (*VG:H* Sept 19, 1751) or “he went away in” (*NYG* Oct 27, 1735), by far the most typical wording is “(he/she) had on”. The subject of the sentence is quite often omitted (see 11.2.2). The phrase, with or without the subject, occurs in 114 advertisements (which is 60% of all the ads and 84% of those that mention clothing). When looking at the colonies separately, we see that “had on” is used in 53 (i.e. 53%) of the Virginian advertisements, 34 (i.e. 76%) of the New York advertisements and 27 (i.e. 60%) of the Pennsylvanian advertisements. In advertisements with multiple runaways, the phrase can occur several times, but these are not counted into these numbers. Furthermore, the phrase is often followed by “when he/she went away”. This happens in 81 of the 114 cases with “had on” (Virginia: 33 ads of 53; New York: 29 ads of 34; and Pennsylvania 19 ads of 27).

### **10.1.3 *Whoever ...***

Move 5 also favours one structure above all others. It characteristically starts with the word “whoever”. Other possibilities for this Move include starting with the comparable expression “any Person” (used in 6 ads) or using a structure like “I will give X Reward to any Person, who brings me the slave”. However, these variants are clearly in the minority, as the word “whoever” begins this move in 167 of the advertisements<sup>5</sup> (i.e. 88% of the corpus). The wording of the rest of the sentence varies somewhat, even though the conditions stated are usually the same – the runaways must be captured, and then either returned to the advertiser or secured somewhere so that the owner can get

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<sup>5</sup> (*PG* June 27, 1734) actually uses the word “whosoever”

them himself. The verbs denoting the action required vary, but popular alternatives are e.g. “takes up”, “apprehends”, “secures”, “brings” and “delivers”. Often the verbs appear in combinations like “takes up and secures”.

In the case of just securing the slave (instead of delivering him directly to the owner), there is a phrase expressing that this should be done in such a way that the advertiser can come and reclaim the runaway himself. The phrasing here is not entirely uniform, but all the alternatives seen in Table 4 are so near to each other, that they can be considered as variations of a single fixed phrase. The table shows the pronoun forms that occur in the case of a single male runaway (the most typical case), but included in these figures are also phrases that refer to a female runaway or multiple runaways (in which cases *his* and *him* are naturally replaced by *her* or *their* and *them*). In rare cases the word “master” can also be in plural (i.e. when the advertisement features multiple runaways who have run away from different owners) – these cases are also not separated in the table.

Table 4: “So that his Master may have him again” and related forms

	Virginia	New York	Pennsylvania	Total
"so that his Master may have him again"	3*	17**	8	28
"so that his Master may get him again"	3	2	1*	6
"so that his Master can have him again"	0	3	0	3
"so that I may have him again"	5	0	2	7
"so that I may get him (again)"	5+1***	0	1+1	8
"so that I get him (again)"	4+2	0	0	6
"so that he may be had again"	2+1	2	2	7
"so as his Master may get him"	1	0	0	1
"so as his Master may have him again"	0	0	7	7
"so as he may be had (again)"	2+1	0	1	4
	30(/100 ads)	21(/45 ads)	23(/45 ads)	77(/190 ads)
* in one ad, instead of "Master", the word "Owner" is used				
** in one ad, instead of "Master", the pronoun "he" is used				
*** in cases where "again" is in brackets, the first number is that of ads with the word, the second one of ads without it				

If we count the variant forms together, we can see that this phrase is present in 77 advertisements, i.e. 41% of them. The phrase is more popular in the New York (47%) and Pennsylvanian advertisements (51%) than in the Virginian ones (30%). From table 4 can also be seen that New York in particular favours one expression above others, the version “so that his Master may have him again”. In Pennsylvania this version, as well as the one using *as* instead of *that*, form the majority, whereas Virginia shows the most variation in regard to the wording. A lot of the variation is due to the choice of the advertiser to refer to himself by the first person pronoun, by calling himself the “master” or by using a passive construction (see 10.2.2).

Another reoccurring phrase in Move 5 is, as was already mentioned, “(all) reasonable charges”. It occurs in 72 advertisements. It is used only in six Virginian advertisements; of these, three have the version “reasonable charges” and the other half has “all reasonable charges”. All these phrases occur in the early half of the corpus, in the 1730s and the 1740s; the phrase seems to have dropped out of use in Virginia in the later years altogether. The phrase is far more popular in the New York and Pennsylvanian corpus (34 and 32 ads respectively). Between these two colonies, a rather marked division can be seen in the usage of the two variants. New York advertisements favour “all reasonable charges” to “reasonable charges” (28 ads vs. 6 ads), whereas the tendency in Pennsylvanian advertisements is the opposite (4 ads vs. 28 ads). Additionally, the wording “reasonable expenses” is used in one Virginian and one New York advertisement. The fixed phrase is used to avoid more cumbersome formulations like the one that was seen in example (15).

A phrase that is particularly typical for Virginian advertisements is “besides what the Law allows”. It appears in this form in 50 Virginian notices. On top of that, three other advertisers refer to the law-guaranteed sum in different words: “besides the Allowance by Law” (*VG:P* Aug 7-14, 1746), “besides what is allowed by Law” (*VG:P* March 30-Apr 6, 1739) and “handsomely rewarded, over and above what the Law allows” (*VG:P* Feb 2-8, 1738 [1739]). The phrase “besides what the Law allows” also occurs once in the Pennsylvanian corpus, but that is a case of a Virginian slave owner advertising in a neighbouring colony’s paper. In the Virginian corpus its popularity seems to wane

slightly in the later decades: of the 50 occurrences, 11 come from the 1730s, 15 from the 1740s, 13 from the 1750s, 7 from the 1760s and only 4 from the 1770s.

I have not come across any mention of a guaranteed-by-law sum for capturing runaways in Pennsylvania and New York. In their introductions to the runaway advertisements, Hodges and Brown (1994) and Smith and Wojtovicz (1989) treat the slave codes of the colonies in question, but make no mention of any such sum. Even though I have been unable to locate a mention of such a sum for Pennsylvania and New York, it does not exclude the possibility of its existence, as the sum defined by Virginian law is not often mentioned in discussions of the Virginian slave code either<sup>6</sup>. It seems that at least the fugitive slave law in New Jersey defined such a sum (David 1924:18) – it would be interesting to see if New Jersey advertisements included a similar phrase. However, if there was indeed no such legislation in New York and Pennsylvania, it would neatly explain the absence of the phrase in these advertisements.

Finally, in the cases where Move 6 (the signature) is linked to Move 5, the most typical way to do it is with the phrase “paid by”. The phrase is either a simple “paid by [name]” or a slightly longer version “paid by me/us/his Master, [name]”. This is the case in 21 of the 35 Virginian advertisements that have Move 6 in the sentence for reward (see table 4). Of the 30 New York advertisements with this structure, 26 are of this type. The number is greatest in Pennsylvania, where the phrase is found in 36 advertisements out of 40. All in all, “paid by (me/us/his Master), [name]” is found in 83 advertisements (i.e. in 44% of all the advertisements).

## **10.2 References to people in the advertisements**

The main people in the advertisements are naturally the runaway and the advertiser. In this chapter I will look at the different words the advertisers use to refer to the runaway,

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<sup>6</sup> The Virginian legislation mentioning the reward is available for reading on the Geography of Slavery site ([www.vcdh.virginia.edu/gos/laws1700-1750.html](http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/gos/laws1700-1750.html))

as well as the various ways they refer to themselves. A brief look will also be taken at the way other people are treated in the advertisements.

### 10.2.1 Referring to the runaway

As was mentioned in chapter 9.1.4.1, the runaway is initially introduced by phrases like “a Negroe Man” (*PG* Dec 18, 1766) or “a pale-complexion’d Mulatto Fellow” (*VG:P* June 15-22, 1739). Nouns often used at this point are “negro”, “mulatto”, “slave” and “servant”. Also used are “man”, “fellow”, “woman”, “wench”, “boy” and “girl”, but these words are always defined by the person being either “negro” or “mulatto”.

Somewhat surprisingly, only 12 Virginian, 2 New York and 9 Pennsylvanian advertisements use the word “slave” in the initial description. Even later on, the word is only used in further 16 Virginian and 3 Pennsylvanian notices to refer to a runaway. Perhaps using the word “slave” was seen as being unnecessary, since men of colour were considered slaves unless proven otherwise. In fact, “negro” could essentially be understood as meaning ‘slave’<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, defining the runaways as either “negro” or “mulatto” had more informative value to the reader, as those words could reveal something of the skin tone of the escapee as well.

Whereas in the Virginia corpus the word “servant” is only used to refer to the white indentured servants, one New York and three Pennsylvania advertisements describe the runaways as servants in the initial description (again e.g. “a Negroe Man Servant”). At a later point, the word is used in 4 New York and 2 Pennsylvania advertisements. Even though there can be no absolute certainty on the matter, it would seem that these “servants” were in the status of slaves.

Although the runaway’s name is normally mentioned somewhere in the advertisement, it is very rarely repeated later on in the text. There are only seven exceptions: Five of

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<sup>7</sup> The *OED* includes the following definition for the word *Negro*: “A slave (or enfranchised slave) of black African origin or descent, esp. in the Southern States of America prior to the Abolition of slavery in 1865. Now *hist.*” (*OED*, s.v. Negro)

these<sup>8</sup> can be explained by the fact that the advertisements are of several runaways, and to distinguish them, names have to be used. There are only two single-runaway advertisements (*NYGoWPB* July 3, 1758 and *VG:PD* Nov 10, 1774) that uses the name twice, referring to “said Fanny” and “said John” in Move 5. In most advertisements, when the runaway has to be mentioned a second time, he or she is called, for example, “the (said) fellow/negro/wench” or “this fellow/boy”. Other options are the use of a pronoun or, quite often, elliptical sentence structures make it possible to omit the subject of the sentence altogether (see chapter 11.2.2).

