

BLACK FUGITIVES IN COLONIAL SOUTH CAROLINA

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In the years since 1960 the historiography of colonial slavery has undergone such radical changes in terms of the approaches and evidence used, that Peter Wood has labelled the period the 'Second Black Reconstruction.'¹ Studies of slavery have shifted their emphasis from assessing the impact of the 'peculiar institution' on white society to consideration of the lives of the slaves - a change only made possible by the increased acceptance of the multi-disciplinary and frequently quantitative techniques of the 'new social history.' The major hindrance to any historical study of slavery is that the sources originate not from the slaves, who were mostly illiterate, but from their white masters. To a certain extent the biases of material such as letters, and travellers accounts can be avoided by using sources not specifically written to inform - for example ledgers, court records and inventories - sources that Marc Bloch has called 'witnesses in spite of themselves.'²

Although runaway advertisements had been utilised by historians for many years it was not until the publication of *Flight and Rebellion* by Gerald Mullin in 1972 that the material in colonial newspapers was used on anything more than a random basis. Runaway advertisements provide reasonably objective descriptions, amenable to quantification, of hundreds of slaves omitted from the more traditional sources. This material used in conjunction with other sources can aid analysis of broader issues - the acculturation of African slaves, the role of slaves in the economy and the position of slave women - than the mere physical act of running away.

Mullin examined over a thousand advertisements from Virginia newspapers and concluded that the behaviour of runaway slaves was a function of the assimilation of slaves into white society. The 'acculturated' slaves, defined in terms of the two interdependent variables of position in the occupational hierarchy and ability to speak English, were more likely to try and escape the 'plantation world' by rebelling, running away out of the state or trying to pass as free in the towns. The Virginia planters were essentially engaged in a self-defeating endeavour in that the more the slaves were trained to take on skilled positions the more likely they were to resist the institution of slavery.³ Using methods similar to Mullin, this article will examine the behaviour of runaway slaves in South Carolina.

The material used in this article has been taken from all extant issues of *The South Carolina Gazette* (1740-69), *The South Carolina*

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1. Peter H. Wood, "'I did the Best I Could for My Day' - The Study of Early Black History During the Second Black Reconstruction, 1960 to 1976" *William and Mary Quarterly* XXXV (1978) 185-225.
2. Quoted in Gerald W. Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion - Slave Resistance in Eighteenth Century Virginia* (Oxford University Press 1975) p.x.
3. Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion* passim.

Weekly Gazette (1758-63), *The South Carolina and American General Gazette* (1764-69) and *The South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal* (1765-69) for the thirty year period between 1740 and 1769. More than 1100 runaway advertisements describing nearly 1900 slaves were analysed. For example

Runaway from the plantation of Mr. Alexander Perroneau a fhort well fet Angola Negro fellow named Cordolier, fpeaks good Englifh (having been in this province from a boy) formerly belonged to Edmund Atkin Efq. at Hobcaw and is fuppofed to be harboured thereabouts and often in Charleftown. He has been abfent 3 weeks and had on when he went away oznabrug fhirt and breeches and an old Negro Cloth jacket. Whoever will bring the faid fellow to the above plantation on Wando or to the Warden of the Workhoufe fhall receive five pounds as a reward from
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It is crucial at the outset to realise the limitations of the figures obtained from these advertisements. The slaves in the advertisements represent only a fraction of the total number of runaways. The time lag between the departure of the slave and the placing of the advertisement in the Gazettes, frequently a matter of months, suggest that advertising may have been a last resort. The costs of advertising (the fee, the reward and the Warden's fee) meant that the advertisements contain a bias towards the more valuable slaves owned by the wealthier planters. To a certain extent this bias can be overcome by using another set of figures taken from notices placed in the Gazettes by the Warden of the Workhouse. These notices describe unclaimed slaves who were taken up, and hence contain none of these biases, but unfortunately they generally contain less information than the advertisements. Over 800 such notices describing nearly 1,000 slaves were analysed. For example

Table 1: Runaways from Slave Advertisements

	1740-9	1750-9	1760-9	Total
Males	280	417	714	1411
Females	90	155	159	404
Children	17	44	20	81
Totals	387	616	893	1896

- Of the adult runaways 77.7% are male and 22.3% female

Table 2: Runaways from the Workhouse Notices

	1740-9	1750-9	1760-9	Total
Males	208	226	420	854
Females	36	39	44	119
Children	6	5	2	13
Totals	250	270	466	986

- Of the adult runaways 87.8% are male and 12.2% female

4. *The South Carolina Gazette* (SCG) Oct.30 1751.

The demographic configuration of the black population in South Carolina differed significantly from that of Virginia in two ways which are of vital importance in any explanation of slave behaviour. Firstly, although Virginia was numerically the largest slaveholding state, the proportion of blacks to whites was much greater in South Carolina. South Carolina was the only American colony where there was a 'black majority.' Secondly, the natural growth rate of the Virginia blacks was much greater than that of South Carolina.⁵ The Virginian black population of about 20,000 in 1730 had risen to 188,000 by 1770. There was an increase of nearly 170,000 blacks, but between 1710 and 1769 only 55,000 negroes were imported. Between 1740 and 1770 in South Carolina the black population increased by about 45,000 to 84,000, but in excess of 40,000 slaves were imported.⁶ Due to the very low natural growth rate and high levels of importation, in South Carolina, unlike Virginia, African born blacks constituted a large element of the black population.

