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THE EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE IN SLAVERY, 1650-1850

Edited by Rebekka von Mallinckrodt



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Cover image: Silver Collar, Glasgow, c. 1732. People's Palace Museum, Glasgow. ID Number E.1980.165.

Photo © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection / Bridgeman Images.

It is unclear whether the silver collar shown here was used for a human or a dog. Written and pictorial sources confirm the use of such collars for enslaved persons in Europe, however.

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This volume not only addresses the European entanglement in slavery and the slave trade but is also the result of a multifaceted intellectual exchange across national borders. It testifies to the added value provided by such international debates and cooperation, and – especially when researching the more disturbing aspects of European history – it is a commitment to such a free discussion that also faces up to criticism itself. Its publication would not have been possible without the support of a European institution, the European Research Council, which generously funded not only the “GermanSlavery” project from 2015 to 2022 but also networking meetings and conference presentations to promote the integration of our research into European (and global) contexts. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank the ERC most sincerely. I also wish to thank the contributors to this volume for their rich texts and their patience. It was not least the example and encouragement of colleagues in neighboring European countries that inspired our research into Germany’s involvement in slavery and the slave trade and prompted us to follow through.

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Rebekka von Mallinckrodt

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Rebekka von Mallinckrodt is Professor for Early Modern History at the University of Bremen and member of the Hamburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities. She researches enslavement practices in the Holy Roman Empire and led the ERC Consolidator Grant project “GermanSlavery” from 2015 to 2022. Currently, she is writing a monograph on people of color in early modern Germany funded by the Volkswagen Foundation’s “Opus Magnum” grant. Her publications include *From Practices to Structurations: German Involvement in Slavery and the Slave Trade* (special issue of *Journal of Global Slavery* (2023), ed. with Magnus Ressel), *Beyond Exceptionalism: Traces of Slavery and the Slave Trade in Early Modern Germany, 1650–1850* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2021, ed. with Josef Köstlbauer and Sarah Lentz), as well as various other contributions especially on the legal history of slavery, including the award-winning essay “Verhandelte (Un-)Freiheit” in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* (2017) and “Return of a Ghost: Slavery and the Law in Early Modern Saxony (Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries)” in the abovementioned special issue.

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Sue Peabody is Meyer Distinguished Professor of History and Liberal Arts at Washington State University specializing in slavery, race, and the law in eighteenth- to nineteenth-century France and its colonies. Her books include *“There Are No Slaves in France”: The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) as well as the prize-winning *Madeleine’s Children: Family, Freedom, Secrets, and Lies in France’s Indian Ocean Colonies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), translated into French via the Centre International des Recherches sur l’Esclavage (CIRES, CNRS) (Paris: Karthala, 2019). A recipient of numerous awards from institutions including the American Council of Learned Societies, the American Philosophical Society, the Gilder Lehrman Center, and the Camargo Foundation, she also consulted on the museum exhibit “L’Étrange histoire de Furcy Madeleine” at the Musée historique de Villèle in La Réunion. Her current project is *The Failure of the Succès: Anatomy of a Slave Smuggling Voyage*, a microhistory of slave trafficking in the Indian Ocean world.

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interest in Germans and the early slave economy represents a convergence of work on the Black presence in modern Germany and research on gender, finance, and emotions in the eighteenth century. Relevant publications include *Black Germany: The Making and Unmaking of a Diaspora Community, 1884–1960* (with Robbie Aitken) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); *Slavery Hinterland: Transatlantic Slavery and Continental Europe, 1680–1850* (Martlesham: Boydell and Brewer, 2016, ed. with Felix Brahm); *Global Commerce and Economic Conscience in Europe, 1700–1900: Distance and Entanglement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022, ed. with Felix Brahm).

Gunvor Simonsen is Associate Professor of History at the University of Copenhagen. She specializes in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Atlantic history, particularly Caribbean cultural and social history. She heads the research project *In the Same Sea* funded by a grant from the European Research Council. Her book *Slave Stories: Law, Representation, and Gender in the Danish West Indies* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2017) reconstructs the narratives crafted by enslaved men and women during legal proceedings in the Danish West Indies and argues that contested notions of gender enabled some enslaved persons to challenge colonial legal power. Her latest research has resulted in the co-authored essay “Together in a Small Boat: Slavery’s Fugitives in the Lesser Antilles” (*William and Mary Quarterly*, October 2023). In addition to her Caribbean research interest, she is engaged in the field of global history and co-edited the volume *Global Biographies: Lived History as Method* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022).

Arne Spohr (PhD, Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Köln) is Professor of Musicology at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, USA. His research explores Renaissance and Baroque music in its many dimensions – performative, aesthetic, cultural, social, and political – and has focused in particular on cultural transfer between Britain and the continent around 1600, the intersections of sound, music, space, and power in European court culture, and the role of race and social status in the lives of Black court musicians in the Holy Roman Empire. Among his publications are the monograph “*How chances it they travel?*” *Englische Musiker in Dänemark und Norddeutschland 1579–1630* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), the collection of essays *Michael Praetorius – Vermittler europäischer Musiktraditionen um 1600* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2011, ed. with Susanne Rode-Breyman), and the article “‘Mohr und Trompeter’: Blackness and Social Status in Early Modern Germany” in *Journal of the American Musicological Society* (2019). He is currently working on a monograph on musicians of African descent in the Holy Roman Empire.

Annemieke van der Vegt is an independent historical researcher and genetic genealogist. Her historical research focuses on the lives of African (child) servants, one of whom – Christiaan van der Vegt (c. 1743–1825) – she herself is a descendant of. Since 2013 she has been publishing a blog about her research into the life of Christiaan and that of other African servants (“Hoe heette Christiaan?” / “What was Christiaan’s name?”). She has contributed to exhibitions on the subject of slavery and African servants at Weesp Municipal Museum (“Out of the Shadows,” 2017) and the Rijksmuseum (“Slavery,” 2020). In the latter exhibition, she presented a chapter of the audio tour dealing with the origins of a decorated neck band (“slave collar”). Her research and expertise were the subject of two articles in the Dutch national newspaper *De Volkskrant* as well as a book contribution on how DNA research can help unravel the colonial past.

Rebekka von Mallinckrodt

1 The European Experience in Slavery 1650–1850: Parallels and Entanglements

In 2020, the University of Virginia completed a remarkable “Memorial to Enslaved Laborers” commemorating the “enslaved African Americans who built the University of Virginia and sustained daily life from its founding.”¹ Two concentric rings of granite visualize the often invisible work of these enslaved persons and their experiences that remain mostly undocumented in the preserved archives. The larger circle’s outer surface features an enlarged projection of the eyes of Isabella Gibbons in a relief that appears and disappears depending on the viewer’s position and the angle of incoming light. Gibbons labored as an enslaved cook at UVA before working as a teacher at the “Freedmen’s School” after her emancipation; the grooved structure of the stones itself evokes the labor of “an estimated 4,000 enslaved persons (men, women and children) who worked on the Grounds of UVA between 1817 and 1865.” The inner ring documents stations in the lives of enslaved African Americans at the university, their achievements, but also the violence they endured.

But how could the discrepancy between the 889 recorded individuals (in part only known by their first names, and sometimes only identified via occupations and kinship relations) and the estimated total of 4,000 enslaved persons be depicted? Each of the 3,111 unidentified individuals (referred to as “Unknown Unknown” within the project) is represented on the inside of the outer ring by a gash called a “memory mark”, which simultaneously symbolizes their coercion and their absence from official records – or, as expressed by architect Mabel O. Wilson, who was involved in the project, “the violence of their erasure.”² These unknown enslaved persons are thus documented not in a statistical manner, as is often the case in the sources of the enslavers with a view to their economic value; instead, they are embedded in a network

¹ This and the following: Mabel O. Wilson, “Ambivalent Monuments: Freedom and Slavery in Iconic American Buildings,” Berthold Leibinger Lecture, October 10, 2023, <https://www.americanacademy.de/event/ambivalent-monuments-freedom-and-slavery-in-iconic-american-buildings/>, last accessed January 24, 2024. See also <https://mel.virginia.edu/memorial?open=true#making-the-memorial>, last accessed January 24, 2024.

² On this fundamental problem, see also Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1–14.

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of social and familial relations between the individuals identified by their first names, their kinship, or their occupation – and thereby restored to their human dignity.

The persistent problem of the extreme asymmetry of historical tradition and the resulting lack of information was also addressed by Mabel O. Wilson in an installation for the 2023 Venice Biennale entitled “Unknowing Slavery.” It featured the voices of three descendants of enslaved African Americans reading the names of all enslaved persons at the University of Virginia aloud. The reading was accompanied by two gongs: a brighter one sounded for each distinct name, and a darker one struck each time the substitution “Unknown” was read. Each anonymous person was thus symbolized by two somber sounds for the first and the last name, providing the audience with a profound sensory and emotional experience of the tremendous number of no longer identifiable enslaved individuals.

If one were to undertake the same acoustic experiment for early modern France, the two gongs would have to be struck at least 38,000 times for more than 19,000 individuals. This is the number of entries compiled by Érick Noël together with numerous collaborators in a project hitherto unique in Europe: the *Dictionnaire des gens de couleur dans la France moderne*.³ Its three volumes published so far cover Paris and its environs, the Bretagne, and southern France from the sixteenth century until 1792. Although not all the people of color listed in the *Dictionnaire* were enslaved – and for many of them, we will never know – this register provides us with a notion of the fact that slavery in Europe was anything but a marginal phenomenon, and that people of color presumably shaped the history of the Old Continent more than older historiography reflects. Estimates of the number of enslaved people on the Iberian Peninsula between 1450 and 1750 range between 700,000 and 800,000. The approximation for the whole of Europe amounts to roughly 2.5 million enslaved people between 1500 and 1800.⁴

This is still far fewer than the 12.5 million enslaved Africans transported to the Americas,⁵ but much more than historians have previously assumed, and – given the uneven state of research – possibly just the proverbial tip of the iceberg.⁶ While some work had been done much earlier in the former western colonial powers and the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, research efforts in these areas have significantly increased over the past twenty years, not least due to current debates and

³ Érick Noël, ed., *Dictionnaire des gens de couleur dans la France moderne*, 3 vols. (Geneva: Droz, 2011–2017).

⁴ Giulia Bonazza, “Slavery in the Mediterranean,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Slavery throughout History*, ed. Damian A. Pargas and Juliane Schiel (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 227–242, here 227f.

⁵ <https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database>, last accessed January 24, 2024.

⁶ Cf. the overview in Annika Bärwald, Josef Köstlbauer, and Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, “People of African Descent in Early Modern Europe,” in *Oxford Bibliographies Online: Atlantic History*, ed. Trevor Burnard, last modified January 15, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199730414-0326>, last accessed January 24, 2024.

conflicts. Once it became clear how far the Mediterranean connections extended towards the north and how deep into the European hinterland the transatlantic entanglements reached, the Scandinavian⁷ and Central European⁸ countries likewise began confronting their slavery-related pasts. Contributions on Eastern Europe, on the other hand, remain a research desideratum.⁹ And while there is a long tradition of international collaboration regarding slavery in the Mediterranean region, not least due to the geographic proximity of the neighboring countries, such cooperation was far less frequent in the more nationally oriented research on transatlantic slavery (also as a long-term effect of empire studies).¹⁰ Only in recent years have these two systems of

7 See e.g. Gísli Pálsson, *The Man Who Stole Himself: The Slave Odyssey of Hans Jonathan*, rev. and updated ed. translated by Anna Yates (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Joachim Östlund, “Playing the White Knight: Badin, Chess, and Black Self-Fashioning in Eighteenth-Century Sweden,” in *Migrating the Black Body: The African Diaspora and Visual Culture*, ed. Leigh Raiford and Heike Raphael-Hernandez (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017), 79–94; Hanne Østhus, “The Case of Adam Jacobsen: Enslavement in Eighteenth-Century Norway,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 48, no. 5 (2023): 635–655.

8 Peter Martin, *Schwarze Teufel, edle Mohren: Afrikaner in Geschichte und Bewußtsein der Deutschen* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2001 [OE 1993]); Walter Sauer, *Von Soliman zu Omofuma: Afrikanische Diaspora in Österreich 17. bis 20. Jahrhundert* (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2007); Mischa Honeck, Martin Klimke, and Anne Kuhlmann, eds., *Germany and the Black Diaspora: Points of Contact, 1250–1914* (New York: Berghahn, 2013); Anne Kuhlmann-Smirnov, *Schwarze Europäer im Alten Reich: Handel, Migration, Hof* (Göttingen: V & R Unipress, 2013); Felix Brahm and Eve Rosenhaft, eds., *Slavery Hinterland: Transatlantic Slavery and Continental Europe, 1680–1850* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2016); Jutta Wimmeler and Klaus Weber, eds., *Globalized Peripheries: Central Europe and the Atlantic World, 1680–1860* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2020); Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, Josef Köstlbauer, and Sarah Lentz, eds., *Beyond Exceptionalism: Traces of Slavery and the Slave Trade in Early Modern Germany, 1650–1850* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2021); Rebekka von Mallinckrodt and Magnus Ressel, eds., *From Practices to Structures: German Involvement in Slavery and the Slave Trade*. Special Issue of *Journal of Global Slavery* 8, no. 2–3 (2023).

9 Vitali Byl is undertaking important first steps in this context with his research project “Race and Freedom: Africans in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth on the Eve of Modernity,” see <https://www.depen-dency.uni-bonn.de/en/people/postdoctoral-researchers/dr-des-vitali-byl>, last accessed January 24, 2024.

10 Among the few exceptions within the abundance of research are the pioneering work by Hans Werner Debrunner, *Presence and Prestige: Africans in Europe. A History of Africans in Europe before 1918* (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 1979); Thomas Foster Earle and Kate J. P. Lowe, eds., *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Dieudonné Gnamman-kou and Yao Modzinou, eds., *Les Africains et leurs descendants en Europe avant le XXème siècle* (Toulouse: Maison de l’Afrique à Toulouse, 2008); Sue Peabody and Keila Grinberg, eds., *Free Soil in the Atlantic World*. Special issue of *Slavery and Abolition* 32, no. 3 (2011), reprint London: Routledge 2014; Joaneath A. Spicer, ed., *Revealing the African Presence in Renaissance Europe* (Baltimore: Walters Art Museum, 2012); David Northrup, *Africa’s Discovery of Europe, 1450–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Doris Bulach and Juliane Schiel, eds., *Europas Sklaven*. Special Issue of *Werkstatt Geschichte* 66–67 (2014); Brahm and Rosenhaft, *Slavery Hinterland*; Olivette Otele, *African Europeans: An Untold History* (London: Hurst & Company, 2020).

slavery increasingly been examined together and comparatively.¹¹ The lack of overarching studies is in part a consequence of different temporal foci: Research on the European countries along the Mediterranean (like the Italian states, for example) has traditionally been strong for the Late Middle Ages and the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, while the 1700s and 1800s were long neglected owing to the belief that slavery no longer played a significant role during this period.¹² Concerning the more northerly colonial powers like the Netherlands, England/Great Britain, or France, the seventeenth and especially the eighteenth century attracted the most attention, thereby impeding direct comparisons. Finally, only recently has intensifying research on the Asian “slaving zone”¹³ begun to complement our understanding of the Mediterranean and transatlantic slave trade – and thus of the repercussions of all three systems on Europe itself. At the same time, studying the interdependence between Europe and its “other” is increasingly being criticized as a perpetuation of colonial perspectives: While Dipesh Chakrabarty calls for “provincializing Europe”, Natalie Zemon Davis argued in favor of “decentering history.”¹⁴ In due consequence, the design of current research projects has become very flexible, and slavery studies as a whole have been “globalized.”¹⁵

11 Very early and groundbreaking in this regard: Gillian Weiss, “Infidels at the Oar: A Mediterranean Exception to France’s Free Soil Principle,” *Slavery & Abolition* 32, no. 3 (2011): 397–412. Weiss argues that Ottoman and Moroccan rowers on French galleys did not provoke consternation among French leaders despite the violation of the free soil principle their presence constituted (on the free soil principle, see the summary in Sue Peabody’s contribution, 26–31). Questions about the lawfulness of keeping Muslim slaves arose only after colonial slaves began claiming liberty in the metropole. Both systems are also considered together in: Giulia Bonazza, *Abolitionism and the Persistence of Slavery in Italian States, 1750–1850* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019). Cf. also the project *Atlantic Italies: Economic and Cultural Entanglements (15th–19th Centuries)* headed by Roberto Zaugg and funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (2018–2022), <https://atlanticitalies.net>, last accessed January 24, 2024.

12 The fact that slaves could still be found in early nineteenth-century Italy was only pointed out by Salvatore Bono, *Schiavi musulmani nell’Italia moderna: Galeotti, vu’ cumprà, domestici* (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1999) and Bonazza, *Abolitionism*.

13 Jeff Fynn-Paul and Damian Alan Pargas, eds., *Slaving Zones: Cultural Identities, Ideologies, and Institutions in the Evolution of Global Slavery* (Leiden: Brill, 2018); Maartje Hids, Pascal Konings, Sam J. Miske, Matthias van Rossum, Merve Tosun, and Hannah de Korte, “Exploring Slave Trade in Asia: First Steps towards an International Database,” *TSEG – The Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* 20, no. 1 (2023): 153–172.

14 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Natalie Zemon Davis, “Decentering History: Local Stories and Cultural Crossings in a Global World,” *History & Theory* 50, no. 2 (2011): 188–202.

15 Cf. e.g. Damian A. Pargas and Juliane Schiel, eds., *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Slavery throughout History* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023); the *Journal of Global Slavery* established in 2016; Michael Zeuske, *Handbuch Geschichte der Sklaverei: Eine Globalgeschichte von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013); Joseph C. Miller, *The Problem of Slavery as History: A Global Approach* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

One might therefore assume that research focused on Europe has been made obsolete by global historical approaches. In reality, however, we are far from having achieved a comprehensive understanding not only of the *quantitative* dimensions of slavery in Europe but also of their *qualitative* effects for European societies. Furthermore, the inclusion of states previously considered uninvolved in these processes reveals hitherto unresearched *intra-European* entanglements, providing new impulses for further investigation. Three examples illustrate this point: When the Elector of Saxony and King of Poland wanted Black court personnel¹⁶ for his son's wedding ceremony in 1719, he knew where to look, sending his Spanish-born chamberlain Johann Alphonso to Lisbon to purchase or recruit free and enslaved people of African descent for the court in Dresden.¹⁷ When Christoph Adam Carl von Imhoff (1734–1788), an officer released from Württemberg service, sought a new occupation in 1767, he initially tried his hand at painting miniatures in London before being recruited by the East India Company; he eventually returned to southern Germany from India with two enslaved Black boys.¹⁸ And when Alphonse Tarangai was expelled from Brunswick in 1828 following violent altercations among the court servants, he returned to Italy, where – after a personal history that involved being abducted from Peru to Egypt and accompanying the French troops from there to France – he had previously spent several years in Naples, Rome, and Florence before being hired by the Duke of Brunswick during the latter's Grand Tour and taken along to Germany.¹⁹

16 'Black' is spelled with capital letters here since this by now widely accepted spelling underlines that Blackness "is not a natural category but a social one – a collective identity – with a particular history" (see Kwame Antony Appiah, "The Case for Capitalizing the B in Black," *The Atlantic*, June 18, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/time-to-capitalize-blackand-white/613159/>, last accessed January 24, 2024). Excepted from this spelling are citations from historical sources whose wording – and consequently meaning – I did not want to change. Although I agree regarding the constructed nature of whiteness as well, I have refrained from capitalizing 'white' in order to avoid any confusion with white supremacist practice, opting to use italics instead. Moreover, to enable the authors of this volume to adequately describe highly complex historical situations – especially since many terms had a very specific and sometimes different meaning in the early modern period – I have refrained from imposing guidelines with regard to terminology and spelling in the individual papers.

17 Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden, 10026 Geheimes Kabinett, Loc. 00357/02, fol. 93r. See also the contribution dealing with Dresden in this volume.

18 Gerhard Koch, ed., *Imhoff – Indienfahrer: Ein Reisebericht aus dem 18. Jahrhundert in Briefen und Bildern* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2001), 213, 221ff.; Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, "Verschleppte Kinder im Heiligen Römischen Reich Deutscher Nation und die Grenzen transkultureller Mehrfachzugehörigkeit," in *Transkulturelle Mehrfachzugehörigkeiten: Räume, Materialitäten, Erinnerungen*, ed. Dagmar Freist, Sabine Kyora, and Melanie Unseld (Bielefeld: transcript, 2019), 15–37, here 24, 33–34.

19 Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, "Alphonse Tarangai or The Great Fury: Race Making from Below and Forms of Resistance by People of Color in Early Nineteenth-Century Germany," in *Belonging, Materials, Dependency: Perspectives from Early Modern History*, ed. Eva Lehner and Claudia Jarzebowski (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2024), forthcoming.

These three cases clearly show not only the entanglements and parallels in the European history of slavery, but also the fact that it developed its own dynamics which have hitherto not been acknowledged. Early modern Europe was long considered effectively free of slavery,²⁰ or at the very least a mere side stage of the large slavery systems, whose consequences for the Old Continent were considered minor in scale and importance and generally characterized as unintentional by-products or spillover effects. But enslaved persons not only came to Europe from the colonial world; they were also traded (and even “ordered”) *within* Europe.²¹ The constant manpower needs of putatively national but *de facto* highly international trading companies and colonies²² contributed to the continuous stream of people moving between the various slaving zones and Europe, as well as to the flow of pre-modern *intra-European* commuters, who often took enslaved persons with them. Finally, besides the often involuntary arrival of people from the slaving zones, the early modern period increasingly saw migration of free and enfranchised people of color *within* Europe.

Characteristically, all three examples stem from the Holy Roman Empire, which due to its few and short-lived slave trading companies and colonies was long considered to have been oddly untouched by the promises and fault lines of early modern globalization. Because the inhabitants of the Old Empire were reliant on the infrastructure of other nations as so-called “participatory colonists,”²³ triangular structures are encountered particularly frequently here. But such transfers and entanglements can be identified in other European countries as well – they have simply not been at

20 Thus, Tamira Combrink and Matthias van Rossum wrote in 2021 of “the still deeply engrained notion that the history of slavery was an ‘overseas’ history, and that slavery only affected and took place in the world outside Europe.” (“Introduction: The Impact of Slavery on Europe – Reopening a Debate,” *Slavery & Abolition* 42, no. 1 (2021): 1–14, here 2). Similarly Doris Burlach and Juliane Schiel, “Editorial Europas Sklaven,” *Werkstatt Geschichte* 66–67 (2014): 3–6, here 3f.

21 As discussed e.g. in Kuhlmann-Smirnov, *Schwarze Europäer*, 164 and Martin, *Schwarze Teufel*, 104. See also Mallinckrodt, “Verschleppte Kinder,” 20, 22.

22 Cf. e.g. Felicia Gottmann, who questions the notion of “national” trading companies: “Prussia All at Sea? The Emden-Based East India Companies and the Challenges of Transnational Enterprise in the Eighteenth Century,” *Journal of World History* 31, no. 3 (2020): 539–566; together with Philip Stern, “Introduction: Crossing Companies,” *ibid.*, 477–488; Felicia Gottmann, “Mixed Company in the Contact Zone: The ‘Glocal’ Diplomatic Efforts of a Prussian East Indiaman in 1750s Cape Verde,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 23, no. 5 (2019): 423–441. With regard to military history, see for example Chen Tzoref-Ashkenazi, “German Auxiliary Troops in the British and Dutch East India Companies,” in *Transnational Soldiers: Foreign Military Enlistment in the Modern Era*, ed. Nir Arielli and Bruce Collins (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 32–49; Chen Tzoref-Ashkenazi, *German Soldiers in Colonial India* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2014).

23 Cf. Bert Becker, *France and Germany in the South China Sea, c. 1840–1930: Maritime Competition and Imperial Power* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021); *idem*, “German Business in Hong Kong before 1914,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch* 44 (2004): 91–113.

the center of attention due to the formerly primarily nationally and now globally oriented approaches. For this reason, this volume is structured along national lines as well following the expertise of its contributors. As a collective endeavor, however, it strives to provide an overarching perspective. The term “experience” as used in the title refers not only to considering the respective local, regional, and national settings but also to reconstructing concrete practices and notions of the contemporary protagonists which encompass both enslavers and enslaved along with judges, bureaucrats, publicists, and law enforcement officers. Therefore, many contributions adopt a biographical or, where this is impossible due to the fragmentary and scattered nature of the sources, a microhistorical perspective. In a bottom-up process based on these empirical studies, the final section of this introduction aims to carve out overarching themes and parallel developments as well as transfer processes and entanglements that made slavery a pan-European experience impacting us to this day.

Although the contributions in this book confirm that isolating enslaved persons hailing from any specific slaving zone is neither sensible nor even possible since people from various regions of the world (including East Indians and Native Americans) were trafficked to Europe, one of the focal points of this volume are the respective entanglements with the transatlantic slave trade. On the one hand, this is due to the state of research: Whereas works on Mediterranean slavery abound, there are hitherto only very few studies on the repercussions of the Asian slaving zones for Europe. On the other hand, sub-Saharan Africans often also represent the majority of enslaved individuals in diverse case studies. For these reasons, this volume focuses on Northern, Central, and Western Europe in the period between 1650 and 1850: During the long eighteenth century, the peak of the transatlantic slave trade made its impacts on Europe most noticeable. Was the experience of slavery at the level of concrete actors similar throughout Europe? Were the conditions for enslaved persons more favorable in some regions than in others? Did different countries “learn” from one another, or did they aim to distinguish themselves? On the basis of microhistorical studies, this volume hopes to take a first step towards such comparative and overarching perspectives.

The Contributions

Sue Peabody as one of the pioneers in the field opens the group of contributions on individual European countries. It is not least thanks to her 1996 monograph *There Are No Slaves in France* that research on the early modern French Black diaspora began to develop dynamically early on (with impulses extending beyond the country’s borders as well) and is now highly differentiated. In her chapter, Peabody contrasts the fate of Madeleine and her children Maurice, Constance, and Furcy with an overview of the legal history of slavery in France. There, explicit legislation on enslaved persons

developed comparatively early and continuously: Whereas the *free soil principle*, which declared slaves to be free upon setting foot on French soil, applied until the late seventeenth century, the situation of slaves brought to the country gradually worsened over the course of the eighteenth century with the increasing involvement of France in the plantation economies. French planters were able to secure their power over slaves accompanying them from the colonies, but the sale and gifting of enslaved persons within France remained illegal. Nevertheless, this was exactly what happened to the young Bengali woman Madeleine in 1772. What is more, when Madeleine moved to Isle Bourbon (Réunion) with her new owners, she was apparently manumitted in 1789 but not informed of her emancipation until her mistress died in 1808. Finally, her deceased mistress' executor also defrauded her of a large sum of money that would have enabled her to redeem her son Furcy. The lawsuit concerning the latter's manumission extending from 1817 to 1843 resulted in the comprehensive documentation of this case. Madeleine's example illustrates the discrepancy between legislation and biographical experience: The law did not protect individuals who were unable to assert their rights due to lack of knowledge, gender, or the fact that they were minors. The latter in particular applied to many enslaved persons in the colonies as well as in the metropole.

Simon P. Newman's contribution likewise deals with attempts to circumvent the law – this time, however, on the part of enslaved individuals who escaped their owners. His chapter on Scotland simultaneously sheds light on a part of the British Isles long overshadowed by the early and intensive research on England²⁴ – not least because Scotland viewed itself as a pioneer of abolitionism and victim of British imperialism. It was precisely the involvement of Scots within the framework of the British Empire, however, that prompted Scottish merchants, plantation owners, ship captains, and officers to return home with enslaved people of color. Since the latter's legal status in Scotland was unclear and slavery was not explicitly abrogated by Scottish courts, the eighteenth century saw not only free and manumitted people of color in the country, but also persons living in a form of debt bondage as well as true slaves, who (in contrast to France) could be sold legally and therefore publicly. Like in France, the majority of enslaved persons were male children and youths – often African Americans, but also East Indians and (less frequently) Native Americans. Newman

24 On England, besides the “classic” contributions by Norma Myers, *Reconstructing the Black Past: Blacks in Britain 1780–1830* (London: Routledge 2013, original edition 1996); Imtiaz Habib, *Black Lives in the English Archives, 1500–1677: Imprints of the Invisible* (London: Routledge, 2008); Kathleen Chater, *Untold Histories: Black People in England and Wales during the Period of the British Slave Trade, c. 1660–1807* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009); Onyeka Nubia, *Blackamoors: Africans in Tudor England, Their Presence, Status and Origins* (London: Narrative Eye, 2014); David Olusoga, *Black and British: A Forgotten History* (London: Macmillan, 2016); Miranda Kaufmann, *Black Tudors: The Untold Story* (London: Oneworld, 2017), cf. now also Simon P. Newman, *Freedom Seekers: Escaping from Slavery in Restoration London* (London: University of London Press, 2022).

convincingly shows that the danger of potentially being sold at any time to plantation owners on their way to the colonies was sufficient to make the lives of enslaved persons in Scotland anything but safe and comfortable, especially since they had been deprived of their familial and social networks at the latest upon arriving in Europe. Besides notices on runaway slaves, sales advertisements are often the only sources indicating the existence of enslaved individuals in Scotland; the number of unknown cases can therefore be assumed to be much higher. Paradoxically, runaway notices written from the perspective of *white* slaveholders simultaneously represent an important testament to enslaved persons' desire for freedom and self-determination.

Michel R. Doortmont and Annemieke van der Vegt use a double biography to investigate the scope of action of people of African descent in the eighteenth-century Netherlands. Annemieke van der Vegt explores the life of her ancestor Christiaan van der Vegt (c. 1743–1825), providing an important example of the fact that the African diaspora cannot be viewed in isolation since it often merged into the *white* majority society. Christiaan, whose original given name we do not know, presumably hailed from the west coast of Africa, came to the Netherlands by way of abduction and enslavement as a child accompanying an employee of the Dutch West India Company, was then gifted to the Court of Orange-Nassau in 1748 and, following the death of Princess Maria Louise of Hesse-Kassel in 1765, ended up in the household of the burgomaster of Weesp, Abraham d'Arrest Sr., under the name of "Presto." He received the name Christiaan van der Vegt with his baptism in 1777, married a year later, and started a family. Whereas another slaveholder in the Netherlands explicitly waived his rights to a slave upon the latter's baptism in a comparable case in 1754,²⁵ there are no sources documenting the legal status of Presto/Christiaan. His social, economic, and legal dependence was certainly high as a result of his minority during his first years in the Netherlands, and later on due to his servanthood as well as his abduction and subsequent lack of means. Despite serving in a number of minor offices, he ran into financial difficulties in 1788 owing to the economic crisis in the Netherlands, and would remain dependent on church aid for the rest of his life.