### **10.2.2 The advertiser referring to him-/herself**

When the advertisers need to make reference to themselves, they can do this in various different ways. The phrases in table 4 already illustrated this phenomenon: the advertisers can refer to themselves by using first person pronouns, or, if they wish to avoid that, they can use passive constructions or refer to themselves in the third person (typically by referring to themselves as the slave’s Master).

The first person pronoun *I* can be found as the subject of many different kinds of sentences (e.g. “I will give...”, “I have had them outlawed”, “I bough him”, etc.) However, the one place where the first person pronoun is used most often is in constructions where the advertiser expresses his or her suspicions on, for example, the whereabouts of the slave. This includes phrases like “I believe / suppose / imagine / suspect / expect / have reason to believe” and others. However, the passive is more often used to express even these kinds of suspicions: forms like “it is supposed” or “it is thought” are very popular. Possibly the use of passive gives a more “general” air to these assumptions. Furthermore, the runaway can be kept as the focus of the sentence, especially when using passive constructions like “he is supposed to be”. The passive is also often used in other kinds of sentences, too, instead of the first person pronoun (e.g. “it is desired” or “he was bought”).

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<sup>8</sup> (*VG:P* Oct 29-Nov 5, 1736), (*VG:P* Oct 26-Nov 2, 1739), (*VG:Pu* June 23, 1775), (*PG* Jan 18, 1770) and (*PG* Oct 11, 1775)

Apart from *I* being used as the subject of sentences, the possessive pronoun *my* can be found in some advertisements, in expressions like “my House”. *Me* is used particularly in the construction “to me” in Move 5, which happens in 64 advertisements. However, many advertisers avoid the first person altogether: This phenomenon is most typical in the New York advertisements, where 36 of 45 advertisements (i.e. 80%) never use the first person pronoun. 27 (i.e. 60%) of the Pennsylvanian advertisements do this as well. Virginian advertisements use the first person pronoun much more often, only 17% have no *I*, *me* or *my* in them. However, even in the advertisements where the first person pronoun is used in some places, it is often not used consistently but rather mixed in with third person references and passive forms.

When referring to himself in the third person, the advertiser can choose different ways how to do it. One option for the subscriber is to refer to himself by name, as happens in example (37).

- (37) RAN away about 3 Weeks ago, from Col. Lewis Burwell's Plantation ... Whoever brings the said Negro to Col. Burwell, at his House near Williamsburg, shall be well rewarded, in Proportion to his Trouble, besides what the Law allows, by Lewis Burwell. (VG:P Apr 14-21, 1738, emphasis mine)

Although the advertisers do seem to be much more inclined to repeat their own names rather than that of the runaway in their advertisements, example (37) does not represent the most typical kind of practice. More usually the advertiser refers to himself as the “Subscriber”. Naturally, this option is not available in the advertisements where Move 6 is missing. Most often “the Subscriber” is used in Move 3, in the phrase “ran away from the Subscriber” or, more rarely, “the Subscriber’s [plantation/quarters, etc.]”. Sometimes the phrase “belonging to the Subscriber” is in the beginning of Move 4, right after the initial description. In these early positions it is used in 76 Virginian, 11 New York and 27 Pennsylvanian advertisements. The use of “Subscriber” later on in the advertisement is quite rare, but, for example in Move 5, the “Subscriber” is identified as the person the



slave must be delivered to in 10 advertisements (Virginia: 3 ads; New York: 1 ad; Pennsylvania: 6 ads).

Furthermore the advertiser can resort to referring him- or herself as the slave's "Master" or "Mistress". Although there are some occurrences of the word in different positions in the advertisements, most often it is found in Move 5: the slave is to be "returned to his Master" or secured "so that his Master may get him again". In these constructions, it is used in 27 New York (i.e. 37%) and 17 Pennsylvanian notices (i.e. 38%), but just 8 Virginia advertisements. The word "Mistress" is only found in three New York advertisements referring to the advertiser (in three further cases reference is made to the slave's "Mistress", but in these cases this person is not the one placing the advertisement). In one Virginian and one New York advertisement, the advertiser also calls himself the "Owner" of the runaway.

The advertiser seldom limits himself to one or two of the methods: he can, in the beginning of the advertisement refer to himself as "the Subscriber", at the end as "the Master", as well as employing both passive forms and the first person pronoun somewhere in between.

### **10.2.3 Referring to other people**

Other people whose names are mentioned in the advertisements are most typically previous owners or people (other than the subscriber) who the runaway can be returned to or who will pay the reward. Characteristic for these references is that the titles or the professions also mentioned in addition to the name of the person, e.g. "he went to Capt. John Chisman's" (*VG:Pu* June 23, 1775) or "was once the Property of Mr. Archibald Ritchie, Merchant, at Hobb's Hole" (*VG:PD* Jan 23, 1772). The names of people (this includes also the advertiser's name) are nearly always also followed by their place of residence, e.g. or "by applying to the subscriber, near Princeton, to Dr. Samuel Duffield at Philadelphia, to Mr. Lloyd Daubney at New-York, or to Dr. Bates William Peterson, near Elizabeth-Town" (*NYG:R* Oct 13, 1774).

In the few advertisements where there is need to refer to these other people a second time, they are called “(the above-mentioned) Gentlemen”. Also other people in general are sometimes referred to as “Gentlemen”, as in “[the runaway is] well known by the Gentlemen in the Country, for keeping of Horses” (*VG:P* May 2-9, 1745). However, people who aid the runaways are not referred to in quite so respectful tones, as can be seen in examples (38) and (39).

- (38) he had on an iron collar about his neck, but it is supposed the collar is taken off by some ill-disposed neighbour (*PG* Apr 28, 1773, emphasis mine)
- (39) it is supposed that he is conveyed or carried off by some ill minded and malicious Persons (*NYG\_RiWPB* Dec 21, 1747, emphasis mine)

Those who help runaways are called “ill-disposed” and “malicious”. This draws attention to the people behaving in a discourteous manner towards the advertiser, sidestepping the fact that removing an iron collar is hardly malicious behaviour towards the slave.

### **10.3 Vocabulary**

The runaway advertisements contain some notable aspects in their vocabulary. One aspect, which has also been of interest in other studies on runaway advertisements, is naturally the vocabulary used to describe the slave. Here I have limited the research on the most often-repeated adjectives. In the second subchapter some comment is also made on the value-judgements made in regard to the slave. Finally, clothing vocabulary is looked at separately, since it is very rich, and furthermore it contains the terms that are probably the most unfamiliar to the modern reader.

### 10.3.1 Slave description: typical adjectives

As was noted before, all advertisements contain some kind of a description of the runaway. Table 5 charts out the popularity of some fairly typical adjectives that are used to characterize the fugitives.

Table 5: *Typical adjectives for slave description*

well-set	44 ads
well-made	13 ads
likely	29 ads
lusty	21 ads
middle (stature/-sized)	30 ads*
tall	19 ads**
short	17 ads
black	27 ads
yellow(ish)	25 ads
young	20 ads
sensible	13 ads
cunning	9 ads
artful	8 ads
	* includes one "under the Middle size"
	**includes one "not tall"

The numbers in table 5 show in how many of the 190 advertisements the adjectives come across in the description of the runaway. In a few cases the adjective may occur several times in one advertisement, i.e. if, in an advertisement for multiple runaways, two escapees are described by the same adjective, but these cases have been counted only once here. Furthermore, for adjectives like “black”, only references to the runaway’s skin colour are counted, not references to, for example, black hair.

There are no adjectives that would occur in the majority of the advertisements. This is probably to be expected, as the idea of the description is to set the runaway apart from others and to make identification easier – therefore, adjectives that would be used in a great number of advertisements would not be particularly helpful. Some adjectives are,

however, reasonably popular: “well-set” occurs in 23% of the advertisements, and, if we count it together with “well-made”, in 30%. Two New York and one Pennsylvanian advertisement also use the adjective “well-built”.

A considerable amount of runaways are also described as being “lusty” or “likely”. “Lusty” is used in the meaning of ‘healthy, strong, vigorous’ (*OED* s.v. *lusty*). The meaning of “likely” is quite similar, as the *OED* defines the adjective as ‘having the appearance, or giving evidence, of vigour or capacity; strong or capable looking’. In some cases the word can possibly also be used to mean ‘of seemly or comely appearance; good-looking, handsome’ (*OED* s.v. *likely*).

Many advertisements also contain some adjective describing the runaway’s size, and all the sizes (“short”, “middle size” and “tall”) are represented quite evenly. This is not the case with adjectives of age: 20 advertisers use “young”, whereas only two runaways are described as being “old” (which can probably be explained by the fact that most runaways were young men, and furthermore, as was mentioned, slave owners did not always even bother advertising for old, “low-value” slaves). Many advertisers give the precise age of the runaway, which explains the reason why “young” does not come up in more than 20 advertisements either.

The runaway’s complexion can be described as “black” or “yellowish”. It can probably be assumed that when the runaway is referred to as a “mulatto” rather than a “negro”, he is of a lighter complexion – however, “whitish” is used in only one advertisement (*VG:P* Aug 11-18, 1738) and another notes the runaway to be “very white for one of his kind” (*PG* July 24, 1776). This rarity of the use of the word is hardly unexpected, as slavery was defined as being only for blacks, never for white people.

It is noticeable that some adjectives seem to have a tendency to occur together. For example, of the 17 runaways described as “short”, 11 are also described as being “well-set”. “Sensible”, “cunning” and “artful” also often co-occur (more on this in 10.3.2). Most adjectives, not only the ones mentioned here, but also ones modifying parts of the body, etc., are also frequently modified by words like “very” or “remarkably”.