The concentration of negroes in the lowland parishes of South Carolina with only a very small white presence made learning English both more difficult and less essential than in Virginia. The high ratio of blacks to whites - in some parishes slaves were more than 90% of the total population - meant that the Africans generally learnt English from other slaves and not from the whites. These factors contributed toward the emergence in the eighteenth century of the pidgin dialect Gullah - a hybrid of English and various African languages - which still survives among the blacks living on the Sea Islands off the South Carolina coast.⁷ In the South Carolina lowland there was a complex interaction between the language of the white masters and that of the numerically dominant slaves. Ebenezer Hazard, who travelled along the Carolina coast in 1778, noted the influence of the negroes on white speech

The common country people talk very much like the Negroes and indeed many of the better sort use a little of that dialect. This arises from the number of Negroes in the state of which I am told there are 50 for one white Person.⁸

It would appear not improbable that the use of the term 'good English' when applied to negroes had a different meaning than when applied to the whites. The phrase in all likelihood was little more than an indication that the negro's speech was intelligible to whites. An advertisement in the Gazette refers to four men and a woman who "...speaks very good (Black-) English."⁹ Blacks had difficulty pronouncing English words and many must have spoken with a heavy

5. The low growth rate was caused by factors like the climate, the rigours of rice cultivation and the sexual imbalance of the blacks. See Shane White, "Slavery in the Province of South Carolina, 1740-1770" (University of Sydney B.A. Thesis, 1978) pp.7-14.
6. *Ibid.*
7. For a more detailed consideration of Gullah see Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 Through the Stono Rebellion* (New York 1975) Chapter VI.
8. H. Roy Merrens (ed.), "A View of Coastal South Carolina in 1778: The Journal of Ebenezer Hazard" *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 73 (1972) p.181.
9. *SCG* Mar.30 1734.

accent - for example a Guiney born slave who was "...named Chriftopher (but may be taken for Cato by his way of expreffion)".¹⁰

Mullin, although he noted that variation could occur depending on age, location and job, suggested that imported Africans gained some English within a year and "...proficiency came within about three years."¹¹ Although the evidence is by no means conclusive there appear to be grounds for asserting that learning English took longer in South Carolina. The runaway advertisements are full of slaves who "can't fpeak one word of Englifh" or "little or no Englifh". However it appears that the situation continued for some time - seven Coromantees who had been in South Carolina 15 months spoke "little Englifh".¹² Frank, "...brought into the Province 4 years ago" spoke "little Englifh".¹³ A forty year old woman who worked as a house wench for Elizabeth Timothy ran away in 1748 and was described as "...fpeaks fo bad Englifh that fhe can hardly be underftood." The same woman ran away eight years later and still spoke "very bad Englifh."¹⁴

The other principle indicator of acculturation used by Mullin was the position of the slave within the occupational hierarchy. Slaves as well as providing the labour in the raice and indigo fields dominated many of the skilled professions in South Carolina. Of the 1411 male slaves advertised as runaways 265 or 18.8% possessed some skill that would have engaged them in an activity other than labouring for most of the time. This is considerably higher than the figure of 6% that Wood found in the South Carolina runaways of the 1730's.¹⁵ The expanding economy, particularly under the impact of the new crop, indigo, placed a premium on skilled slaves. Such slaves were more highly valued than "new negroes." Johann Bolzius, a Swiss settler, estimated that carpenters and coopers were worth more than twice the price of an unskilled slave.¹⁶ Exceptionally skilled slaves could fetch even higher prices, thus Governor Glen writing of the difficulties he was having valuing the contents of South Carolina for the Board of Trade claimed he knew "...a Gentleman who refuses five hundred Guineas for three of his slaves."¹⁷

Table 3: Occupations of the Male Runaways

	Number	% of skilled slaves
Tradesmen	142	53.5%
On the water	93	35.1%
House servants	15	5.7%
Miscellaneous	15	5.7%
	265	100.0%

10. SCG June 7 1760.

11. Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion* pp.46-7.

12. SCG Oct.6 1758

13. *The South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal* (SCG&CJ) Aug.4 1767.

14. SCG Oct.31 1748 and July 8 1756.

15. Wood, *Black Majority* pp.240-1.

16. Klaus G. Loewald, Beverly Starika and Paul S. Taylor (eds. & trans.) "Johann Martin Bolzius Answers a Questionnaire on Carolina and Georgia" *William and Mary Quarterly* XIV (1957) p.255.

17. *British Public Records Office* Vol.24 pp.303-5 Glen to Board of Trade 1751.