Arij de Graaff (1730–1788), on the other hand, whose life was researched by Michel R. Doortmont, enjoyed entirely different opportunities: Born in Elmina as the son of an African mother and a Dutch West India Company Master of Works (or perhaps the Dutch governor of the city), he moved to Groningen in the Netherlands with his legal guardian following the early death of his father. After being appointed Master of Works himself at the young age of sixteen, he returned to the Gold Coast. Thanks to his excellent education, his talent, and his patronage ties, he was able to pursue an impressive career, became active as a slave trader in the Atlantic slave trade himself, founded a family with three children, and earned a considerable fortune before applying for his dismissal and return to the Netherlands in 1762. There he briefly contin-

25 See the contribution by Michel R. Doortmont and Annemieke van der Vegt in this volume, 85.

ued his economic engagement in the slave trade, but soon purchased a manor in Groningen, becoming a member of the province's landed gentry. He married a *white* woman from Groningen and fathered another four children. We can only speculate about how Arij de Graaff felt as a Euro-African in the relatively conservative rural society of Groningen, and how he was perceived by others. However, the bride price he paid for his wife – otherwise uncommon in the Netherlands – along with his Sunday rides to a church located further away and his ostentatious display of wealth seem to indicate that he may have had to contend with certain difficulties due to his dark skin. Together, Christiaan van der Vegt and Arij de Graaff illustrate the spectrum of the biographical experiences made by men of African descent in the eighteenth-century Netherlands. At the same time, they show the entanglement of Dutch society with the Black African diaspora. De Graaff's high social standing was apparently not entirely enough to offset an increasing racialization, however.

It is this progressive racialization that Gunvor Simonsen places at the center of her chapter on people of African descent in eighteenth-century Copenhagen: The second half of the eighteenth century saw not only a boom of Danish slave trading, but also a surge in corresponding reporting in Copenhagen newspapers. In accordance with the economic and financial interests of the readership, such reporting treated enslaved persons as statistical quantities and value assets, risk factors in terms of revolts, flexible workers, and expedient soldiers. It is highly likely that this dehumanization and instrumentalization also shaped the perception of people of African descent arriving in Copenhagen during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Like in other European countries, the presence of slaves caused certain irritations but did not lead to a categorical abrogation of slavery in Denmark: As in Scotland, enslaved persons could be publicly traded. With the increasing use of the term “negro/negress” in Danish sources – for example, the 1801 census – we see racialization, designation of slave status (here especially in the sense of commodification), and occupational title slowly coalescing into one. Likewise similar to the situation in Scotland, notices in newspapers advertising slaves for sale or runaways represent only the visible tip of the iceberg with regard to human beings traded and held as property in Copenhagen. At the same time, newspaper adverts shed light not only on the fate of the enslaved but also on that of the few manumitted and free Africans and African Caribbeans, who sought to ensure their livelihoods in the Danish city by offering their services in this way.

At first glance, Arne Spohr's contribution on Black court trumpeters in the Old Empire seems to deal with a niche aspect. In reality, however, a considerable number of people of African descent were employed as musicians. Spohr does away with the assumption in older research that Black musicians should be considered legally free and socially privileged as a result of their membership in the “Imperial Trumpeters' and Kettledrummers' Guild,” or that they were on equal footing with military officers. More recent studies prove that the “Imperial Guild” was unlike traditional guilds; the term was used in a figurative sense with the primary purpose of protecting the prince's privileges. And indeed, Spohr's two case studies from the seventeenth century

show the precarious situation of these musicians: Christian Real, who served at the Württemberg court in Stuttgart, lost an eye to a violent assault in 1669, during which his attackers also made reference to his skin color. By contrast, Christian Gottlieb's fate seems more propitious at first glance: His patron Bartram Rantzau from an influential Schleswig-Holstein family endowed him not only with financial means but also with a coat of arms, resulting in Gottlieb owning two estates and a mill privilege towards the end of his life. When he intended to marry the *white* Gertrud Radeleff in 1684, however, her male relatives attempted to prevent the wedding at all cost, insulting the bride as a "Moor devil." The ceremony could only proceed after an intervention by the local duke. As early as the seventeenth century, racist animosity thus restricted the scope of action of people of African descent even in territories considered part of the slavery hinterland, or at least allowed them to implement their plans only with support from benevolent authorities. In both cases, the status and rank achieved by Black men were perceived by involved *white* actors as a provocation and incommensurate with the already widespread association of dark skin with a status of subordination, if not outright enslavement.

In my own contribution, I examine the living situation and legal status of people of color at the court of Augustus the Strong (r. 1694–1733) and his wife Christiane Eberhardine (r. 1694–1727) in Dresden (Saxony), taking the iconography of slavery as a starting point. Whereas boys of African descent were invariably portrayed as slaves in the highly formalized and stereotyped Saxon ruler iconography, thereby representing the imperial ambitions of the reigning couple, depictions of sub-Saharan people in other paintings created in the context of the court distinguished clearly between free and unfree status. Looking at the situation of people of color at the Dresden court, we see that both free and manumitted Black Africans lived there – as did enslaved people of color who were emancipated neither by their arrival in Saxony nor by baptism. The social and economic circumstances of persons of color at the court likewise differed significantly; the homogenization of this group in contemporary language as well as in academic literature must therefore be itself regarded as an effect of racialization. We can distinguish between a scant few relatively privileged servants who worked at the court for many years and belonged to the inner circle of attendants and a much larger group of often nameless persons whose lives at court were spent under significantly worse conditions, and partly in slavery. Friendly and familial relations as well as racially motivated abuse and forms of resistance are documented for both groups. But while enslavement practices in the Old Empire were hitherto assumed to have occurred in a juridical gray area, the Saxon example shows that the legal status of slavery was already reintroduced in the context of the Ottoman Wars and subsequently applied to victims of the transatlantic slave trade as well. In this sense, the dressing of Black Africans in Ottoman garb was not only an expression of European eclecticism; it also points to the deeper connections between the two systems of enslavement in the Old Empire.

On the Way to Pan-European Slavery Research

The notion that slavery was illegal or unlegislated in the European countries outside the Mediterranean zone and therefore did not exist there has in part persisted to this day. By contrast, intensive research has resulted in Portugal now being considered to have been a “slave society” owing to the large number of enslaved persons present there.²⁶ The idea of a “slavery-free” Europe was perhaps facilitated by the perception of the far smaller numbers (in comparison to the plantation economies) of enslaved people arriving in Northern, Western, and Central Europe as nothing more than a “side effect” of the transatlantic slave trade. The intensive study and broad reception of the Somerset Case may also have contributed to this impression: This court verdict of 1772 stated that slavery did not exist in England since it had not been introduced by way of positive law.²⁷ The examples from Scotland and Denmark, on the other hand, show that slaves were openly traded there without corresponding regulations having been passed. In addition, newspaper advertisements from these two countries as well as printed court calendars from the Old Empire document an approach to slavery in Europe that was not only overt but surprisingly matter-of-fact as well. One might therefore argue conversely that slavery was practiced in Europe wherever it was not explicitly outlawed. Suggestions from France, the Netherlands, and Italy to reintroduce slavery for European populations as a means of combating poverty or to replace the death penalty indicate that the practice even developed a dynamic of its own in Europe – and that the colonies apparently already served as laboratories before the modern period.²⁸

²⁶ Bonazza, “Slavery in the Mediterranean,” 228.

²⁷ However, recent research has shown that the English jurisprudence and practice were not as uniform before or after this case as the reception history of the Somerset Case suggests. Cf. e.g. Sheila Dziohon, “Judge, Jurisprudence and Slavery in England 1729–1807,” in *Colonialism, Slavery, Reparations and Trade*, ed. Fernne Brennan and John Packer (New York: Routledge, 2012), 167–191.

²⁸ *De la nécessité d'adopter l'esclavage en France*. Texte anonyme de 1797 présenté par Myriam Cottias et Arlette Farge (Paris: Bayard, 2007), 111–167. The text was published in two versions in 1755 and 1797, both of which recommended slavery as a punishment and as a safeguard for the poor. In their „Présentation,“ Cottias and Farge write of a „contamination“ (ibid., 7–76, here 8) by the colonial situation, stating that the (re)introduction of slavery for the poor in France was considered repeatedly between the 16th and 18th centuries (ibid., 14, e.g. 31–35). [Cesare Beccaria], *Dei delitti e delle pene* ([Livorno]: [Marco Coltellini], 1764), Della Pena di Morte, 61–70. Beccaria's anonymously published work, which remained on the Index of Forbidden Books until the Second Vatican Council, triggered a Europe-wide discussion. Dienke Hondius, “No Longer Strangers and Foreigners, but Fellow Citizens: The Voice and Dream of Jacobus Eliza Capitein, African Theologist in the Netherlands (1717–47),” *Immigrants & Minorities* 28, no. 2–3 (2010): 131–153, here 137f. David Nii Anum Kpobi, “Mission in Chains: The Life, Theology and Ministry of the Ex-Slave Jacobus E. J. Capitein, 1717–1747 with a translation of his major publications” (PhD diss., Utrecht University, 1993), 214f.

France and the Holy Roman Empire illustrate two different approaches to the legal regulation of slavery: In France, Roman slave law was not adopted,²⁹ but a relatively sophisticated legislation (compared to other European countries) on slavery in the metropole was developed that even provided an example for other states: A Danish slave code drafted in the 1780s but never enacted stipulated that enslaved persons should not be allowed into Denmark in the first place. Exceptions were made for the enslaved servants of plantation owners and royal clerks, as well as for slaves sent to the metropole to learn a trade: After registration, they were to be allowed to remain in the country for a maximum of one respectively three years.³⁰ The striking similarity to French regulations makes it seem very likely that the administrators took inspiration from their European neighbors.³¹ Like in France, the intent was to differentiate clearly between the colonial and metropolitan situation by forbidding (in the very same draft law) the sale of slaves within Denmark without fundamentally questioning the right to own a human being. How much of a role racist notions played in this regard is evident from the planned provision that liberated slaves were to return to the Caribbean immediately and were not allowed to marry in Denmark under any circumstances, with any already transacted marriages to be considered invalid.³²

The territories of the Old Empire, on the other hand, regulated the handling of abducted and enslaved persons in positive German law only very late – according to current knowledge, in the General Land Law for the Prussian States of 1794 – and were thus considered “slave-free” by research for a long time. In contrast to this initial impression, however, Roman slave law was subsidiarily applied to Ottoman prisoners of war since the time of the Turkish Wars, and later also to enslaved persons arriving by way of the transatlantic slave system. This means that a legal framework existed even earlier than in France, although its original motivation was a different one. According to these regulations, possession as well as the purchase and sale of human beings was legal in the Old Empire – unlike France, where such transactions occurred clandestinely.³³ And while the reciprocal enslavement during the Ottoman Wars served as a blueprint for the treatment of enslaved Black Africans in the Holy Roman Empire, the French legal system distinguished fundamentally between the

29 Cf. the contribution by Peabody in this volume, 27.

30 Cf. the contribution by Simonsen in this volume, 115–116.

31 Cf. “Édit du Roi, Concernant les Esclaves Nègres des Colonies. Donné à Paris au mois d’Octobre 1716” and “Déclaration du Roi, Concernant les Negres esclaves des Colonies. Donné à Versailles le 15 Décembre 1738,” in *Le Code Noir ou Recueil de Reglemens Concernant [. . .] [l]es Negres dans les Colonies Françaises* (Paris: Chez Prault, 1788), 169–181, 382–395; Pierre H. Boule and Sue Peabody, *Le droit des noirs en France au temps de l’esclavage* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2014), 43–46, 64–67. Interestingly, the Danish regulations received the older French legislation but not the more current *Police des Noirs* of 1777, which banned the entry of any person of color into the French kingdom (cf. the contribution by Peabody in this volume, 31). Perhaps the latter was not yet known in Denmark?

32 Cf. the contribution by Simonsen in this volume, 115–116.

33 Peabody refers to the prohibition on the sale and gifting of slaves in France in her contribution, 32.

handling of Muslims from the Mediterranean slave system and that of people of color arriving via the transatlantic networks: The free soil principle was never applied to captives from the Ottoman Empire and the Barbary States, who were regularly worked to death as galley slaves.³⁴

Besides these varying approaches, similar legal problems are also discernible throughout Europe: The desire of slave owners for legal certainty in the metropole contrasted with the respective authorities' wishes to differentiate between the colonial and metropolitan situations while simultaneously avoiding destabilization in the colonies as a result of liberal emancipation rules in the European territories. On the other hand, we see the contours of differing country profiles which, while obviously traceable to geopolitical circumstances and historical experiences, also illustrate differences in (legal) culture. At the same time, the early modern legal pluralism must be taken into consideration as well: The coexistence and occasional competition between various jurisdictions and responsibilities meant that legal norms could be heterogeneous and sometimes contradictory even within individual European states.

Moving on from the aspect of legal regulations to that of everyday experiences, which plays a central role in all of the contributions to this volume, the extreme economic and social dependence of almost all trafficked persons taken to Europe appears as a common feature. Owing to the fact that they were frequently underage and employed as servants, their employers/patrons/owners were able to leverage a multitude of laws governing various dependency relationships in early modern Europe. These afforded them ample power and capacities even without having to resort to the slave status itself. The severed familial ties of people abducted from faraway regions also meant that their factual dependency was much greater than that of natives, who usually had access to more substantial social networks. This circumstance along with the fact that the slave status was applied only to persons considered "foreign" with respect to religion or ethnicity controverts the dissolution of the concept of slavery into a multitude of intersectional relations. How profoundly the social and economic situation of displaced foreigners differed from that of natives becomes visible especially in cases of conflict, where the former were faced not only with a smaller number of potential supporters but also with significantly fewer options for action.

On the other hand, the typical early modern dependence on patronage relationships and the great significance of estate and rank also meant that people of color could at times attain high-ranking positions. Examples found in this volume are Arij de Graaff in the Netherlands and Christian Gottlieb in the Holy Roman Empire; other cases discussed in research literature include Alessandro de' Medici (1510–1537) in

³⁴ Cf. the contribution by Peabody in this volume, 29.

Italy,³⁵ Ibrahim Hannibal (c. 1696–1781) in Russia,³⁶ and Thomas Alexandre Dumas (1762–1806) in France.³⁷ However, such biographies in early modern societies seem to have been restricted to men and largely – though not exclusively – to children of Afro-European descent.

At the same time, the importance of estate and patronage networks could not entirely offset an increasing racialization in early modern Northern, Western, and Central Europe. Nor were premodern concepts of otherness based exclusively on religion, as the experiences of *baptized* people of color with discrimination clearly show. Rather, we encounter a geographically broad and long-term effect of racist stereotypes that were already present and effective in Central European slavery hinterlands during the seventeenth century. “Race” was thus already an operative category long before the development of (pseudo)scientific racism – not just in the Iberian empires with the concept of the *limpieza de sangre*, but also in Northern, Central, and other Western European countries. And while this necessitated a language that distinguished between skin tones, a supporting theoretical framework was not required.³⁸ The association of dark skin with slave status or with low class or rank also affected the possibilities for action of free and liberated people of color.

As a third field of a pan-European treatment of slavery alongside legal regulation and the roots of modern-day racism, we must consider the entanglement of the Black diaspora with early modern European societies: Slavery brought large numbers of

35 John K. Brackett, “Race and Rulership: Alessandro de’ Medici, First Medici Duke of Florence, 1529–1537,” in *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, ed. Thomas Foster Earle and Kate J. P. Lowe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 303–325. Brackett argues that Alessandro de’ Medici, the first Medici duke of Florence, was the son of a freed slave. Although his skin color is never mentioned in contemporary sources, Brackett uses artistic evidence to support the conclusion that his mother was a Black African woman. The author reasons that Alessandro’s nobility was more important than his skin color: Documented insults referred to his mother’s peasant status but not to her “race,” while he himself was criticized for being a tyrant.

36 Ibrahim Hannibal was purchased as a slave by the Russian envoy in Constantinople and arrived at the court of Peter the Great at age nine; he received an excellent education, and at the time of his death he was a major general, engineer general, General-en-chef and Director of the Canals, a knight of the Order of Alexander Newski, and lord of a manor with 1,500 serfs (Martin, *Schwarze Teufel*, 303–308). See also Dieudonné Gnamankou, *Abraham Hanibal. L’Aieul noir de Pouchkine* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1996).

37 Tom Reiss, *The Black Count: Glory, Revolution, Betrayal, and the Real Count of Monte Cristo* (New York: Crown, 2012). Thomas Alexandre Dumas, son of a French nobleman and an African slave woman, served as a junior officer under Chevalier de Saint-George in the all-Black regiment established by the National Assembly during the French Revolution, eventually rose to the rank of general under Napoleon, and was the father of the iconic writer Alexandre Dumas père.

38 This also corresponds to the current trend in racism research of taking the premodern developments of (proto-)racism into consideration, cf. e.g. Francisco Bethencourt, *Racisms: From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013); Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler, eds., *The Origins of Racism in the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

people of color to Europe.³⁹ With all due awareness for the involved imbalance of power, this means that the history of *white* and Black people cannot be written simply as one of antagonism, and that the latter must be considered – and portrayed – not only as victims but also in terms of how they shaped their lives and influenced European societies. On the one hand, this entanglement had a biological dimension: Despite the fact that child mortality in the early modern period was high (and very high among the enslaved) and many never had the opportunity to start families, there were nevertheless marriages and informal relationships between *white* and Black persons as well as children stemming from these unions. Such family establishments were restricted neither to the social elites nor to Europe, and they frequently resulted in intercontinental family networks.⁴⁰ On the other hand, the entanglement also included a hitherto less intensively studied *cultural* dimension, as indicated by the poetry of Juan Latino (c. 1518– c. 1594/1597),⁴¹ the philosophy of Anton Wilhelm Amo (c. 1703–after 1753),⁴² the theology of Jacobus Capitein (c. 1717–1747),⁴³ and the music of Joseph Boulogne Chevalier de Saint-George (1739?–1799).⁴⁴ This aspect also includes dictionaries created with the help of Black contributors like the Ethiopian scholar Abba Gregorius (c. 1600–1658),⁴⁵ as well as country studies such as Leo Africanus' (born

39 On slavery as a globalizing factor, cf. Damian A. Pargas, "Introduction: Historicizing and Spatializing Global Slavery," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Slavery Throughout History*, ed. Damian A. Pargas and Juliane Schiel (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 1–17, here 2.

40 Cf. also the important work by Pernille Ipsen, *Daughters of the Trade: Atlantic Slavers and Interracial Marriage on the Gold Coast* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

41 Aurelia Martín Casares, *Juan Latino: Talento y destino. Un afroespañol en tiempos de Carlos V y Felipe II* (Granada: Editorial Universidad de Granada, 2016); Elizabeth R. Wright, *The Epic of Juan Latino: Dilemmas of Race and Religion in Renaissance Spain* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016). Cf. also Diana Berrueto-Sánchez, "Negro poeta debió de ser el que tan negro romance hizo: ¿poetas negros en el Siglo de Oro?," *Hipogrifo. Revista de literatura y cultura del Siglo de Oro* 9, no. 1 (2021): 131–142 as well as the ERC project "The Cultural History of the Black African Diaspora in Early Modern Spain" (2024–2029) headed by Berrueto-Sánchez.

42 Among the numerous works on Anton Wilhelm Amo, see the more current publications with explicitly philosophical orientation: Ottmar Ette, *Anton Wilhelm Amo: Philosophieren ohne festen Wohnsitz. Eine Philosophie der Aufklärung zwischen Europa und Afrika* (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2014); Dwight Kenneth Lewis jr., "Anton Wilhelm Amo's Philosophy and Reception. From the Origins through the Encyclopédie," (PhD diss., University of South Florida, Saint Petersburg, 2019), online: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/etd/8382/>, last accessed January 24, 2024; Stephen Menn and Justin E. H. Smith, eds., *Anton Wilhelm Amo's Philosophical Dissertations on Mind and Body* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); Stefan Knauß et al., eds., *Auf den Spuren von Anton Wilhelm Amo. Philosophie und der Ruf nach Interkulturalität* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2021).

43 *The Agony of Asar: A Thesis on Slavery by the Former Slave, Jacobus Elisa Johannes Capitein, 1717–1747*, translated with commentary by Grant Parker (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2001).

44 Pierre Bardin, *Joseph sieur de Saint George, le chevalier noir* (Paris: Guénégaud, 2008).

45 Wolbert Smidt, "Abba Gorgoryos – ein integrierter und ernsthafter Mann. Der Besuch eines äthiopischen Gelehrten in Thüringen 1652," in *Äthiopien und Deutschland. Sehnsucht nach der Ferne*, ed. Kerstin Volker-Saad and Anna Greve (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2006), 48–57.

c. 1490) first geographical survey of Africa printed in 1550.⁴⁶ Last but not least, African abolitionists such as Ignatius Sancho (1729?–1780), Olaudah Equiano (c. 1745–1797), and Ottobah Cugoano (1757?–after 1791) addressed and criticized slavery and the slave trade in their writings.⁴⁷ With the increasing inclusion of Black scholars and people of color in academia, they are likely to bring to light aspects of African, Asian, and Caribbean culture in European society that *white* scholars may not be able to recognize due to a lack of knowledge. In any case, the new research produced in recent years shows that we are apparently still far from the boundaries of what can be known – and that the horizon of the unknown can yet be pushed further back before we have to yield to silence. It seems very likely that this work will enduringly change not only our view of the past but also our self-perception as Europeans today.

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⁴⁶ Natalie Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim between Worlds* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2006).

⁴⁷ Ignatius Sancho, *Letters of Late Ignatius Sancho, an African*, 2 vols. (London: J. Nichols, 1782); Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*, 2 vols. (London: T. Wilkins, 1789); Ottobah Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery and Other Writings*, ed. Vincent Carretta (New York: Penguin Books, 1999).

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Sue Peabody

2 Barriers to Accessing France's *Sol Libre* in Early Modern France

Whereas the status of foreign slaves migrating into many European cities and states in the early modern era was ambiguous, the centralizing royal bureaucracy of France developed an explicit policy of *sol libre*, or free soil, which conferred freedom to any slave who set foot within the kingdom. However, over the course of the eighteenth century, the free soil principle – considered by French jurists as a fundamental maxim of French law since at least the sixteenth century – was gradually suspended by a series of royal laws, primarily to accommodate the wealthy officers and planters of France's growing slave colonies in the Americas and the Indian Ocean. In its place, France erected an exclusionary regime based in racial language, such that by 1777, “no black, mulatto, or other person of color”¹ was to be admitted into the metropole (i.e., continental France).

This microhistory uses the biography of a family in slavery and freedom to explore how the categories of slavery, freedom, and race shifted in French law and practice during the rapid economic and ideological changes of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Of course, the genre of microhistory necessarily explores the “*exceptionnel normal*,” a case devoted to the lives of common people that is unusually well documented and sheds light on more widespread, yet under-explored historical culture and contexts of marginalized or subaltern classes.² In this case, I use the story of Furcy, a man who successfully liberated himself and even achieved reparations through France's and Great Britain's judicial systems, to show that the gulf between prescriptive law and lived experience could be very wide. The aim is to understand positive law, judicial interpretation, and the experiences of people who navigated imperial legal systems in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Forgotten for almost two centuries, Furcy has recently been rediscovered in Réunion, an overseas department of France in the Indian Ocean, especially in popular culture as a symbol of resistance to slavery. His memory may have been deliberately suppressed by the French planter elite who sought to scrub Furcy's memory from offi-

1 “Déclaration du Roi pour la Police des noirs, donnée à Versailles le 9 août 1777, enregistrée en parlement [de Paris], le 27 desdits mois et an,” in *Le Code Noir ou Recueil de Reglemens Concernant [. . .] [l]es Negres dans les Colonies Françaises* (Paris: Chez Prault, 1788), 489–500, at 492: “[. . .] aucun noir, mulâtre, ou autres gens de couleur.”

2 Eduardo Grendi, “Micro-analisi e storia sociale,” *Quaderni storici* 35 (1977): 506–520. For a comparative exploration of microhistory, as contrasted with the genres of biography and historical fiction, see: Sue Peabody, “Microhistory, Biography, Fiction: The Politics of Narrating the Lives of People under Slavery,” *Transatlantica* 2 (2012), <http://transatlantica.revues.org/6184>, last accessed October 13, 2023.

cial records during his lifetime.³ The first historian to begin to recover Furcy's story was Hubert Gerbeau while researching his doctoral thesis in the 1990s.⁴ Legal scholar Johary Ravaloson and sculptress Sophie Basin collaborated to produce a series of performances in 1998–1999 based on Furcy's freedom suit to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the French abolition of slavery, casting local students and notables in the historical roles.⁵ The work that made Furcy truly famous, however, is Mohammed Aïssaoui's 2010 prize-winning novel *L'Affaire de l'esclave Furcy* based on a collection of historical documents recently purchased at private auction and made available by the Departmental Archives of Réunion.⁶ Aïssaoui's novel inspired several plays, and a current feature film a contemporary protest song, and a movie which further secured Furcy's image as a symbol of resistance to slavery and injustice.⁷ Since the publication

3 The 1817 edition of the official government publication of the *Gazette de l'Isle Bourbon*, site of the struggle between Furcy and his master Joseph Lory – and more importantly, the *procureur du roi* Louis Gilbert Boucher and the *commissaire ordonnateur* Philippe Panon Desbassayns de Richemont – is missing from both the Archives Départementales de la Réunion and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Key years of Furcy's story are missing from the journal of Renoyal de Lescouble, a friend of the Routiers and Lorys and ordinarily an effusive observer of colonial scandal. Jean-Baptiste Renoyal de Lescouble, *Journal d'un colon de l'Île Bourbon*, edited by Norbert Dodille, 3 vols. (Paris / Saint-Denis, La Réunion: L'Harmattan / Éditions du Tramail, 1990), 155–161. Additional missing documents include the inventory of the widow Ursule Desblottières Routier's estate and the *échet de partage* by which Furcy was transferred to Joseph Lory, both of which are missing from the double minutes of the Michault d'Emery notary in the Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer in Aix-en-Provence. That these two documents once existed can be deduced from a later notarized receipt mentioning both of them: Quitance, Sieurs Routier, and Demoiselle Mansel to Joseph Lory, November 30, 1808, Notariat Michault D'Emery, no. 652 (Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer [hereafter ANOM] DPPC NOT REU1802). There are no decisions for Furcy's cases in the official register of the Tribunal of First Instance (1817) or the Royal Court of Bourbon (1818) (Isle Bourbon Cour d'Appel, Jugements Civils 1798–1911, Arrêts civils, 1817–1824 [ANOM 6DPPC2726]). Finally, the dossier which should have held the 1843 decision of the Cour royale de Paris is likewise missing: Enregistrement au ministère de la Justice, des arrêts de la Cour de cassation, 1837–1841 (Archives Nationales de France, BB/19/46).

4 Hubert Gerbeau, "Les libertés de Bourbon: d'une révolution à une autre," in *Révolution française et Océan Indien: Prémices, paroxysmes, héritages et déviances*, ed. Claude Wanquet and Benoît Julien (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996), 347–360. Gerbeau expanded the story in his doctoral thesis: "L' esclavage et son ombre: L'île Bourbon aux XIX^e et XX^e siècles" (PhD diss., Université de Provence Aix-Marseille I, 2005), 211–226, 942–948.

5 Ravaloson and Basin's performances are preserved under the stage names of Arius and Marie Batis-kaf in a book, *Liberté plastiK*, (Saint-Denis, La Réunion: Grand Océan-Dodo vole, 2000) and a website, *Liberté plastiK* (2007), batiskaf.blogspot.com/2007/09/libert-plastik.html, last accessed October 13, 2023.

6 Mohammed Aïssaoui, *L'Affaire de l'esclave Furcy* (Paris: Gallimard, 2010). This novel won the Prix Renaudot and the Prix RFO in 2010. As a work of fiction, however, it introduced a number of historical errors into popular memory and omitted some facts that allowed Furcy to be heroized popularly as an anti-slavery fighter.

7 Patrick Le Mauff and Hassane Kassi Kouyaté adapted a play, *L'affaire de l'esclave Furcy*, from Aïssaoui's novel, which was performed by Kouyaté in Paris in 2012 and Réunion in 2013; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nU9tKVOD4sQ>, and <http://www.temoignages.re/culture/culture-et-identite/l-affaire-de-l->

of my book *Madeleine's Children* in 2017, a museum exhibit and a documentary on Furcy have introduced him to an even larger public.⁸

The recent widespread celebration of Furcy's memory coincides with newer efforts to confront the legacy and enduring effects of slavery and the slave trade in France's colonial past.⁹ However, when I first came across Furcy's 1844 legal pamphlet announcing his successful freedom suit during my own doctoral studies in 1990, my research on French slavery was a relatively lonely enterprise. At the time, few historians of France considered the "former colonies" to be important loci of study, and the idea of writing a slave biography was even less imaginable. I came upon this topic when, in a small study of marriage law, I discovered a 1778 ban on marriages between whites and blacks in metropolitan France. France enjoyed a reputation of being more tolerant of interracial relationships than the Anglophone colonies of the Americas, whether between fur trappers and their Indian wives or between Caribbean colonists and their black concubines. As I researched further, however, I stumbled across the 1777 *Police des Noirs* banning the entry of all people of color – which was surprising given that, according to contemporary estimates, only about five thousand people of color lived in the nation of twenty-five million over the course of the eighteenth century.¹⁰ This led to the discovery of a series of laws and traditions regulating the entry

esclave-furcy,65446, both sites last accessed October 13, 2023. In October 2014, at the suggestion of Gilles Dégras, the Réunionnais musician Kaf Malbar released a song, "L'Or de Furcy," which has become an anthem of a Kreyol movement for dignity for the descendants of enslaved people, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zxLc4w0fWMk>, last accessed October 13, 2023. Another one-man play, *Fer6* by Franky Lauret, was first performed by Erick Isana in 2016; <https://www.citedesarts.re/Fer6>, last accessed October 13, 2023. Abd Al Malik's film "L'Affaire de l'esclave Furcy" will appear in 2025.