Differences between colonies are not considered in detail. This is because the relatively small number of adjectives that occur at all would not give very accurate results. However, for the most often repeated adjectives, it would seem that they are slightly more popular in the Virginian advertisements. This could be because the Virginian advertisers often advertised for field workers and not household servants, and therefore had to resort to more generic descriptions. One interesting case is “likely”, which, while in use in 20 Virginian advertisements and 8 New York ones, is only used only in one Pennsylvanian one (and even that is a North-Carolinian advertiser). Instead, Pennsylvanian advertisements instead use “likely” more often in the present meaning of ‘probable’ (7 occurrences and one occurrence of “unlikely” in the Pennsylvanian corpus, compared to only 3 occurrences in the Virginian and 1 in the New York corpus). Whether this can be traced to local dialects or other like factors, shall not be speculated here, as the corpora are not sufficiently large nor is the problem directly pertinent to the study, but it is an interesting finding nonetheless.

### **10.3.2 Slave description: words with negative connotations**

As the runaway advertisements are placed by people whose “property” has run off, to their great financial detriment, one does not really expect to find the slaves being described in a particularly positive manner. The purpose here is to cast a look at some of the words with overt value-judgements that are to be found in the advertisements.

Whereas “sensible” in the meaning ‘endowed with good sense; intelligent’ (*OED*, s.v. sensible) is sometimes used to describe the runaways, intelligence is often seen as a negative thing when the slave runs away. Therefore, runaways who are described as “sensible” are often designated also by the words “cunning” and “artful”. Intelligence is seen as a negative characteristic because quick wits allow runaways to avoid capture. Or as one advertiser warns of his “cunning” and “artful” runaway: he is “very capable of forging a tale to impose on the unwary” (*VG:R* June 30, 1774).

Other negative nouns and adjectives do not occur many times in the corpus; rather they are usually one-time occurrences. These include accusations of being a rogue: “a very sly roguish look” (*VG:H* Nov 13, 1751); “a great rogue” (*VG:R* June 7, 1770); “a very great rogue” (*PG* July 24, 1776). Another aspect is deceitfulness: “extreme deceitful, and a great villain” (*VG:PD* May 21, 1767); “speaks plain, but deceitful” (*VG:PD* Jan 23, 1772); “liar” (*PG* Apr 28, 1773). The dishonesty and deceitfulness of the slave is most often the negative characteristic that is highlighted, probably again because convincing liars were harder to capture. Some advertisers also brought up various other negative statements on their bondsmen, for example “a very impertinent Countenance” (*VG:PD* Jan 20, 1774); “flippant” (*NYGoWPB* Oct 15, 1753) and “a very bragging fellow, given much to flattery” (*PG* July 28, 1748).

Furthermore, verbs with rather negative connotations are sometimes used to describe the runaway’s actions. To report that the runaway is suspected to be hiding in some particular area, the verb “lurk” is used in 5 and “skulk” in one advertisement. The verb “pretend” is used in 13 advertisements. In five of them the runaway “pretends he is a freeman” (*VG:R* Sept 29, 1768) (the exact phrasing varies). Others are claimed to “pretend” their profession or skills, e.g. “to be a Doctor” (*VG:P* Nov 14-21, 1745) or “to making and burning Bricks” (*PG* Apr 4, 1745). Other instances are, for example, “pretends to be very religious” (*PG* Jan 18, 1770) and one “pretends to have an uncle [who has escaped from the colony and lives in Great-Britain]” (*PG* Aug 31, 1749). The use of the verb can be linked with the perceived dishonesty and deceitfulness of the futive, i.e. in the eyes of the slave owner the runaways claim to be something they really are not.

Negative habits of the runaways are mentioned by some advertisers, but usually they are not stressed quite as much as is done in examples (40) and (41) (the latter one written by the future president of USA, Thomas Jefferson). These advertisements stick out as being slightly unusual in attempting to paint the runaway in an exceptionally bad light by stressing their condemnable behaviour.

- (40) he is a cunning fellow, and subject to make game at the ceremonial part of all religious worship, except that of the Papists; he is proud, and dislikes to be called a Negroe, has formerly been privateering, and talks much (with seeming pleasure) of the cruelties he then committed. (*PG* June 23, 1748).
- (41) he is greatly addicted to drink, and when drunk is insolent and disorderly, in his conversation he swears much, and in his behaviour is artful and knavish. (*VG:PD* May 2, 1771)

In cases like these the negative image is created by using words with negative connotations as well as reporting unsuitable behaviour like the addiction to alcohol.

As can be expected, very positive qualities are mentioned even more rarely than very negative ones. Positive comments on the outer appearance of the runaways are sometimes also expressed in a way that reveals the racist views of the time, e.g. “very likely for a negroe” (*NYG\_WM* Sept 11, 1775); “has good features for a Negro” (*VG:R* Apr 27, 1769) and “is a handsome Wench, and may pass for a free person, as she is very well featured all but her nose, and lips, which are thick and flat” (*NYGoWPB:P* June 18, 1761). However, as was seen from table 5, popular adjectives in description are words like “well-set” or “lusty”, which can be seen as adjectives with positive connotations. This is especially true from the slave owner’s point of view – “well-set”, “lusty” slaves were more valuable than old and feeble ones, which explains why the advertisers were so keen to reclaim them and posted advertisements for them. In general it seems that the advertisers were more inclined to refer to the physical characteristics of the slave with positive words, whereas the perceived personality of the slave was likelier to be described in unfavourable terms. The majority of advertisements, however, are rather neutral in the manner they describe the runaway, and do not overtly dwell on the positive characteristics nor particularly vilify the fugitive.

### **10.3.3 Clothing vocabulary**

In many advertisements, Move 4 includes a long list of clothing items the runaways had on or took with them. The list in example (42) is perhaps somewhat longer than average, although not unusually long either.

- (42) Had on, and took with him the following cloaths, viz. Two brown broad cloth coats; one of them rather too large and long for Him, with silver plated buttons, the other very short, with plain buttons; a blue surtout coat; one brown Holland and one fustian short coat; one pair of sustian, and one ditto of leather breeches; one pair of striped, and one ditto of check trowsers; one sustian, one striped gingham, and two white waist-coats; one pair of old boots; a pair of new and a pair of old shoes, with a pair of neat Pinchbeck buckles; one or two old beaver hats, cut in the fashion; two white and three check shirts; with sundry other things. (*NYG:R* Nov 3, 1774)
- (43) Had on a Newmarket bearskin coat, and blue and red waistcoats, long osnabrug breeches, country made shoes, white stockings, and generally wore a cocked hat. (*VG:PD* Jan 8, 1767)

Even the shorter list seen in example (43) gives a good image of the detailed way items of clothing are described. The colour, condition, material and style of the clothing items are often given. Terms of clothing with a place-name come across often, and are usually unfamiliar to the modern reader, e.g. “Newmarket coat” or “Monmouth cap”. Fabrics are often called by names which reflect their original place of production. In the corpus we come across clothes from “Ozenbrigg” (from the place-name Osnabrück), “Holland”, “Russia”, “Manx” and “Virginia” cloth, as well as many, many others. It is not unusual for individual items to get lengthy descriptions, e.g. “an old homespun blue and white striped linen jacket with sleeves” (*NYG\_WM* Sept 11, 1775). From the frequent use of such terms, it can be assumed that the terminology was familiar to 18<sup>th</sup> century colonists and of use in identifying the runaway.

In lists of clothes, the word “ditto” is also sometimes used for avoiding repetition (see example (42)). It seems it is nevertheless used in the meaning ‘a similar thing’ rather than the more specific ‘Cloth of the same material (chiefly plural, in *suit of dittos*: a suit of clothes of the same material and colour throughout)’ (*OED*, s.v. *ditto*). It is used in 6 Virginian, 4 New York and 3 Pennsylvanian advertisements, and in the advertisements that have the word, it is often used several times.



## **11. Elements of different styles in the texts**

In the runaway advertisements we can see elements of at least two rather distinct styles. On one hand, the advertisers seek to perform various actions through the advertisements (promising monetary rewards for the capture, warning people against helping the runaways under the threat of legal actions, etc.). These actions call for official sounding, precise language. On the other hand, in newspaper advertisements space is not unlimited, which leads to abbreviated constructions especially in the syntax.

### **11.1 Traits of official language**

In this subchapter I will first look at the different speech acts that are present in the advertisements. A particularly official flair is given to the texts by the use of *hereby* in making e.g. warnings or promises. The speech acts are closely connected with the intended audiences, so in 11.2 notice will be taken of different groups that are addressed by the advertisers. Finally, I will examine the frequent tendency to use “said” and other related forms to modify nouns, which again enforces the idea of an official style in the advertisements.

#### **11.1. Speech acts and the use of *hereby***

As became clear when the different moves of the runaway advertisement were analysed, the advertiser uses the advertisement to make several distinct speech acts, i.e. they do different things through language. Overt speech acts can further be highlighted by the use of *hereby*, which draws attention to the speech act that is being made.

One thing that all the advertisers do is promise a reward. As was seen in chapters 9.1.5 and 10.1.3, Move 5 usually uses a construction in the style of “Whoever captures the runaway, shall have X reward”. The act of promising to pay a reward is present in this construction, though not really as highlighted as it is in the less popular variant “I will give X reward to...” (which is only found in 7 Virginian ads). In a typical runaway

advertisement, there seems to be no need to stress the act of promising a reward by the use of *hereby*. There are, however, three examples of using *hereby* in Move 5: “I hereby promise a reward” (*PG* March 21, 1765), “I do hereby offer” (*VG:H* Jan 30, 1752) and “I hereby promise to pay” (*VG:H* Aug 14, 1752). In all the three cases there is suspicion that the slave has been stolen away, and a reward is offered not only for capturing the runaway but also for information on the thief. Perhaps it is that whereas offering a reward for the runaway is considered a matter of course, offering one for the thief is not, and therefore the relative rarity of this kind of an action warrants the use of *hereby*. The word is also used in the post-script where one advertiser promises a reward on information about people who help her runaways in general (see example (26)).