The skilled slaves can be divided into two broad and frequently overlapping categories - slaves who worked on the plantations and slaves who were hired out, principally in Charlestown. Advertisements for the sale of slaves from the plantations of deceased estates invariably included a number of skilled slaves. An advertisement for the sale of 25 negroes in 1760 included "...a very good carpenter, 2 coopers and 2 pair of sawyers."¹⁸ This advertisement also gives a good indication of the trades commonly learnt by the slaves - those concerned with the working of wood. Rice the principal crop of South Carolina was stored in barrels - nearly 100,000 were exported annually. The second largest group of skilled slaves (see Table 3) were those who managed the boats. Most of the rice plantations were situated on one or other of the many rivers that cross the Carolina lowland and water transport was essential in moving the bulky rice crop to market in Charlestown.

The hiring out of slaves was quite common, particularly in Charlestown. Slaves were given tickets from their masters and allowed to hire themselves out. They were either supposed to give all their income to their masters or an illegal arrangement was made whereby a fixed sum was given to the master and the slave retained the surplus. These negroes had a substantial degree of autonomy which some took advantage of to abscond. Bristle, a wheelright

...had a permit in July laft for one month to work at his trade fince which he has abfented himfelf and has not been heard of.¹⁹

The amount of money earned by some of these negroes was not inconsiderable. One slave

...ufed to work out with a monthly ticket but as ...(people) ...employed the faid fellow without a ticket, by which I have loft above 300 l.²⁰

Ulrich Phillips asserted that the skilled trades were entered by "exceptional negroes and mulattoes." This was based more on a racist assumption that unless a negro had white blood or was exceptional (a necessary precondition of which was to have been raised in a white environment) he was incapable of gaining the necessary skills, than on any historical evidence.²¹ However the evidence from the runaway advertisements indicates that this was incorrect. More than 24% of the skilled slaves who had their origin listed were born in Africa - slaves Phillips dismissed as a "mass of half savage negroes."²² The demography of South Carolina was such that there was an almost continual labour shortage that necessitated the teaching of skilled trades to Africans. Further, in contrast to what Mullin found in Virginia, some of the skilled Africans in South Carolina had very little knowledge of English - for example a tanner spoke "bad Englifh" and an Ebo cooper spoke "little or no Englifh."²³

18. *SCG* Jan.5 1760.

19. *SCG* Dec.11 1762.

20. *SCG* Feb.17 1763.

21. Ulrich B. Phillips, "The Slave Labour Problem in the Charlestown District" *Political Science Quarterly* XXII (1907) p.425.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *SCG&CJ* April 8 1766 and *SCG* Oct.29 1753.

The runaway advertisements only infrequently gave a specific reason for the departure of the slaves. Undoubtedly an important factor was the cruelty of slavery - an aspect that few slaveowners were likely to publicise in their advertisements. However a few of the notices from the workhouse indicate that some whites, particularly overseers, became sadistic when entrusted with the total control of slaves. One slave told the Warden that "...his Mafter castrated him and another, but the other dying he ran away."²⁴ A Mandingo "...fays his Mafter had a negro that killed himself and his being ordered to cut the dead negro's head off was the occafion of his running away."²⁵ Another slave with a completely unwarranted faith in British justice "...went to the Governor to complain of his Mafter" but was incarcerated in the workhouse for his pains. One further example indicates that cruelty did not necessarily stem from the behaviour of the whites. Kefrey, taken up in the back country "...ran away from a plantation at Stono, when rice was planting laft on account of ill ufage from a negro driver called Peter."²⁶

However the advertisements contain a large amount of material on the expected destination of the runaways - and in many cases the cause of their departure can be inferred from their destination. Two distinct types of runaway emerge from the advertisements - the unacculturated slave, usually African born, who had great difficulty in engagements with whites, and the acculturated slaves, usually American born who passed among the whites with ease and confidence. A few of the slaves - described as "artful", "cunning," and "plaufible" - attained a high level of sophistication in their demeanour more than adequate to deceive most whites. A slave named Moll

...fpeaks very good Englifh and has a moft artful knack of framing and delivering a ftory in that fhe may eafily be miftaken for a ftrictly religous and very upright creature.²⁷

Abraham, a mustee "...hath a very fmooth tongue" and another mustee, Stepney "...can readily invent a plaufible tale if queftioned."²⁸ The acculturation of some of the slaves even extended to the more obscure habits of the whites. A West Indian born slave who was "remarkably clean and neat in his defs" had cultivated the habit of taking snuff.²⁹ A note appended to an advertisement in 1758 for a runaway named Cuffee, observed that he "often wears a wig."³⁰ Six of the male negroes played on the violin or fiddle, perhaps the most interesting of whom was Dick who

plays upon the fiddle and fometimes affects to fpeak broad Scotch or Northumberland dialect; a plaufible rafcal....³¹

24.*SCG&CJ* Feb.17 1768.

25.*SCG* May 12 1759. The master's action was not completely pointless. Africans believed that the mutilation of the dead prevented their return to Africa - hence decapitation could act as a deterrent to prospective suicides.