⁸ Sue Peabody, *Madeleine's Children: Family, Freedom, Secrets, and Lies in France's Indian Ocean Colonies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), translated and adapted by Pierre Boule as *Les Enfants de Madeleine: Famille, liberté, secrets et mensonges dans les colonies françaises de l'océan Indien* (Paris: Karthala, 2019). The exhibit "L'Étrange histoire de Furcy Madeleine" opened at the Musée historique de Villèle, St. Gilles-les-hauts, Réunion, in December 2019 and travels internationally since 2022. A catalogue, *L'étrange histoire de Furcy Madeleine, 1786–1856*, under the direction of Jean Barbier and Jérémy Boutier, featuring the texts of the exhibition written by Gilles Gérard as well as topical notices by Gilles Gérard, Sue Peabody, and Jérémy Boutier ([Saint-Denis, Réunion]: Collection Patrimoniaire Histoire, 2020) captures this beautiful exhibit. Pierre Lane's documentary, *Furcy, le procès de la liberté*, (CinéTévé) first aired on May 13, 2021.

⁹ Christiane Taubira was the most visible leader of the effort to pass the law of May 21, 2001, which recognizes the Atlantic slave trade and slavery as crimes against humanity and established May 10 as the annual commemoration of this history. Over the past two decades, international scholarship on the history of France's historical relationship with slavery has proliferated, including the establishment of research centers such as *Esclavages CIRESC* (<https://esclavages.cnrs.fr/>, last accessed October 13, 2023), *EURESCL: Les traits, les esclavages et leurs abolitions dans la construction de l'Europe*, <http://www.eurescl.eu/>, last accessed October 13, 2023, and the *Fondation pour la mémoire de l'esclavage*, <https://memoire-esclavage.org/>, last accessed October 13, 2023.

¹⁰ Pierre H. Boule, *Race et esclavage dans la France de l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Perrin, 2007), 196.

of slaves within the borders of continental France.¹¹ This puzzle became the foundation of my research: Who were these blacks, and why was the French state restricting their mobility in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries?

In this essay I will introduce France's free soil principle and discuss how French law changed over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in response to the expansion of colonial slavery. Then I will examine the lived experience of these laws, along with the barriers to achieving freedom via free soil, through the life of Furcy. Inspired by a recent series of important biographies of enslaved people including Annette Gordon Reed's book on the Hemings family of Monticello, James Sweet's remarkable investigation of Domingos Alvarez, and Jean Hébrard and Rebecca Scott's multigenerational biography of the descendants of Rosalie, an enslaved woman in Haiti,¹² I realized Furcy's story would make a powerful slave biography. By making enslaved people the protagonists of their stories, these important works force us to imagine their subjective experiences even as the archival sources – largely produced by colonial powers – recorded them as property to be taxed or resistant bodies to be controlled. This biographical approach reveals not only how enslaved people lived within the system of colonial slave law, but also how the planter class deployed legal instruments – contracts, testaments, and manumissions – to advance their own interests and circumvent both the letter and the spirit of French law.

Before turning to Furcy's story, it is important to understand how the French principle of free soil came into being in French law from the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries before being transformed into a law of racial exclusion during the eighteenth century. Both free soil and race would be invoked as grounds for Furcy's freedom suit in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The Free Soil of France

Lucien Peytraud's *L'esclavage aux Antilles françaises avant 1789*, published in 1897,¹³ offered the first sustained inquiry into the regulation of slaves accompanying their masters to France. More recently, several scholars have more fully examined the leg-

11 Sue Peabody, "There Are No Slaves in France": *The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Pierre H. Boule and Sue Peabody, *Le droit des noirs en France au temps de l'esclavage* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2014).

12 Annette Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family* (New York: Norton, 2008); James H. Sweet, *Domingos Alvarez, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Jean Hébrard and Rebecca Scott, *Freedom Papers: An Atlantic Odyssey in the Age of Emancipation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012).

13 Lucien Peytraud, *L'esclavage aux Antilles françaises avant 1789*, 2 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 1897), vol. 2, chapter VIII, 373–400.

isolation, juridical contests, and lived experiences of slaves and free people of color in the metropole. This scholarship has moved beyond cataloguing developments in the prescriptive legislation issued by royal officials to consider how individuals and groups fared under this legislation and how they used the judicial system to try to advance their interests.¹⁴ Some authors, such as Pierre Boule and Erick Noël, have approached the topic through the lens of social history, carefully indexing, counting, and mapping the presence of black people in the metropole.¹⁵ My own contributions have largely focused on the emergence and application of France's free soil and race-based legislation.¹⁶ Others such as Brett Rushforth, Jennifer Palmer, and Robin Mitchell have considered the experiences of slaves within the French Atlantic world of the eighteenth century, providing insight into the evolving emergence of the Atlantic linkage between blackness and legitimate (legal) slavery.¹⁷

The French kingdom, which consolidated through military conquest and strategic alliances of noble families in the Middle Ages, did not retain the Roman legal tradition of slavery. The very name of the Frankish kingdom, *France*, was understood to be synonymous with “freedom”; to manumit a slave – *affranchir* – literally meant to make them *franc*, or French. In the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, competition with the expanding Iberian empire along France's southern borderlands caused the French crown to adapt what was originally a privilege of the city-dwellers of Toulouse into the free soil tradition of the French kingdom.¹⁸

14 An early example of this approach is Pierre Pluchon, *Nègres et Juifs au XVIIIe siècle: le racisme au siècle des Lumières* (Paris: Tallandier, 1984).

15 In addition to Boule, *Race et esclavage*, see: Marcel Koufinkana, *Les Esclaves noirs en France sous l'ancien régime* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008); Erick Noël, *Être noir en France au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Tallandier, 2006); Bernard Gainot, *Les Officiers de couleur dans les armées, 1792–1815* (Paris: Karthala, 2007); Erick Noël, ed., *Dictionnaire des Gens de couleur dans la France modern*, 3 vols. (Paris: Droz, 2011, 2013, 2017).

16 In addition to the works cited above, see: Sue Peabody, “Furcy, la question raciale et le sol libre de France: une microhistoire,” *Annales: Histoire, Sciences sociales* 64, no. 6 (Nov–Dec 2009): 1305–1334; Sue Peabody, “La Race, l'esclavage et la francité: l'affaire Furcy,” in *Français? La nation en débat entre colonies et métropole, XVIe–XIXe siècle*, ed. Cécile Vidal (Paris: Éditions de l'EHESS, 2014), 189–210.

17 Brett H. Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute for Early American History and Culture, 2012), esp.; Jennifer L. Palmer, *Intimate Bonds: Family and Slavery in the French Atlantic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Robin Mitchell, *Vénus Noire: Black Women and Colonial Fantasies in Nineteenth-Century France* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2020); Robert Harms' pioneering work, *The Diligent: A Voyage Through the Worlds of the Slave Trade* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), uncovered previously unknown documentation regarding some of the earliest revisions of the free soil principle in the early eighteenth century.

18 Sue Peabody, “An Alternative Genealogy of the Origins of French Free Soil: Medieval Toulouse,” *Slavery and Abolition* 32, no. 3 (Sep. 2011): 341–362, reprinted in *Free Soil in the Atlantic World*, ed. Sue Peabody and Keila Grinberg (London: Routledge, 2014), 341–362.

This free soil principle advantaged frontier societies by attracting able-bodied men who could fight for their adopted homeland and women who helped to establish permanent settlements. French courts, including the Parlement of Paris, ultimately embraced the free soil principle to liberate slaves who fled their Castilian and Aragonese masters and crossed into the French kingdom in a series of legal disputes in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹⁹ By the mid-sixteenth century, France's free soil principle was clearly established as a privilege of the French nation. The preeminent legal theorist Jean Bodin wrote that "the slave of a foreigner is clear and free as soon as he has set foot in France."²⁰

A second legacy of France's medieval period was the structure of the sovereign court system. By the eighteenth century, fifteen of France's most important feudal cities had become seats of sovereign courts, each with its own unique tradition of customary law. One of these, the Parlement de Guyenne, had ruled in 1571 that "*la France, mère de la liberté, ne permet aucun esclave*" (France, the mother of liberty, does not allow for any slave).²¹

Since each of these courts as well as the numerous overlapping competencies and jurisdictions of other tribunals – royal, municipal, fiscal, and so on – did not necessarily share the same legislation or procedures, it posed no problem to jurisprudence when, in the seventeenth century, France began to import slaves into its new colonies in North America, the Caribbean, Africa, and the Indian Ocean. France already had plural sovereign courts, each with its own customary law, and each colony therefore likewise developed its own legislation more or less independently, responding to local conditions. However, the crown helped to regularize laws consistently from site to site – sometimes directly through royal decrees, but more often through directives issued by its ministry.

The most important example of royal synthesis was the 1685 edict for the Antilles, which came to be known as the Code Noir in the eighteenth century.²² Drafted in Paris by colonial administrators familiar with current colonial practices,²³ this edict standardized policy regarding slavery and freedom across France's most populated slave colonies: Saint-Christophe, Martinique, Guadeloupe and, later, Saint-Domingue.

19 Charles Verlinden, *L'Esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale*, vol. 1: *Péninsule Ibérique-France* (Bruges: De Tempel, 1955), 427–437.

20 Jean Bodin, *Les Six Livres de la République* (Lyon: Jean de Tournes, 1579), 43: "[. . .] l'esclave d'un étranger est franc & libre, sitôt qu'il a mis le pied en France."

21 *Chronique bourdeloise* (Bordeaux: S. Millanges, 1594), fol. 47v. See also: Boulle and Peabody, *Le droit des noirs*, 27.

22 Jean-François Niort and Jérémy Richard, "L'Édit royal de mars 1685 touchant la police des îles de l'Amérique française dit 'Code Noir': versions choisies, comparés et commentés," *Revue Droits (PUF)* 50 (2009/2010): 143; Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, 355.

23 Vernon Valentine Palmer, "The Origins and Authors of the Code Noir," *Louisiana Law Review* 56, no. 2 (1996): 363–407, <https://digitalcommons.law.lsu.edu/lalrev/vol56/iss2/5>, last accessed October 13, 2023.

Notably, it waived the naturalization process for freedmen regardless of their place of birth and granted them “the same rights, privileges, and immunities enjoyed by free-born persons.”²⁴

What was problematic, however, was the status of slaves traveling from France’s colonies to the metropole – with or without their masters’ consent. Strikingly, even when slaves escaped their masters as stowaways or were smuggled from the colonies to France, Louis XIV upheld France’s free soil tradition, liberating them upon arrival. A ministerial decision in 1691 held that the ship captain was required to compensate the colonial master for the loss of his property, but the fugitive slaves were free in the metropole.²⁵ Nevertheless, the privilege of free soil was generally not extended to Muslim captives from North Africa and the Ottoman Empire held by the crown.²⁶ Moorish and Turkish slaves were condemned to row French galleys alongside Christian criminals. Their arrival in the French kingdom rarely resulted in emancipation, and most were worked to death or exchanged for French captives.

French management of the fundamental contradiction of colonial slavery and metropolitan freedom changed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The expanding settlement of France’s plantation colonies in the Americas and the Indian Ocean created a powerful planter lobby which, over the course of the eighteenth century, successfully eroded access to France’s free soil principle through a series of royal laws. The royal edict of 1716 and the declaration of 1738 together suspended the free soil principle and allowed colonial masters to retain ownership of their slaves in France under certain conditions.²⁷ If any of these conditions were violated, the slaves could be confiscated as royal property and returned to the colony for state labor or resale. The 1738 law was registered by all but one of France’s sovereign courts: the Parlement of Paris, where it was never ratified, ostensibly because the justices objected to including

24 “Édit du Roi, touchant la police des îles de l’Amérique,” March 1685, Article 59, in *Le Code Noir* (1788), 57: “[. . .] les mêmes droits, privilèges et immunités dont jouissent les personnes nées libres.”

25 Louis Phélypeaux, comte de Maurepas à Éragny, gouverneur général des Antilles françaises, October 4, 1691, ANOM, COL, B4, fol. 148v; see also Boule and Peabody, *Le droit des noirs en France*, 29–30.

26 Gillian Weiss, “Infidels at the Oar: A Mediterranean Exception to France’s Free Soil Principle,” *Slavery & Abolition* 32, no. 3 (2011): 397–412, reprinted in *Free Soil in the Atlantic World*, ed. Peabody and Grinberg, 397–412; Gillian Weiss, *Captives and Corsairs: France and Slavery in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

27 Permission was to be granted in the colonies prior to travel only for the express purposes of religious training or training in a trade deemed useful to the colonies, a security deposit roughly equal to the value of the slave was to be forfeited prior to departure, the slaves were to be registered upon arrival in France, and the master was to return them to the colonies as soon as possible (after 1738, within three years). “Édit du Roi, Concernant les esclaves Nègres des colonies, donné à Paris au mois d’octobre 1716,” and “Déclaration du Roi, concernant les nègres esclaves des colonies, 15 décembre 1738,” in *Le Code Noir* (1788), 169–180, 382–395. See also Boule and Peabody, *Le droit des noirs en France*, 43–46, 64–67.

the word “slave” in any French law. Thus, French colonists achieved the capacity to bring their slaves to France without fear of liberation.

Meanwhile, during the eighteenth century, both royal and colonial authorities began to restrict the equality of free people of color originally established in the 1685 Code Noir. When the Code was formally extended to the Indian Ocean colonies of Isle Bourbon and Isle de France in 1723, it contained several new, explicit disabilities based in racial language that had not been present in the earlier Caribbean Code Noir: 1) It now formalized prior local legislation banning marriages between blacks and whites; and 2) it declared blacks (*nègres*) “incapable of receiving from whites any bequest, by reason of death or otherwise.”²⁸ These innovations only make sense in light of the ethnic diversity of the free population of the Mascarene colonies. Indeed, many free men and some free women migrated there from Madagascar and India in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Free people of darker complexion on the two islands were thus not necessarily descended from slaves, yet the terms *blanc* (white), *nègre* (negro), and *noir* (black) were used there to distinguish free people from slaves regardless of skin tone or ancestry.²⁹ From the Indian Ocean Code Noir, these provisions passed into Louisiana the following year, in 1724.³⁰ In the Antilles, local authorities enacted increasing restrictions affecting free people of color as well, banning them from practicing certain trades, prohibiting them from adopting whites’ surnames, and forbidding women of color from dressing like white women by way of sumptuary laws.³¹

Beginning in the 1730s, over one hundred slaves sued for their freedom in Paris on the basis of France’s free soil principle, and the Admiralty Court regularly recognized their freedom. However, even with a sentence affirming freedom, masters sought and received *lettres de cachet* – royal orders to arrest their slaves – resulting in their imprisonment and even deportation to the colonies.³² Finally, in 1777, in re-

28 “Lettres patentes en forme d’édit, concernant les esclaves nègres des Isles de France et de Bourbon,” Article 51 (1723), in Jean-Baptiste-Étienne Delaleu, *Code des Isles de France et de Bourbon*, 2nd ed. (Port-Louis, Mauritius: chez Tristan Mallac et Cie, Imprimeurs du gouvernement, 1826), Isle de France, 251: “incapables de recevoir des blancs aucune donation entre-vifs à cause de mort, ou autrement.” Delaleu’s compendium contains separately paginated sections for Isle de France and Isle Bourbon, hence the designation “Isle de France” here and below.

29 Peabody, *Madeleine’s Children*, 70.

30 Louis Sala-Molins, *Le Code Noir ou le calvaire de Canaan* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2012), 108–109, 196–197.

31 Yvan Debbasch, *Couleur et liberté: Le jeu du critère ethnique dans un ordre juridique esclavagiste*, vol. 1: *L’affranchi dans les possessions françaises de la Caraïbe, 1635–1833* (Paris: Dalloz, 1967), 53–71; John Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 162–169; Robert Taber, “Family Formation and Polemics in Saint-Domingue, 1670–1789” (PhD diss., University of Florida, 2015), 89–91.

32 Miranda Spieler, “The Vanishing Slaves of Paris: The *Lettre de Cachet* and the Emergence of an Imperial Legal Order in Eighteenth-Century France,” in *The Scaffolding of Sovereignty: Global and Aesthetic Perspectives on the History of a Concept*, ed. Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, Stefanos Geroulanos, and Nicole

sponse to numerous freedom suits before the Paris Admiralty Court and the refusal by the Parlement of Paris to register laws containing the word *esclave* (slave), the king issued new legislation known as the *Police des Noirs*, which banned the entry of any “noir, mulâtre, ou autre gen de couleur” (black, mulatto, or other person of color) into the French kingdom.³³ The law also established port depots where slaves who did cross the ocean would be held until they could be shipped back to the colonies on the first available boat.³⁴

Together, then, France's original policies distinguishing between the status of slaves and free people were transformed by the mid-eighteenth century into disabilities based in racial laws. Where free soil had once liberated slaves in the metropole, a racial quarantine now prohibited their immigration.

At the same time, the meanings of French racial terms were ambiguous in the mid-eighteenth century. *Nègre* and *négresse* described people with dark skin, but also usually connoted slave status. These terms were applied to both Africans and Asian slaves in official records.³⁵ As in English, *indien* was used interchangeably for people indigenous to the Americas and to South Asia. In 1727, a French East India Company regulation had banned the exportation of slaves from two French Indian factories (Chandernagor and Pondichery) to the Mascarene islands, but this ban was quickly forgotten and never invoked in subsequent freedom suits in Paris.³⁶ Ministerial directives had forbidden the trade in Indian slaves from North America in 1739.³⁷ In 1759, lawyers representing Francisque, a slave from India who had been brought to Paris, argued for his freedom on the grounds that French law authorized only the trade in African slaves.³⁸ In point of fact, slavery had been practiced for centuries, if not millennia, in South Asia, and like other European traders, the French tapped readily into these sources while colonizing the Indian Ocean islands, even as they supplemented “legitimate” slavery with kidnapping – especially of children.³⁹

Jerr (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 230–245. Spieler's ongoing research suggests that these arrests were very widespread, even to the point of negating virtually all of the Admiralty Court's decisions in favor of freedom.

33 Boulle and Peabody, *Le droit des noirs en France*, 83–86.

34 “Déclaration du Roi pour la Police des noirs, donnée à Versailles le 9 août 1777, enregistrée en parlement [de Paris], le 27 desdits mois et an,” in *Le Code Noir* (1788), 489–500.

35 Peabody, *Madeleine's Children*, 35–36, 45.

36 Isle Bourbon Correspondance générale 1727, ANOM COL C3/5, fol. 206.

37 Ordinance of March 9, 1739, ANOM COL B 68, fol. 15r–15v.

38 *Mémoire signifié pour le nommé Francisque, Indien de nation, néophyte de l'Eglise Romaine, Intimé contre le Sieur Allain-François-Ignace Brignon, se disant Ecuyer, Appellant* (Paris: chez P.G. Simon, Imprimeur du Parlement, 1759). See also Peabody, “*There Are No Slaves in France*,” chap. 4; Boulle and Peabody, *Le droit des noirs en France*, 61, 75–78.

39 Dady Rustomji Banaji, *Slavery in British India* (Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala, 1933), 45, 53–63; Jean-Michel Filliot, *La Traite des esclaves vers les Mascareignes au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Office de la recherche scientifique et technique outre-mer [ORSTOM], 1974), 177; Amal Kumar Chattopadhyay, *Slavery in the Bengal Presidency, 1772–1843* (London: Golden Eagle Publishing House, 1977), 36, 46, 80–83;

Madeleine, Mother of Furcy

So, when an adolescent Bengali slave, Madeleine, traveled with her French mistress from Chandernagor to the Atlantic port of Lorient in 1772, her status was ambiguous. Some passenger and census records referred to Madeleine as a *négresse*, others as an *indienne*.⁴⁰ In any event, her mistress should have registered Madeleine with local authorities upon arrival in continental France, but like many other colonial masters, she sidestepped this requirement. Perhaps she convinced herself that the language of the law, *esclaves nègres* (negro slaves) did not apply to her Indian servant.⁴¹ Or perhaps, like many owners of slaves from Africa, she simply chose to evade the law. Instead, within just a couple of months, Madeleine's mistress arranged for her to join the household of Charles and Marie Anne Routier, a French planter family from the Indian Ocean colonies of Isle Bourbon and Isle de France.

The transfer of Madeleine to new owners in France was definitely illegal. The gifting and sale of slaves in the metropole was specifically forbidden by the same laws that required Madeleine to be registered.⁴² There is no surviving contract, most likely because it was a simple verbal agreement concluded privately. Even so, the transaction apparently included a conditional clause that Madame Routier understood to be binding: Madeleine was to be freed in the colonies sometime in the future.⁴³

Why did Madeleine not take advantage of her presence in the metropole to claim her freedom there? The young woman may have faced at least three practical impedi-

Lionel Caplan, "Power and Status in South Asian Slavery," in *Asian and African Systems of Slavery*, ed. James L. Watson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 182; Indrani Chatterjee, *Gender, Slavery and the Law in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 11–12, 22, 179; Basanta Kumer Basu, "Notes on the Slave Trade in India during the Early Days of John Company," *Muslim Review* 4, no. 4 (1930): 22–23, 26–27; Marina Carter, "Indian Slaves in Mauritius, 1729–1834," *Indian Historical Review* 15 (1987/1988): 235–237; Pierre H. Boule, "Les non-blancs de l'océan Indien en France," reprinted in Pierre H. Boule, *Race et esclavage dans la France de l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Perrin, 2007), 144; Richard B. Allen, "The Constant Demand of the French: The Mascarene Slave Trade and the Worlds of the Indian Ocean and Atlantic during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Journal of African History* 49 (2008): 44, 47, 54–55; Richard B. Allen, "A Traffic Repugnant to Humanity: Children, the Mascarene Slave Trade and British Abolitionism," *Slavery and Abolition* 27, no. 2 (2009): 219–236.

⁴⁰ For example: Passengers, Lorient, Arrivals, May 22, 1772, *Hector*, ANOM COL F/5B/21; Passengers, Lorient, Departures *La Brune*, September 12, 1773, ANOM COL F/5B/50.

⁴¹ Indeed, there is no definitive evidence that Madeleine was enslaved as she departed from Chandernagor in 1770. The French census indicates that her mistress, Anne Despense de la Loge, had six unnamed servants: one free male, three free females, one male slave, and one female slave. Madeleine could thus have been either enslaved or free. See: Census, Chandernagor, 1768, ANOM DPPC G1/481, fol. 103.

⁴² "Édit du Roi, Concernant les esclaves Nègres des colonies, donné à Paris au mois d'octobre 1716," in *Le Code Noir* (1788), 169–180: "Article 11: Les maîtres desdits esclaves ne pourront les vendre ni échanger en France, & seront obligés de les renvoyer dans nos colonies pour y être négociés & employés, suivant l'édit de mars 1685." See also Boule and Peabody, *Le droit des noirs en France*, 46.

⁴³ This clause appears in the 1789 manumission document: Affranchissement no. 727, ANOM 6DPPC 3742.

ments in this regard. Firstly, a lack of knowledge: To claim her freedom in Lorient, located within the jurisdiction of the Parlement de Bretagne, Madeleine would have had to learn of the free soil principle and make her way to the jurisdiction of the Parlement de Paris. Secondly, there were practical barriers: The closest major city within the jurisdiction of Paris where she might conceivably have received assistance was Angers, at a distance of 250 kilometers. In escaping her mistress, Madeleine would have had to navigate the unfamiliar social and geographical environments of France – not to mention finding a lawyer willing to take her case, and the means to pay him. Thirdly, there were legal obstacles: Madeleine was a female minor between the ages of 13 and 16. Since French law did not recognize adulthood until the age of 25 for girls, the best she could hope for would be to become the dependent of another head of household. Finally, in challenging her enslavement, Madeleine faced considerable risks: The route to Angers and Paris would bring her perilously close to the thriving slave port of Nantes. Escape left her vulnerable to starvation, abuse, and arrest. There was no guarantee that a new master or mistress would hire her without references from a previous employer or treat her better than the mistress she had known for most of her life. Thus, we should not be surprised that there is no evidence of Madeleine attempting to invoke the free soil principle during her brief sojourn in France in 1772.

After only a couple of months, as confirmed by passenger records, Madeleine accompanied her new master and mistress to Isle Bourbon.⁴⁴ There she eventually gave birth to three children: Maurice, Constance, and Furcy. The identity of their father(s) remains unknown, although the youngest two were almost certainly children of the Routier adolescent sons.⁴⁵ Little is known about the eldest, Maurice, who would die in 1810 before Furcy began his legal quest for freedom. The Indian Ocean Code Noir levied a hefty fine on white masters who sired children with their slaves, and subsequent legislation prohibited priests from baptizing children born to slave mothers as free without going through a formal manumission process.⁴⁶ A tradition of silence thus prevented masters from acknowledging their out-of-wedlock children with enslaved women. It was only as an adult that Furcy summoned the courage to declare in a letter to a sympathetic

⁴⁴ Passengers, Lorient, Departures *La Brune*, September 12, 1773, ANOM COL F/5B/50.

⁴⁵ Peabody, *Madeleine's Children*, 63–65. Recent DNA testing of one of Furcy's living descendants shows that his ancestors include Madame Routier. This conclusively identifies Furcy's father as one of the Routier sons: Augustin, Cyrille, or Jean Nicholas, aged 19, 18, and 15 respectively in 1785, when Furcy was conceived (private correspondence).

⁴⁶ "Lettres patentes en forme d'édit, concernant les esclaves nègres des Isles de France et de Bourbon," Article 5 and "Ordonnance du Roi," August 20, 1766, issued in Isle de France on August 29, 1767 and Isle Bourbon November 9, 1767, in Delaleu, *Code des Isles de France*, Isle de France, 258 and 209, respectively.

judge in Paris: “I was born a French colonist and I am the son of a Frenchman by birth.”⁴⁷

Formal manumission was relatively rare during this period on Isle Bourbon; manumission rates for the entire colony hovered at about one hundred per year, out of a total slave population of approximately 37,500 in 1787–1788. Nevertheless, both Constance and Madeleine were freed by the Routier family – the former as an infant, which was very unusual.⁴⁸ Manumission law required that the master allocate the payment of a lifetime pension to freedmen to prevent them from becoming a burden on colonial charity. Instead, Constance’s manumission papers state that she was given a personal slave of her own, presumably to nurse and care for her, but perhaps also as a source of perpetual income through hiring out her labor.⁴⁹ In 1787, the year after Furcy was born, Madeleine’s master Charles Routier died. Within two years, the widow Routier arranged for Madeleine’s manumission.

Although some of the phrasing of Madeleine’s manumission was formulaic – she was freed “in recognition of the good services that she has rendered her [Madame Routier]” – two aspects of this act were unusual. Firstly, the petition added the justification “[. . .] and to fulfill the contract that she [Madame Routier] had made in France to procure the liberty of the said Magdelaine [sic], who was only given to her under this condition.”⁵⁰ This clause would prove essential to Furcy’s future lawsuit as written proof of his mother’s brief residence in metropolitan France. Secondly, according to later testimony, the widow Routier never told Madeleine that she was free.⁵¹ Madeleine continued to live with and serve her mistress until the latter’s death in 1808, ostensibly free on paper but apparently unaware of her condition.

We might pause here to consider questions that the law generally does not. What does it mean to be free if one does not know it? Why would Madeleine’s mistress go to the trouble of registering her freedom with the authorities if she had no intention of telling Madeleine of her liberty? While Madeleine’s daily life may not have changed as a free woman, the act of manumission entitled her to a pension of 600 *livres* per year. Whether Madeleine knew it or not, when Madame Routier freed her on

47 “[J]e suis né Colon Français et je suis fils d’un Français de naissance.” Furcy to Boucher, May 15, 1826, Archives Départementales de La Réunion (hereafter ADR) 1Jp2007-1, no. 71.

48 Claude Wanquet, *Histoire d’une révolution: La Réunion 1789–1803*, 3 vols. (Marseille: J. Laffitte, 1980–1984), vol. 3 (1984), 135–136.

49 Actes d’affranchissement, 1767–1786, ADR 1B9J25, no. 439. There is no evidence that Constance retained the slave in subsequent documentation. Rather, she seems to have remained with her mother Madeleine in the Routier household until she began to raise a family of her own.

50 “[. . .] en reconnaissance des bons services qu’elle lui a rendus [et] [. . .] pour remplir l’engagement qu’elle a contracté en France de procurer la liberté de ladite Magdelaine, qui ne lui a donné qu’à cette condition.” Affranchissements, no. 727, ANOM 6DPPC 3742.

51 Extrait d’une Mémoire déposé au greffe de la Cour Royale de l’Isle de Bourbon le trois Décembre 1817 par Mr. Le Procureur général pour servir s’il y a lieu, à intenter toute procédure criminelle ou correctionnelle, ADR 1Jp2007-1, no. 36.

paper and promised to pay the required pension so that Madeleine would not become a burden on colonial charity, the widow was in effect preparing an unofficial inheritance in the form of a debt owed to her former slave that would come due to Madeleine upon her mistress's death. Although her motives remain inscrutable, it seems likely that Madame Routier intended to recompense Madeleine for her service to the family and to provide for her and her husband's illegitimate children after her own death – something the law specifically prohibited.

Revolution without Freedom

Within days of Madeleine's manumission, Parisians stormed the Bastille in Paris. The French Revolution, rendered all the more complex by parallel events in the Caribbean colonies, transformed French law concerning slavery, race, and citizenship in important ways. Notably, the first article of the *Droits de l'homme* declared that "all men are born and live free in law," thus providing a fundamental doctrine that contradicted the ongoing experience of colonial slavery.⁵² The Decree of September 28, 1791 reestablished both the metropole as free soil, now under statutory law (as opposed to the hazy "principle" of tradition), and full citizenship for people of color.⁵³ On February 4, 1794, the National Convention ratified the slaves' self-liberation in colonial Saint-Domingue but left its implementation in France's remaining slave colonies to the Committee for Public Safety.⁵⁴ Revolutionary abolition never made it to France's Indian Ocean colonies: when the metropolitan commissioners arrived there in 1796 with instructions for abolishing slavery, the planters ran them off the island with cutlasses and pistols, and the officers barely escaped with their lives.⁵⁵ Therefore, when Bonaparte formally restored the Old Regime slave law in 1802, followed by the new Civil Code in 1804, the effect was to limit manumissions and restore legal disabilities for free people of color, including the racial quarantine of the *Police des Noirs*.⁵⁶ On the other hand, beginning during the Empire and then expanding gradually under the Restoration, French ministerial and legislative directives removed the legal disabilities of men of mixed ancestry, especially if they were wealthy, and quietly resumed the default free soil policy when masters

52 "Tous les êtres humains naissent libres et égaux en droit." Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen (1789), <https://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/le-bloc-de-constitutionnalite/declaration-des-droits-de-l-homme-et-du-citoyen-de-1789>, last accessed October 13, 2023.