Most often *hereby* is used in connection with the act of “forewarning” (8 ads) and “forbidding” (1 ad) people to “entertain”, “harbour” or “carry off” their slaves. These actions can also occur in the advertisements without the word *hereby* (“forbid” in 10 ads, “forewarn” in 5 ads, also one advertiser “warns” and another “cautions” people against such actions). Although “forewarning” seems like a more polite move than “forbidding” people to act in a certain way, the end result of the speech act is often more or less the same – they can be construed as threats, as they are usually followed by the phrase “at their Peril” or some other phrase that threatens with legal action in case the “forewarning” is not heeded. In fact, in example (44) one advertiser forgoes the warning and opts for a more straightforward threat.

- (44) and whoever shall offer to harbour or entertain the said wench may depend upon being prosecuted to the utmost Rigour of the law by me (*NYGoWPB* July 3, 1758)
- (45) All masters of vessels are desired to be careful not to carry him out of the colony, as they may depend on being prosecuted with rigour, if it can be proved. (*VG:PD* Feb 11, 1768, emphasis mine)

Example (45) starts off politely, as the masters of vessels are not “forbid”, but rather “desired to be careful” not to take the fugitive on board. However, this politeness ends

quickly, if people ignore the request, as the sentence ends with the advertiser promising to “prosecute with rigour” those who go against his wishes (*VG:PD* Feb 11, 1768).

As was noted in chapter 9.1.7, one advertiser chooses a different approach, and instead of warning people, he makes appeal to the goodness of his fellow citizens by announcing that “[i]t is earnestly requested and presumed no gentlemen will harbour the said runaway negro ” (*NYG\_WM* Sept 22, 1777) . Another, after expressing the suspicion that the runaways will try to escape by ship, does not “forbid” all masters of vessels to carry him off (as is the typical case), but rather “beg[s] of all the persons they may apply to, to forward them ... to the most convenient gaol” (*VG:R* Aug 10, 1769). It is also possible for advertisers to express their suspicions that the fugitive will try to board some vessel, without adding a straightforward “forewarning” to the advertisement.

Apart from promising a reward and warning or threatening with legal actions against some types of action, the advertiser can also express his desire that the readers will behave in a given manner. Evidently, the advertiser hopes the readers will capture the runaway, but there does not seem to be a need to stress this desire. This is probably because the reward is offered in return. At least one advertiser does, however, feel the need to use additional methods to urge people into capturing the runaway:

- (46) As he has been endeavouring to prevail upon the Negroes in this neighbourhood to go with him and join the ministerial army, it is hoped every lover of his country will endeavour to apprehend so daring a villain (*PG* Sept 25, 1776, emphasis mine)

The advertiser promotes the idea that it is the duty of everyone who considers themselves “a lover of their country” to assist in capturing this particular runaway (who, additionally, receives the designation “so daring a villain”, therefore stressing the importance of capturing him). However the kind of refined persuasive tactics employed in example (46) are not very typical of runaway advertisements in general.

Whereas the advertiser does not usually need to specifically ask people to capture the runaway, additional wishes of action need to be requested explicitly. Often this is done

by using the verb *desire* (either in the passive or active form). It comes across in the instructions for punishment (see chapter 9.1.7) and other treatment upon capture. Other additional actions can sometimes also be requested, as is seen in examples (47) and (48).

- (47) if any Gentleman will be so kind ... to cut out the Advertisement, and set it up in the most publick Place, it will be esteemed a favour (*PG* Oct 22, 1761, emphasis mine)
- (48) the subscriber requests this advertisement may be carefully kept and taken notice of for several years (*PG* July 24, 1776, emphasis mine)

The need for politeness in cases like these is more evident, probably at least partly due to the fact that they are actions that the person will not receive a reward for. This person is also not breaking the law if he chooses to ignore these wishes of the advertiser.

### **11.1.2 People addressed**

Generally, the advertisements do not address anyone in particular; or rather, they address anyone who can possibly catch the runaway. The general audience can be seen as the “whoever” (or “any person”) mentioned in Move 5. The general public can also be the subject of some requests and warnings. However, sometimes the advertisers also need to address specific groups of people.

The most typical group addressed are “Masters of Vessels”. They (and in one case, also “Ferry-men”) are specifically addressed in 25 advertisements (Virginia: 9 ads; Pennsylvania: 9 ads; New York: 7 ads). This group receives special attention because advertisers are particularly concerned of the runaways making their escape by boat. Even when it is “Masters of Vessels” in particular that are warned not to “harbour”, etc., the runaway, the advertiser sometimes extend the addressed group by adding “and others” after mentioning the masters of vessels.

Other specific groups are addressed only occasionally. One advertisement specifically mentions “coopers”, who are “hereby forewarned employing [the runaway] without

agreeing with the subscriber” (*PG* Feb 13, 1750). In one advertisement, “each Constable” (*VG:P* May 2-9, 1745) is desired to punish the runaway and in one “the gaoler” is begged to send an express to the advertiser, if the runaways are brought to his jail (*VG:R* Aug 10, 1769).

Slaves are not really addressed in the advertisements. One exception can be considered the Virginian advertisement, where, in Move 5, the word “whoever” is further defined by “be he Free Man or Slave” (*VG:P* Aug 11-18, 1738). Furthermore, one advertiser, after naming a reward for capturing the runaway, adds the phrase seen in example (49).

- (49) Or if the said Negro will return to me, at my House in St. Mary’s County, he shall be kindly received, and escape all Punishment for his Offence. (*PG* Oct 31, 1745)

Even though the corpus of this study offers only one example of the advertiser addressing the runaway in the advertisement, this apparently was not a one-time occurrence but rather did happen occasionally (as was mentioned in chapter 3.3).

### **11.1.3 Use of *said* / *aforesaid* / *above***

One noticeable feature of the runaway advertisements is the frequent use of “said”, “aforesaid” or “above” (sometimes also “above mentioned”, “above-nam’d” or “before mentioned”) when persons, places or reward sums are mentioned a second time. This happens especially in Move 5.

When talking about the slave, “said” is the most often used modifier. In Move 5 the runaway is referred to as “said Negro” in 62 advertisements (25 Virginian, 20 New York and 18 Pennsylvanian ads) and as “said slave” in 21 advertisements (15 Virginian, 1 New York and 5 Pennsylvanian ads). 47 advertisements also use “said” with some other noun, e.g. “fellow”, “mulatto”, “runaway”, “servant”, “Fanny”, “wench”. Adding to that the 7 cases where instead of “said”, for example, “above” is used, we can see that this kind of a construction is used to refer to the runaway in Move 5 in 137 advertisements

(i.e. 72% of all the ads). In other Moves, this kind of a structure is used when referring to the runaway in only 21 cases.

“Said” and its variants are sometimes also be used in connection with nouns referring to other people (e.g. “said Master” or “said [name of person]”). For mentioning places, the form “aforesaid” is favoured (e.g. “aforesaid plantation” or “York Town aforesaid”). “Above” is used particularly in the phrase “the above reward”, where it occurs in 24 advertisements (and once in the form “the above premium”) – these are the cases where the reward is first mentioned in the headline.

Using “said” or its variants seems in many cases somewhat superfluous, as there really is no chance of misunderstanding. Its use makes the most sense in cases where, for example the plantation’s location or owner is specified in Move 3 and in Move 5 it is then referred to as “the aforesaid Plantation” – therefore eliminating the need to repeat the location. However, cases like example (50) and (51) are not explained by this.

- (50) by information was apprehended and committed to goal, in the year 1764, in Fredrick-Town, in Maryland, on suspicion of having run away. From that goal she was reported to have made an escape, and about two months ago was discovered about 15 miles from Ball-Fryer’s ferry, in Frederick county, in Maryland aforesaid, where she had three children. (*PG* July 4, 1771, emphasis mine)
- (51) RAN away from a Plantation of the Subscriber's near York Town, a Negro Man, named Kingsale, about Twenty Four Years of Age ... It is suppos'd he will shape his Course over James River, and so to North Carolina, having been lately sent from thence. Whoever secures and conveys the said Slave to York Town aforesaid (*VG:P* March 30-April 6, 1739, emphasis mine)

Perhaps the main reason to use “said” and its variants is to form stronger cohesive links between Move 5 and the beginning of the text, or possibly simply to create a more official look to the advertisements.

## 11.2 Concise, abbreviated style

For example classified ads today are strongly characterized by an extreme use of abbreviations, as the price of an advertisement depends on its length. The pricing system in colonial newspapers seems to have been somewhat more flexible. At one point the *Virginia Gazette* advertised that “[a]dvertisements, of a moderate Length, are taken to be inserted in [the] paper for Three Shillings the first Week” (*VG:P* June 10, 1737<sup>9</sup>). How “moderate length” was in practise defined is unsure, but probably most runaway advertisements fit into the category. There seems to have been no great need for using a heavily abbreviating style, even though some abbreviating constructions appear particularly in the syntax.

### 11.2.1 Use of abbreviations

It can be noted that abbreviations are rather rare in runaway advertisements. However, it must be kept in mind that the Pennsylvanian corpus is slightly unreliable in this respect, since the compilers mention having written out some abbreviations. The abbreviations found in the corpus are grouped and presented in Table 6.