26.*SCG* Nov.11 1756.

27.*SCG* Nov.8 1751.

28.*SCG* Feb.1 1752 and *SCG* Sept.30 1756.

29.*SCG* Nov.17 1758.

30.*SCG* Mar.10 1757.

31.*South Carolina and American General Gazette* (SCAGG) Jan.29 1768.

Slaves who ran away were essentially faced with three choices - they could try to leave South Carolina, pass for free and try to obtain employment (principally in Charlestown) or be harboured by friends or relatives on the negro quarters of plantations. In Table 4 the slaveowners estimates of the destination of the male fugitive slaves have been listed with the slaves divided into three groups -

Table 4: Slaveowners Estimates of the Destination of Male Runaways

Acculturated Runaways

Destination	<i>South Carolina</i>		<i>Virginia</i>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Harboured	170	27.8%	100	15%
To town or pass as free	136	22.2%	205	31%
Out of state	72	11.8%	121	18%
Other destination	3	0.5%	5	1%
Destination not stated	230	37.7%	238	35%
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	611	100.0%	669	100.0%

Unacculturated Runaways

Destination	<i>South Carolina</i>		<i>Virginia</i>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Harboured	49	15.3%	38	32%
To town or pass as free	6	1.9%	10	8%
Out of state	18	5.7%	7	6%
Other destination	16	5.0%	2	2%
Destination not stated	231	72.1%	62	52%
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	320	100.0%	119	100.0%

Acculturation not indicated

Destination	<i>South Carolina</i>		<i>Virginia</i>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Harboured	116	27.7%	60	29%
To town or pass as free	65	15.6%	18	9%
Out of State	14	3.4%	31	15%
Other destination	6	1.3%	2	1%
Destination not stated	217	52.0%	101	46%
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	418	100.0%	212	100.0%

The Virginia figures are taken from Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion* p.108. Great care should be taken in comparison. The Virginia figures are for 1736-1801 and the Carolina figures for 1740-69. Further in the Virginia figures Mullin excluded native born Africans as they were such a small group. In South Carolina they were of crucial importance and have been included - they are predominantly in the categories of "Acculturated" and "Acculturation not indicated". If these differences are born in mind a comparison can still be made.

acculturated, unacculturated and acculturation not indicated.³²

The unacculturated runaways were almost invariable of African origin with the majority being recent imports to South Carolina.³³ These slaves having recently undergone the shock of the "middle passage" from Africa were in a strange country where the inhabitants spoke a strange language. Many negroes bolted at the first chance - for example a "new negro" ran away "...2 days after I bought him in the fhip in which he was imported."³⁴ The method of departure of others could hardly be called a positive act. Notices such as "...ftrolled away from my houfe about midnight" or "...fuppofed to have loft himfelf in or near Charleftown" convey some of the sense of bewilderment that the "new negroes must have initially experienced."³⁵

These slaves, with little if any knowledge of either the country or the language, had little chance of success and constituted the bulk of the negro runaways who were caught and taken to the workhouse. From Table 5 it can be seen that in the period of high negro importation from 1750 to 1770 African born slaves were a substantial proportion, more than 80% in the 1760's, of the negroes in the workhouse.³⁶ Of these African born slaves more than 68% were positively identified as being unable to speak English. The African born slaves were made even more conspicuous by their "filed teeth" and "country marks" - the result of ritual scarification undergone at African initiation ceremonies. These blacks had a rather distinctive appearance - an Angola had "...3 perpendicular ftrokes on each cheek" and war marked on his forehead with a cross, another slave had "...country marks like diamonds between his eyebrows" and a Gold Coast slave was "...full of his country marks in his face and all over his body."³⁷

Table 5: Origin of Slaves taken to the Workhouse

	1740-9	%	1750-9	%	1760-9	%	Total	%
Africa	38	15.6%	162	61.2%	374	80.6%	574	59.0%
America	11	4.5%	8	3.0%	44	9.5%	63	6.4%
Not specified	195	79.9%	95	35.8%	46	9.9%	336	34.6%
Totals	244		265		464		973	

Unacculturated slaves frequently ran off in groups - there were 27 advertised groups of more than 5 slaves running away together. The fact that many of these groups came from the same region in Africa is,

32. One major shortcoming of the material is that it is slaveowner's estimation and not the actual destinations that are listed. However from the wording of the advertisements the information came from other negroes, or in many cases the negroes were expected to go where they went last time they ran away. As well, in many cases the estimation was based on sightings of the negro, particularly in Charlestown where presumably the negro could elude capture even though the owner or friend actually saw him.

33. In Table 4 the unacculturated negroes from Virginia are not Africans.

34. *SCG* Oct.31 1761.

35. *SCG* Sept.3 1753 and *SCG* May 11 1765.

36. This could also apply to the 1740's if the high proportion of Not specified in Table 5 were actually African born.

37. *SCG* Oct.23 1751, *SCG* Jan.29 1753 and *SCG* Dec.24 1763.

perhaps, indicative of a culture more communally oriented than that of white Americans.³⁸ As the slaves became more acculturated to white mores the tendency to runaway in groups disappeared. The negroes classified as acculturated generally ran off individually, or at most in twos and threes. The only occasion when more than three ran away was when a whole family departed together.