53 *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860. Première série (1789–1799)*, ed. Jérôme Mavidal and Émile Laurent, 102 vols. (Paris: E. Dupont [etc.], 1862–2012), first series, vol. 31 (1888), 442–443.

54 "Décret du 16 pluviôse an II (February 4, 1794)," *Gazette nationale ou Le Moniteur universel*, no. 137 (17 Pluviôse, an II [February 5, 1794]): 554.

55 Claude Wanquet, *La France et la première abolition de l'esclavage, 1794–1802: le cas des colonies orientales, Isle de France (Maurice) et la Réunion* (Paris: Karthala, 1998), 308.

56 Boule and Peabody, *Le droit des noirs en France*, 156–170.

neglected to place their slaves in the port depots. From 1818 to 1824, the royal Council of Ministers would not authorize the arrest or deportation of slaves who absconded from their masters within the continental kingdom; they remained free in fact, though without formal manumission papers.⁵⁷ However, due to tensions between the Prefect of Police and the Minister of the Navy over masters' requests to arrest self-liberated slaves and return them to the colonies, the Council of Ministers reversed this policy in 1824. The Minister of the Navy simply ordered colonial administrators to deny permission to any master who sought to leave a colony with a slave for any destination.⁵⁸ This order did not apply to free people of color, who could travel freely. From 1824 until 1830, then, slave status replaced race as the legal boundary between colonies and the metropole.

Following the 1830 Revolution, the French legislature formally granted equal civil rights to colonial free people of color and liberalized colonial manumission policy, such that some 20,000 slaves were voluntarily freed by their masters (without pensions) throughout the French empire.⁵⁹ However, progress toward full abolition stalled after the British emancipation act of 1833. For the next decade and a half, French colonial planters effectively deferred emancipatory proposals in the French legislature.⁶⁰ The free soil ordinance of April 29, 1836 signaled the end of real antislavery momentum in France.⁶¹ While it granted freedom to the few slaves selected by their masters to accompany them to the metropole, it also reaffirmed France's two distinct legal regimes of colonial slavery and metropolitan freedom. Not until the Revolution of 1848 would slavery be permanently abolished in France's plantation colonies.

How did this changing legal environment affect Madeleine and her children? As one might imagine, the Revolution affected them very little. Madeleine continued to live with her mistress, the widow Routier, until 1808, ostensibly free but apparently ignorant of her status, serving her mistress as a domestic. Constance, always identified as a free person of color, remained with her mother and the widow in the Routiers' Saint-Denis townhouse.⁶² Maurice was likewise identified as a domestic servant,

57 Boule and Peabody, *Le droit des noirs en France*, 183–193.

58 “Circulaire du ministre de la Marine aux administrateurs des colonies, 3 mars 1824, et des ports, 6 mars 1824,” (ANOM, GEN 629, dos. 2735), in Boule and Peabody, *Le droit des noirs en France*, 205.

59 Léo Elisabeth, “The French Antilles,” in *Neither Slave nor Free: The Freedmen of African Descent in the Slave Societies of the New World*, ed. David W. Cohen and Jack P. Green (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), 146.

60 Boule and Peabody, *Le droit des noirs en France*, 222–223.

61 “Ordonnance du Roi relative aux esclaves des colonies amenés ou envoyés en France par leurs maîtres,” April 29, 1836, in Boule and Peabody, *Le droit des noirs en France*, 218.

62 After 1789, Madeleine and Constance are itemized as free people of color living with the widow in her Saint-Denis townhouse in 1801 (ADR L143 and ADR L144) and 1803 (ADR L147). In an exceptional case discussed in more detail in chapter 4 of my book, Madeleine was briefly re-inscribed as the widow's slave in 1796 (ADR L142.1) just weeks after the revolutionary commissioners from Paris, René Gaston Baco and Etienne Burnel, tried to enforce general emancipation in Mauritius and Réunion. It

but he lived on the widow's rural Sainte-Marie plantation, probably in the service of her eldest son Augustin.⁶³

Furcy's name, however, disappears from the widow's census returns and those of her married children during the revolutionary decade.⁶⁴ This omission represents a strategic "silence" in the archival record that demands interpretation. Perhaps the best explanation is that Madame Routier understood Furcy, who was a toddler at the time of his mother's manumission, to be freed informally along with Madeleine in 1789. French officials acknowledged the widespread practice of informal manumission, distinguishing between people who were free in fact (*libre de fait*) and those who had papers formalizing their freedom (*libre de droit*).⁶⁵ This practice allowed masters to avoid paying the manumission tax and the lifetime pension owed their former slaves.

When Furcy finally reappears on the census, it is in 1806, about a year before Madame Routier's death.⁶⁶ Unreported for two decades, he is now suddenly listed as one of the widow's domestic slaves in the Saint-Denis townhouse. This census was not filled out by Routier herself, who may have been incapacitated, but by her son-in-law Joseph Lory, a colonial merchant who dabbled in real estate speculation, lending, and financing the slave trade even after it had been abolished under French law. It was Lory who, in his capacity as the widow's executor over the next two years, tricked Madeleine – who was illiterate – into affirming a receipt for the nineteen years of wages owed to her by the widow's estate.⁶⁷ Madeleine thus lost some 12,000 *livres*, worth at least two skilled adult male slaves, which would have allowed her to purchase both Furcy's and Maurice's freedom. But since she had formally acknowledged

may be that Madame Routier was attempting to use her census return as a means to lay claim to the liberated Madeleine, but it is hard to discern whether the widow was using the paperwork to prevent Madeleine's seizure by another unscrupulous master or her effort to escape during this highly charged moment. On the attempted abolition of slavery in the Mascarene Islands, see: Wanquet, *La France et la première abolition de l'esclavage*, 279–310.

63 Maurice is listed among the Routier's Sainte-Marie plantation slaves in 1787 (ADR 74C) and 1804 (ADR L170). These are the only two extant censuses for this property during the revolutionary period.

64 Furcy's name does not appear in the above-mentioned Saint-Denis townhouse census returns for 1801 and 1803, nor in the widow's Sainte-Marie plantation census (ADR L170). Likewise, his name is omitted from the widow's and her son's Sainte-Marie plantations census returns in 1804 (ADR L168), 1805 (ADR L170), and 1806 (ADR L171).

65 For example, see Charles de Secondat Montesquieu, *Esprit des Loix*, Book XII "Des loix qui forment la liberté politique dans son rapport avec le citoyen," chap. 1, "De la liberté du citoyen," in *Oeuvres de Monsieur de Montesquieu*, new ed. (Amsterdam and Leipzig: Arkstée and Merkus, 1764), vol. 2, 2.

66 Census, Saint-Denis parish, Routier, 1806 (ADR L151.2).

67 Quittance Madelaine aux h^{ers} Routier [Receipt, Madeleine to the Routier heirs] August 7, 1809; Notary Michault d'Emery, no. 731, ANOM DPPC NOT REU1803. Madeleine's daughter, Constance, explains how this occurred in her petition of November 9, 1817 (ADR 1Jp2007-1, no. 3).

the receipt, they remained enslaved. Maurice died in 1810 during the English occupation of the island.⁶⁸

When Madeleine tried to bargain with Lory for Furcy's freedom, Lory responded: "Everything that has been done has been done correctly; to undo it is impossible [. . .] if you have the money [to purchase your son's freedom], we will spend it."⁶⁹ Madeleine was now recognized as free, but without an employer or a wage-earning family member to support her, she was vulnerable. She died four years after the widow in 1812, supposedly of grief over losing her sons' freedom.

Furcy's Freedom Suits

In 1817, following the arrival of a new royal prosecuting magistrate charged with cleaning up the corruption of the colonial judiciary, Furcy – aided by his free sister Constance – declared himself free on November 21, 1817, exiting the gates of Joseph Lory's home and submitting a writ asserting his freedom to the court bailiff.⁷⁰ The hearings officer (*conseiller auditeur*), collaborating secretly with the royal prosecuting magistrate (*procureur du roi*), prepared two documents – one in Constance's name and a second writ (*signification*) on Furcy's behalf, arguing that the latter should be free on several grounds: the free soil principle, Furcy's infancy at the time of his mother's manumission, natural law presumption of freedom, and the supposed principle that Indians (*indiens*) could not be enslaved under French law.⁷¹ The Tribunal of First Instance of Saint-Denis decided against Furcy on 17 December 1817, ruling that "Furcy, presently detained in prison, will be returned to his master, Lory, within three days of the recording of this judgment."⁷² Although the colonial law regulating

⁶⁸ We only know of Maurice's death thanks to Constance (ADR, 1Jp2007-1, no. 3). His existence among the Routier slaves is confirmed in the census records, but his baptismal and death records do not appear where one might expect them in the parish registers.

⁶⁹ "Tout ce qui est fait est bien fait rien ne pourra le defaire & si vous avez de l'argent nous allons en dépenser." Notes écrites sous la dictée de Furcy, n.d. (ADR 1 Jp 2007/1, no. 51).

⁷⁰ Copy of Furcy's writ (*signification*) to the Saint-Denis Tribunal of First Instance, November 22, 1817 (ADR, 1Jp2007-1, no. 23); see also: Peabody, *Madeleine's Children*, 122.

⁷¹ Mémoire de Constance en faveur de Furcy, November 9, 1817 (ADR 1Jp2007-1, no. 3); Furcy's writ of November 22, 1817 (ADR 1Jp2007-1, no. 23); see also: Peabody, *Madeleine's Children*, 119–120, 122–123.

⁷² "[F]urcy présentement détenu en prison du tribunal sera dans le délai de trois jours de la signification du présent jugement remis à Lory son maître." In *Madeleine's Children* (134–135), I stated that this decision had never been rendered, but I had overlooked a contemporary reference to the decision forwarded by the *commissaire ordonnateur* [civil commissioner], Philippe Desbassayns de Richemont, in his report to the Minister of the Navy: Extrait des minutes du greffe du Tribunal de premiere instance de l'Île Bourbon entre Maître Petitpas patron du nommé Furcy contre Joseph Lory, December 17, 1817 (ANOM, 3210 COL 97/684, pièce jointe no. 25). This suggests that the hearing and verdict did occur.

fugitive slaves dictated that an escapee could not be held in chains for more than two months,⁷³ Furcy remained in jail on Joseph Lory's orders for almost a year. And while later accounts suggest that Furcy appealed the lower court decision to the Royal Court of Bourbon on either the 12th or the 18th of February, 1818, there is no evidence of the decision until 1836, when he challenged his slavery before the Court of Cassation in Paris.⁷⁴

Eventually, Lory smuggled Furcy to the neighboring British colony of Mauritius, thereby separating Furcy from his allies in Bourbon and forcing him to perform grueling labor on his nephews' sugar plantation. There, Furcy eventually used the British legal system – mobilized by the antislavery movement in the metropole – to negotiate a paperless freedom from Lory: a freedom in fact, but not in law.⁷⁵ As a free man, he set up a candy shop in Mauritius, capitalizing on the sugar boom there, and purchased land and at least two slaves.⁷⁶ However, because neither the British nor the French colonial justice systems ever formally ruled on his status, he had no freedom papers. When Furcy decided to appeal to Paris for a definitive ruling on his status beginning in 1835, he wrote to the governor of Isle Bourbon, requesting permission to research his birth certificate and legal papers there. The French governor responded that while Furcy might be free under English law, he was still considered a slave in France's colonies.⁷⁷ To return to Isle Bourbon would subject him once again to being the slave of

73 Arrêté 93, du 7 floréal an XIII (April 27, 1805), in *Recueil des lois publiées à Maurice depuis la dissolution de l'Assemblée Coloniale et 1803, sous le Gouvernement du Général Decaen, jusques à la fin de l'administration de son Exc. Sir R. T. Farquhar en 1823* ([Port Louis] Mauritius: Mallac Frères, 1822–1824), 122.

74 The date of February 12, 1818, is cited in André-Marie-Jean-Jacques Dupin, *Réquisitoires, plaidoyers et discours de rentrée*, vol. 2 (Paris: Joubert, Libraire-Éditeur, 1836), 422; *Annales maritimes et coloniales 26e année, 2e sér., 1^{re} partie: partie officielle* (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1841): 324; Thureau, *Plaidoyer pour le sieur Furcy indien*, 6; *Gazette des tribunaux*, December 21, 1843, 1; and [Émile] Moreau, [Alphonse] Paillet, and Huart, *Mémoire pour la dame veuve Lory, et les sieurs Adolphe Lory, Henry Lory, Thomas Lory, Arthur Lory, Jules Lory, et Edouard Lory, demeurant tous à l'Île-Bourbon, intimés, contre le sieur Furcy, homme de couleur, demeurant à l'Île de France* (Paris: Guyot, 1843), 7. The date February 18, 1818 appears only in [Émile] Moreau, *Mémoire pour le Sieur Lory, Propriétaire [. . .] défendeur, contre le Sieur Furcy, Homme de couleur [. . .] demandeur* (Saint-Denis [La Réunion]: Impr. de Pollet, Soupe et Guillois, 1838), 4. This last is undoubtedly the source for the same date supplied in the Minister of the Navy's letter to the governor of Bourbon, May 29, 1838 (ANOM, 30 COL 158/1307).

75 Peabody, *Madeleine's Children*, 151–154.

76 "Furcy alias Magdeleine" received £84 18s 2d for two slaves on January 6, 1837; Mauritius Claim 3523; Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons, "Slavery Abolition Act: an account of all sums of money awarded by the Commissioners of Slavery Compensation," *Parliamentary Papers 1837–1838*, vol. 48, 215, last accessed via *Legacies of British Slave-ownership*, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/search/> on October 13, 2023; *Mauritius Government Gazette* 36 (September 5, 1835) (Supplement) (National Archives of the United Kingdom CO 171).

77 Governor Cuvillier to Furcy, September 17, 1836, in Furcy to Boucher, October 1, 1836 (ADR 1Jp2007-1, no. 74).

Joseph Lory, who had carefully itemized Furcy in each of his census returns from 1810 to 1833.

Over two and a half decades (1817–1843), at least six legal rationales were offered by lawyers and judges to justify Furcy's freedom in the colonial courts of Isle Bourbon and Mauritius as well as the Paris courts of appeal: his mother's Indian origins, her sojourn on France's free soil, the illegal transfer of Madeleine through sale or gifting in the metropole, Furcy's young age when his mother was manumitted, his having been smuggled into Mauritius in violation of the British slave trade ban, and the 1833 abolition of slavery within the British Empire. Antislavery activism in the British Empire effectively laid the groundwork for Furcy to petition the governor of Mauritius in 1826 and negotiate his freedom *de fait*. French abolitionism never reached the fever pitch of Britain's widespread public movement manifest in petition drives, pamphlet-eering, public meetings, and the lobbying of Parliament. Rather, the French legal professionals who assisted Furcy represented the Paris-trained liberal ideology of the Bourbon restoration and the July Monarchy. Their advocacy for Furcy was based on a desire to bring the corrupt colonial judiciary under metropolitan control (in the case of the *procureur générale*, Louis Gilbert Boucher, in 1817) or to institute a policy to resurrect and reinforce the separate legal regimes of metropole and slave colonies (André Dupin in the 1830s and 1840s).

On December 23, 1843, the Cour royale de Paris declared Furcy freeborn (*né libre*) based on the fact that his mother had set foot on French soil in 1772.⁷⁸ The royal court of the July Monarchy was keen to maintain the principle of free soil, which was consistent with the older legal tradition, and conveniently permitted slavery to continue in the colonies while upholding the French constitution's commitment to freedom in the metropole. In fact, France's free soil had been declared by royal ordinance just a few years earlier, in 1836. It is ironic that the Cour royale decided Furcy's freedom on the basis of free soil, since the laws in effect when Madeleine had come to Brittany over seventy years earlier would never have recognized her as free. By law, she should have been confiscated as royal property and returned to India, which is precisely what her first mistress may have expected when she gave or sold Madeleine to the Routiers. None of these legal arguments coincided with what Madeleine, Constance, or Furcy understood to be the foundation of his liberty, however – that Madeleine had earned the money to purchase her son's freedom but was swindled out of her savings by Joseph Lory.

Thus, the barriers to accessing France's free soil were numerous. Even slaves who somehow learned of the free soil principle had to resist their masters' authority in escaping, make their way to the jurisdiction of Paris courts while evading arrest, starva-

78 *Gazette des tribunaux*, December 24, 1843, no. 5207, 1; Edouard Thureau, *Plaidoyer pour le sieur Furcy indien, demeurant à l'île de France, appelant, contre les veuve et héritiers Lory, demeurant à l'île Bourbon, intimés* (Paris: Imprimerie de J. Delalaine, 1844), 45–46; *Journal du Palais* 1, no. 6 (1844): 224.

tion, and exposure, find a lawyer to represent them in court, find a new employer who would take in a servant without references, produce legally viable written evidence of their free status, survive until the court rendered its judgment, and build a new life without the benefit of dowry, references, and the alliances of family and community. Furthermore, the mobility between metropole and colonies that subdued the protagonists to the colonial slave regimes complicated their situation. The obstacles to achieving officially recognized freedom on the basis of France's free soil principle were therefore considerable.⁷⁹ Men predominated in obtaining court-sanctioned freedom *de droit* as well as the informal status of *libre de fait*. The high demand by France's elites for black domestic servants as status symbols in Paris facilitated a lucky few in finding new positions during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

This microhistorical approach to French law has underscored the gap between the formal legal institutions, procedures, and doctrines on the one hand and slaves' own experiences and their sense of justice on the other. To be free in fact was not necessarily to be free in law, nor vice versa. This case study furthermore suggests that the struggle for freedom was not an individual but rather a family affair that could extend over several generations. This struggle was complicated as well as enabled by the diverse colonial regimes between which employers/owners and servants/slaves navigated. Well into the nineteenth century and even from the perspective of the colonial periphery, the late medieval/early modern free soil principle – after being dissolved during the eighteenth century – still constituted an important point of reference for legal decisions, as French jurists sought to resolve the contradictions between colonial slavery and modern French law.

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– Sainte-Marie, 1780–1787: 74 C.

– Saint-Denis, 1786–1788: 75 C.

1 Jp 2007-1: Papiers collectés par Louis Gilbert Boucher, 1817–1840: nos. 3, 23, 36, 51, 71, 74.

L 139–294: Île Bourbon / La Réunion / Bonaparte. Déclarations individuelles pour les recensements (1789–1815).

⁷⁹ Fewer than one hundred enslaved persons won decisions in favor of freedom by the French Admiralty Court prior to the Revolution, and many of these were immediately arrested, imprisoned, and either returned to their masters or deported to the colonies as royal property to be re-sold or employed in public works projects. Peabody, “*There Are No Slaves in France*,” 93; Spieler, “The Vanishing Slaves.”

- Saint-Denis, 1792–1848: L 142.1, 143, 144, 147, 151.2.
- Sainte-Marie, 1804–1812: L 168–171.

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30 COL: Administration générale, deuxième empire.

- 30 COL 158/1307: Conditions des esclaves (1818–1843)3201 COL: La Réunion, correspondance générale.
- 3201 COL 97/684: Affaire Boucher/Sully Brunet, relative à la revendication de liberté de l'esclave Furcy, 1817–1819.
- COL B: Correspondance au départ.
- COL B 4: Compagnie des Indes orientales et occidentales, 1663–1678.
- COL B 68: Antilles, Cayenne, Canada, Île Royale & Louisiane, 1739.COL C: Correspondance à l'arrivée.
- COL C/3/5: Île Bourbon, 1717–1727.
- COL, F/5B: Passagers, 1744–1886.
- F/5B/21: Passagers, arrivées Lorient, 1768–1776.
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Simon P. Newman

3 Escaping Enslavement in Eighteenth-Century Scotland

In March 2021, the UK Government published a report by the *Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities*, an investigation of the current state of race relations in Great Britain. Controversially, the Commission concluded that racism is no longer a decisive factor in British life: “We no longer see a Britain where the system is deliberately rigged against ethnic minorities.” Although “impediments and disparities do exist, they are varied, and ironically very few of them are directly to do with racism.” The Commission Chair, Dr. Tony Sewell, included the report’s only reference to historical racial slavery in his foreword, in which he suggested that “there is a new story about the Caribbean experience which speaks to the slave period not only being about profit and suffering but how culturally African people transformed themselves into a remodelled African/Britain.” Sewell’s observation appears even more remarkable than the report’s suggestion that institutional racism has all but disappeared in Britain, for he infers that centuries of racial slavery were most significant not for any harm they did to Africans but rather for the ways in which they prepared Africans for British citizenship. The report has been widely criticised, not least by historians of slavery. David Olusoga, for example, condemned it in an op-ed in *The Guardian*, suggesting the authors had deployed “an argument that was used by enslavers themselves in defence of slavery 200 years ago: the idea that by becoming culturally British, Black people were somehow beneficiaries of the system.”¹

In the wake of celebrations for the 2007 bicentennial of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, many Britons have tended to focus on the nation’s celebratory history of abolitionism, first of the slave trade and then, a generation later, of slavery itself. Britain’s active participation in and profiting from slavery have been neglected in this focus on abolitionism. For many years, this problem was even greater in Scotland, a nation then suffering from what Professor Sir Thomas Devine termed a “time-honoured denial of a Scottish role in slavery” rooted in “academic neglect [. . .] paralleled by popular amnesia”. For two centuries, Scots have correctly identified their nation as a pioneer in abolitionism: In 1788, for example, the University of Glasgow was the first British university to petition Parliament in favour of abolition of the slave trade, and

¹ Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, “*The Report*,” published March 31, 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-report-of-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities>; David Olusoga, “The poisonously patronising Sewell report is historically illiterate,” *The Guardian*, April 2, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/apr/02/sewell-race-report-historical-young-people-britain>, both sites last accessed October 27, 2023. Because of protests against the language in the report, some wording was subsequently changed.

leading American abolitionists were tremendously popular and raised a great deal of money in Scotland in support of their cause. Yet while Scottish enthusiasm for abolitionism has long been acknowledged and celebrated, many Scots chose to dismiss racial slavery and colonization as English rather than Scottish endeavours. Furthermore, some in Scotland characterized their nation as a colonized victim of English imperialism, mistakenly arguing that Scottish convicts, vagrants and prisoners-of-war sent as indentured servants to the plantation colonies were themselves “white slaves”.²

Some excellent recent work together with changes in the school curriculum and the actions of major cultural institutions like museums and the National Trust for Scotland has helped to weaken the Scottish belief that racial slavery was an institution restricted to the North American and Caribbean colonies, created and driven by England’s government and merchants, and that Scots and Scotland had little to do with the mass enslavement of millions of Africans. New research is demonstrating that Scots were deeply engaged in slavery and empire, and that the wealth generated by slave-driven plantations helped modernize Scotland. What has remained less visible, however, is the fact that there were enslaved people present in eighteenth-century Scotland, and that some of these men, women and children resisted their bondage by escaping.³ A few were indigenous North Americans or South Asians, but the large majority were African or African-descended, and some of them had endured the Middle Passage from Africa to the Americas. These bound men, women and children found themselves in Scotland because of the high levels of Scottish engagement with Britain’s expanding empire. Doctors, merchants, ship and army officers, colonial officials, planters, plantation bookkeepers and managers spread out from Scotland across the empire, and some of the more successful of these expatriates returned to Scotland and used their wealth to purchase lavish town houses and country estates. On occa-

2 Thomas M. Devine, ed., *Recovering Scotland’s Slavery Past: The Caribbean Connection* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 247, 23; Stephen Mullen and Simon P. Newman, *Slavery, Abolition and the University of Glasgow*, September 2018, 5, https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/Media_607547_smx.pdf; Alasdair Pettinger, *Frederick Douglass and Scotland, 1846: Living an Antislavery Life* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019); Stephen Mullen, “The myth of Scottish slaves,” *Sceptical Scot* blog post, March 4, 2016, <https://sceptical.scot/2016/03/the-myth-of-scottish-slaves/>, both sites last accessed October 27, 2023.

3 For newer work on Scotland and slavery, see Devine, *Recovering Scotland’s Slavery Past*; Michael Morris, *Scotland and the Caribbean, c. 1740–1833: Atlantic Archipelagos* (London: Routledge, 2015); Stephen Mullen, *The Glasgow Sugar Aristocracy: Scotland and Caribbean Slavery, 1775–1838* (London: University of London Press, 2022); Mullen and Newman, *Slavery, Abolition and the University of Glasgow*. For the work of the National Trust of Scotland, see “Facing Our Past,” National Trust for Scotland, last accessed October 27, 2023, <https://www.nts.org.uk/stories/facing-our-past>; for an example of a Scottish Museum, see “Legacies of Slavery in Glasgow Museums and Collections,” Glasgow Museums, last accessed October 27, 2023, <https://glasgowmuseums.org.uk>. The 2021 Manifesto of the Scottish Nationalist Party builds on this with a recognition of “the need for countries to face their colonial history” and a commitment to “fund the development of an online programme on Scotland and the UK’s colonial history throughout the world that can be delivered to schools.” See *Scotland’s Future: SNP Manifesto 2021*, last accessed October 27, 2023, <https://www.snp.org/manifesto/>.

sion, these homecoming sojourners brought enslaved people with them. At the same time, ship captains and officers – especially those who had visited West Africa and the Caribbean – sometimes purchased enslaved boys and young men, and when these officers and their ships docked in Scotland, both enslavers and enslaved entered the coastal maritime communities.⁴

We can see evidence of the presence of enslaved people in various surviving records and artefacts. Archibald McLauchlan's 1767 portrait of the wealthy Glasgow tobacco merchant John Glassford and his family includes the faintly discernible profile of a liveried Black servant, quite possibly enslaved and most likely from the Chesapeake colonies of Virginia or Maryland.⁵ Centuries of accumulated dirt meant that the presence of this young African American was hidden at the edge of the painting for many years, a perfect metaphor for the ways in which the enslaved people present in eighteenth-century Scotland have been all but forgotten. But they were certainly there: Adjacent to the Glassford portrait in Glasgow Museums' People Palace is a silver slave collar inscribed with the words "John Crauford of Miltoun Esqr Owner 1732" (see Fig. 3.1). Crafted by the leading Glasgow silversmith Robert Luke, this collar did not even name the enslaved person who may have worn it, instead using the precious metal and engraved wording to flaunt the wealth and power of the enslaver.

A young Black boy wearing a silver collar appears in Sir John Baptiste de Medina's portrait of James Drummond, the second Duke of Perth (see Fig. 3.2). Painted around 1700, the Jacobite's aristocrat status was confirmed by his armour, his bearing, and the presence of the attending enslaved boy. All around Scotland are clues and

4 This essay builds on the project and database *Runaway Slaves in Britain: Bondage, Freedom and Race in the Eighteenth Century*, last accessed October 27, 2023, <https://www.runaways.gla.ac.uk/database/>. There is relatively little scholarship on enslaved people in eighteenth-century Scotland. The most extensive work is by John W. Cairns, a prominent legal historian who has investigated the legal status of enslavement in early modern Scotland. See Cairns, "Freeing from Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Scotland," in *Judge and Jurist: Essays in Memory of Lord Rodger*, ed. Andrew Burrows, David Johnston, and Reinhard Zimmermann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 367–382; Cairns, "Slavery without a *Code Noir*: Scotland 1700–1778," in *Lawyers, the Law and History*, ed. Felix M. Larkin and Norma M. Dawson (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013), 148–178; Cairns, "Enforced Sojourners: Enslaved Apprentices in Eighteenth-Century Scotland," in *Ad Fontes: Liber Amicorum prof. Beatrix van Erp-Jacobs*, ed. Erik-Jan Broers et al. (Oisterwijk: Wolf Legal Publishers, 2014), 67–81. See also Dolly MacKinnon, "Slave Children: Scotland's Children as Chattels at Home and Abroad in the Eighteenth Century," in *Children and Youth in Premodern Scotland before the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Janay Nugent and Elizabeth Ewan (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2015), 120–135; Iain Whyte, *Scotland and the Abolition of Black Slavery, 1756–1838* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 9–40; Eric J. Graham and Mark Duffill, "Black People in Scotland during the Slavery Era," *Scottish Local History* 71 (2007): 11–16. There is a much more extensive historiography dealing with Scots engagement with the enslaved in the greater British Atlantic World, including Mullen, *The Glasgow Sugar Aristocracy*; Morris, *Scotland and the Caribbean*; and Devine, ed., *Recovering Scotland's Slavery Past*.

5 See Anthony Lewis, "John Glassford's Family Portrait," August 2018, last accessed October 27 2023, <https://glasgowmuseumsslavery.co.uk/2018/08/14/john-glassfords-family-portrait/>.



Fig. 3.1: Silver Collar, Glasgow, c. 1732. People's Palace Museum, Glasgow. ID Number E.1980.165. Photo © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection / Bridgeman Images.

hints regarding the former presence of enslaved and bound Black servants. In the burial ground of the now derelict Trailtrow Chapel in Dumfries, for example, an old gravestone bears the epitaph “Here lies Charles Murray A Native of Africa [. . .] died 5 February 1776.” Similarly, in the church yard of St. Modan’s at Rosneath is the grave of an African-born enslaved man who had been purchased in Trinidad by the church’s minister, Robert Story, and later freed.⁶

Some members of Scotland’s non-white population were at liberty and helped form part of Britain’s small but growing free community of non-white people, and a few were formerly enslaved persons who were now paid apprentices and servants. Such people were often in a liminal state between enslavement and freedom, bound to work for their masters for several years to pay for their liberation. But others were publicly identified by their masters as enslaved, and thus as property. Their enslavement was made possible by the fact that Scottish law was unclear on the legality of racial slavery, making Scotland very different from Britain’s Caribbean and American colonies, where the legal status of enslaved people was precisely defined. From the mid-seventeenth century on, English and then British colonists had responded to the rapidly increasing number of enslaved Africans and indigenous Americans in the colonies by developing elaborate slave codes, as a consequence of which racial slavery

⁶ For a discussion of McLauchlan’s portrait of the Glassford Family and de Medina’s portrait of Drummond, see Morris, *Scotland and the Caribbean*, 24–27; Canmore National Record of the Historic Environment, “Trailtrow Chapel”; last accessed October 27, 2023, <https://canmore.org.uk/site/66674/trailtrow-chapel>; and Phil Gregory, *The Black Presence in Britain*, “The Graves of Slaves”, last accessed October 27, 2023, <http://www.blackpresence.co.uk/slave-graves/>. The identity of John Crauford is unknown.