Table 6: *Abbreviations in the corpus*

Titles:	Col. ; Hon. ; Esq. ; Capt. ; Mr. ; Dr. ; Sen. ; Jr. ; jun.
Money:	l. ; s. ; £ ; sh
Latin	N.B. ; viz. ; &c ; &c &c &c
Money:	Feb. ; Sept. ; Nov. ; Decemb.
Other:	Inst. ; No. 6 ; No.11 ; do. ; Geo. ; Benj.

The abbreviations are not really specific to runaway advertisement, as they are words that would generally be abbreviated in most kinds of texts. The abbreviations are also not used every time it is possible: for example, the titles “Captain” and “Doctor” are also found written out in full in some advertisements, and the abbreviations for money appear in the Virginian corpus only from the 1760s onwards. Words indicating the

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<sup>9</sup> This advertisement is taken from the Colonial Williamsburg Digital Library, not the main database used for Virginian runaway advertisements

currency are in any case more often written without abbreviations and the sums are written out in letters rather than numbers, probably to draw attention to the reward. Numbers are written out in letters surprisingly often also when indicating, for example, the date of escape or the runaway's height – something that would certainly be avoided if brevity was a pressing concern.

The most surprising abbreviations for the modern reader are the abbreviations for names, even though they occur only in two advertisements: “belonging to Col. Geo. Braxton” (*PG* Sept 21, 1738) and “She is supposed to have been taken hence by an Oyster-Shallop, *Benj. Taylor* Master” (*PG* Sept 18, 1740). As was mentioned in chapter 10.2.3, normally people's names are written out in full, mentioning both the first and last name (except for the runaways, who rarely have last names). Only one advertisement (*VG:PD* June 23, 1768) is signed by using only the last names of the advertisers. An initial is used only in two advertisements, where William Byrd (judging from the date, it is William Byrd III of Virginia's Byrds) signs his advertisement “W.Byrd” (*VG:PD* Dec 3, 1767 and *VG:PD* June 1, 1769).

### 11.2.2 Elliptical constructions in syntax

The complexity of the syntax varies, but particularly in the description, there is a tendency for long, list-like sentences.

- (52) [ran away] a light-complexion'd Mulatto Man , aged about 25 Years, nam'd Ben; he is about 5 Feet 8 Inches high, has a down Look, a low Forehead, talks good English, and has been well whipp'd. (*VG:P* Nov 14-21, 1745)

As can be seen from examples (52) and (53), the subject (i.e. the runaway) is often omitted from the beginning of clauses. Example (53) goes even further with the ellipsis, leaving out “he is” from the list of characteristics starting with “about 25 years of Age...”

- (53) Ran away last Night from the Sloop Walter, William Price, Master, lying in Rotten Row; a Negro Man, named Ralph; about 25 years of Age, about



5 feet, 4 inches high, smooth-faced, thick lipped; speaks good English. Had on when he went away, a blue Jackett, and a Drab colour'd Do. and a white Flannel Waistcoat, a grey pair of Stockings, much worn, with a pair of black worsted one's under them. (*NYGoWPB* Dec 26, 1757, emphasis mine)

Apart from *is*, the verb *has* is also sometimes (though more rarely) left out, as happens in example (54).

- (54) Warwick, a middle-siz'd Fellow, thin Face, small Eyes, and a sneaking Look, cloathed as the other. (*VG:P* Apr 28-May 5, 1738)

These syntactically incomplete sentences typically occur in the description in Move 4, but sometimes elliptical structures can be found in other places as well. This happens in example (55), where the advertiser adds a precision of the reward in a post-script.

- (55) N.B. If they should be taken separate, Two Pistoles for the white man, and Eight for the Mulatto. (*VG:H* June 12, 1752)

Some elliptical structures, like the ones seen in examples (56) and (57), seem rather clumsy. It could be that these advertisers are not very practised writers, or else they just have not spent a lot of thought in how to formulate their message.

- (56) A young Mulatto Wench, named BELINDA, went off at the same Time, who is short and very fat. I purchased her of Mr. George Blair of Smithfield, where she possibly may go, but more likely with the Fellow, who is her Husband. (*VG:PD* Oct 1, 1772)

- (57) had on, when he went away, a Hat, an Oznabrig Shirt, a dark colour'd Coat, with a small Cape to it, lin'd with Velvet, and is too long for him (*VG:P* May 9-16, 1745, emphasis mine)

On the other hand, some advertisements seem very carefully phrased, and contain long, complex sentences. This is probably connected to the writing skills of various advertisers as well as their own personal styles. Some advertisers use a much more elliptical style and avoid repeating the runaway as much as possible, whereas others are much wordier in their advertisements.

## 12. Discussion

### 12.1 Differences between the colonies and changes in time

When analysing the various features, I have often commented on the differences between the three colonies. In this chapter I will draw together some of the most noticeable of these differences.

Table 7: *Differences in the advertisements of the three colonies*

	Virginia	New York	Pennsylvania
Move 1 present	36 %	<u>6</u> %	<b>49</b> %
Using "the Subscriber" vs. the name in Move 4	<b>73%</b> / <u>10%</u>	<u>24%</u> / <b>58%</b>	58% / 29%
The reward as a separate headline	<u>3</u> %	16 %	<b>33</b> %
The signature syntactically part of Move 5	<u>35</u> %	67 %	<b>89</b> %
...by using the phrase "paid by X"	<u>21</u> %	58 %	<b>80</b> %
Move 7 present	<u>8</u> %	22 %	<b>42</b> %
Post-script present	<u>13</u> %	<b>42</b> %	24 %
"had on, when (s)he went away"	<u>33</u> %	<b>64</b> %	42 %
"(all) reasonable charges"	<u>6</u> %	<b>76</b> %	71 %
"so that his Master may have him again" or some variation thereof	<u>30</u> %	47 %	<b>51</b> %
no 1st person references	<u>17</u> %	<b>80</b> %	60 %
In Move 5, the slave owner referred to as "Master"	<u>8</u> %	<b>60</b> %	38 %

In table 7 I have bolded the largest percentages in each case, and underlined the lowest ones to make the comparisons easier. In general the table seems to indicate that many of the fixed phrases are more typical in the New York and Pennsylvania corpora than in the Virginian advertisements, which contain more variation in how things are worded. The Pennsylvanian and New York advertisements do not always follow the same trends, however. For example, Move 1 is found in 49% of the Pennsylvanian notices but only in 6 % of the New York advertisements. Apart from the differences presented in table 7, many others could also be observed in the corpus.

The more interesting question is *why* these differences appear. Editorial influence does not seem a likely candidate, as particularly the New York corpus (which seems to contain many of the fixed phrases) comes from several different newspapers. Some

differences between the advertisements of the different colonies can be explained by outside factors, especially the different situations the slaves found themselves in the Northern and Southern colonies. This explains, for example, the existence of directions for punishment in Move 8 of some Virginian advertisements and their absence in the other two colonies. It can also be that Pennsylvanian and New York runaways had more opportunities to get onboard vessels, which would explain why Move 7 (warnings to masters of vessels, etc.) is more popular in those advertisements. Likewise, the Virginian fixed phrase “besides what the Law allows” in the reward is linked to the runaway legislation of that particular colony.

However, some other features cannot be explained so easily. Why do New York advertiser favour the phrase “all reasonable charges” when Pennsylvanians more often choose “reasonable charges”? Why do most New Yorkers mention the advertiser’s name right at the onset, whilst the other two colonies are more likely to use “the Subscriber”? I cannot offer hypotheses as to how the initial tendencies came to be, but it would seem logical that once they had emerged, these models were self-enforcing. If, in the beginning, advertisers in a particular newspaper happen to choose similar phrases to express certain things, the readers, who, after reading these initial advertisements write their own, are more likely to follow the set example. Thus, in turn, they strengthen the emerging tendencies. On the other hand, if, from the onset on, the advertisers use several different ways to express themselves, the “example effect” is not going to have such a strong influence to later advertisements either.

Since the corpus used is not very extensive, the findings of this thesis cannot be taken as absolutely definitive, even though the tendencies revealed are interesting. One more aspect that could be interesting is the spread of particular phrases or other practises from one colony to another. As the slave owners did regularly advertise for their runaways in the neighbouring colonies’ papers, it would be surprising if some interaction of this kind did not take place.

Changes in time in the time span of over forty years were not particularly marked. However, for example Move 7 (warnings to masters of vessels and others) is more popular in the later years. Noticeable also is the appearance of the reward sum as a separate headline in the later years, which as was already mentioned, is probably a reaction to the growing number of advertisements. In the Virginian advertisements development could also be observed in the layout: for example, from the 1750s onwards all capital letters began to be used to highlight the names of the advertiser and the slave and possibly also the reward sum.

## 12.2 A prototypical runaway advertisement?

In this study I have identified various features which characterize the genre of runaway slave advertisements. However, as these features have been examined by looking at individual parts of the runaway advertisement one by one, it is perhaps useful here to look at a single advertisement, example (58), and see how these features are present in it.

- (58) RAN away from the Subscriber, living in Hanover County, near Newcastle Town, about the End of September last, a new Negroe Man; he understands no English; is about 5 Feet 11 Inches high, a right Black Fellow; with a Scar over his Right Eye-brow; had on, a new Cotton Jacket and Breeches, without either Button or Button-holes, a new Felt Hat, and an Oznabrig Shirt. Whoever takes up the said Negroe and brings him to me, or to Mr. Robert Brown, Merchant, in Newcastle, shall have a good Reward, besides what the Law allows. Margaret Arbuthnott. N.B. It's desired that he may receive sufficient Correction in his Way home. (VG:P Nov 14-21, 1745)

This Virginian advertisement has quite a typical array of Moves. It starts with Move 2 (the phrase “RAN away”). Move 3 gives information on where and from whom the runaway has escaped. Move 4 contains the description of the slave: slightly untypical is the fact that the slave is not named (though, as the slave is a recent purchase, this is understandable), whereas the rest of the information given (comments on English skills, height, scars, list of clothing) is quite typical. As in all runaway advertisements, Move 5 is present and defines the reward. This advertisement also has Move 6 (the signature), as do 74 % of all the runaway advertisements. The somewhat rarer Move 8 (the desired

punishment) is also present in this notice. Missing are Moves 1 (which, in any case, occurs only in 32 % of all advertisements), Move 7 (warnings not to harbour the runaway, etc. – again, a move that occurs in a minority of the advertisements) and Move 9 (unexpected moves, therefore, not really expected here either). The moves that are present are in the prototypical order.