More than 70% of the owners of runaway unacculturated negroes were unable to even hazard a guess at their destination. This is hardly surprising as most of the unacculturated negroes would have had very little conception themselves of where they were going - their immediate concern was getting away from their new masters. Those slaves that managed to reach the woods at times survived for quite long periods of time - an Angolan taken to the workhouse had been in "...the woods thefe two years."³⁹ The inhospitable nature of the South Carolina lowland made this at best rather unpleasant - as Johann Bolzius laconically put it, they got along "miserably."⁴⁰ In 1765 an advertisement stated that some Guiney negroes were "...3 in company but one got drowned." A slave taken up by John Cantey near the Santee "...had juft swum the river and was almoft perished with hunger and very much crippled in his feet and legs."⁴¹ Two Guiney slaves had run away for about "...two summers" but "...Jeffery died in the woods by eating a fnake."⁴²

As can be seen from Table 4 a few of the unacculturated slaves were expected to leave the province. Their aims and methods were considerably less sophisticated than those of the acculturated slaves. More than half were in some way attempting to return to Africa. These attempts further illustrate the depth of the culture shock they had undergone - many of the Africans had no conception of the size of the ocean. Five Angolans who had run away from David Williams in the Welch Tract "...are fuppofed to have gone an eaft courfe as long as they could thinking to return to their own country that way."⁴³ Another group of "new negroes" were expected to keep "...together and make towards the fea coaft."⁴⁴ One can only speculate as to the cause of the following black's predicament

Taken up on the high feas...diftance of about 3 leagues...a fhort well fet Angola negro man branded on the foulder TW. He was lying in a fmall canoe half full of water, in a wretched helples ftate.⁴⁵

The unacculturated slaves, most of whom were recently enslaved, made a relatively unsophisticated attempt to run away - a bid that was frequently cut short by recapture, as the workhouse figures testify.

On the other hand the acculturated slaves had a much clearer conception of their aims when they ran away. Consequently slaveowners attempted to predict their destination in more than 60% of the advertisements. About one in four of the acculturated slaves were expected to be "harboured" by friends or relatives in the slave quarters on the plantations in the country. A combination of the low

38.For example *SCG* Dec.5 1761 7 Ebos, *SCG* Oct.6 1758 7 Coromantees.

39.*SCG* Feb.23 1765.

40.Loewald et al., "Johann Martin Bolzius" p.234.

41.*SCG* Oct.22 1765.

42.*SCG* Feb.17 1759.

43.*SCG* Oct.23 1757.

44.*SCG* Mar.3 1761.

45.*SCG* Dec.22 1758.

life expectancy and high bankruptcy rate of the white planters meant that most negroes had more than one owner (frequently many more) in their lifetimes - about 35% of the advertisements listed one or more former owners. The sale and removal of slaves to other parts of South Carolina meant that many slaves were "...well known in most parts of the province having had several masters."⁴⁶ When these slaves ran away they were expected to try and obtain aid from their former friends. A slave who formerly belonged to Mr. Beamer was

...not heard of about Afhepoo or elfewhere, for above these three months its supposed that he is harboured by some negroes of his old acquaintance especially those belonging to said Beamer.⁴⁷

The physical mobility of the slave population, as well as providing a network of "acquaintances" where aid could be obtained, was also the specific cause of many slaves running away. The death of a master and the consequent sale of his effects threatened the stable existence of many slaves within the closed "plantation world". Sale to a new master involved separation from friends and frequently from relatives and families. A number of advertisements contain information like - "...bought at Mr. Quelch's vendue about 6 weeks since and have absented ever since" or "who immediately after the sale absconded."⁴⁸ Slaves sold to a new master sometimes found him or her less benevolent than their previous master - a negro told the Warden of the Workhouse that he had been sold to "...John Collins in St. Johns Parish and not liking him ran away."⁴⁹

A few of the advertisements provide testimony to the effect slavery had on family life. A female fugitive had a

mother and father at the Honourable William Bull Esq. plantation on Ashley River, a father at the late Thomas Holmes, several relations at Dr. Linings a brother at Mr. Williams and many others...⁵⁰

Another slave had a "...father and mother at Mr. Camus farm near town, a father at Mr. Isaac Motte's near Charlestown and a husband at Sir John Colletons."⁵¹

The harshest cases involved, like the last example, the separation of husband and wife. Peter Timothy advertised for sale a driver - a slave who had reached the pinnacle of black achievement in a slave society - who was now "...runaway occasion'd by his Wife and Child's being fold from him."⁵² An advertisement in 1752 stated that two negroes had runaway

that belonged to the estate of John Parker deceased viz. Tom, bought by Mr. Aiflie and Phoebe his wife bought by the subscriber...As I have now bought Tom (off Mr. Aiflie) if he and his wife will return to their duty their offence

46. *SCG* Nov. 30 1767.