Fig. 3.2: James Drummond, second titular Duke of Perth, with enslaved African boy, painting by John Baptiste de Medina, c. 1700. National Galleries of Scotland, <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/3473/james-drummond-2nd-titular-duke-perth-1673-1720-jacobite>, last accessed October 27, 2023. Public domain.

was recognised by – and indeed enshrined in – colonial law. From Maryland to Jamaica, the status of the enslaved and the contours of their subjection were absolutely clear. In both Scotland and England, however, the status of enslaved and the legality of slavery was far less apparent. With only a relatively small number of enslaved people in Scotland, there was no pressing need to legally define and control them, in contrast to the large and potentially rebellious enslaved populations of the Ameri-

cas.⁷ A small number of Scottish coal miners and their families lived in what Scottish historians have described as a watered-down form of serfdom until the late eighteenth century, although this anomaly was far removed from the reality of legalized enslavement.⁸

Slavery itself was neither explicitly sanctioned nor clearly proscribed in Scottish law, and the resulting lack of legal clarity enabled some enslavers to bring enslaved people from the colonies into Scotland during the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century. Enslaved Africans, Indigenous Americans and South Asians were overtly brought into Scotland, where they were held in bondage and quite openly bought and sold. In key cases such as *Sheddan v Montgomery* (1757) and *Dalrymple v Spens* (1770), Scottish courts reached no clear conclusions – in part because of the premature death of the enslaved person at the centre of the first case and because the master involved in the second case ended legal proceedings. But in neither case did the judges prove willing to rule racial slavery illegal: Indeed, a manuscript note added to a part of the *Sheddan v Montgomery* court documentation recorded that “it seemed to be the Opinion of the Lords, that he [the enslaved man Jamie Montgomery] ought to go back to his Master.”⁹ As the leading Scottish legal historian John Cairns has stated, “It was certainly possible to maintain slavery in Scotland without any kind of *code noir*.”¹⁰

7 On the legal situation of people of colour in eighteenth-century Scotland, see Cairns, “Slavery without a *Code Noir*,” 148–178, and Cairns, “Enforced Sojourners: Enslaved Apprentices in Eighteenth-Century Scotland,” 67–81. For the situation in England, see Simon P. Newman, “Freedom-Seeking Slaves in England and Scotland, 1700–1780,” *English Historical Review* 134 (2019): 1136–1168.

8 Over the past quarter-century, the view of Scottish miners as a class of virtual serfs has been challenged and eroded, and more recently historians have focused on the considerable autonomy often exercised by Scottish miners in their workplaces as well as on all that these colliers had in common with the social, cultural and religious lives of other Scottish workers. See, for example Christopher A. Whatley, “Scottish ‘Collier Serfs,’ British Coal Workers? Aspects of Scottish Collier Society in the Eighteenth Century,” *Labour History Review* 60, no. 2 (1995): 66–79; Christopher A. Whatley, “The Fettering Bonds of Brotherhood: Combination and Labour Relations in the Scottish Coal-Mining Industry,” *Social History* 12, no. 2 (1987): 139–154; Christopher A. Whatley, “Collier Serfdom in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Scotland: New Light from the Rothes MSS,” *Archives* 22 (1995): 25–33; Rab A. Houston, “Coal, Class and Culture: Labour Relations in a Scottish Mining Community, 1650–1750,” *Social History* 8 (1983): 1–18.

9 “Reid v. Scot of Harden and His Lady (1687),” in *The Decisions of the Lords of Council And Session, From June 6th, 1678 to July 30th, 1712*, ed. Sir John Lauder of Fountainhall, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: for G. Hamilton and J. Balfour, 1761), 439–440, at 439; *Memorial for Robert Sheddan of Morrice Hill, Late Merchant in Glasgow* (July 9, 1756), 2, Session Papers, Campbell’s Collection, The Faculty of Advocates Library, Edinburgh. For colliers and salters, see Christopher A. Whatley, “The Dark Side of the Enlightenment? Sorting Out Serfdom,” in *Eighteenth Century Scotland: New Perspectives*, ed. Tom M. Devine and John R. Young (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1999), 259–274.

10 *Memorial for Robert Sheddan of Morrice Hill, Late Merchant in Glasgow* (July 9, 1756), 2, Session Papers, Campbell’s Collection, The Faculty of Advocates Library, Edinburgh; Cairns, “Slavery without a *Code Noir*,” 178.

Enslaved People in Scotland

The lives and work of enslaved people in Scotland were markedly different from those of the enslaved in the Americas, and this helps to explain why Scottish courts were slow to rule against slavery, as well as why some historians have concluded that racial slavery did not exist in eighteenth-century Britain. While most of the enslaved in eighteenth-century Scotland had been brought from Britain's New World colonies, they were far from representative of the colonial enslaved population. During the century between 1676 and 1775, an estimated two million enslaved people were transferred from Africa to England's and then Britain's Caribbean and North American colonies, and more than 98% of them were transported to the plantation colonies from the Chesapeake through the Carolinas and Georgia to the islands of the Caribbean. Overwhelmingly adult (83%) and male (63%), the vast majority of these two million enslaved Africans lived, worked, and died on plantations growing, harvesting, and processing tobacco, sugar, rice, cotton, indigo and other staple crops. On these plantations, a small number of enslaved men, women and children worked in the houses of white masters and managers, a few enslaved men laboured as slave drivers or craftsmen, and there were some enslaved workers in towns. But the vast majority of the enslaved toiled from dawn to dusk in the fields.¹¹

Nothing like the fields of sugar in Jamaica, of rice in South Carolina, or of tobacco in Virginia could be found in Scotland, however, and there was no need for a large bound labour force employed to grow, harvest and process staple crops. Scotland's enslaved population was thus demographically distinct and not at all representative of the Caribbean and American enslaved populations whence most of its members came. In Scotland, there were two principal groups of enslaved people: those owned by ships' captains and officers, and the household servants of Scots who had returned from the colonies. The enslaved persons in Scotland were overwhelmingly male and young, and many were children. Planters, merchants, physicians, and others returned to Scotland, bringing with them favoured young male servants. Like the unnamed boy in the Glassford family portrait, these children were often dressed in smart livery and served as living exotic emblems of the colonial success of their owners.¹²

¹¹ The 'Estimates' function of the Transatlantic Slave trade database suggests that 2,071,376 enslaved Africans may have been transported to the English/British colonies, and 2,039,183 (98.44%) disembarked in the plantation colonies. See *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* ("Estimates"; last accessed October 27, 2023), <http://www.slavevoyages.org/assessment/estimates>. The data on age and gender is drawn from the database's 'Search' profile, and applies here to the enslaved transported to Barbados, Jamaica, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia. See *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* ("List of Voyages"), last accessed October 27, 2023, <http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/search>.

¹² This information is drawn from analysis of the advertisements placed for runaways in Scottish newspapers, all located in the database of the project *Runaway Slaves in Britain*, last accessed October 27, 2023, <https://www.runaways.gla.ac.uk/database/table/>.

We can glean information about the enslaved from eighteenth-century Scottish newspapers. On occasion, masters advertised enslaved people for sale, openly and brazenly using the back pages of Glasgow and Edinburgh newspapers to proclaim slave ownership and the status of Black people as property. These advertisements were strikingly similar to those published in Caribbean and North American newspapers, and they reveal that enslavers in Scotland felt quite comfortable in publicly asserting their right to buy, own, and sell human beings. Moreover, newspaper editors in Glasgow and Edinburgh did not hesitate to accept and publish these advertisements, thereby aligning their newspapers with the perceived right of masters to hold chattel slaves in Scotland. Nor is there any evidence within these newspapers or elsewhere that readers were distressed or offended by notices advertising enslaved people for sale.¹³

Recognizing the presence of enslaved people in Scotland and throughout Britain helps to break through the silence of archives and the absence from the historical narrative that has reinscribed the violence of slavery and its dehumanization of the enslaved. The surviving newspaper advertisements are stark reminders of the status of enslaved people in eighteenth-century Scotland as property. In April of 1766, for example, the auctioneer Peter Thomson placed a lengthy advertisement in Edinburgh's *Caledonian Mercury* that began with an appropriate expression of the city's status as the capital of the Scottish Enlightenment. Thomson advertised for sale a series of scientific instruments including a telescope, two globes, a "portable electrical machine", and a combined barometer and thermometer. Below this listing, seemingly almost as an afterthought, appeared the words "Likewise, to be sold, by the said Peter Thomson, A HANDSOME EAST INDIAN BLACK BOY, sixteen years old. He can wait at table, and is very ready at learning any thing." Thomson as well as the sellers on whose behalf he acted saw no contradiction between marketing the scientific instruments of Enlightenment rationality and the sale of an enslaved boy. Ever the salesman, Thomson commended the attributes and selling points of a telescope "with two eye pieces, and rack work" or globes "improved by Martin, with quadrants of altitude, and the hour circles under the meridian, by which either pole might be elevated." So, too, a young boy not even graced with a name was suggested by Thomson to be valuable because of his proficiency as a waiter and his ability to learn new skills which might be of use to his new master.¹⁴

13 *Runaway Slaves in Britain*. For examples of contemporary North American and Caribbean newspaper advertisements, see advertisements from the *Barbados Mercury and Bridgetown Gazette* at <https://barbadosmercury.files.wordpress.com/2020/05/sampleads.pdf>; for advertisements from Virginia, see <http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/gos/>; and for advertisements from North Carolina, see <http://libcdm1.uncg.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/RAS>, all three sites last accessed October 27, 2023.

14 "The following Mathematical Instruments," *Caledonian Mercury* (Edinburgh), April 10, 1766. For more on the ways in which archival gaps and silences can potentially reaffirm the power structures of slavery, see Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*

Women and children – and even entire family groups – might also be advertised for sale in Scotland. “A NEGRO WOMAN, named Peggy” was offered for sale with her one-year-old son, who “will be disposed of with the mother”. Peggy was only nineteen years old, born and raised in Charleston, South Carolina and therefore a long way from her family and community. The unnamed seller of this small family group extolled Peggy’s saleable strengths, including her ability to speak “good English” and her skills as “an excellent good House-wench, and washer and dresser, and is very tender and careful of children.”¹⁵ This, and indeed most of the Scottish for-sale advertisements, reveal that the people offered for purchase were young domestic servants, many of them teenaged and most of them male. They were not enslaved people who had laboured long and hard on plantations, but rather young enslaved domestic servants who had been valuable to their owners in performing the daily tasks that white servants would likewise have undertaken in Britain: shaving and dressing men, dressing and waiting on women and caring for children, preparing horses and carriages, and attending to the needs of their masters and mistresses at home and in public. These were the kinds of skills most often listed in Scottish advertisements offering enslaved people for sale.

All of the eleven enslaved people in this sample who were offered for purchase in Scotland were very young, ranging in age from nineteen-year-old Peggy to her one-year old son.¹⁶ Two were only eleven years old, including a “Smart NEGRO BOY” who had arrived from North Carolina only four months previously, while “A HANDSOME BLACK-BOY, about thirteen years of age” was nonetheless “very well qualified for making a household servant, serving a table well.” Like livestock, such enslaved people were listed as having “a fine constitution, enured [sic] to the climate, and has had the small-pox”, indicating a sound investment.¹⁷ Two were sixteen years old, one of them “A BLACK BOY” described as “healthy, strong and well made, has had the measles and small-pox, can shave and dress a little, and has been for these several years accustomed to serve a single gentleman, both abroad and at home.”¹⁸ Peggy is the only female in the group, perhaps a reflection of the overwhelmingly male character of the Scottish sojourners in the Caribbean and North America, who tended to return to Scotland with enslaved boys who had become familiar and trusted personal attendants.

(New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007); Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

15 “To be disposed of a Negro Woman,” *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, September 27, 1766.

16 *Ibid.* These ten advertisements (one advertised for two people) were published between April 1766 and November 1771 in the *Caledonian Mercury* (Edinburgh), the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, the *Edinburgh Evening Advertiser*, and the *Glasgow Journal*. They are included in a collection of ‘for sale’ notices included in *Runaway Slaves in Britain* at https://www.runaways.gla.ac.uk/for_sale/.

17 “To be sold, a smart Negro Boy,” *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, April 4, 1768; “To be disposed of, a handsome Black Boy,” *Edinburgh Advertiser*, January 20, 1769.

18 “To be sold, a Black Boy,” *Edinburgh Advertiser*, January 20, 1769.

The skills possessed by these enslaved youths, and the ways in which they functioned as living status symbols, meant that they might well be purchased by affluent Scots who could dress them in fine livery and show them off to friends and acquaintances. But there was also a very real chance that these healthy young people might be purchased by merchants or ship captains in Edinburgh and Glasgow and taken to the American or Caribbean colonies for sale to planters. Unlike newly arrived Africans who were ‘unseasoned’ and might soon succumb to disease, enslaved youths in Britain had almost certainly undergone a seasoning period in the Americas and were thus more likely to survive, thereby increasing their value. Moreover, they were also fast approaching the adult years when their labour was most valuable to planters. All the persons discussed in this contribution were advertised for sale between 1744 and 1771, during which period they might easily have commanded high prices in a colony such as Jamaica. When the Jamaican planter Thomas Thistlewood purchased two “Men Boys” in Jamaica in 1765 – young males around the age of many of those sold in Scotland at much the same time – he paid £54 for each of them. These were newly arrived Africans, and they might well have attracted higher prices had they been ‘seasoned’.¹⁹ Thus, although enslavement in Scotland as a well-dressed and presumably quite well-housed and well-fed domestic servant might appear a much easier life than enslavement on the plantations of Britain’s American and Caribbean colonies, with ships regularly leaving Scotland for the Americas, these young people remained only one sale away from the plantations. The short advertisements offering them for purchase are usually the only record we have of their existence, and we do not know what became of them – whether they were sold to other Scottish masters or returned to bondage in the Americas. None of the advertisements include prices.

Runaways: Escaping from Slavery in Scotland

Newspaper notices advertising people for sale showed the enslaved as no more than the unnamed and depersonalised objects of commercial exchange. However, other advertisements in Scottish newspapers revealed enslaved and bound workers as individuals who resisted their bondage and sought a measure of freedom and self-determination. On occasion, enslaved and bound people of colour attempted to escape into Scottish society, prompting their owners and masters to place runaway slave advertisements in the newspapers identifying the escapees and offering rewards for their capture and return. Forty-five runaway advertisements published in Glasgow and Edinburgh newspapers between 1719 and 1773 provide valuable clues about the overall profile of enslaved and bound la-

¹⁹ Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, OSB MSS 176, Thomas Thistlewood Diary, 1765, entry for April 29, 1765, p. 95, last accessed October 27, 2023, <https://brbl-zoom.library.yale.edu/viewer/12014888>.

bourers of colour in Scotland, as well as revealing details of particular individuals who sought to escape from their masters.²⁰

To the enslaved, flight constituted one of the greatest acts of self-determination – while to slave-owners it represented theft of property. Eager to recapture their valuable human possessions, slave-owners placed advertisements in newspapers, describing the physical characteristics, mannerisms, habits, skills, and inclinations of people who are otherwise all but completely absent from historical records that treat them as property. The result is that runaway slave advertisements (and sometimes court records related to the capture of runaways) are a rich source of information about the enslaved and slavery. They reveal not just the existence of enslaved people and slavery as such in eighteenth-century Scotland, but also offer precious glimpses of the enslaved themselves, of the ways in which they were regarded by their masters and owners, and of their attempts to gain some measure of independence. Just like the for-sale notices, these runaway advertisements often represent the only surviving information about the existence of a particular enslaved person and their presence in Scotland – yet these short and somewhat formulaic newspaper adverts sometimes reveal a good deal of information about individuals and the enslaved population as a whole.

As in the Americas, runaway advertisements were placed at the back of newspapers alongside other notices including those for the sale of livestock. Words such as ‘likely’ – meaning fit, suitable, and even attractive, and therefore implying worth and value – might be used to describe a human, a horse, and a bullock all on the same page. Other language described the bodies and characteristics of runaways in highly racialised terms: For example, “A NEGRO LAD” who escaped from David Fraser in Arbroath on Scotland’s east coast was identified as having “short curly wool instead of hair”, while “A MULATTO BOY” escaped from Balnaguard in Perth was described by his master Patrick Stewart as having “Yellowish colour” skin. One African-born runaway was characterised as having “thick lips”, a description commonly applied to Africans by white men, while another sixteen-year-old African-born Ibo was described by his master, the Rev. Mr. Clarkson, as being so acclimatised as to speak “with a broad Lancaster dialect”. Despite this, Clarkson identified the runaway as unmistakably alien and other, “with beautiful features for a black” and clearly identifiable by “his country marks”, the ritualised scarification of his forehead which had taken place during his youth in West Africa.²¹

²⁰ All of these advertisements are included in the database *Runaway Slaves in Britain*, last accessed October 27, 2023, <https://www.runaways.gla.ac.uk/database/table/>.

²¹ “Run away from the 20th Inst. from Mr David Fraser,” *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, July 23, 1760; “A Mulatto Boy,” *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, September 14, 1765; “Run away, on Monday night last [. . .] London,” *Caledonian Mercury* (Edinburgh), September 2, 1761; “Run away from the house of the Reverend Mr Clarkson,” *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, October 5, 1765.

In the wake of England's momentous Somerset case of 1772, which restricted the ability of white men to hold enslaved people in England and return them to bondage in the colonies, a few Scottish advertisements identified runaways as servants. When twenty-three-year-old Anthony eloped in May of 1773, his master identified the runaway in an Edinburgh newspaper as "A BLACK SERVANT". Later that same year, sixteen-year-old Peter, "An East India Black servant", ran away, and a year later an eighteen-year-old named Sylvester escaped from Greenock, where he "was serving his time [. . .] as a Joiner".²² However, although four runaways were identified as servants between 1772 and 1779, only one had been labelled in this way during the half century before the Somerset case. Moreover, Somerset shows the difficulty in ascertaining the precise status of escapees. Samuel Ramsay ran away from his master in Arbroath in 1760, but the label "servant" apparently described his role within his master's household rather than his status, for the runaway advertisement also identified Ramsay as "the property of David Fraser". It is inconceivable that a free man employed as a servant would have been identified as property in this fashion. A second and longer advertisement appeared in the newspapers some six weeks later, with a more detailed description of Ramsay and the clothing he had been wearing when he escaped – perhaps prompted by Fraser having heard that Ramsay "was seen sometime after his elopement at Perth in a gentleman's livery".²³ Many of the Britons who made their fortune in the Caribbean returned to the healthier climes of Scotland and England, often bringing with them one or two enslaved people who had been trained as personal servants. A liveried Black enslaved person was a status symbol, a mark of success in the colonies. But at the same time, this meant that the enslaved person had skills along with a kind of status that increased their chances of securing paid employment as a free person. Some employers may have suspected (but not cared) that a skilled Black person they were employing was a runaway, but they might just as easily have chosen to believe their new servant was drawn from the ranks of Britain's growing free Black population.

Thirteen of the forty-five runaways were clearly identified as enslaved property: four as "slave", five as the "property" of their masters, and two as "belonging" to their masters, while one advert mentioned the runaway's master as his "owner", and the owner in another referred to a runaway as "his negro". In 1756, Robert Shedden placed an advertisement in Glasgow newspapers for a twenty-two-year-old "Virginia born Slave" who had "Run away from the subscriber". A trained carpenter who had been in Scotland for five years, the young runaway had a certificate of baptism and good conduct signed by the Rev. John Witherspoon, "which calls him Jamie Montgom-

22 "Run away from his Master [. . .] a Black Servant," *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, May 2, 1772; "An Indian Black Boy run off," *Glasgow Journal*, December 10, 1772; "Run off from Greenock," *The Edinburgh Advertiser*, January 3, 1773.

23 "Run away [. . .] from Mr David Fraser," *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, July 23, 1760; "Run away and deserted a Negro Servant," *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, September 6, 1760.

erie". This wording makes clear that Shedden believed the young boy he had purchased in Virginia in 1750 remained enslaved and his property, and thus undeserving of a last name: Shedden referred to the young runaway simply as Jamie, or with the derogatory name Shanker.²⁴

In 1768, Captain George Oliphant Kinloch advertised in three Edinburgh newspapers regarding a seventeen-year-old "NEGRO SLAVE" who "answers to the name of LONDON". According to Kinloch, London was "a stout lad, well-made" and five feet seven inches tall. The clothing that London had on when he escaped indicated that he was a liveried domestic servant, for Kinloch described him as wearing a dark coloured jacket and waistcoat, buckskin breeches, and a blue coat with a red velvet collar and trim.²⁵ Five years later, another enslaved person – also named London – escaped from Kinloch. About thirty-seven years old, this runaway was also known by his African name Quashy, and he was identified as the "property of" Lord Oliphant and therefore an enslaved person.²⁶ In 1771, "a BLACK SLAVE native of the East Indies called CAESAR" escaped from Novar House, the home of Sir Hector Munro in Ross-shire. Munro had been a senior army officer in India between 1760 and 1765 and had presumably brought Caesar home with him. In his runaway advertisement, he noted that Caesar had been "bred a cook", a commonly used term in the plantation colonies denoting the training of enslaved people from an early age. Perhaps Caesar had been tired of preparing spiced Indian food in the kitchens of Munro's ancestral home.²⁷

Cato and William Northumberland were each identified as a "Negro" and the "property of" their masters, while "A NEGRO" named Cesar [sic] "belonging to" Captain William Jones escaped from his owner's ship at Leven on the Fife coast. African-born with country marks on his face and speaking "little or no English", Cesar nonetheless seized his chance, disappearing into the Scottish countryside wearing tartan "Highland Breeches and Trews". His recapture did not prevent him from attempting to escape again six weeks later, prompting his frustrated owner to publish a new ad-

24 "Run away from the subscriber," *The Glasgow Courant*, May 10, 1756 and *Glasgow Journal*, May 3, 1756. For a full discussion of Jamie Montgomery's escape and capture along with the court case that ensued, see Simon P. Newman, "Rethinking Runaways in the British Atlantic World: Britain, the Caribbean, West Africa and North America," *Slavery & Abolition* 38, no. 1 (2017): 49–75, at 55–61.

25 "Run away from Capt. Olyphant Kinloch, a Negro Slave," *The Edinburgh Advertiser*, June 7, 1768; *Caledonian Mercury* (Edinburgh), June 8, 1768; *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, June 8, 1768.

26 *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, January 15, 1773.

27 "A Negro Man call'd London," *Daily Courant* (London), October 7, 1714; "Whereas John Devonshire," *Daily Advertiser* (London) July 18, 1735; "Run away from Captain Oliphant Kinloch," *The Edinburgh Advertiser*, June 7, 1768; repeated in *Caledonian Mercury* (Edinburgh), June 8, 1768; "A Black Slave run away," *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, June 22, 1771. For more information on Sir Hector Munro, see Gerald J. Bryant, "Sir Hector Munro," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, last accessed October 27, 2023, <https://www-oxforddnb-com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/display/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-19546?rskey=6Qwkuq&result=1>.

vertisement. For all of the difficulties he faced in trying to secure his freedom, Cesar clearly preferred a life away from his master.²⁸

One of the most striking examples of the reality of racial slavery in eighteenth-century Scotland appeared in an advertisement placed in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* on 9 February 1727 by Dr. Gustavus Brown:

Run away from the 7th Instant from Dr Gustavus Brown's Lodgings in Glasgow, a Negro Woman, named Ann, being about 18 years of Age, with a Green Gown and a Brass Collar around her Neck, which are engraved with the Words ["Gustavus Brown in Dalkieth his Negro, 1726."] Whoever apprehends her, so as she may be recovered, shall have Two Guineas Reward, and necessary Charges, allowed by Laurence Dinwiddie Junior Merchant in Glasgow, or by James Mitchellson, Jeweller in Edinburgh.

Brown had trained in Edinburgh as a doctor before emigrating to Maryland, where he married, established a successful practice, and became a wealthy and successful planter. His Maryland-born son, also named Gustavus, was likewise training in medicine at Edinburgh and would go on to serve in the Continental Army and attend to his friend George Washington during his final illness. Brown Sr. owned lands in both Scotland and Maryland, and he also owned people: At his death, his estate included the landholdings as well as a list of his living property, including forty-five enslaved people as well as "hogs, horses, sheep, [and] cattle". It would appear that Brown Sr. had brought Ann with him on a visit to Scotland thirty-five years earlier.²⁹ The young enslaved woman was unusual in being forced to wear a collar. Brown's Maryland home was named Rich Hill and located close to Port Tobacco, so 'Dalkeith' referred to his Scottish property, and it is quite possible that the collar was made and fitted – or at least engraved – in Scotland. Why had Brown had this metal collar fitted around Ann's neck? Had she escaped before, and was it thus designed to discourage further attempts and mark her clearly as enslaved and as Brown's property? Or was the collar an ostentatious display of wealth and power by the local boy-made-good, an eye-catching affirmation that Brown was sufficiently successful to own Ann and others like her? We cannot know, just as we do not know what became of Ann, just eighteen

28 "Gone from Castle-Semple [. . .] Cato," *Caledonian Mercury* (Edinburgh), February 2, 1748; "Run off a Black Negro Man, who passes by the name of William Northumberland," *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, February 6, 1773; "In August last a Negro run away from Leven," *Caledonian Mercury* (Edinburgh), February 26, 1740; "That Saturday last the Negro, Cesar, formerly advertised run away again," *Caledonian Mercury* (Edinburgh), April 10, 1740.

29 Moncure Daniel Conway, *Autobiography, Memories and Experiences of Moncure Daniel Conway*, vol. 1 (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1904), 1–5; Horace Edwin Hayden, *Virginia Genealogies. A Genealogy of the Glassell Family of Scotland and Virginia*, 1891 (Baltimore: Clearfield, 2004), 147–148, 151–152; "Gustavus Richard Brown," *People of the Founding Era: A Biographical Resource*, Roundtable: University of Virginia Press, last accessed October 27, 2023, <https://pfe-rotunda-upress-virginia-edu.tjportal.idm.oclc.org/v1/documents?uri=49670.xml>; Joseph M. Toner, "A Sketch of the Life of Gustavus Richard Brown," *Sons of the Revolution in State of Virginia Quarterly Magazine* 2 (January 1923): 12–23, at 12.

years old and very far from her family and community in Maryland. Did she find refuge, or was she recaptured and eventually taken back to Maryland? Her name does not appear on the list of the forty-five enslaved people owned by Brown when his possessions were inventoried thirty-six years later, unless she was in fact Nan, the seventh oldest of Brown's enslaved people and valued at £35.³⁰ If Nan was another name for Ann, and she was thus the same person who had once run away in Scotland, what stories of that country did she have for children and grandchildren? Or had Ann escaped and lived the rest of her life in Britain?

Ann is the only female runaway in this set of forty-five Scottish runaway advertisements. Most Scottish freedom seekers and bound servants of colour were hardly more than children, and among those whose ages are identified, 26 (67%) were boys or teenaged, 8 (20%) were in their twenties, 2 (5%) were in their thirties, and 3 (8%) were simply identified as men. Eleven of the forty-five advertisements did not name the runaway, telling evidence of how masters regarded their enslaved and bound servants. Others bore names revealing another of the ways in which power was asserted by masters over their enslaved property: As property rather than people, the enslaved were rarely allowed a surname, and they often had a name imposed upon them which marked them as different and inferior. Masters saw humour in some of these names: To call a young enslaved boy or man Cupid, Bachus, Mercury, Neptune, or Caesar amused whites as much as it demeaned the affected individuals.³¹

The owners of enslaved people sometimes attributed certain characteristics to runaways. Owners and masters often regarded escape as a personal affront – a betrayal by a person who, they believed, should be grateful for their situation. After all, owners might have developed quite close relationships with enslaved personal attendants and believed that they had rescued them from the horrors of plantation slave society, offering them a far better life of domestic servitude in Scotland. But the enslaved in Scotland did not necessarily feel either favoured or grateful. Some had been torn from family in Africa, and most had been ripped from communities in the colonies. They had endured enormous trauma and remained both psychologically and legally enslaved, subject to the whims of owners who might at any time return them to the plantations or sell them to ship captains, merchants, or others travelling to the colonies. Such people could not be truly or fully free, as Joseph Knight discov-

³⁰ Inventory of Gustavus Brown's possessions, taken May 29, 1762, recorded July 20, 1768, Charles County Inventories 1766–1773, Maryland State Archives, CR 39, 592-1 CM 386-5, pages 203–209, transcription available from Center for History and New Media, George Mason University, last accessed October 27, 2023, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/probateinventory/pdfs/brown62.pdf>.