As for fixed phrases, for one there is the initial “RAN away”. Although in the corpus in general “RUN away” is the most popular way to start the advertisement, “RAN away” is the variant that dominates in Virginian advertisements at this point in time. Like in 60% of all advertisements, the list of clothes starts with the phrase “had on”, and Move 5 uses the “Whoever...” –structure like 88% of the advertisements. Although there is no precise reward sum named (which is not the usual case), the fixed phrase “besides what the Law allows” is present like in half of the Virginian advertisements.

The fact that the advertisement does not refer to the runaway as a “slave”, but rather as by the words “negro man”, “fellow” and “said negro” is also in accordance with general tendencies. Typical, too, is that when mentioning an “outsider” person, the advertiser not only mentions his name, but also his title, occupation and place of residence. The advertisement also offers a prime example the ways the advertisers can refer to themselves. When referring to herself in Move 3, the advertiser calls herself “the Subscriber” (as do 58% of all, and 73% of Virginian advertisers). However, in Move 5 she changes to first person in “brings him to me”. Furthermore, in Move 8, she opts for a passive construction rather than placing herself as the subject (“it’s desired...”). Although this does not seem very consistent, such mixed methods were quite usual especially in the Virginian advertisements.

With 109 words the advertisement is somewhat shorter than average. In the matter of abbreviated language, too, the advertisement follows the typical model. The only abbreviations used are the Latin “N.B.” and the title “Mr”. In the syntax elliptical constructions appear in Move 4, where the runaway as a subject is not repeated in the beginning of all the clauses.

All in all, example (58) can be considered a reasonably prototypical member of the runaway slave advertisement genre. In particular, it follows the conventions of Virginian runaway advertisements. When compared to the typical advertisements in Pennsylvania or New York, certain differences arise. For example, Pennsylvanian and New York advertisements would more likely contain the phrase “(all) reasonable charges”, as well as avoid the first person reference altogether. Move 6 would also more likely form part of the previous sentence, probably linked by the phrase “paid by”. However, although this Virginian advertisement would not be quite such a prototypical example of New York or Pennsylvanian advertisements, it would nevertheless not seem particularly out of place, were it placed in the newspapers of neighbouring colonies.

### **13. Conclusion**

In this thesis I have inspected the runaway slave advertisement as a genre, looking at the structural and formulaic features that it has. Examination of the Virginian, Pennsylvanian and New York corpus revealed that, although the varying circumstances of slave escape unavoidably bring different elements to different advertisements, there is enough regularity in form to make it possible to talk of a prototypical runaway advertisement. Furthermore subtle preferences in wording in the advertisements in different colonies would indicate that even rather local norms were in action, as advertisers, perhaps automatically, followed the conventions they saw in their own papers. Change in the period of about 40 years was not very noticeable. However, for example, the eye-catching practice of placing the reward sum in the headline can perhaps be seen as developing due to the increase in the number of advertisements.

The advertisements were analysed in terms of *moves*. Identified were basic moves that are to be found in (nearly) all runaway advertisements, as well as rarer moves that appear only occasionally. The moves are connected to the different acts the advertisers wish to accomplish through the advertisements. Apart from the move structure and its organization, generic tendencies could also be observed on the level of vocabulary and especially in the use of fixed phrases. The presence of exceptions (in the moves as well

as word choices) shows that the writers *did* have the possibility to phrase matters differently – however, the idea of a prototypical runaway advertisement seems to have been so effective that this possibility was not gripped by most writers.

This study was limited to runaway slave advertisements, and other related subgenres, though briefly mentioned, were not subjected to close analysis. Therefore, one future avenue for research could be, for example, a comparison between the runaway slave and runaway white servant advertisements. It might also be of interest to examine the generic qualities of other early “lost and found” advertisements. Furthermore, it would be interesting to see whether examples of runaway advertisements from the extreme northern and southern colonies concur with the tendencies discovered in the present study.

The generic features discovered in these advertisements are interesting, as they reveal something about the development of a particular genre of texts in the early days of the newspaper. Nevertheless, the most interesting aspect of these texts is the window they offer to the lives of individual slaves and their owners living in 18<sup>th</sup> century America.

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## ANNEX 1: LIST OF ADVERTISEMENTS USED FOR THE CORPUS

### **VIRGINIA:**

1. Virginia Gazette (Parks), October 29 to November 5, 1736.
2. Virginia Gazette (Parks), December 10 to December 17, 1736 .
3. Virginia Gazette (Parks), From June 3 to June 10, 1737.
4. Virginia Gazette (Parks), December 2 to December 9, 1737.
5. Virginia Gazette (Parks), February 24 to March 1, 1737 [1738]
6. Virginia Gazette (Parks), April 14 to April 21, 1738.
7. Virginia Gazette (Parks), April 28 to May 5, 1738.
8. Virginia Gazette (Parks), June 2 to June 9, 1738.
9. Virginia Gazette (Parks), July 14 to July 21, 1738.
10. Virginia Gazette (Parks), August 11 to August 18, 1738.
11. Virginia Gazette (Parks), December 15 to December 22, 1738.
12. Virginia Gazette (Parks), February 2 to February 9, 1738 [1739].
13. Virginia Gazette (Parks), March 30 to April 6, 1739.
14. Virginia Gazette (Parks), May 4 to May 11, 1739.
15. Virginia Gazette (Parks), June 8 to June 15, 1739.
16. Virginia Gazette (Parks), June 15 to June 22, 1739.
17. Virginia Gazette (Parks), August 10 to August 17, 1739.
18. Virginia Gazette (Parks), From Friday October 5 to Friday, October 12, 1739.
19. Virginia Gazette (Parks), October 19 to October 26, 1739.
20. Virginia Gazette (Parks), October 26 to November 2, 1739.
21. Virginia Gazette (Parks), March 14 to March 21, 1744-5.
22. Virginia Gazette (Parks), May 2 to May 9, 1745.
23. Virginia Gazette (Parks), May 2 to May 9, 1745.
24. Virginia Gazette (Parks), May 9 to May 16, 1745.
25. Virginia Gazette (Parks), May 9 to May 16, 1745.
26. Virginia Gazette (Parks), September 19 to September 26, 1745.
27. Virginia Gazette (Parks), From November 14 to November 21, 1745.
28. Virginia Gazette (Parks), November 14 to November 21, 1745.
29. Virginia Gazette (Parks), November 14 to November 21, 1745.
30. Virginia Gazette (Parks), November 28 to December 5, 1745.
31. Virginia Gazette (Parks), December 5 to December 12, 1745.
32. Virginia Gazette (Parks), May 8 to May 15, 1746.

33. Virginia Gazette (Parks), August 21 to August 28, 1746.
34. Virginia Gazette (Parks), March 20 to March 27, 1746.
35. Virginia Gazette (Parks), March 20 to March 27, 1746.
36. Virginia Gazette (Parks), March 27 to April 3, 1746.
37. Virginia Gazette (Parks), April 3 to April 10, 1746.
38. Virginia Gazette (Parks), April 17 to April 24, 1746.
39. Virginia Gazette (Parks), July 24 to July 31, 1746.
40. Virginia Gazette (Parks), From August 7 to August 14, 1746.
41. Virginia Gazette (Hunter), May 2, 1751.
42. Virginia Gazette (Hunter), May 9, 1751.
43. Virginia Gazette (Hunter), August 8, 1751.
44. Virginia Gazette (Hunter), September 19, 1751.
45. Virginia Gazette (Hunter), September 19, 1751.
46. Virginia Gazette (Hunter), October 31, 1751.
47. Virginia Gazette (Hunter), November 14, 1751.
48. Virginia Gazette (Hunter), January 3, 1752.
49. Virginia Gazette (Hunter), January 24, 1752.
50. Virginia Gazette (Hunter), January 30, 1752.
51. Virginia Gazette (Hunter), January 30, 1752.
52. Virginia Gazette (Hunter), June 12, 1752.
53. Virginia Gazette (Hunter), June 18, 1752.
54. Virginia Gazette (Hunter), August 14, 1752.
55. Virginia Gazette (Hunter), August 21, 1752.
56. Virginia Gazette (Hunter), October 20, 1752.
57. Virginia Gazette (Hunter), April 18, 1755.
58. Virginia Gazette (Hunter), November 7, 1755.
59. Virginia Gazette (Hunter), September 2, 1757.
60. Virginia Gazette (Hunter), November 30, 1759.
61. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Co.), March 7, 1766.
62. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Co.), March 21, 1766.
63. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Co.), June 13, 1766.
64. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), August 15, 1766.
65. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), December 11, 1766.
66. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), January 8, 1767.

67. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), May 21, 1767.
68. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), December 3, 1767.
69. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), February 11, 1768.
70. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), June 23, 1768.
71. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), September 15, 1768.
72. Virginia Gazette (Rind), September 29, 1768.
73. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), January 26, 1769.
74. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), May 18, 1769.
75. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), March 9, 1769.
76. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), June 1, 1769.
77. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), September 14, 1769.
78. Virginia Gazette (Rind), April 27, 1769.
79. Virginia Gazette (Rind), August 10, 1769.
80. Virginia Gazette (Rind), October 19, 1769. Supplement.
81. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), March 22, 1770.
82. Virginia Gazette (Rind), June 7, 1770.
83. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), May 2, 1771.
84. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), October 3, 1771.
85. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), January 23, 1772.
86. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), July 16, 1772.
87. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), October 1, 1772.
88. Virginia Gazette (Rind), February 6, 1772.
89. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), January 7, 1773.
90. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), January 20, 1774.
91. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), Postscript. July 21, 1774.
92. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), November 10, 1774.
93. Virginia Gazette (Rind), June 30, 1774.
94. Virginia Gazette or, Norfolk Intelligencer (Duncan), August 15, 1775.
95. Virginia Gazette (Dixon & Hunter), March 18, 1775.
96. Virginia Gazette (Dixon & Hunter), April 1, 1775.
97. Virginia Gazette (Purdie), June 23, 1775.
98. Virginia Gazette (Purdie), March 22, 1776.
99. Virginia Gazette (Purdie), September 6, 1776.
100. Virginia Gazette (Dixon & Hunter), June 27, 1777.

## **NEW YORK:**

The New York corpus was collected from the book *“Pretends to Be Free”*: *Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey*.

The corpus of this study includes the following advertisements:

12, 18, 21, 24, 28, 38, 44, 48-50, 53, 59, 65, 66, 74, 82, 86, 106, 147, 159, 164, 191, 195, 219, 247, 260, 274, 280, 325, 328, 342, 352, 365, 375, 376, 382, 385, 386, 390, 395, 396, 398, 401, 443 and 449

## **PENNSYLVANIA:**

The Pennsylvanian corpus was collected from the book *Blacks Who Stole Themselves: Advertisements for Runaways in the Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728-1790*.

The corpus of this study includes the following advertisements:

3, 4, 9, 10, 13, 14, 16, 19, 23, 24, 26-28, 32, 33, 35, 41, 42, 47, 70, 75, 77, 84, 94, 104, 124, 125, 147, 154, 171, 176, 180, 182, 191, 196, 204, 211, 219, 229, 233, 235, 242, 244, 251 and 252

## FINNISH SUMMARY / SUOMENKIELINEN TIIVISTELMÄ

Tutkielmani käsittelee 1700-luvun koloniaalisesta Amerikasta peräisin olevien ”karanneet orjat” –ilmoitusten genrelle tyypillisiä piirteitä. Nämä ilmoitukset, joiden avulla omistajat pyrkivät saamaan toiset kolonialistit avustamaan heitä karanneiden orjien kiinniottossa, olivat erittäin tyypillisiä ilmoituksia ensimmäisissä amerikkalaisissa sanomalehdissä. Tutkimusaineiston 190 ilmoitusta tulevat Virginian, Pennsylvanian ja New Yorkin siirtokunnista.

### **Orjuus Pohjois-Amerikassa**

Alunperin Pohjois-Amerikan siirtokuntien suuri työvoiman tarve täytettiin pääosin käyttämällä eurooppalaisia palvelijoita, jotka sitoutuivat työskentelemään isännälleen useita vuosia Atlantin ylitystä vastaan. Kuitenkin 1700-luvulle mennessä valkoisten palvelijoiden merkitys oli pienentynyt orjuuden vakiinnuttua Britannian Amerikan-siirtokunnissa. Vaikka varsinkin alkuaikoina myös intiaaneja vangittiin orjiksi, ehdottomasti suurin osa orjista oli afrikkalaista alkuperää. Orjien määrän kasvaessa nopeasti siirtokunnissa syntyi tarve säätää lakeja, jotka määrittelivät orjien asemaa. Orjuus sidottiin kiinni ihonväriin: tummaihoisille oletuksena oli koko elämän pituinen orjuus, kun taas valkoiset eivät voineet tulla orjuutetuiksi. Käytännössä eurooppalaisilla palvelijoillakaan ei ennen palvelusajan täyttymistä ollut paljon orjia paremmat olot, sillä hekin olivat täysin isäntiensä määräysvallan alla – erona oli kuitenkin, että valkoihoisten palvelijoiden palvelusaika oli rajattu.

Vaikka orjuus oli laillista kaikissa siirtokunnissa, orjien asemassa oli kuitenkin suuria alueellisia eroja. Nämä tulivat esiin varsinkin eteläisten (kuten Virginia) ja pohjoisten (kuten Pennsylvania ja New York) siirtokuntien välillä. Eteläiset siirtokunnat tarvitsivat suuret määrät työvoimaa maatalouteen, ja siellä orjuus muodosti talouden perustan. Pohjoisemmissa siirtokunnissakin orjuus oli laillista, muttei kuitenkaan niin laajalle levinnyttä kuin etelässä. Orjat myös työskentelivät pohjoisessa useammin vaihtelevimmissa tehtävissä, esim. palvelijoina tai erilaisissa ammateissa.

Kaikilla alueilla oli kuitenkin yleistä, että orjat tavoittelivat vapautta pakenemalla isänniltään ja emänniltään. Joskus karkulaiset palasivat itsekseen lyhyen ajan kuluttua, mutta toiset tavoittelivat pitempiäaikaista vapautta kovien rangaistuksienkin uhalla. Omistajat turvautuivat erilaisiin keinoihin saadakseen orjansa takaisin, ja sanomalehtien alkaessa ilmestyä siirtokunnissa kolonialistit pystyivät jahtaamaan karkulaisia myös sanomalehti-ilmoitusten avulla.

### **Sanomalehdet ja 1700-luvun englannin kieli**

Ensimmäiset sanomalehdet aloittivat toimintansa siirtokunnissa 1700-luvun ensimmäisellä puoliskolla. Pennsylvania sai ensimmäisen lehtensä vuonna 1719, New York vuonna 1725 ja Virginia vuorostaan vuonna 1736. Heti alusta alkaen lehdissä oli ilmoituspalsta ja yksi yleinen ilmoitusten kohde olivat karanneet orjat. Myös valkoiset palvelijat pakenivat usein isänniltään, joskus samanaikaisesti orjien kanssa, ja olivat myös monien ilmoitusten aiheena. Yleisesti ottaen sanomalehti-ilmoitukset olivat 1700-luvulla ulkonäöltään visuaalisesti melko monotonisia. Hieman eloa ilmoituksiin toivat jossain vaiheessa mm. kuvitukset, jotka ilmoittivat ilmoituksen aihepiiriin. Myös ”karanneet orjat” –ilmoitukset julkaistiin 1700-luvulla joissain lehdissä joidenkin vuosien ajan puukaiverrus-kuvalla varustettuna. Sanomalehtiteksteissä käytettiin usein myös kursiivia tai isoja kirjaimia painottamaan esimerkiksi otsikkoa tai tekstissä esiintyviä erisnimiä.

1700-luvun englannin kieli ei tuota kovinkaan suuria ymmärtämisvaikeuksia nykylukijalle. Sanojen kirjoitusasussa on kuitenkin tässä vaiheessa vielä jonkin verran variaatiota, ja tutkimusaineiston ilmoituksissakin monille sanoille löytyy kaksi tai useampi eri kirjoitusasu (esim. ”jail” on useammin kirjoitettu ”gaol” tai ”goal” aineiston ilmoituksissa). Joidenkin sanojen merkitys on voinut myös muuttua ja toiset sanat tippua käytöstä vuosien kuluessa. Satunnaisia sanasto-ongelmia lukuunottamatta tekstit ovat kuitenkin melko helppolukuisia. Nykylukijan huomio voi myös kiinnittyä 1700-luvulla yhä jonkin verran käytössä olleeseen tapaan kirjoittaa kaikki substantiivit isolla alkukirjaimella.



## **Genre**

Sanomalehti-ilmoitukset ovat yksi esimerkki genrestä. Mm. Swales ja Bhatia määrittelevät genren olevan ryhmä tekstejä, joita yhdistää yhteinen kommunikatiivinen päämäärä. ”Kadonneet orjat” –ilmoituksilla tämä päämäärä on orjan takaisin saaminen muiden kolonialistien avustuksella. Vaikka yhteinen päämäärä onkin tärkein määrittelijä, sen lisäksi genren teksteillä on yleensä rakenteellisia yhteneväisyyksiä. Genrestä riippuen nämä rakenteelliset yhteneväisyydet voivat olla tiukempia tai löyempiä. Rakenteellisiin yhtäläisyyksiin kuuluvat sanaston ja tyylin lisäksi esimerkiksi rakenteet, joita Swales kutsuu siirroiksi (moves). Siirroilla on omat päämääränsä, jotka ovat kuitenkin alisteisia genren määrittävälle päämäärälle. Näillä siirroilla on yleensä myös kiinteä järjestyks. Tämän tutkielman tarkoituksena on tutkia, millaisia nämä rakenteelliset yhteneväisyydet ovat ”karanneet orjat” –ilmoituksissa.

Riippuen siitä kuinka yleisellä tasolla ”yhteinen kommunikatiivinen päämäärä” ymmärretään, genret voidaan jakaa edelleen pienempiin alagenreihin. Esimerkiksi sanomalehti-ilmoitusten laajasta genrestä voidaan erottaa alaryhmäksi ”kadotettu ja löydetty” –ilmoitukset. Tämä alaryhmä taas sisältää siirtomaa-ajan sanomalehdissä esimerkiksi ilmoituksia harhailevista hevosista sekä tätä tutkielmaa koskettavat ”karanneet orjat” –ilmoitukset. Läheisiä sukulaisgenrejä ovat toisaalta ilmoitukset kiinniotetuista orjista ja toisaalta karanneista valkoisista palvelijoista tai armeijasta pakenneista sotilaista.