47. *SCG* Aug. 8 1743.

48. *SCG* Sept. 24 and *SCG* April 16 1754.

49. *SCG&CJ* July 4 1769.

50. *SCG* Feb. 17 1759.

51. *SCG* Oct. 1 1764.

52. *SCG* Nov. 11 1765.

their offence will be pardoned.⁵³

From the foregoing it can be seen that a substantial proportion of runaways were not resisting "...the institution of slavery with a determination to be free that defies description" as Meaders romantically depicts it, but were complaining or protesting at one aspect of slavery - separation from family and friends.⁵⁴ Their destinations indicate that the aspirations of many of the slaves were bound up within the very limited horizons of plantation slavery. It would be interesting to know if Tom and Phoebe returned, and if they would have remained relatively content once the immediate cause of their departure had been removed.

Nearly one in four of the acculturated slaves (as opposed to one in fifty of the unacculturated) was expected to go to Charlestown. Although a proportion of these slaves would have been harboured by friends or relatives they have been included in a separate category because of the distinctive nature of Charlestown.⁵⁵ By the 1760's Charlestown had a population of over 10,000 inhabitants, the majority of whom were black. The size of Charlestown, the only large town in the province, provided a degree of anonymity for runaways unavailable elsewhere in South Carolina. A letter to the Gazette in 1772 stated that there were seldom less than 40-50 runaways harboured about the town.⁵⁶ The free negroes and other relatively uncontrolled elements in the population harboured fugitives - Sue was expected to be harboured by "...fome free negroes in this town" and a male negro was "...intimate with abundance of black profitutes and rogueifh fellows."⁵⁷

Another major attraction of Charlestown for the runaways was the availability of work - "every runaway who will work may get employ."⁵⁸ Theoretically a negro required a ticket from his master before he could gain employment, but the absence of such a ticket was not an insurmountable problem. One slave could "...read and write a pretty good hand, of which he may probably avail himself by forging a ticket in his mafter's hand."⁵⁹ An "artful" and "plaufible" slave had "...produced a falfe ticket, drawn up by fome evil difpofed perfon, which he had impofed on feveral people who haav employed him."⁶⁰ The whites were prepared to flout the slave laws, particularly when there was a labour shortage. Limas, a carpenter, "...for fome time wrought clandeftinely about Town and thereby defrauded his mafter of feveral fums of money" and Cuffee was "...frequently hiring

53. *SCG* Aug.10 1752. This advertisement is also interesting in that its contents were expected to reach the runaways - this occurred in a number of cases. Eight of the runaways could read and write, but probably, in a basically illiterate society word spread very quickly from those who could read.

54. Daniel E. Meaders, "South Carolina Fugitives Viewed Through Local Colonial Newspapers with Emphasis on Runaway Notices, 1732-1801" *Journal of Negro History* LX (1975) p.317.

55. In Table 4 the category is "to town or pass as free" however this is only for the point of comparison with Virginia. While there were several urban areas in Virginia, Charlestown was the only one in South Carolina worth considering.

56. *SCG* Sept.17 1772.

57. *SCG* Nov.14 1761.

58. *SCG* Sept.17 1772.

59. *SCG* Oct.5 1769.

60. *SCG* Oct.19 1767.

himself out without my knowledge whereby I am defrauded of his uses."⁶¹

For slaves confident in their dealings with whites Charlestown provided the runaways with the possibility of an element of control of their lives impossible within the carefully regulated existence of plantation life. Charlestown also provided another attraction in that it was the main port in South Carolina and the expected point of embarkation of many of the slaves whom it was anticipated would try and leave the province.

About one in nine of the acculturated runaways was expected to try and leave South Carolina - more than half of these were expected to leave by sea. A runaway in 1769 had "...told some of the subscribers people before he ran away that he would go to Charlestown and endeavour to get a passage to the Northwards in some vessel."⁶² Many slaves either stowed away or attempted to bluff their way on board as free negroes. Some came very close to success - one slave "...has attempted to go off in vessel and was brought from on board her when going over the bar."⁶³ The exact destination of these runaways was only rarely stated - two born in Bermuda and one born in New York were expected to return to their respective birthplaces. Interestingly there were two separate cases of slaves expected to go to England.

The rest of the runaways were expected to leave South Carolina by land, on foot or horse. Prior to 1751 slavery was illegal in Georgia - hence runaways avoided the province as they tended to be rather conspicuous. South Carolina played a prominent role in supplying North Carolina and Georgia (after 1751) with slaves. More than half of the slaves expected to go to these provinces either had relations or had been recently resident on a plantation there. While some slaves certainly fled South Carolina to "reject slavery" it would seem that a large element were responding to the same motivations as those slaves categorised as "harboured", albeit on a larger scale.