³¹ "Runway from Greenock [. . .] a Negro man called Cupid," *Glasgow Journal*, August 30, 1756; "A Black Boy [. . .] answers to Bachus," *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, November 26, 1764; "Run away from his master [. . .] Mercury," *The Edinburgh Advertiser*, September 15, 1769; "Run away [. . .] a Negro Lad [. . .] called Neptune," *Caledonian Mercury*, December 22, 1779; "A Black Slave run away [. . .] called Caesar," *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, June 22, 1771.

ered. Knight had been born in Africa and endured the Middle Passage to Jamaica, where he was purchased and used as a personal servant by John Wedderburn. While still a youth, Joseph was brought to Scotland by Wedderburn, but when the young man married and requested a salary and support, his master's favour turned to anger and a desire to enforce Knight's subordinate enslaved status.³² Legally speaking, running away constituted a theft of property – quite literally stealing oneself away – and advertisements highlighted the ingratitude, untrustworthiness and criminality of runaways. When a sixteen-year-old “American Black Boy” named James escaped in Edinburgh in November 1769, his master asserted that James was “very artful and may endeavour to pass under a fictitious name.” Furthermore, James “took with him some shirts and silk stockings of his master's, which he may offer for sale.” The runaway had since been spotted in Glasgow, but his owner believed that if James could not secure employment, he might “make off for the Highlands.”³³

While five of the runaways were identified as coming from the East Indies, only one was an indigenous North American. A series of advertisements tells us something of the story of an “Indian Young LAD” who eloped in September 1764, again in June 1765, then in August 1765, and a year later in August 1766. This “TAWNY NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN BOY” was about fourteen years old, with short black hair, and had each ear split or notched in a manner common to various North American peoples. Although the young boy often wore local clothing – a farmer's hat, breeches, a vest and coat – he refused, like many North American Indians, to wear hard and heavy British shoes whatever the time of year. The boy was never named, and his fate is unclear: If life in Britain could be isolating for an enslaved African, how much more so would it have been for an indigenous North American boy who refused to accept enslavement?³⁴

Conclusion

While enslavers in the Caribbean, North America and India exercised brutal authority over their human property, racial bondage in Scotland might appear at first glance to have been far less violent, and the power and authority of masters far less complete. With Africans, South Asians and Native Americans working on ships, as artisans, or

³² Morris, *Scotland and the Caribbean*, 233–252; John W. Cairns, “The Definition of Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Thinking: Not the True Roman Slavery,” in *The Legal Understanding of Slavery: From the Historical to the Contemporary*, ed. Jean Allain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 71–84.

³³ “Absented himself [. . .] An American Black Boy,” *Glasgow Journal*, November 30, 1769.

³⁴ “Since Thursday morning Last an Indian Young Lad,” *Glasgow Journal*, September 20, 1764; “Since Friday morning Last an Indian Young Lad,” *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, September 26, 1764; “On the 14th Inst. An Indian Boy,” *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, June 17, 1765; “That an Indian Lad run away,” *Glasgow Journal*, August 29, 1765; *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, September 9, 1765; “Tawny North American Indian Boy,” *Glasgow Journal*, August 14, 1766.

most commonly as well-dressed domestic servants, it is all too easy to assume that they were not truly enslaved as were so many others in the colonies. Yet racial slavery is as much about psychological power, memory, and threat as it is about the raw violent power of masters and slave codes in the Caribbean and elsewhere. London had been born in West Africa, taken into slavery and sold to European slave traders, after which he endured the horrific Middle Passage to the Caribbean, where he was enslaved on St. Kitts. At some point, he had become the property of John Waller on that island, but for some reason he was serving aboard a small ship named the *Two Friends*, from which he escaped in September 1761 while moored in Bo'Ness on the Firth of Forth. The simple words “born at Guiney, and lately from the West Indies” found in the corresponding advertisement can only hint at what this man had experienced during the Middle Passage and his time in the Caribbean. Like any enslaved person in eighteenth-century Britain, he could be returned to the colonies at his master’s whim and sold for plantation labour – and as a man who served on a ship and whose owner remained in the Caribbean, London was particularly vulnerable to this return to far worse forms of enslavement. He could never really be free in this situation, and perhaps that is why he tried to free himself.³⁵

Similarly, the brand marking on the shoulder of another runaway spoke of his experiences of enslavement in the colonies. This twenty-two-year-old “NEGRO MAN” seized his opportunity to escape while recovering from smallpox in the Edinburgh Infirmary. Unnamed in the advertisement, he was instead identified by the scars of a disease that marked many Black people from Africa and the New World, as well as by the letters “GM” branded on his shoulder – the initials of an owner.³⁶

The for-sale and runaway advertisements found in newspapers do more than simply indicate the presence of a larger population of enslaved people in eighteenth-century Scotland. They are invaluable resources for understanding enslavement as it functioned within Scotland. In many cases, these short newspaper advertisements are the only surviving records of enslaved individuals, and the only evidence of their presence in Scotland. They are also inherently biased, written by enslavers who regarded the people they described as property – yet the descriptions of physical characteristics, manners, dress and so forth all provide evidence about the enslaved themselves. By definition, these advertisements also reveal the agency of bound and enslaved people who sought to free themselves by escaping: There is irony in the fact that the only surviving archival records of such people simultaneously attest to their enslaved status and their determination to be free.

The advertisements also suggest that there was an even larger population of enslaved people in eighteenth-century Scotland. Most commercial transactions, includ-

³⁵ “Run away, on Monday night last, from aboard the snow two Friends,” *Caledonian Mercury* (Edinburgh), September 2, 1761.

³⁶ “Run away from the Royal Infirmary,” *Caledonian Mercury* (Edinburgh), December 9, 1746; “Run away from the Royal Infirmary,” *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, December 9, 1746.

ing the sale of enslaved people, took place without the benefit of newspaper adverts. Similarly, it is highly likely that the masters of other enslaved people who escaped pursued “their” runaways without resorting to newspaper notices. Moreover, the majority of enslaved people in Scotland were quite likely never sold while in the country, nor took the brave decision to escape. Therefore, the surviving newspaper advertisements that form the basis of this essay are indicative of the existence of a much larger enslaved and bound population in Scotland during the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century. There were enslaved people in eighteenth-century Scotland, and those who are most visible in surviving newspaper advertisements were notable in their determination to resist their bondage by escaping.

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Michel R. Doortmont and Annemieke van der Vegt

4 Variations of African Life in the Eighteenth-Century Netherlands: Between a Boy Servant at the Court of Orange-Nassau and a Lord of the Manor in the Province of Groningen

Introduction

In the eighteenth century, the Netherlands saw the presence of a fair number of Africans in society, whose arrival and residency can be designated as a by-product of the Atlantic slave trade and Dutch Caribbean slavery. Recent research seems to indicate that their number was considerably larger than previously thought. Especially in the second half of the eighteenth century, travel between the colonial possessions and the Netherlands became easier, facilitating the arrival of larger numbers of people from Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. Archivist Svend Veldhuijzen counted the overseas foreigners from these areas in the town of The Hague in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and arrived at a total of 114 identifiable persons, of whom about fifty-eight were from Africa or the Caribbean.¹ This type of research, now becoming more commonplace, has made Africans in the Netherlands increasingly visible. Initially, this visibility had to be taken literally in the sense of the images of Africans in the public space; the work by Allison Blakely in the 1990s is notable in this regard.² More recent is the exhibition *Black Is Beautiful: Rubens to Dumas* (2008), which produced a comprehensive catalogue with several important analytical essays on the presence of Africans in the Netherlands and their rendition in art.³ In one of these essays, Elmer Kolfin, Carl Haarnack and Dienke Hondius address the question whether African servants appearing in portraits of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century elites are real people or stylistic figures, making the argument that for the most part, we see real-life African servants with clear individual traits being portrayed.⁴ These studies have led to a more con-

1 Svend E. Veldhuijzen, "Aantekeningen over 'gekleurde inwoners' in Den Haag, vanaf ca. 1621," Municipal Archives The Hague, coll. no. OV 18, Aantekeningen Haagse geschiedenis diverse personen, no. 37.

2 Allison Blakely, *Blacks in the Dutch World: The Evolution of Racial Imagery in a Modern Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

3 Elmer Kolfin, Arnoud Bijl, Vincent Boele, Nicolette Sluijter-Seijffert, eds., *Black Is Beautiful: Rubens to Dumas* (Amsterdam: De Nieuwe Kerk / Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 2008).

4 Elmer Kolfin, "Zwarte modellen in de Nederlandse kunst tussen 1580 en 1800: Feit en fictie," in Kolfin, Bijl, Boele, Sluijter-Seijffert, eds., *Black Is Beautiful*, 70–87; Carl Haarnack and Dienke Hondius,

certed effort to identify African servants in portraits and name them through identification of and historical-genealogical research into their masters and, where possible, the Africans themselves.⁵ In 2020, the Rembrandt Huis Museum in Amsterdam followed this trend with its exhibition “Black in Rembrandt’s Time” focusing on the presence of Africans in Rembrandt’s work and early seventeenth-century Amsterdam.⁶ The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam went one step further with its grand exhibition opened in 2021: In “Slavery: Ten True Stories”, slavery is made visible by way of paintings, art objects, and items from day-to-day life, but most importantly through the life histories of enslaved people.⁷ The City Archives Amsterdam also organised an exhibition in the year 2020 based on the stories of individuals directly connected to slavery.⁸

The presence of Africa and Africans in Europe and the Netherlands is also being studied in other ways, but the topic at hand – the presence of Africans in Europe during the eighteenth century at the height of the Atlantic slave trade – is still developing. This can be illustrated with the important edited volume on Africans in Britain resulting from a session at the 1991 conference of the African Studies Association of the United Kingdom. This collection of articles deals with many different forms of African

“Swart’ in Nederland: Afrikanen en Creolen in de Noordelijke Nederlanden vanaf de middeleeuwen tot de twintigste eeuw,” in *ibid.*, 88–107.

5 Research in which Annemieke van der Vegt is actively involved, inter alia through her Pinterest Board “Young Africans with Europeans in 17th and 18th century”, <https://pin.it/d6vqsztfib6pr5>, last accessed December 20, 2023, and with an exhibition on African servants in Museum Weesp. Cf. Peter van Brummelen, “Notabelen uit Weesp verhoogden aanzien met zwarte bedienden,” *Het Parool*, April 2, 2017, <https://s.parool.nl/se444-a4481564/>, last accessed December 20, 2023; “Museum opent expositie over Afrikaanse ‘bediendes,” *WeesperNieuws.nl*, March 23, 2017, <https://www.weespernieuws.nl/cultureel/cultureel/73911/museum-opent-expositie-over-afrikaanse-bediendes->, last accessed December 20, 2023.

6 Elmer Kolfin and Epco Runia, eds., *Black in Rembrandt’s Time* (Zwolle: W Books / Museum Het Rembrandthuis, 2020), in particular the following contributions with relevance to the subject at hand: Elmer Kolfin, “Black in the Art of Rembrandt’s Time,” 12–37; Mark Ponte, “Black in Amsterdam around 1650,” 44–59; Mark Ponte, “Pieter Claesz Bruijn and Lijsbeth Pieters,” 60–61; Marieke de Winkel, “Christiaan van Africa,” 62–63; and Elmer Kolfin, “Did Black People Recognize Themselves in the Images on the Streets?,” 64–65. The exhibition gained international attention among others due to a review in *The New York Times* newspaper: Nina Siegal, “Dutch Golden Age Art Wasn’t All About White People. Here’s the Proof,” *The New York Times*, March 13, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/13/arts/design/black-portraits-dutch-golden-age.html>, last accessed December 20, 2023.

7 “Slavery: Ten True Stories,” <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/whats-on/exhibitions/slavery>, last accessed December 20, 2023.

8 Exhibition *Amsterdammers en slavernij*, produced by Amsterdam City Archives in collaboration with Studio Raul Balai. Idea and composition by Mark Ponte, Manon Tietzel, Nikki Boot, and Ludger Smit, Amsterdam City Archives, June 30 to November 29, 2020, <https://www.amsterdam.nl/stadsarchieef/onderwijs/thema/amsterdammers-slavernij/>, last accessed December 20, 2023, and 2021 at Amsterdam City Hall. This exhibition received international attention as well. See article by Deutsche Presse Agentur (DPA): “Die dunkle Seite des Goldenen Zeitalters. Amsterdam und die Sklaverei,” *Westfälische Nachrichten*, July 1, 2020, <https://www.wn.de/Welt/Kultur/4227801-Amsterdam-und-die-Sklaverei-Die-dunkle-Seite-des-Goldenen-Zeitalters>, last accessed December 20, 2023.

migration to Britain over a longer period of time, thereby establishing an analytical benchmark for the study of the African presence in Europe. Empirically, the period under review in this study is not very well covered, however.⁹ Only one chapter deals with the time before the nineteenth century, focusing on several African intellectuals rather than on the common man or questions of dependency.¹⁰ Diennek Hondius' work *Blackness in Western Europe: Racial Patterns of Paternalism and Exclusion* (2014) is a laudable effort to shift perspectives by interrogating attitudes towards race in Western Europe, but it deals with thought more than real people.¹¹

Empirical work that asks conceptual questions about the role and position of Africans in Europe, as well as about slavery and other forms of dependency, is increasingly becoming available. For the Netherlands, this includes studies about the physical presence of slavery and the slave trade in the (mainly) urban landscape. Prominent projects in this respect are the studies on the history of slavery in the cities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, with special attention to the role of local government, local businesses, and office holders as well as the visible and invisible heritage of slavery in the townscapes. Interesting to note is that in the three-part study on Rotterdam, Africans in the city hardly play a role except in the final volume on the twenty-first-century postcolonial city. The study on Amsterdam does not fare much better.¹² The Mapping Slavery project, which as a public history project tries to reach a wider public by publishing (walking) guides, is another example.¹³ It does not focus comprehensively on the individuals that lived the experience either, although “real Africans” do appear in the publications, and sometimes even quite prominently.

9 David Killingray, ed., *Africans in Britain* (Illford: Frank Cass, 1994).

10 Paul Edwards, “Unreconciled Strivings and Ironic Strategies: Three Afro-British Authors of the Late Georgian Period (Sancho, Equiano, Wedderburn),” in *Africans in Britain*, ed. Killingray, 28–48.

11 Diennek Hondius, *Blackness in Western Europe: Racial Patterns of Paternalism and Exclusion* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2014).

12 Pepijn Brandon, Guno Jones, Nancy Jouwe, and Matthias van Rossum, eds., *De slavernij in Oost en West: Het Amsterdam onderzoek* (Amsterdam: Spectrum, 2020); Alex van Stipriaan, *Rotterdam in slavernij* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2020); Gert Oostindie, ed., *Het koloniale verleden van Rotterdam* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2020); Francio Guadeloupe, Paul van de Laar, and Lilliane van der Linden, eds., *Rotterdam, een postkoloniale stad in beweging* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2020).

13 Mapping Slavery: <http://www.mappingslavery.nl>, last accessed December 20, 2023. Examples of guides include Diennek Hondius, Nancy Jouwe, Dineke Stam, and Jennifer Tosch, *Gids Slavernijverleden Amsterdam / Slavery Heritage Guide* (Arnhem: LM Publishers, n.d.); Diennek Hondius, Nancy Jouwe, Dineke Stam, and Jennifer Tosch, *Gids Slavernijverleden Nederland / Slavery Heritage Guide The Netherlands* (Volendam: LM Publishers, n.d. [2019]), and Margriet Fokken and Barbara Henkes, *Sporen van slavernijverleden in Groningen: Gids voor stad en Ommeland* (Groningen: Uitgeverij Passage, n.d.). For the province of Groningen, an academic network analysis based on the Mapping Slavery concept was undertaken by Lieuwe Jongsma, “Slavery Dynasty: Networks of Kinship around Transatlantic Slavery and Slave Trade in the Province of Groningen, 1622–1863” (Research M.A. diss., University of Groningen, 2015), <http://arts.studenttheses.ub.rug.nl/17705/1/Ma-1770535-LJongsma.pdf>, last accessed December 20, 2023.

A direct focus on the individuals in subaltern positions is found in the work done by Annemieke van der Vegt on her ancestor Christiaan van der Vegt and published on her long-running blog “Hoe heette Christiaan?” This in-depth study of one African person and their world tries to pose hitherto unasked questions about the lives of African people in the eighteenth-century Netherlands, some of which are presented in this chapter.¹⁴ Another example is art historian Esther Schreuder’s study about the court servants Cupido and Sideron, which highlights the lives of several African servants at the court of Orange-Nassau in The Hague during the same period in which Christiaan van der Vegt maintained relations with it.¹⁵ Both studies cover the same topic, but they take very different vantage points and have vastly different scopes. For Amsterdam, Mark Ponte is researching the seventeenth-century presence and social life of Africans in particular, unearthing a wealth of information from the notarial records of the city and other hitherto understudied sources.¹⁶ Leading research into Afro-West-Indian individuals in the Netherlands is being conducted by Jean-Jacques Vrij.¹⁷

The group of Africans in the Netherlands was mixed and included numerous servants and other personnel of Dutchmen involved in the slave trade or slavery, many of whom (mostly boys and girls) arrived directly from Africa. There were others too, however, like the small but significant group of so-called Euro-Africans – children of relations between European men and African women, sent to the Netherlands by their parents or taken there by their fathers. In the Netherlands, this group has been studied by Michel Doortmont and Natalie Everts.¹⁸ In many cases, Euro-Africans went back to West Africa to pursue a career in the Dutch West India Company, but others stayed in the Netherlands or returned to Europe at a later stage after their careers as officials – often as slave traders themselves. Arij de Graaff, whose life history is discussed here, belongs in this category.

14 Annemieke van der Vegt, “Hoe heette Christiaan?,” <https://www.hoeheettechristiaan.nl/>, last accessed December 20, 2023.

15 Esther Schreuder, *Cupido en Sideron: Twee moren aan het hof van Oranje* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Balans, 2017).

16 E.g. Mark Ponte, “‘Al de swarten die hier ter stede comen.’ Een Afro-Atlantische gemeenschap in zeventiende-eeuws Amsterdam,” *TSEG/ Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* 15, no. 4 (2019): 33–62. DOI: <https://tseg.nl/article/view/8262>. For more titles, see Mark Ponte, “Publicaties / Publications” on website: “Voetnoot.org. Onderzoek en anecdotes door / Research and anecdotes by Mark Ponte,” <https://voetnoot.org/publicaties-publications/>, last accessed December 20, 2023.

17 E.g. Jean-Jacques Vrij, “Susanna Dumion en twee van haar lotgenoten. Drie Afro-Westindische vrouwen in achttiende-eeuws Amsterdam,” *Wi Rutu* 15, no. 1 (2015): 18–31.

18 E.g. Michel R. Doortmont and Natalie Everts, “Onzichtbare Afrikanen: Euro-Afrikanen tussen de Goudkust en Nederland, 1750–1850,” in *Nieuwe Nederlanders: Vestiging van migranten door de eeuwen heen*, ed. Marjolein ‘t Hart, Jan Lucassen, and Henk Schmal (Amsterdam: Stichting Beheer IISG, 1996), 81–100; Michel R. Doortmont, Natalie Everts, and Jean-Jacques Vrij, “Tussen de Goudkust, Nederland en Suriname. De Euro-Afrikaanse families Van Bakergem, Woortman, Rühle en Huydecoper,” *De Nederlandsche Leeuw. Tijdschrift van het Koninklijk Nederlandsch Genootschap voor Geslacht- en Wapenkunde* 117 (2000): 170–212, 310–344, 490–577.

An important research issue is how to historiographically and socially position these African men, women, boys, and girls brought to the Netherlands, a nation state that officially did not condone chattel slavery within its European borders since the sixteenth century.¹⁹ For many Dutchmen, an African physique was tantamount to a subaltern (read: slave) status, especially as the number of Africans in Dutch society grew towards the end of the eighteenth century. And we can hypothesize that many of the Africans in the Netherlands actually found themselves in bondage during this period – if not legally, then certainly social-economically.

This chapter asks questions about the perceptions and nuances of African identity in Dutch society in the eighteenth century, along with its connections to daily life as well as to the slave trade and slavery. The contribution builds on original empirical research done by the authors, offering a bifurcated perspective on the lives and social positions of African people in the Netherlands during the second half of the eighteenth century. The perspective is that of a double biography. Annemieke van der Vegt presents the life history of the boy servant first known as Presto and later as Christiaan van der Vegt (c. 1743–1825) at the court of Orange-Nassau in The Hague and Leeuwarden and then in a burgomaster's household in the small town of Weesp, some fifteen kilometres east of Amsterdam. She sets this in the context of other African children who were brought to the Netherlands as servants in a state of total dependency. Michel Doortmont looks into the life history of the Euro-African orphan, engineer, slave trader and lord of the manor Arij de Graaff (1730–1788), whose social position was also one of dependency since he was an orphan who happened to be of part-African descent. Later in life, he gained a position of great independence in the local elite of the province of Groningen after a career as an engineer and slave trader in West Africa.

By looking closely at these two contrasting life histories, it is possible to ask further questions about the interdependence between slavery and other forms of dependency in Europe on the one hand and the factor of race – in terms of both identity and social status – on the other.

¹⁹ Mark Ponte, "Tussen slavernij en vrijheid in Amsterdam," in *De slavernij in Oost en West: Het Amsterdam onderzoek*, ed. Pepijn Brandon, Guno Jones, Nancy Jouwe, and Matthias van Rossum (Amsterdam: Spectrum, 2020), 248–256, especially 251–255.

An African Boy in Dutch Servitude: The Story of Christiaan van der Vegt

The story of Christiaan van der Vegt starts around 1743 somewhere in West Africa, most likely in what is now the Republic of Ghana and was formerly known as the Gold Coast.²⁰ His origins and the circumstances in which he spent his first years are shrouded; what is clear is that at some point before age five, he resided in the town of St. George d'Elmina, the Dutch West India Company's headquarters on the Gold Coast. He may have been a victim of the wars raging in the western region of the Gold Coast at the time between the kingdoms of Ahanta, Wassaw, and Asante along with their respective allies.²¹ Stolen from his parents, he eventually ended up in Elmina.²²

In Elmina, the boy – as yet unnamed – became the servant of a high official at the castle.²³ He was not the only one in such a position: There are numerous instances of children serving Dutch West India Company personnel, as well as members of the British and Danish trading companies, in their respective settlements in West Africa. Child servitude was a common occurrence in West African societies, and the Euro-

20 The basis for this section lies in the research reported on in the blog “Hoe heette Christiaan?,” <http://www.hoeheettechristiaan.nl/>, last accessed December 20, 2023. For third-party reports on the project, see Sjoerd Wielenga, “Mijn voorvader had een ‘vreemde couleur’,” *De Volkskrant Magazine*, December 10, 2016, https://www.volkskrant.nl/mensen/mijn-voorvader-had-een-vreemde-couleur~b19c392f/?_sp=1513392e-34dc-4705-8ba3-15bb3e41fe54.1513004063977&utm_source=link&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=shared%20content&utm_content=, last accessed December 20, 2023; Sophie Reinders, “Wat was de naam van Christiaan?,” *Gen. Magazine voor familiegeschiedenis* 7 (2015): 8–12, <https://www.hoeheettechristiaan.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/wat-was-de-naam-van-christiaan.pdf>, last accessed December 20, 2023.

Research into the geographical origins of Christiaan is ongoing through different channels, including DNA research among his descendants. So far, this has yielded an area of origin somewhere in modern Ghana or Ivory Coast. Cf. Van der Vegt, “Hoe heette Christiaan?,” <https://www.hoeheettechristiaan.nl/christiaans-dna/> and <https://www.hoeheettechristiaan.nl/update-etniciteiten-bij-ancestry/>, last accessed December 20, 2023.

21 Ivor Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century: The Structure and Evolution of a Political Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 26–27; John Kofi Fynn, *Asante and Its Neighbours, 1700–1807* (London: Longman, 1971), 66–67.

22 The event was emphatically remembered in the family and retold by his daughter Antje almost ninety years later: City Archives Amsterdam, coll. no. 50000.GAW030-01, Weesp Municipality, (1810) 1814–1912 (1987), cat. no. 19-396, correspondence 1814–1911, letter by Antje van der Vegt to King Willem I, The Hague, April 30, 1830 (hereafter cited as: Antje's letter to King Willem I, 1830).

23 Until the early 1770s, Christiaan went without a name in the sources. From that point onwards, he was known as Presto, and only after his baptism in 1777 did he become known as Christiaan van der Vegt. For the sake of convenience and to avoid confusion, we will use the name Christiaan van der Vegt throughout, however.

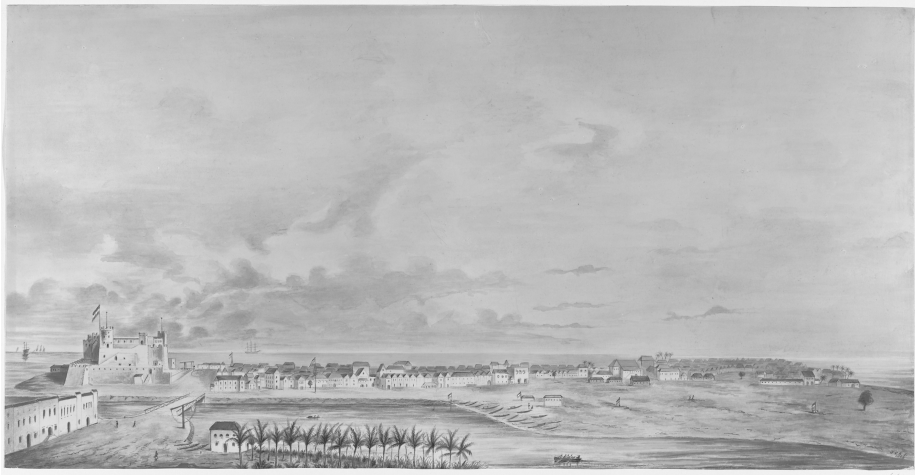


Fig. 4.1: View of the town of Elmina, Ghana, c. 1869 but offering a fair impression of the eighteenth-century townscape. By: Anonymous, after monogrammist JCKJ. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, cat. no. RP-T-1994-99, <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.250282>, last accessed December 20, 2023. Public domain.

peans along the coast adopted the practice.²⁴ That there was a clear distinction to outright slavery in the actual and perceived status of these children is discernible in a letter by the Dutch West India Company official Focquenbroch, who wrote about his twelve-year-old African boy servant around 1670: “[Being so] kind, polite, and loyal, that I love the boy with all my Heart, and would (*if he were a slave*²⁵) not hesitate to pay a Pound of Gold for him.”²⁶ It is obvious that Focquenbroch did not see the child as a slave.

As indicated in the introduction, many of these children were sent or taken to Europe, where they were especially visible in the courts and houses of the European nobility. The same thing happened to our anonymous boy who, at only a few years of age, was taken to the Netherlands in 1747 by the Dutch West India Company official

²⁴ On the practice of child servitude and its relationship to (indigenous) slavery in Ghana, see Akosua Adoma Perbi, *A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana: From the 15th to the 19th Century* (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2004), 3–4, 112–114, passim.

²⁵ Italics added by the authors.

²⁶ Willem Godschalk van Focquenbroch, *Afrikaensche Thalia, of het derde deel van de geurige zanggodin* (original publication Amsterdam: door Jan ten Hoorn, 1678), 164–165, cited in Karel Bostoën, “Opgewekte berichten uit het droevig Morenland: Afrika en de Afrikanen in de *Afrikaense-Brieven* (1668–1670) van Focquenbroch,” *Fumus: Mededelingen van de Stichting Willem Godschalck van Focquenbroch* 5 (2007): 1–28, here 19: “[Zijnde] soo vriendelijck, beleeft, en trouw, dat ick de jongen lief heb in mijn Hart, en souw (soo hy een slaef was) niet weygeren een Pond Gout voor hem te geven.”

who had procured him and taken him under his wing.²⁷ To understand the circumstances of his arrival, as well as his early life history in the Netherlands, we need to take a step back and review the political situation in the Netherlands at the time.

In 1747, the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands underwent a political transformation: From that point on, all provinces accepted a single hereditary stadtholder as first citizen, most powerful civil servant to the States General, and commander-in-chief of the army. Willem IV, Prince of Orange-Nassau became the first to hold this position.²⁸ With it came the pomp and circumstance of a princely court in The Hague, with royal aspirations. On April 11, 1748, Willem IV's new-born son, the later Stadtholder Willem V, was christened in The Hague in an event attracting considerable national and international attention.²⁹ The young prince was the new heir apparent to the stadtholder position, superseding his older sister Carolina, who had just celebrated her fifth birthday. During the christening celebrations, the parents and the new-born prince received numerous presents. There was also a present for Princess Carolina, as reported in the Dutch newspapers: "On the 20th [April 1748] the Princess was offered a Present of two young *African Moors*, as well as a costly *Hammock* brought over from that Continent."³⁰ The giver of this gift remains anonymous, but it can be argued that it came from the circle around the West India Company in Africa, as there were no private Dutch merchants active in Africa. We can thus assume that the two boys and the hammock were sent either by the company itself or by one of its leading officials.

We can ask ourselves how this gift should be regarded. One line of thought could be that it is to be seen as a gift by the West India Company to the next "chief" of the Republic of the Netherlands. African political leaders or chiefs on the Gold Coast were

27 As yet, the circumstances of his travel to the Netherlands and the identity of the official involved are subjects of ongoing research. There are strong indications that the official in question was the powerful West India Company director general Jacob de Petersen, who returned to the Netherlands in 1747 and became a director of the West India Company in Amsterdam. A reference by Christiaan's daughter in her 1830 letter to the king is an indication, as is the reconstructed timeline of Christiaan's arrival in the Netherlands. Michel R. Doortmont, "Presto returns to Ghana: Where to begin? (II)," blog entry on blog "Presto returns to Ghana," August 10, 2016, <https://prestoreturnstoghana.blogspot.com/2016/08/presto-returns-to-ghana-where-to-begin.html>, last accessed December 20, 2023, and references mentioned there; Antje's letter to King Willem I, 1830. On Jacob de Petersen, see Michel R. Doortmont, "Jacob de Petersen, slavenhandelaar op West-Afrika en Amsterdams bestuurder," in *De slavernij in Oost en West: Het Amsterdam onderzoek*, ed. Brandon, Jones, Jouwe, and Van Rossum, 104–111.

28 Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477–1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 1067–1078.

29 "Baptism of Prince Willem V, 1748," sketch design for a print by Simon Fokke, Collection Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, cat. no. RP-T-00-1595, url: <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/collectie/RP-T-00-1595>, last accessed December 20, 2023.

30 *Nederlandsch Gedenboek of Europische Mercurius* (Amsterdam: Gerrevink en Erven Ratelband, 1748), 237: "Den 20 dezer wierd die Prinsesse tot een Present aangeboden twee kleine *Africaansche Moortjes*, benevens een kostbare *Hangmat* uit dat Werelt-Deel overgebracht."

customarily carried around in expensively adorned hammocks, and we might thus consider the form of the gift to be a sign of respect to Princess Carolina in “African style”, with the boys being an integral part of the ensemble as bearers of the hammock in which the little princess could be carried around. This makes all the more sense when we consider that until the birth of her younger brother Willem, Carolina was the legal heir to the office of stadtholder.³¹ Her brother was just six weeks old when the hammock and boys arrived at the court in The Hague.