## **Tutkimusaineisto**

Korpuksen 190 ilmoituksesta 100 tulee Virginiasta, *Virginia Gazette* –nimellä toimineista sanomalehdistä. Pennsylvanialaiset 45 ilmoitusta on julkaistu alkujaan *Pennsylvania Gazette* –lehdessä. New Yorkin 45 ilmoitusta ovat peräisin useammasta New Yorkin alueella toimineesta sanomalehdestä, suurin osa kuitenkin *New York Gazette, or the Weekly Post-Boy* –lehdestä. Aineistooni virginialaiset ilmoitukset keräsin Virginia Runaways Project Internet-sivustolta. Transkriptioiden lisäksi sivustolla on

suurimmasta osasta ilmoituksista myös kuva alkuperäisestä lehdestä. Pennsylvanian ja New Yorkin aineistot ovat peräisin kirjoista, joihin näitä ilmoituksia on kerätty. Ajallisesti vanhimmat ilmoitukset tulevat 1730-luvulta, kun taas uusimmat ovat peräisin 1770-luvulta. Tutkimusaineisto on pyritty keräämään mahdollisimman tasaisesti tältä aikaväliltä. Tämä ei kuitenkaan ole aivan ongelmatonta, sillä alkuvuosilta on saatavilla huomattavasti vähemmän ilmoituksia kuin viimeisiltä vuosikymmeniltä (varsinkin 1770-luvulla Amerikan vallankumouksen tuoksinassa ennätysmäärät orjia pakeni ja myös ilmoitusten määrä kasvoi huomattavasti).

Ilmoitukset käsittelevät yleensä vain yhtä karkulaista (näin tapahtuu 154 ilmoituksessa), mutta muutamaa orjaa tai orjaa ja valkoisia palvelijoita koskevat ilmoitukset eivät myöskään ole harvinaisia. Aineiston yhdessä ilmoituksessa kadoksissa on jopa kuusi orjaa. Ilmoitusten pituus vaihtelee 45 sanasta 392 sanaan, keskimääräisen pituuden ollessa 137 sanaa per ilmoitus. Pennsylvanian ilmoitukset ovat keskimäärin toisia pidempiä, mutta tämä voi johtua siitä, että lähteenä käytettyyn kirjaan on alunperin valittu pitempiä ilmoituksia, koska ne on nähty sisältävän enemmän mielenkiintoista informaatiota orjien elämästä.

### **Analyysi**

Analysoidessani ilmoituksia, jaoin ne yhdeksään mahdolliseen *siirtoon* (moves). Siirto 1 sisältää ilmoituksen päiväyksen ja paikan. Siirto 2 on aloittava otsikko (ja mahdollinen illustraatio), joka paljastaa ilmoituksen tyypin. Siirrosta 3 ilmoitetaan keneltä ja koska karkulainen on paennut. Tärkeimmät siirrot ovat 4 ja 5. Siirto 4 sisältää karkulaisen kuvailun, kun taas siirto 5 määrittelee palkkion ja mitä on tehtävä sen saadakseen. Siirto 6 on mahdollinen erillinen allekirjoitus. Muut siirrot ovat harvinaisempia. Siirron 7 tarkoituksena on estää se, ettei kukaan auta karkulaista: siinä kielletään, usein lakitoimin uhkaamalla, suojelemasta tai kuljettamasta karkulaista. Siirto 8 sisältää mahdolliset toimintaohjeet orjan kiinniottamisen jälkeen (esim. neuvot rankaisemisesta). Siirto 9 on kokoelma epätyypillisiä siirtoja, jotka esiintyvät erittäin harvakseltaan. Nämä siirrot esiintyvät yleensä ilmoituksissa aina samassa järjestyksessä, vaikka harvinaisten siirtojen osalta havaittavissa on enemmän vaihtelua.

Eri siirroissa esitettävät asiat esitetään useimmissa ilmoituksissa turvautuen samoihin sanavalintoihin. Näitä ovat esimerkiksi aloitus ”RUN away” (KARANNUT) ja vaatekuvailun aloittava ”Had on, when he went away” (Piti yllään, kun pakeni). Varsinkin siirto, jossa kuvaillaan palkkio, seuraa usein samaa muottia. Aloittavana sanana on ”whoever” (”se, joka...”). Virginiassa palkkiosumman perässä on yleensä fraasi ”besides what the law allows” (”lain myöntämän summan lisäksi”), kun taas newyorkilaisille ja pennsylvanialaisille ilmoituksille tyypillinen on fraasi ”and (all) reasonable charges” (”ja (kaikki) kohtuulliset kulut”).

Orjien kuvailuun käytettäviä adjektiiveja tutkiessa käy ilmi, että muutamia poikkeuksia lukuunottamatta sanasto ei ole kovin toistuvaa. Tämä on ymmärrettävää, koska kuvailun tarkoituksena saada karkulainen erottumaan joukosta. Vaikka jonkin verran (hyvinkin) negatiivisväritteistä sanastoa löytyy aineistosta etenkin kuvailtaessa karkulaisen luonnetta kun taas ruumiinrakenteen kuvailussa vuorostaan tyypillisempiä ovat myönteisemmät adjektiivit, pääosa kuvailusta on kuitenkin suhteellisen neutraalia. Huomion arvoista on myös vaatteiden kuvailuun liittyvä sanasto: se on yllättävän laajaa, sillä suuri osa ilmoituksista sisältää tarkan listan karkulaisen vaatetuksesta, ja lisäksi se sisältää paljon termejä, jotka ovat nykylukijalle tuntemattomia.

Tutkiessani miten karkulaiseen viitataan tekstissä, oli huomattavissa mm. seuraavia suuntauksia: Vaikka karkulaisen nimi yleensä mainitaan kuvailun alussa, sitä ei toisteta myöhemmin ilmoituksessa. Myöhemmin ilmoituksessa karkulaiseen viitattaessa käytetään sen sijaan termiä ”mainittu neekeri/mulatto/poika/yms.” Sanaa ”orja” ei käytetä läheskään kaikissa ilmoituksissa, todennäköisesti koska, jos karkulainen ilmoitettiin olevan tummaihoisen, oletuksena oli hänen olevan orjan asemassa. Itseensä ilmoituksen jättäjä voi viitata käyttäen yksikön ensimmäistä persoonaa, mutta varsinkin newyorkilaiset ja pennsylvanialaiset mainostajat välttävät tätä. Sen sijaan käytössä ovat passiivirakenteet ja viittaaminen itseensä joko nimellä tai ilmauksilla ”subscriber” (allekirjoittanut) tai ”(his) Master” (hänen isäntänsä). Useissa ilmoituksissa useat näistä keinoista ovat käytössä samanaikaisesti. Kun ilmoituksessa mainitaan muita henkilöitä,

heidät nimetään, mutta myös tittelit, ammatit ja asuinpaikka mainitaan melkein aina. Tuntemattomat henkilöt, joita epäillään karkulaisten avustamisesta, kuvaillaan ”ilkeämielisiksi” henkilöiksi.

Ilmoitusten avulla ihmiset pyrkivät tekemään erilaisia asioita, ei ainoastaan tarjoamaan palkkiota orjan löytäjälle. Toinen melko tyypillinen toiminta oli varoitusten antaminen varsinkin laivojen kapteeneille, etteivät he kuljettaisi orjaa – varoitusta tehostettiin useimmiten uhkauksella oikeustoimiin tarttumisesta, jos orjaa avustetaan paossa. Joskus ilmoittajat myös pyytävät lukijoita tekemään ylimääräisiä asioita, kuten rankaisemaan orjaa tai säilyttämään ilmoituksen pidemmän aikaa. Varsinkin varoituksista löytyy usein toimintaa korostava ”hereby” (”täten”), joka antaa virallisen vaikutelman ilmoituksille. Myös ilmaukset kuten ”edellämainittu orja/palkkio”, yms. tuovat virallista tyyliä ilmoituksiin. Toisaalta ilmoituksille on myös tyypillistä lyhentelevä tyyli lauserakenteissa. Varsinkin kuvailu-osuudessa on usein elliptisiä rakenteita. Yleisimmin tämä koskee subjektin pois jättämistä peräkkäisissä lauseissa, joissa karkulainen on subjektina, mutta myös radikaalimpia elliptisiä rakenteita esiintyy joissain ilmoituksissa. Toisaalta sanalyhenteitä käytetään yllättävän harvoin. Tämä johtunee siitä, ettei 1700-luvun ilmoitusten hinnoittelu ollut kovin tarkasti riippuvainen ilmoituksen pituudesta.

Virginian, Pennsylvanian ja New Yorkin ilmoitusten välillä on huomattavissa jonkin verran eroja. Näitä löytyy sekä sanavalinnoissa (mm. jotkut kiinteät fraasit esiintyvät tiettyjen siirtokuntien ilmoituksissa useammin kuin toisten) että eräiden siirtojen yleisyydessä. Koska kaikki erot eivät selity kulttuurisilla eroilla esim. orjien kohtelussa, olettaisin niiden olevan todisteita siitä, että paikalliset lehdet toimivat ehkä osittain tiedostamattomina esimerkkeinä kirjoittajille. Tätten kerran yleistynyt rakenne jatkaa vahvana, kun ihmiset laativat ilmoituksiaan lukemiensa mukaan. Noin 40 vuoden aikana ilmoitusten muodossa ei ole havaittavissa kovin suurta kehitystä. Kuitenkin esimerkiksi palkkiosumman maininta otsikossa yleistyy myöhäisemmissä ilmoituksissa, mikä johtunee siitä, että ilmoitusten määrän lisääntyessä lisääntyi myös tarve kiinnittää lukijan huomio omaan ilmoitukseen.