There can be no such doubt about the motivations of those runaways who fled to the Spanish. The Spanish, both on Havana and in their settlement at St. Augustine (in present day Florida), had long been a thorn in the side of the South Carolina planters - they were well aware of the potential of the "black majority" for creating internal unrest in South Carolina. Slaves who reached St. Augustine were given their freedom - a fact that many slaves took advantage of to the detriment of their owners. The Stono rebellion of 1739 was widely believed to have been the result of the machinations of a Spanish agent provocateur, who had travelled widely throughout the southern half of the province a few months previously.⁶⁴ A disturbing characteristic of the pattern of runaways to St. Augustine was that they differed from normal slave behaviour in that groups ran away together - there are reports from the 1730's of as many as sixty or seventy slaves deserting en masse.⁶⁵ The ultimate destination of the 50-100 slaves involved in the Stono rebellion was St. Augustine. In 1749 21 slaves stole a boat from Port Royal and sailed for

61. *SCG* Sept. 23 1756.

62. *SCG* July 13 1769.

63. *SCG* Aug. 25 1758.

64. *Statements Made in Introduction to the Report of General Oglethorpe's Expedition to St. Augustine* reprinted in B.R. Carroll, *Historical Collections of South Carolina* 2 vols. (New York 1836) Vol. 2 p. 357.

65. Wood, *Black Majority* Ch. XII.

St. Augustine.⁶⁶ In 1768 a group of six or seven slaves stole a small schooner from Charlestown and were expected to head for the Spanish at Havana.⁶⁷ An equally disturbing element in this distinct pattern was the more frequent use of violence. The most celebrated murder in South Carolina for decades was that of Charles Purry in 1754. A black was convicted of the crime and an hour before his execution he made a dramatic confession that "...disclosed a scene equally shocking by which he and 8 other Negroes were to have been concerned."⁶⁸ They planned to kill two other whites in Beaufort, take a schooner from the harbour and sail for St. Augustine. St. Augustine remained a haven for runaways long after peace was concluded with the Spanish. All of the 13 runaways specifically expected to go to St. Augustine ran away after 1750, and furthermore all were either acculturated or their degree of acculturation was not indicated. The Spanish at St. Augustine continually offered the prospect of freedom to the slaves and militated against complete acceptance of their condition as slaves for life.

The literature on the role of black women in slavery (in particular eighteenth century slavery) is for all practical purposes nonexistent. Mullin devoted about three pages to the topic and concluded that "...black women escaped the more oppressive ravages of slavery."⁶⁹ In his cursory analysis Mullin neglected to examine the position women occupied in the structure of slavery in the same thorough way he had dealt with the males.⁷⁰

Women gained what could, perhaps, be called a degree of "equality" in that they were compelled to work in the fields with the men,⁷¹ but they had only extremely limited opportunities to attain a more skilled position. About one in five of the male runaways were skilled as opposed to one in twenty of the females. Furthermore the skilled positions that the women occupied were in every case limited to the domestic sphere - for example washerwomen, seamstresses or cooks.

66. *SCG* Oct. 30 1749.

67. *SCG* June 27 1768.

68. See *SCG* Aug. 22 & 29 1754.

69. Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion* p. 103.

70. To a large extent this is due to his preoccupation with the neurotic problems of the slaves - principally stuttering. Borrowing from research on the etiology of stuttering Mullin concluded that speech impediments were a reflection of the "assimilated's divided self and cultural marginality" - which fitted in very neatly with his main thesis of the impact of white values on acculturated slaves. On the application of this to South Carolina see White, "Slavery in the Province of South Carolina" pp. 55-6. The basis of Mullin's conclusions about women was based on the fact that none of the female Virginian runaways exhibited these neurotic symptoms found in 4.3% of the males. The limitations of this approach to the question of the position of women become apparent when the South Carolinian runaways are examined. About 1.0% of the women, as opposed to 1.77% of the men had speech impediments - hardly a sound basis for asserting that slavery had a greater psychological impact on any particular group. Mullin's criteria lead to the rather surprising conclusion that the position of women significantly differed in the two provinces of South Carolina and Virginia. On stuttering see Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion* p. 98-103.

71. See Loewald et al., "Bolzius" p. 257 and Francis Harper (ed.), "Diary of a Journey through the Carolina's, Georgia and Florida 1766" American Philosophical Society, *Transactions* New Series 33 (1942) p. 22.

A negro wench advertised for sale could "...handle a needle very well, wafh, iron & ftarch, but the principal qualification in which fhe excels is paftry cook."⁷²

Table 6: Slaveowner's Estimates of the Destinations of Female Runaways

Acculturated Runaways

Destination	Number	Percent
Harboured	44	33.8%
To Charlestown or pass as free	45	34.6%
Out of the province	6	4.6%
Other destination	1	0.8%
Destination not stated	34	26.2%
	130	100.0%

Unacculturated Runaways

Destination	Number	Percent
Harboured	11	23.9%
To Charlestown or pass as free	3	6.6%
Out of the province	0	-
Other destination	0	-
Destination not stated	32	69.5%
	46	100.0%

Acculturation not indicated

Destination	Number	Percent
Harboured	41	18.6%
Charlestown or pass as free	71	32.3%
Out of the province	5	2.3%
Other destination	5	2.3%
Destination not stated	98	44.5%
	220	100.0%

Unfortunately there are no figures for Virginia for comparison which is indicative of Mullin's neglect of the issue of slavery for women.