One year later, at the end of January 1749, one of the two gifted boys died. He was buried in Scheveningen near The Hague and identified in the records as Fortuin (Fortune), “[t]he little Moor of her Highness Madame Princess Carolina”.³² The other boy has so far eluded further identification in the archival sources and contemporary publications, but a strong case can be made that this boy was actually Christiaan. Christiaan only comes into view in his own right in the historical sources during the 1770s, when he went by the name of Presto and worked for the family of one of the burgomasters of the town of Weesp, Abraham d’Arrest Sr.³³ From there on, his life can be followed in detail, with his christening as Christiaan van der Vegt in 1777 representing a watershed in his social position, and his marriage in 1779 inaugurating his social-economic independence.

As an old man, Christiaan wrote several letters to King Willem I, the son of Stadtholder Willem V. In them, he reminisced about and referred to his early years at the court of Orange-Nassau. Many of the details provided in the letters are quite intimate and place Christiaan in a direct personal relationship to several members of the court. As the letters were intended to solicit social-economic redress and financial support, we may surmise that Christiaan was writing truthfully about his relationships. Telling lies – even white lies – could have had disastrous results for him if they were discovered.

There are four known letters dating from 1815 to 1821. In them, Christiaan offered piecemeal and complementary information about his relationship to the court.³⁴ In

31 E.g. Reinildis Elizabeth van Ditshuyzen, *Oranje-Nassau: Een biografisch woordenboek* (Haarlem: H.W.J. Becht, 1992), sub voce “Carolina van Oranje-Nassau.”

32 Municipal Archives The Hague, Burial records, Netherlands Reformed Church Scheveningen, 1749, registration February 1, 1749: “Het Moortje van [. . .] haere Hoogheid Mevrouw Princes Carolina [. . .].”

33 Mentioned as Presto in: City Archives Amsterdam, Notarial Archives Amsterdam, coll. no. 5075, cat. no. 16138, Protocol notary public Pieter Mastenbroek, January–June 1770, no. 37.

34 City Archives Amsterdam, coll. no. 50000.GAW030-01, Weesp Municipality, (1810) 1814–1912 (1987), cat. no. 31, correspondence 1815, letter by Christiaan van der Vegt to King Willem I, Weesp, November 13, 1815; *ibid.*, cat. no. 35, correspondence 1816, letter by Christiaan van der Vegt to King Willem I, Weesp [received June 23, 1816]; National Archives, The Hague, General State Secretary, access no. 2.02.01, cat. no. 429, letter Christiaan van der Vegt to King Willem I, Weesp [received April 29, 1817]; *ibid.*, cat. no. 1327, letter Christiaan van der Vegt to King Willem I, The Hague, September 19, 1821 (hereafter cited as: Christiaan’s letter to King Willem I, with the corresponding year).

1830, his daughter Antje wrote a letter to the king as well, reporting what her father had told her about his early life.³⁵ Taken together, these letters enable us to reconstruct Christiaan's early years in the Netherlands. Among other things, Christiaan wrote how he served Princess Carolina and her brother, the later Willem V: "Already he had the honour to serve your Majesty's Aunt, Her Serene Highness, the Madame Princess Carolina of Orange Nassau, but also to serve, as domestic servant, His late Serene Highness the well-beloved Prince Stadtholder, Your Majesty's father, the petitioner's benefactor [. . .]."³⁶ In 1760, Princess Carolina married the German prince and remote relation Karl Christian of Nassau-Weilburg in The Hague. The marriage was solemnised in the town church and recorded in a drawing.³⁷

On the left of the drawing are the members of the couple's household, clearly identifiable and sitting in a special area. In the middle of this group, we see an African boy dressed in the same style as other African boys in numerous paintings, with a typical hat and a collar around his neck. Could this be the same boy that was presented to Carolina in 1748? And if so, could it be Christiaan? Or is it another young African servant? There are indications that link Christiaan to the court for the period around 1760 as well, when he was in his late teens. In one of his letters, he wrote: "Because the undersigned served His Highness the Prince of Weilburg in the year 1762 [. . .]."³⁸ At the time, Christiaan would have been about nineteen years old, and he was most likely describing his transfer from Princess Carolina's service to that of her husband Karl Christian in this letter. It was a common occurrence for boy servants in their adolescence to move, or be moved, from female to male service in the household, as the many paintings with African servants show us.³⁹

From the letters, we also learn that Christiaan did not stay long with Prince Karl Christian. In 1764, the prince and his wife left for Germany. We then find Christiaan with Carolina's grandmother, Princess Maria Louise of Hesse-Kassel, at her court in the town of Leeuwarden in Friesland, where he found himself in the company of sev-

35 Antje's letter to King Willem I, 1830.

36 Christiaan's letter to King Willem I, 1816: "Hij toch had de eer reeds Uwer Majesteits Tante, Hare Doorluchtige Hoogheid, Mevrouw de Princesse Carolina van Oranje Nassau, en mede wijlen Zijne Doorluchtige Hoogheid, den welbeminden Prins Erfstadhouder, Uwer Majesteits vader, zijn Suppliants weldoener G[oed] G[unstig] als domestiek te dienen [. . .]."

37 Simon Fokke, "Huwelijk van Karel Christiaan van Nassau-Weilburg met prinses Carolina, 1760," print 1761 in Collection Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, cat. no. FMH 4110-b, object RP-P-1944-231, <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/collectie/RP-P-1944-231>, last accessed December 20, 2023.

38 Christiaan's letter to King Willem I, 1821: "Daar ondergetekende in den Jaar 1762, in dienst ben geweest bij Zijne Hoogheid den Heere Prins van Weilburg [. . .]."

39 See the Pinteret collection of over 500 paintings of African servants in European households assembled by Annemieke van der Vegt, "Young Africans with Europeans in 17th and 18th century," <https://pin.it/d6vqszfib6pr5>, last accessed December 20, 2023. From this collection, it is clear that most of the women were painted with little boys, while adult African servants are depicted together with European men on many paintings, for example assisting with hunting or horses.



Fig. 4.2a: Marriage of Princess Carolina of Orange-Nassau and Prince Karl Christian of Nassau-Weilburg, The Hague, 1760. By: Simon Fokke, after Tethart Philip Christian Haag. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, cat. no. RP-P-1927-266, <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.401092>, last accessed December 20, 2023. Public domain.



Fig. 4.2b: Detail from Fig. 4.2a (left center, towards the edge) showing the African servant amidst the court household of Princess Carolina and Prince Karl Christian.

eral other African servants. In one letter he wrote: “That in the year 1764, the petitioner, together with two of his countrymen, Coridon and Citron, came into the service of the late Royal Highness Madame Dowager of Orange Nassau and Friesland [. . .].”⁴⁰

His service in Friesland did not last long either, as the dowager princess died only a year later, in 1765. In her will, she stipulated that her grandson, Stadtholder Willem V, should look after her court household: “We recommend our maidservants and other domestics, who have no [other] office or means of existence, into the benevolent care of our grandson, the Prince of Orange and Nassau, with the request to look after their subsistence by either taking them into His Highness’s own service, or in any other most convenient manner.”⁴¹

We can surmise that this included the African servants, who most certainly had no other means of existence.⁴² Within months of Maria Louise’s death, Christiaan transferred into the service of the abovementioned Abraham d’Arrest Sr., burgomaster of Weesp. As Willem V obviously had no need for his grandmother’s servants himself, he distributed them among friends and acquaintances in order to fulfil Maria Louise’s request. D’Arrest and Willem V were friends.⁴³

We can only guess at D’Arrest’s reason to accept the young adult from the court, although Christiaan’s daughter provides a hint in her letter to the king in 1830: “[Bur-

40 Christiaan’s letter to King Willem I, 1815: “Dat de Suppliant in den Jare 1764, benevens twee van zijne landslieden Coridon en Citron in dienst is gekomen van wijlen Haare Koninklijke Hoogheid Mevrouw de Douariere van Oranje Nassau en Vriesland [. . .].”

41 Royal Archives, The Hague, Royal Collections, cat. no. A28-325, Wills and codicils of Maria Louise of Hesse-Kassel, 1730–1765 and n.d., will 1765: “Onze kameniers en verdere domestiquen die zig buyten ampten en verdere middelen van bestaan bevinden, recommendeeren wij aan de genadige voorsorge van onzen kleijnzoon den Heere Prince van Orange en Nassau, met versoek om voor desselfs subsistentie te wille Sorge dragen’t zij door deselve in Zijn Hoogheids dienst over te nemen, ’t zij op eenige andere best convenieerende wijze.”

42 In her book, Schreuder conflates the persona of Citron with that of Curaçao-born (ca. 1756) Sideron or Guan Siedron, who presumably arrived at the court in The Hague in 1763, was painted a year later, and is listed as a member of the court household in 1764 as “De Moor Guan Siedron.” His service at the court would then continue until his death in 1803. This clashes with the evidence provided by Christiaan van der Vegt that he was in service at the court in Leeuwarden in 1764 together with the Africans Coridon and Citron. It poses the questions (1) whether Sideron and Citron are in fact one and the same person, as Schreuder argues, and (2) which Africans we find at the court of Willem V in The Hague both before and after 1765. This calls for additional research and thorough source criticism. Cf. Schreuder, *Cupido and Sideron*, 30–41, 182, passim.

43 The friendship between Willem V and Abraham d’Arrest is well documented. Christiaan’s daughter Antje wrote in 1830 about the “well-known particular esteem” Willem V had for Abraham d’Arrest, and how the former had come to dinner in the burgomaster’s house on more than one occasion, the last time in 1775. The earlier occasions included stops of the princely entourage on their way from The Hague to the residence in Apeldoorn and back, passing by Weesp and stopping at D’Arrest’s house for dinner or lunch. D’Arrest also appears several times in the prince’s audience books. See also comments below. Antje’s letter to King Willem I, 1830; *Nederlandsch Gedenboek of Europische Mercurius* (Amsterdam: Gerrevink en Erven Ratelband, 1772): October 1772; National Library of the Netherlands,

gomaster D'Arrest] *adopted him as an antiquity* [. . .] *raised him as his own, taught and supported him.*"⁴⁴ The operative word here is "antiquity". It indicates how African servants were apparently regarded by the elites of the Netherlands: as curiosities, exotic ornaments to adorn the household and show off to others. But at the same time, they were also seen as fellow human beings who should be nurtured and educated.⁴⁵ For the next two decades, Christiaan's life was intimately connected with the D'Arrest family, and Weesp was to be his home base for the remainder of his life.

The first time Christiaan appears in the records as his own man is in 1770. At this time, he was living in Amsterdam in the household of D'Arrest's sister Magdalena, a widow who had just lost her last child.⁴⁶ This is the period during which he was referred to as Presto. It looks as though the D'Arrest family saw him not as a personal servant to the paterfamilias but rather as an employee of the family business or group. So, while he served Magdalena in Amsterdam in 1770, he was back in Weesp a few years later, working in the burgomaster's household. Here again, the letters shed light on his role, as well as on the connections between himself, D'Arrest, and the court of Orange-Nassau. In his letters, Christiaan mentioned how he accompanied Prince Willem V on a hunting expedition, possibly in the presence of burgomaster D'Arrest. He also remembered with some fondness how he carried the princely children in his arms, including the very young King Willem I himself: "[. . .] and to carry in his arms all three noble Royal Favourites, but also Your Majesty, now his beloved King."⁴⁷ As Willem I was born in 1772, this must have been sometime in the mid-1770s. Other sources – many referring to the rather turbulent lives of the members of the D'Arrest family with whom he was so closely connected – allow us to reconstruct Christiaan's life during this period in greater detail, but much of this information refers to aspects beyond the scope of this study.⁴⁸ Suffice it to say that the African persona of Christiaan was for all intents and purposes a full member of the D'Arrest household with access to the family's wider circle of friends, acquaintances, and business associates within the boundaries of his professional station as servant. If his African heritage played a role in this –

The Hague, cat. no. 78 G 1-68: Lijsten van personen die bij Willem V ter audiëntie zijn ontvangen op de paleizen Huis ten Bosch en Het (Kleine) Loo te Den Haag, etc. 1768–1792 (Audience books of Willem V), entries for October 28, 1772 and April 4, 1775.

44 Antje's letter to King Willem I, 1830: "[Burgemeester D'Arrest], die hem voor eenen Anthikiteit heeft aangenomen, [. . .], en alzoo vervolgens door den vernoemden Burgemeester de Ritt [read: D'Arrest] als eigen groot gebracht, geleerd en onderhouden."

45 See the examples provided below.

46 City Archives Amsterdam, Notarial Archives Amsterdam, coll. no. 5075, cat. no. 13327, Protocol notary public Gerardus Wijthoff, December 5, 1777, no. 904.

47 Christiaan's letter to King Willem I, 1816: "[. . .] en de edele trits der Vorstelijke lievelingen en alsook Uwe Majesteit, zijnen thans dierbaren Koning op de armen te dragen." The event was so important in the family tradition that daughter Antje repeated it in her letter. Antje's letter to King Willem I, 1830.

48 For more details, consult the blog posts at Van der Vegt, "Hoe heette Christiaan?," <https://www.hoeheettechristiaan.nl> and references cited there.

for instance, whether he still wore special clothing – cannot be ascertained. References to his ethnic identity persisted, however, when he was described in person.⁴⁹ While he thus remained “the Moor”, it seems that over time he was no longer regarded as an “antiquity”.



Fig. 4.3: View of the City of Weesp, c. 1719. By: Daniël Stopendael (1672–1726) and Abraham Rademaker (1676/77–1735). Noord-Hollands Archief / Provinciale Atlas – Prenten en Tekeningen, cat. no. NL-HlmNHA_359_3480_K, <https://hdl.handle.net/21.12102/6376baa4-fb8f-11df-9e4d-523bc2e286e2>, last accessed December 20, 2023. Public domain.

On October 19, 1777, Christiaan’s life changed dramatically. On that day, a Sunday, we find him in the Netherlands Reformed Church in Weesp. It was to be a special day: At the beginning of the service, he entered as Presto, to leave the church several hours later as Christiaan van der Vegt. After his public confession of faith in the Netherlands

⁴⁹ See e.g. Amsterdam City Archives, Notarial Archives Amsterdam, coll. no. 5075, cat. no. 16138, doc. 37, declaration April 9, 1777: “[. . .] een neger genaamd Presto, die welke als knecht dient bij den Heer Burgemeester d’Arrest te Weesp [. . .],” (“[. . .] a negro named Presto, who is a servant in the employ of Mayor d’Arrest in Weesp [. . .].”).

Reformed Church, he was baptised,⁵⁰ thereby receiving his new name as well as a new public identity. He was thirty-four years old at the time. Christiaan's baptism raises several questions that are applicable not only to the case in hand but to many African boys in the Netherlands. Why this baptism at a late age? Why not as a young boy? What informed the choice of first name and surname at baptism?

Other African servants were also baptised as adults, even if they had been in the Netherlands for many years. Christiaan married one and a half years after his baptism. In other cases, too, we find that baptism was a precursor to marriage, since it was a prerequisite for a legal marriage in eighteenth-century Netherlands that one was either a Christian or a Jew. But this does not answer the question why these persons were not baptised as children. In the case of Christiaan, we may ask whether the court did not find it important enough for its African servants to be baptised, or whether there was perhaps another reason. In one of his letters to the king, Christiaan described how Maria Louise of Hesse-Kassel had already had him instructed in the Christian faith when he was an adolescent.⁵¹ Perhaps the princess's death interfered with his baptism, as it would take years before Christiaan eventually acquired church membership. Baptism was not only important for religious integration and a prerequisite for marriage – in the early modern period, church membership provided access to social welfare as well.

His baptism also allowed another rite of passage for Christiaan: It ushered in his release from the service to D'Arrest, albeit eleven years later. He was subsequently given a few minor municipal public functions like lantern lighter, swan keeper, and peat carrier, which offered a fixed income and could also be leased to a third party for a fee.⁵² Now Christiaan was on his own, however, responsible for his own livelihood and the well-being of his family, which soon included several children as well. Life was tough for a working-class person, which was what Christiaan now was. From 1788 onwards – in a period of growing economic crisis in the Netherlands – he had to depend on the church for support for himself and his family. What tipped the scales was the early and severe onset of winter in that year,⁵³ which resulted in Christiaan receiving his first financial support from the church on Christmas Day 1788. Every time he came in for aid, the church clerk noted down that he had been present at holy communion – in other words, that he was a good church member and a proper Christian.

Taking the example of Christiaan, it can be said that baptism and church membership was a step towards social independence and can hence be seen as an important rite of passage for young African servants in the Netherlands who were neither

⁵⁰ City Archives Amsterdam, coll. no. GAW135, Collection baptisms, marriages, and burials, Weesp, cat. no. 5, marriages 1722–1809, p. 118.

⁵¹ Christiaan's letter to King Willem I, 1815.

⁵² Christiaan's letter to King Willem I, 1816.

⁵³ Jan Buisman, *Duizend jaar weer, wind en water in de lage landen, Vol. 6: 1750–1800* (Franeker: Van Wijnen, 2015), 720.

slaves nor free. The social freedom it offered could also lead to economic insecurity, however.

Another indicator for (in)dependence as well as belonging can be found in naming conventions and names. The first name Christiaan, reflecting the person's faith, was often given to African boys baptised in the Netherlands.⁵⁴ One can wonder whether this name – which was common enough but not very frequent among Dutch men in the eighteenth century – was given so often to Africans in order to clarify the civilised Christian state of the person concerned to outsiders, who could otherwise easily and mistakenly associate a black face with heathendom. The surname is a different matter. Some African boys kept their original name as family name, while quite a few others were connected in name to the person they served. Some received a name linked to their place of residence. Did the African boys and men choose their surnames themselves, or was this a prerogative of the former master or mistress? In other words, is what we see here an act of affection or an act of branding? The surname Van der Vegt is a direct geographical reference to the town of Weesp, which lies on the river Vecht. If Christiaan had a hand in picking the name, it might mean that he regarded Weesp as his home by now: He was “from the Vecht / Weesp.” On the other hand, the idea for the name may have come from the D'Arrest family or the vicar. In this case, we simply do not know.

It is useful to look at some of the other African boys who appear in the archives and underwent a similar social transformation as Christiaan. Christiaan Narcis, born circa 1765, arrived in the Netherlands in 1778 and was baptised in 1783. His sojourn was described in the Dutch Christian popular press on the occasion of his baptism. Remarkably, this description included a specific place of origin on the Gold Coast, namely the kingdom of Wassaw in the western part of modern Ghana. The account also tells us that he was “stolen” from there by “hostile negroes” at the age of twelve and brought to the Dutch headquarters at St. George d'Elmina. There the fiscal Sulyard van Leefdael, second in command of the Dutch possessions and an active private slave trader, took him under his wing and soon sent him to his brother, an army colonel in the Netherlands, “as a gift”. Five years later, the Sulyard van Leefdael family in the Netherlands turned the baptism of the boy into a public display, celebrating their own magnanimity as much as the boy's induction into the Christian faith.⁵⁵ Christiaan Narcis's life after 1783 awaits further research. The last reference to him is from 1806, when he was in military service and married with a child.⁵⁶

The case of Christiaan Narcis – who received his first name during his baptism, while Narcis was the name he had carried on his arrival in the Netherlands – looks very much like that of Christiaan van der Vegt: stolen from his family on the Gold

⁵⁴ Cf. Van der Vegt, “Hoe heette Christiaan?,” inter alia blog post “Christiaan Narcis,” October 10, 2015, <https://www.hoeheettechristiaan.nl/christiaan-narcis/>, last accessed December 20, 2023.

⁵⁵ *Maendelykse Uittreksels, of de Boekzael der Geleerde Werelt*, vol. 67 (1783): 93.

⁵⁶ National Archives, The Hague, Army registrations (supplement), access no. 2.01.15, cat. no. 216, fol. 16.

Coast, presumably during a period of conflict in the area, brought to Elmina, picked up by a Dutch West India Company official who did not sell the boy into chattel slavery but made him a personal servant, sending him on as a gift – an “antiquity” – to the Netherlands. Baptism and confirmation were followed by marriage and a military career. The latter can be explained with the fact that the Sulyard van Leefdael family was a high-ranking military family.

Accra Doura is another example, and a man from the same generation as Christiaan van der Vegt. The life history of Accra Doura, and especially his arrival in the Netherlands, differs from the two earlier examples, although he accidentally ended up in Weesp as well. From correspondence surrounding his confession and baptism, we know that his European “master” considered Accra Doura a slave. This person, Dutch West India Company official Huibert van Rijk, wrote a report on Accra Doura’s early life and his own involvement in it to the church council in Weesp in 1754. He told the council that he bought Accra Doura in Elmina as a slave in 1742 and took him along upon returning to the Netherlands in 1750. All the time, Van Rijk saw to it that the boy was educated in miscellaneous subjects and trades including commerce, agriculture, religion, and “the Dutch ways of the servant”. Apparently, Accra Doura stayed in Van Rijk’s household the entire time while in the Netherlands. In his statement, Van Rijk clearly indicated that he regarded Accra Doura as his slave both in Africa and in the Netherlands. This is remarkable because, as we know, (chattel) slavery was prohibited in the European territories of the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands Provinces. When it came to his request to the Weesp church council to confirm and baptise Accra Doura, Van Rijk even emphasised this point by stating: “[This is] why I declare the aforementioned Accra Doura to be from now on released from the Dominion I had over him since [the day] I bought him until today [February 8, 1754].”⁵⁷

This is a unique find: Contrary to what is generally understood regarding slavery in eighteenth-century Netherlands, the position of (young) African servants can be seen as tantamount to chattel slavery. Some of the details of the Accra Doura case invite conjecture about how society dealt with this ambiguity. From the reports by the church council and the timeline of Van Rijk’s and Accra Doura’s presence in the Netherlands, we can make the following reconstruction of events: Upon his return to the Netherlands in 1750, Van Rijk first settled in Weesp. In 1752 he moved to Baarn, some twenty-five kilometres from Weesp, where he was appointed sheriff and tax collector. In Baarn, Accra Doura began to attend bible classes, most likely of his own volition,

57 Guy Meulmeester, “De levensgeschiedenis van Accra Doura, het eerste niet blanke lid van de Gereformeerde Gemeente van Weesp [tr. Weesp 1757 Aaltje Eggers],” *Historische kijk op Weesp* 9, no. 2 (March 1994), no page numbers; City Archives Amsterdam, coll. no. 135, Records of church council Weesp, 1747–1756, cat. no. 15, Church council meetings February 1754, p. 294–299 (scans 48–53), with original quote: “Waerom ik die voorz[eide] Accra Dourra van heden af verklaere te worden ontslagen van de Heerschap die Ik op hem zedert den [dag van] inkoop tot heden [8 Februarij 1754] op hem had gehad.”

before turning up in Weesp a few months later. There he requested the local vicar to educate him further in the Christian religion. From the reports, it looks as though Accra Doura was his own person in all but name at this time, and that the church supported his endeavours as though he were a free person. However, there is also a strong undertone in the wording of the report and the supporting letter from the vicar in Baarn that indicates a different course of events. It seems that Accra Doura, unhappy with his social position and possibly his treatment by Van Rijk, saw an opportunity to escape once the family had moved to Baarn. The vicar of Baarn assisted him in getting away by sending him back to Weesp with a letter of support. The church in Weesp then took him in for almost a year, preparing Accra Doura for church membership, which would grant him social freedom and security and thus release him from the oppressive relationship he had with Van Rijk. The latter was then presented with this *fait accompli* and could do nothing other than begrudgingly relinquish control over Accra Doura. Van Rijk still openly claimed Accra Doura to be his possession, while at the same time emphasising his ongoing benevolence and humanity towards him.⁵⁸

The church and municipal authorities in Weesp turned the confession and baptism ceremony into a public display, with a large gathering of people attending, a public announcement in the town square, and a report of the event in the press. It was also emphatically stated that Accra Doura was baptised with the names Abraham Johannes “at his desire”. Abraham Johannes remained in Weesp and married a local girl in September 1757, only to die in November of the same year while his wife was pregnant. The child, a boy, was born in May 1758 and named Abraham Johannes after his father, but it would only live for a few weeks. Whereas the authorities had turned Accra Doura’s conversion into a major public event, his marriage and subsequent death did not attract any attention at all. In fact, for both the marriage and his burial, he was recorded as “poor”. Apparently, the novelty value had worn off quickly.⁵⁹

The examples of Accra Doura / Abraham Johannes, Narcis / Christiaan Narcis and Presto / Christiaan van der Vegt show us both typical aspects as well as variations in the social status of young African men who came to the Netherlands in the second half of the eighteenth century. It is clear that their initial status was one of social and economic dependency that could last for years. Induction into the Christian faith and church membership enabled social independence and the severance of ties with former masters. In contemporary thinking, their transition from African to European society was an act of benevolence: Narcis, a victim of war in his own country, was lucky

⁵⁸ City Archives Amsterdam, coll. no. 135, Baptisms, marriages, and burials, Weesp, cat. no. 15, Church council meetings (Netherlands Reformed) 1747–1756, February 1754, p. 294–299 (scans 48–53).

⁵⁹ City Archives Amsterdam, coll. no. 135, Baptisms, marriages, and burials, Weesp, cat. no. 72, Marriage registrations (civil court) 1751–1759, Weesp, p. 66, October 1, 1757; *ibid.*, cat. no. 95b, Burial tax (tax collector) 1751–1761, Weesp, p. 74, November 11, 1757; *ibid.*, cat. no. 2, Baptisms (Netherlands Reformed) 1726–1788, p. 260, May 11, 1758.

enough to be “rescued” by Sulyard van Leefdael according to contemporary statements. It is a case that can also be made for Presto. But at the same time, once under European “guardianship”, the boys were also objects that could be given away as “presents”, as curiosities or “antiquities”. In fact – at least until their baptism – they were in a state of social death which, for all intents and purposes, can be regarded as chattel slavery.⁶⁰ In the case of Van Rijk, who went against the conventions of the time, the true position of the African servants is explicated: He *bought* the boy Accra Doura, who was then under his “Dominion” (“Heerschap”) – which together can only be read as “slave”. The response of the church authorities in this case is equally telling. Rather than opposing Van Rijk, they worked around him. But the transition did not turn out well for Accra Doura, who was given “social life” through his baptism and confirmation only to experience social and economic misery and neglect by the same church immediately afterwards.⁶¹

What were the effects of the social transformation for Christiaan van der Vegt? We have already seen that his independence was safeguarded by his former employers by way of several public positions that guaranteed him an income. Nevertheless, quite soon after leaving the D’Arrest household he had to turn to the church for financial assistance, which would be a regular occurrence from then until his death in 1825. The income from public positions was too low, at least at times, to support a growing young family. The economic crises that hit the Netherlands from the 1780s onwards, as well as the subsequent war-torn Napoleonic era, during which Christiaan lost his public positions because of changes in the law, thrust him into a continuous state of poverty. Eventually he had to capitalize on his black skin and his musical abilities – most likely acquired during his time at court as a boy – to earn a living as an itinerant artist performing at fairs across the Netherlands and Germany. When he became too old for this kind of life, he had to turn to the king to beg for alms. Being a proud man, his letters were phrased in terms of compensation for lost income, reinstatement into former positions, and a pension for services rendered. The king was no longer the boy he had once carried on his arm, however; he was now the manager of a modern state apparatus in which there was considerably less room for personal favours than under the ancien régime. Christiaan was left to his own devices.⁶²

The biographies of Accra Doura / Abraham Johannes, Narcis / Christiaan Narcis and Presto / Christiaan van der Vegt share some traits that seem to be typical of these involuntary migrants to the Dutch Republic: Young African boys had curiosity value

⁶⁰ Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 3, 8, 58–71, *passim*.

⁶¹ There are many other available examples of African boys and young men in the same situation that warrant further research for a more complete understanding. Cf. Van der Vegt, “Hoe heette Christiaan?,” *inter alia* blog post “Christiaan Narcis,” October 10, 2015, <https://www.hoeheettechristiaan.nl/christiaan-narcis/>, last accessed December 20, 2023.

⁶² Christiaan’s letters to King Willem I, 1815–1821.

in the era of the Atlantic slave trade and were willingly taken in by prominent families in the Netherlands. They were seen as welcome ornaments in the household who could hold a proper job as a servant at the same time. When they grew older, the former quality diminished quickly and, with a few exceptions, they were cut loose. This gave them independence but simultaneously endangered their social and economic standing. In all cases, these boys were cut off from their African families the moment Europeans took them in in whatever capacity, robbing them of their name and social network at an early age. Skin colour was the reason why these children and juveniles were sought after in the first place, but it also limited their scope of action once they were abandoned by their former owners or employers. In one letter to King Willem I, Christiaan himself referred to his skin colour as a means to supplicate the king: “That the Suppliant, although covered with a black skin, however, carries a heart warm with love for and loyalty to the Royal House and the invaluable person of Your Majesty as the most powerful [person] in the State.”⁶³ The fact that Christiaan set his black skin against “a heart warm with love [. . .] and loyalty [. . .]” shows the ramifications of racial thinking long before the scientific racism of the nineteenth century came about. As we shall see in the next section as well, skin colour was an issue in the late eighteenth century, as were racist tendencies – even for Africans circulating in much higher social spheres.

An African Lord of the Manor in Groningen: Arij de Graaff

In 1735, Reverend Ketelanus, Christian minister in the service of the Dutch West India Company in Elmina, Ghana, baptised a young boy about five years old.⁶⁴ He was the

⁶³ Christiaan’s letter to King Willem I, 1816: “Dat de Suppliant, ofschoon met een zwart vel bedekt, echter een hart omdraagt, dat even warm is van liefde voor en getrouwheid aan het Koninklijk Huis en den onschatbaren perzoon van Uwe Majesteit als de magtigste des Rijks.”