A comparison of the male and female destinations, as estimated by the slaveowners (see Tables 4 and 6) is quite instructive.⁷³ In all

72. *SCG* Jan.5 1760.

73. From Table 1 it can be seen that women made up only about one in four of the total number of runaways. To a certain extent this can be explained by the population imbalance in South Carolina that existed until about 1770 see White, "Slavery in the Province of South Carolina" p.14. At any one time the sex ratio amongst African born negroes would have been 2:1 (male to female) because of the business policy of slavers. Other factors to be taken into account are the greater value of male slaves trained as coopers etc, and the limitations imposed by small children.

three groups the owners were more prepared to estimate the destination of the women than the men. As with the men a large proportion of the women were expected to be harboured by friends or relatives. The constant separations resulting from the sale of estates may have further disadvantaged women in burdening them with the children - whereas 33 single women ran away with one or more children only one male ran off alone with a child. Very few females were expected to try and leave the province. In a society in which females did not travel alone black women would have had great difficulty in passing as free and bluffing their way on board of an outward bound vessel. However one owner in a revealing statement warned masters of vessels about his slave Molly. He had "...reason to think she will not scruple to disguise herself as a man."⁷⁴

About one in eight of the female runaways was accompanied by a male. However it is hardly valid to conclude, as Mullin does for Virginia, that women were more "family" oriented than males.⁷⁵ In South Carolina about one in three of the women (as opposed to one in five of the men) who were not classified as unacculturated were expected to go to Charlestown. Charlestown was probably the one place in South Carolina where a woman could be accepted singly and not as part of a family unit - the skilled positions generally allotted to women were in greatest demand in the city. Women controlled the marketing of goods in Charlestown.⁷⁶ Runaways such as Flora could survive by going "...about the country within ten miles of Charlestown, felling cakes, pretending to have permission from me and sometimes hire herself to free negroes."⁷⁷ Charlestown was also the centre of prostitution in the province, if not in the entire south. Charlestown provided fugitive women with the opportunity to break away from the "plantation world" - and the frequency with which they took advantage of the opportunity must militate against the acceptance of trite, unsubstantiated assertions that the females were more "family" oriented than the males.

Mullin concluded that a skilled males job "...to a degree made slavery tolerable."⁷⁸ These slaves had some degree of control over their work, frequently travelled outside of the plantation, and could achieve some sort of "job satisfaction." Thus even using Mullin's own argument women were a disadvantaged group. Black women, subject both to the constraints of slavery forcing them to work in the fields, and the mores of a male dominated white society, which strictly limited both the quantity and quality of the skilled positions they were allowed to occupy, were, contrary to what Mullin suggested, the "mules of the world."⁷⁹

74. *SCG* June 13 1755.

75. Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion* p.103.

76. See *SCG* Sept. 24 1772 for an extraordinary account of their role in the markets.

77. *SCG* May 23 1761.

78. Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion* p.122.

79. Quoted in Wood, "The Second Black Reconstruction" p.224. It should also be noted that Mullin completely ignored sexual oppression in making his sweeping generalisation on the position of women. See White, "Slavery in South Carolina" pp.72-5.

Table 7: Slaveowners Estimations of the Destination of Runaway Mulattoes

Destination	Number	Percent
Harboured	2	5.4%
To Charlestown or pass as free	11	29.8%
Out of the province	10	27.0%
Other destination	-	-
Destination not stated	14	37.8%
	37	100.0%

In this examination of the pattern of runaway slave behaviour two main elements stand out that distinguish the situation in South Carolina from that of Virginia. Firstly, there was a much larger proportion of African born runaways - a group who generally made a relatively unsophisticated attempt to escape their recent enslavement. Secondly, in Virginia over 50% of the runaways were expected to "reject" slavery by attempting to leave the province or pass as free - the comparable figure in South Carolina was marginally greater than 30%. The only group in South Carolina, and then a very small one, who approached the Virginian figures was the mulattoes (see Table 7). The cause of this difference is deeply rooted in the distinctive demographic pattern of South Carolina. The process of acculturation in South Carolina was delayed by the number of blacks, leading to only infrequent contact with the whites, and the high proportion of African born slaves in the population. The prevalence of "harboured" as a destination amongst the three groups of runaways indicates that the aspirations of the South Carolinian runaways were more closely bound to the "plantation world" than those of the Virginian runaways. In contrast, the mulattoes, who could reasonably be expected to have had more contact with white culture, occupying an invidious position between the black and white races, exhibited a pattern of behaviour comparable with Virginia. However, generally, it seems fair to conclude that the high ratio of blacks to whites, the larger average number of slaves on the plantations, and the continued dependence on the slave trade to supply the demand for labour hindered the process of acculturation - a fact reflected in the resulting pattern of slave behaviour which was at variance with the Virginian experience as described by Mullin.