⁶⁴ This section leans heavily on Michel R. Doortmont and Natalie Everts, “Arij de Graaff (ca. 1729/30–1788): weeskind, W.I.C. dienaar en Gronings borgheer, zijn voor- en nageslacht,” *De Nederlandsche Leeuw. Tijdschrift van het Koninklijk Nederlandsch Genootschap voor Geslacht- en Wapenkunde* 114 (1997): 197–218. The research for this article and the publication itself generated a number of reactions from historians and descendants of Arij de Graaff that enabled me to enhance his life history further. I wish to thank Harm Jan Luth, Paul Noomen, and Dirk R. Wildeboer for their valuable contributions. A more complete study of Arij de Graaff’s life will appear in my forthcoming study Michel R. Doortmont, *The Dutch Atlantic Slave Trade as Family Business* (working title). Other researchers have likewise taken an interest in Arij: Gerta Boonstra, “Nazaten van borgheer Arij de Graaff in Sauwerd en Wetsinge,” *Diepgang: Een kroniek van drie dorpen langs het Reitdiep* 4, no. 12 (November 2016): 10; Hannes Companjen, “Arij de Graaff – Heer van Onstaborg, Sauwerd en Wetsinge,” *Diepgang: Een kroniek van drie dorpen langs het Reitdiep* 4, no. 12 (November 2016): 6–9.

son of the Dutch West India Company's Master of Works Martinus de Graaff, who had died in a boating accident in the bay of Elmina several months earlier. The boy's African mother remained unnamed. Witness to the ceremony was Jurriaan Lindenbergh, Dutch West India Company captain and a friend of Martinus. The boy was named Arij, and Lindenbergh assumed the role of guardian and godfather. Arij followed Lindenbergh to the Netherlands, where he grew up in his godfather's family in the northern town of Groningen. At age sixteen, he was appointed Master of Works in the Dutch West India Company's service and returned to Elmina.

Here, then, we have a boy like Christiaan van der Vegt, but in completely different circumstances: There is a Dutch father and Dutch guardianship, there is a baptism in Elmina (quite rare at the time), and there is a childhood and education as a Dutch boy in an urban middle-class family. What is the same, however, is the fact that like Christiaan, Arij was an African boy who stood out clearly from his fellow schoolmates in colour and physique. From the boys' perspective, Arij's voyage from West Africa to the Netherlands was most likely not much different from Christiaan's. Without their parents and attached to Dutch officials of confirmed social standing, the young boys would have been close to these men for the duration of the trip, doing odd jobs serving them. It was only after their arrival in the Netherlands that their social positions diverged quickly.

We do not know much about Arij's childhood years in Groningen, but we can infer that he received a good education considering that at the age of sixteen, he was appointed as Master of Works in Elmina, the job his father had had before him. This young age of appointment to a relatively high position, followed by a series of events surrounding the assignment, point towards strong patronage. For several historians, this was reason enough to wonder whether Arij might have been the son of the Dutch governor at Elmina rather than of the lower-ranked Master of Works Martinus de Graaff. And indeed, during the rest of his life, there was no contact between Arij and his father's family, which lived in the Rotterdam area of the Netherlands some 250 kilometres from Groningen, at a place he never seems to have visited.⁶⁵

Arij returned to the Gold Coast in 1746, where he embarked on a successful career as Master of Works. In this position, like his father, he was in charge of personnel, buildings, and other public works, as well as ship repair and shipbuilding. This indicates that he must have been schooled in mathematics and geometry while in Groningen, which is not surprising with a ship captain for a guardian. His appointment to the position of Master of Works at the age of sixteen in late 1745 bears the mark of

⁶⁵ This is a point that will not be argued any further here since – except for the patronage he received in his early years – it does not seem to have affected Arij later in his life. Pieter Jan van Winter, *De Westindische Compagnie ter Kamer Stad en Lande* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978), 238; Private collection Paul Noomen, letter Pieter Jan van Winter to Paul Noomen, December 26, 1980.

Dutch West India Company patronage surpassing the influence Jurriaan Lindenbergh could have brought to bear. Arij was assigned to the position with immediate effect, which meant that the incumbent official, one Hendrik Huijting, was removed from it. Huijting was subsequently hired for a period of two years to teach Arij everything connected to the duties of the Master of Works, especially with regard to architecture and construction work. Both men were to live together for the duration of the contract in order to serve the Dutch West India Company to the best of their abilities.⁶⁶ The arrangement was successful, and Arij became well-trained in engineering skills, for which he obviously also had a talent. In later years, he was repeatedly praised for his high-quality work in overseeing the reconstruction and repair of some of the dilapidated forts, the building of bridges, and the wharf.⁶⁷

During his tenure as Master of Works, Arij was also actively engaged in private trade, predominantly in the Atlantic slave trade. As such, he was one of many Euro-African men in Dutch West India Company service who were very successful in that business. Knowledge of the local language, potential extended local family networks through marital relationships, and the possibility to adopt a local identity were all instrumental to this success. But equally important were Arij's connections in Europe and the Caribbean. He joined the trade network set up by his guardian Jurriaan Lindenbergh – and perhaps other personal patrons – and built his own business on the strength of it. In the 1750s and early 1760s, Arij cooperated with several colleagues in West Africa, both European and (Euro-)African. Together they organised at least three slave voyages to the Dutch Caribbean and were involved in the supply of slaves to other traders on the Gold Coast. This made Arij a wealthy and financially independent man.⁶⁸

Like many of his colleagues – young and usually unattached men – Arij entered into relations with local women. Whether these had a formal character, as was often the case, or were of a more informal nature remains unknown. He had at least three children from these relations, two boys and one girl. One boy and the girl were probably sent to Europe for education ahead of Arij's return. They were named Jurrian and Geertruida Elisabeth after Arij's foster parents. The second boy, Martinus, accompanied Arij to Europe.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ National Archives, The Hague, Netherlands possessions on the coast of Guinea, access no. 1.05.14 (hereafter: NL-HaNA, Coast of Guinea, 1.05.14), cat. no. 294, Protocol of original documents 1744–1746, fol. 154.

⁶⁷ E.g. NL-HaNA, Coast of Guinea, 1.05.14, cat. no. 66, Correspondence 1760–1768, fol. 167: Letter by director general David Pieter Erasmî to Assembly of Ten, Elmina, March 22, 1761.

⁶⁸ NL-HaNA, Coast of Guinea, 1.05.14, cat. no. 296, Protocol of original documents 1752–1756, fol. 6: Power of attorney, April 12, 1752, and cat. no. 297, Protocol of original documents 1757–1760, fol. 1: Power of attorney Elmina, January 23, 1757.

⁶⁹ National Archives, The Hague, Society of Suriname, access no. 1.05.03, cat. no. 205, Government journal Suriname 1763, fol. 471, Departure from Suriname, May 14, 1763.

Arij remained in West Africa for sixteen years until 1762, when he requested his retirement and leave to return to Europe.⁷⁰ The motivation for his request was superficial but nevertheless not incorrect: He stated that he had served the Dutch West India Company in Africa for more than fifteen years and “[. . .] was gladly willing to stay on for some time longer, but that he could no longer withstand the desire to return to Europe again [. . .].”⁷¹ Uncommonly quickly, Arij was able to depart the African shores on the private trader *Snoek en Both* (“Pike and Flounder”).⁷²

What, then, was Arij’s mindset when we returned to the Netherlands? How did he see himself, and how was he regarded by his environment? From his resignation letter, we can gauge that he considered himself a European in the end, since he wrote of *returning* to the Netherlands. What were his expectations concerning retirement at age thirty-four (!) to a society he grew up in as a parentless black boy? It was also a society he had grown apart from for sixteen equally formative years, and in which he had no family relations to speak of. His foster parents were dead, and there is no evidence of any contact between Arij and their children.

At first Arij did what many other Dutch West India Company retirees from West Africa did: He settled in Amsterdam and set up shop as an investor in the Atlantic slave trade and plantations in the Caribbean. He quickly shifted his attention and interest to the area of his youth, however – the town and countryside of Groningen. He withdrew the money originally invested in a plantation in Suriname and bought himself a grand manor just north of the town of Groningen. It consisted of a manor house along with land, rented farms, orchards, and a multitude of rights: the right to appoint officials, the right to dispense justice, the right to collect rents and dues on waterworks and tolls, and so on.⁷³

From one day to the next, Arij de Graaff thus became a lord of the manor and member of the landed gentry of the province of Groningen in the north of the Netherlands. This was also how he set himself up for the next two decades: He married the seventeen-year-old daughter of the Groningen city printer in an agreement that involved an exchange of money between Arij and his in-laws. From the evidence, it looks very much as though Arij paid a bride price to his parents-in-law. It comprised the sum of 6,000 guilders in the form of a loan, which was never repaid. The original loan certificates were still in Arij’s possession at the time of his death, without a decla-

70 NL-HaNA, Coast of Guinea, 1.05.14, cat. no. 298, Protocol of original documents 1760–1762, fol. 184: Request with positive decision, Elmina, October 25, 1762.

71 NL-HaNA, Coast of Guinea, 1.05.14, cat. no. 298, Protocol of original documents 1760–1762, fol. 184: Request with positive decision, Elmina, October 25, 1762: “[. . .] nog voor eenige tijd geerne zouden willen hebben volharder; Dog de begeerte om weder na Europa te keeren niet langer kunnende wederstaan [. . .].”

72 Departure from Elmina, November 22, 1762; NL-HaNA, Coast of Guinea, 1.05.14, cat. no. 123, Government journal 1762.

73 Wiebe Jannes Formsma, Riektje Annie Luitjens-Dijkveld Stol, and Adolf Pathuis, *De Ommelander borgen en steenhuizen*, 2nd ed. (Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1987), 340–346, 473–476; Doortmont and Everts, “Arij de Graaff,” 197, 209–210 Fig. 4.2, 216–218.

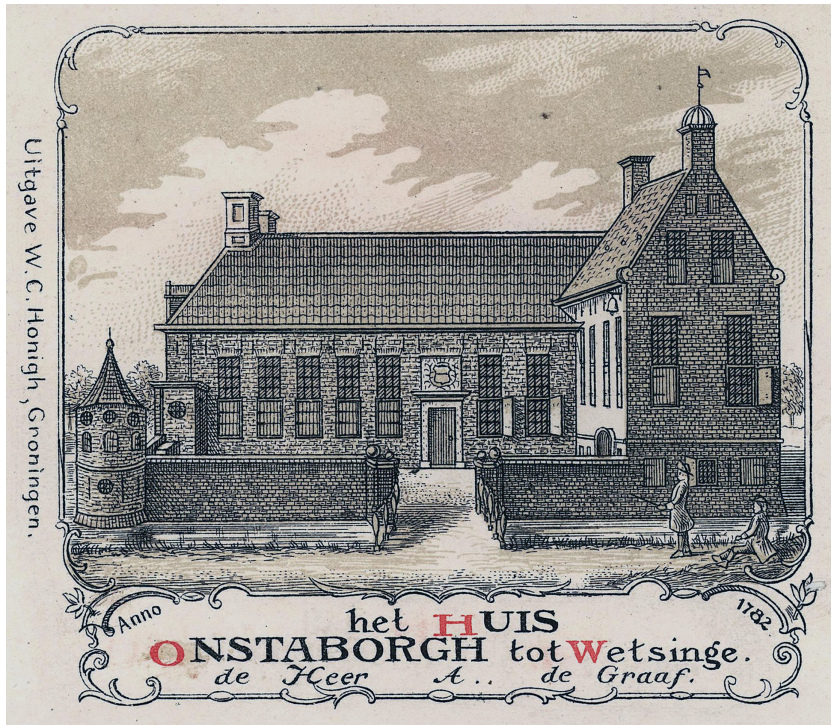


Fig. 4.4: Onstaborg in Wetsinge, Groningen, 1782, with one of the figures on the right most likely depicting Arij de Graaff himself. By: Theodorus Beckeringh (1712–1790). Picture postcard from original etching, 1872. Collection Groninger Archieven, cat. No. NL-GnGRA_1986_7419, <https://hdl.handle.net/21.12105/7b5c07f2-95f0-6aca-93af-176916004d27>, last accessed December 20, 2023. Public domain.

ration of payment being made upon them. Payment of a bride price in this form was not usual in Dutch society, and we can wonder whether Arij's social position as a coloured outsider had something to do with it. Although marriages between Euro-African men of some social standing and Dutch women were not uncommon, in most cases the bride was “socially damaged”, for example by being a young widow with children or a divorcee. Alternatively, the bride could be of (slightly) lower social standing or background, for instance as a recent arrival in town from the province.⁷⁴ This was obviously not the case here, however.

The couple settled at Onstaborg manor in Wetsinge and had four children there. In 1771, Arij's wife died in childbirth, leaving him to look after the children by himself. From the available sources, it can be determined that Arij truly retired from public life at this point: He no longer engaged in any economic activity and is hardly visible

⁷⁴ Doortmont, *The Dutch Atlantic Slave Trade as Family Business*, forthcoming.

in the public offices that came with the manor. He did collect income from these offices, however, and will have dealt with the appointment of officials now and then.⁷⁵

When it comes to personal identity, there are several pointers concerning Arij's social standing and the way in which his environment may have viewed him, as well as how he himself perceived his position. One of these is the social status of his African son Martinus. Arij first set Martinus up to run a plantation in Suriname, but this scheme fell through.⁷⁶ The exact reasons for the failure are not clear and may have had to do with finances, with Martinus' aptitude as manager, or with a racial issue. At the time, there were only a handful of plantation directors of colour in Suriname.⁷⁷ Alternatively, there may have been personal considerations on the part of either Martinus or Arij not to go through with the business. Martinus then settled in Groningen as well, probably at Onstaborg. He married a girl from Groningen town, and the wedding was celebrated at his father's house. The girl, named Aukjen Obbens, was most likely from a working-class background, which made the match socially quite inferior to Arij's own. After a couple of years, Arij and Martinus seem to have become estranged, and Martinus left for the East Indies in 1786, where he died soon after his arrival.⁷⁸

An important question to ask here is whether racism in Groningen society had a place in social relations, and how it influenced Arij's life and that of his family. In eighteenth-century discourse, colour was not a marker for social relations, or at least not a distinguishable one. So we have to look for other pointers – and in the case of Arij, we have several. From the inventory of his estate compiled after his death in 1788, we know that he enjoyed an ostentatious lifestyle quite far removed from the rather sober way of living normally attributed to the good citizens of Groningen town and countryside. His wardrobe was filled with luxurious garments made from expensive cloth, like regular and damask silk and chintz. Many clothes were adorned with gold threading and embroidery, as well as with gold or silver buttons and buckles. When he went out, Arij de Graaff would carry his gold watch and chain with his seal carved in a semi-precious stone and set in gold, a gold ring set with a blue or white

75 On the rights of the lord of the manor, see Formsma, Luitjens-Dijkveld Stol, and Pathuis, *De Omme-lander borgen*, 34–35.

76 City Archives Amsterdam, Notarial Archives Amsterdam, coll. no. 5075, cat. no. 12473, no. 95: Power of attorney by Arij de Graaff on the firm Pieter Rijdenius & Zoon, merchants in Amsterdam, March 25, 1775. The cost to set up an average-sized coffee or cotton plantation with 124 slaves and a large shed was estimated at 99,000 Dutch guilders in 1787. Cf. Alex van Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast: Roofbouw en overleven in een Caraïbische plantagekolonie, 1750–1863* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 258.

77 Doortmont, *The Dutch Atlantic Slave Trade as Family Business*, forthcoming.

78 Martinus de Graaff departed with the ship *Berkhout*, Chamber Hoorn, from the roadstead of Texel on November 20, 1786, and the ship arrived in Batavia on June 10, 1787. National Archives, The Hague, access no. 1.04.02, United East India Company archives, cat. no. 14516, *Berkhout: Grootboek 1786–1787*, fol. 102 (DAS no. 4531.2), https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/en/research/archive/1.04.02/invnr/14516/file/NL-HaNA_1.04.02_14516_0119, last accessed December 20, 2023.

stone, a silver tobacco box inlaid with mother-of-pearl, any one of a collection of silver snuff boxes, his penknife with green agate haft, and his tortoise-shell walking stick with a gold knob. On special occasions, he could choose from four gilded or solid silver ornamental swords to stand out within his social circle. Travel in the countryside was done by horse-drawn carriage, with four rather than the usual two horses. All in all, he must have made quite an impression.⁷⁹

To interpret the social position of a highly visible African man in the late eighteenth-century Groningen countryside is a challenging exercise. Where his countrymen in the towns of the western Netherlands often turned into “invisible Africans”, this was certainly not the case with Arij. In fact, uncertainties abound about the social responses to a man of colour occupying the powerful position of lord of the manor, which had been a privilege of the indigenous nobility and landed gentry only a few years earlier. The Groningen countryside – and the town of Groningen, for that matter – did not have the cosmopolitan character of international port cities like Amsterdam and Rotterdam at the time. A black face was a peculiarity; a black lord of the manor must have sent quite a shockwave through the generally conservative Groningen society. This might have been the reason for Arij to send Martinus to Suriname by the mid-1770s, and it could also explain why he chose the church in Adorp over those in Wetsinge and Sauwerd for the baptism of three of his children and the confirmation of Martinus in the period between 1769 and 1778. It is likely that there was a social or racial problem with the church vicar of Wetsinge and Sauwerd, whom Arij had the right to appoint but not sack. If Arij and his family frequented the church in Adorp precisely for this reason, it must have caused quite a stir in the local community. The church at Adorp was located several kilometres further away from Onstaborg than the other two houses of worship. In fact, one had to travel straight through both Wetsinge and Sauwerd, past the two village churches, to reach the church in Adorp. This means that Arij and his family made a strong and highly visible socio-political statement each Sunday simply by travelling to church. If there were any problems with the church, however, they were resolved by the time Arij’s son Martinus was married in 1784: By then, Arij had appointed a new vicar.⁸⁰

Arij de Graaff died in his house on April 2, 1788, at fifty-eight years old. He was buried in a private vault in the church of Wetsinge, which remained in the family after the sale of the Onstaborg manor. In a holographic will, Arij had appointed two executors and guardians: Scato Gockinga, vice-president of the High Court of Justice of Groningen, and Hendrik Gerrit van Bulderen, town councillor of Groningen and bookkeeper of the Dutch West India Company chamber *Stad en Lande*. Both men were friends or at least close acquaintances of Arij’s, a further indication of a persistent connection to the urban elite

⁷⁹ Groningen Archives, High Chamber of Justice, cat. no. 1856, Estate inventories 1710–1788: Estate of Arij de Graaff, July 24, 1788.

⁸⁰ Groningen Archives, Baptisms, marriages, and burials Wetsinge, cat. no. 533, Netherlands Reformed Church, baptisms and church membership.

of Groningen and West Indian interests. His inheritance went to the children from his Dutch marriage, with no sign of his two remaining African children – both of whom lived in Europe – being beneficiaries. It should be noted, however, that Arij's will has hitherto not been found and might therefore include provisions for his African children as well. In any case, a sum of 35,000 guilders is unaccounted for in the estate. The known content of the will comes from documents attached to the inventory and account of the estate.⁸¹

We can thus conclude that after his settlement in the Netherlands, Arij de Graaff identified as a Dutchman, and in fact even as a man from Groningen. This chosen identity is the one that shines through in his actions and choices in life, and the one that defined him. At the same time, there is the other Arij de Graaff, with his lavish clothing style and appearance and the opulently decorated residence uncommon for the times and the region. Whether the chosen identity tallied with his ascribed identity – the way in which his social circle saw and defined him – is a matter for conjecture, at least up to a point. Deciding factors here may have been his physical appearance and known origin, as well as his social behaviour and his social stature on the Gold Coast.

Conclusion

Comparing the cases of Christiaan van der Vegt and Arij de Graaff, contemporaries with a common geographical and ethnic origin but vastly different life histories, offers important insights into the way in which Africans functioned and were perceived in the late eighteenth-century Netherlands. Christiaan is an example of the many young boys brought to the Netherlands as by-products of the Atlantic slave trade. They were trade goods – for all intents and purposes, enslaved people. Upon their arrival in the Netherlands, they were fitted into a social (and legal) niche in which they were assigned a certain value and status as social ornaments while still being socially and economically completely dependent (and thus unfree). This posed problems when these boys grew up and their “benefactors” wished to get rid of them. Christening and some small gifts to enable them to marry and acquire economic independence of sorts, as in the case of Christiaan, represented the “benevolent” manner of releasing them into Dutch society – and more often than not, into obscurity and poverty.

In the case of Arij de Graaff and other Euro-African children like him, the situation was completely different. They were not so much by-products of the Atlantic slave trade but rather a social consequence of it. The difference is in their status: While the boy servants were another form of enslaved persons, the children of European men and African women were a divergent social category. This is clear from the

⁸¹ Groningen Archives, Judicial archives of Wetsinge and Sauwerd, box 994, cat. no. 2065, Protocol of ordinary civil cases 1772–1796, entries for April–May 1788.

way in which Arij was received in Dutch society both as a child and as an adult after his return from Africa in 1762, as well as from the way in which he developed his social circle in the Netherlands. Economic independence is an important factor here, as is the social acceptance by his peers that allowed for a good marriage and a well-established circle of friends and acquaintances.

By contrast, the racial factor affected both men. The end of the eighteenth century saw a considerable influx of people of colour into the Netherlands, and a lively debate about the merits and tenacities of the slave trade and slavery ensued, connected to new ideas about social identity. This meant that all people of colour, regardless of their social background or creed, came under a looking glass. The example of Arij's son Martinus and his alienation from Groningen society, as well as Arij's own tussle with the vicar who could be considered his employee, are enlightening in this context, as are the circumstances of marriage and social status of the brides of father and son. The biographies of Christiaan van der Vegt and Arij de Graaff thus exemplify (structural) patterns as well as variations of African lives in the eighteenth-century Netherlands.

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5 Race, Slavery, and the Market: African Lives in Eighteenth-Century Copenhagen

In this chapter, I focus on the ways in which race, slavery, and commerce shaped life for Africans and African Caribbeans in Copenhagen, the capital of the Danish-Norwegian dual monarchy, in the eighteenth century. Racial categories had been firmly established in Denmark's Caribbean possessions since the early colonization efforts in the 1670s, with the category of the "negro" equaling slave status and undergirding the exploitation of enslaved Africans on sugar and cotton estates.¹ Racial ideas also permeated Danish merchants' travel literature about the Gold Coast and slowly came to shape the encounter between slave traders at Fort Christiansborg and people in Osu, the town adjacent to the fort.² Copenhagen, the financial center of the Danish colonial empire, likewise saw the emergence of a vernacular of race. Racial ideas came to Copenhagen as detailed news from the wider Atlantic was published in the city's relatively small press; they were also made available to Copenhagengers in a limited number of travel accounts and circulated in the households of absentee planters, colonial officers, merchants, and noblemen and -women with money and prestige invested in colonial ventures. This vernacular came to shape (and was simultaneously shaped by) the slave trading and enslavement that began to appear in Copenhagen at the very same time as race emerged with force as a topic in the capital's newspapers.

The argument that follows contributes to a historiographical debate about the position and social experiences of Africans and African Caribbeans in Europe. Older works have underlined the capacity of race to exclude such migrants from European societies.³ By contrast, newer social histories such as Anne Kuhlmann-Smirnov's *Schwarze Europäer im Alten Reich* (2014) and Kathleen Chater's *Untold Histories*

1 Gunvor Simonsen, *Slave Stories: Law, Representation, and Gender in the Danish West Indies* (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2017), 21–76; Neville A. T. Hall, *Slave Society in the Danish West Indies: St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix* (Mona, Jamaica: The University of the West Indies Press, 1992), in particular 34–55.

2 Pernille Ipsen, *Daughters of the Trade: Atlantic Slavers and Interracial Marriage on the Gold Coast* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 1–180.

3 Peter Martin, *Schwarze Teufel, edle Mohren: Afrikaner in Bewusstsein und Geschichte der Deutschen* (Hamburg: Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung, 1993), in particular 9–14, 129–181, and 328. Folarin Shyllon, *Black People in Britain, 1555–1833* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), see for example ix–x and 241–243.

Note: The author would like to thank Dr Johan Heinsen as well as the other participants in the workshop “Negotiating Status and Scope of Action – Interrelations between Slavery and Other Forms of Dependency in Early Modern Europe,” Universität Bremen, June 2017 for insightful comments which taken together improved the essay.

(2009) have emphasized the possibilities of social integration in ancien régime Europe. They argue that race had less, perhaps even very little, real influence on the everyday life of Africans and their descendants.⁴ In the Danish context, historian Per Nielsen makes a similar argument – albeit for the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – in *Fru Jensen og andre vestindiske danskere* (Miss Jensen and Other West Indian Danes; 2015).⁵

Clearly, the extent of Africans' integration into European societies is important for understanding how ideas and practices of racial servitude and slavery shaped life for Africans and their descendants in Europe. Pernille Ipsen has suggested with regard to the nineteenth century that racial ideas linking blackness to plantation slavery prevented the integration of at least some Africans into Danish society during a period marked by emergent national sentiment.⁶ Here I suggest that we pay more attention to the ways in which racial thinking fed into the creation of patterned (market) positions against which – and with which – Africans and their descendants had to negotiate a life for themselves in the city. The concept of race emerging in Copenhagen in the second half of the eighteenth century tied blackness to slavery and servitude – as it did in the wider Atlantic world surrounding Copenhagen. Yet it also underwent a process of localization as it unfolded in the city's newspapers in which a vernacular of race developed that accentuated some elements of a larger Atlantic racial discourse while underexposing others. In Copenhagen, the drudgery of sugar estates received little coverage, and the concept of the “negro” was primarily (though not exclusively) established in reports on colonial wars, slave rebellions, and Atlantic commerce. As a result, discursive “negroes” as they figured in Copenhagen's newspapers set in motion commercial transactions and prospects of profit. For the relatively few Africans and African Caribbeans who came to live in the city, this discursive configuration meant they were likely expected by Copenhageners to adapt to the urban market with the same ease and within the same boundaries as their media counterparts.⁷

4 Kathleen Chater, *Untold Histories: Black People in England and Wales during the Period of the British Slave Trade, c. 1660–1807* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), in particular 159–221; Anne Kuhlmann-Smirnov, “Ambiguous Duty: Black Servants at German Ancien Régime Courts,” in *Germany and the Black Diaspora: Points of Contact, 1250–1914*, ed. Mischa Honeck, Martin Klimke, and Anne Kuhlmann-Smirnov (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 53–73.

5 Per Nielsen, *Fru Jensen og andre vestindiske danskere, dansk-vestindiske sømænd, tjenestefolk og arbejdere i Danmark, 1880–1920* (Copenhagen: Nationalmuseet, Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2015), see for example 271–285.

6 Pernille Ipsen, “Plant ikke Upas-Træet om vor Bolig’: Colonial Haunting, Race, and Interracial Marriage in Hans Christian Andersen's *Mulatten* (1840),” *Scandinavian Studies* 88, no. 2 (2016): 129–158; Ipsen, *Daughters of the Trade*, 84–111.

7 The notion of localization as used in this chapter is inspired by the conceptual framework developed by anthropologist Anna Tsing to study how concepts that claim universal applicability, i.e., “universals” – in this case the notion of race, and in particular the concept of the “negro” – emerge in specific encounters. It is thus an attempt to pursue the idea that race, despite being an overarching

Race and Commercial Bondage

An early glimpse of the reception and transformation that racial thinking underwent as it entered Danish society through a variety of colonial agents, company directors, merchants, newsmen and writers, thinkers and early scientists is provided by the comprehensive Danish(-Latin) dictionary and lexicon compiled by Matthias Moth from the late 1680s until his death in 1719; the 62-volume work consisting of 8,700 handwritten pages was never published, however. By 1690, Moth had attained the influential position of chief secretary of the Danish Chancellery and also served as director in the Danish West India and Guinea Company, which was established in 1671 as a West Indian venture and also held monopoly privileges in the African trade from 1674. As secretary at the Chancellery, Moth mobilized the assistance of the Lutheran Church and requested bishops, clergymen, and catechists to collect colloquial and even vulgar words, terms, and expressions for his dictionary.⁸

The wealth of input Moth received from clergymen residing in Denmark did not fill the pages of his dictionary with a racialized vocabulary. Moth also appears not to have relied on his own privileged knowledge of Atlantic slaving and slavery obtained through his directorship in the West India company. Terms such as “*negere*” and “*mulatter*” (“negroes” respectively “mulattos”) were rare – as was “*blanke*” (“whites”), a term that appeared in the colonial jargon developed among Danish speakers to describe and enact racial slavery in the Danish Caribbean colony of St. Thomas, established in 1672 and later supplemented with St. John in 1718 and St. Croix in 1733. Indeed, “the West Indies” was an almost empty category in Moth’s lexicon, characterized only by its opposition to the East Indies and its location west of Europe. Likewise, the “Antilles” were a region defined by European colonial powers including Denmark, which held dominion over “St. Tomes, St. Jan, Passage, and Crabben Island,” as well as by its old inhabitants, “*Kareiberne*,” the Caribbeans, who were still present in St. Vincent and Dominica among other places. Despite his own involvement in the slave trade, Moth failed to note that enslaved Africans also populated the Caribbean islands.⁹

Had Moth drawn on the reports he received from the Danish colony of St. Thomas in the Lesser Antilles, he could certainly have included more meaningful descriptions

colonial claim about the nature of Africans, did “not actually make everything everywhere the same.” Universals, Tsing argues, “are effective within particular historical conjunctures that give them content and force.” See Anna L. Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), quotes at 1, 8. For the interpretive benefits of approaching historical sites as emerging from scaling processes, see also Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 115–140.

⁸ The history of Moth’s dictionary is described briefly in Svend Eegholm-Pedersen, “Ministerens ordbog. Matthias Moths store danske ordbog 1700–1717,” *Magasin fra Det Kongelige Bibliotek* no. 4 (2013): 23–37. The following is based on the online edition of Moth’s dictionary, last accessed November 7, 2023, <http://mothsordbog.dk/>.

⁹ *Moths ordbog*, entry “Antiller.”

of the enslavement of Africans. As early as 1688, sixteen years after the Danish colonization began, St. Thomas had a population of 442 enslaved Africans and 317 Europeans. By 1715, these numbers would increase to more than 3,000 slaves and approximately 550 free inhabitants.¹⁰ Moth, however, did not use his insider knowledge of the African slave trade and Caribbean slavery when he decided – apparently with little scribal assistance – which words would make it into his lexicon. This may have been because he did not consider the language of race particularly relevant to his ambition of creating a compilation of vernacular Danish. But regardless of his reasons, Moth’s limited engagement with Atlantic slavery – devoting little space to Africans and even less to the West Indies – relegated race to the textual margins of his work, with the effect that it came to appear as a phenomenon foreign to Denmark in the dictionary.¹¹

It was not merely in the unpublished folios of Moth’s dictionary that racialized slavery received limited attention, however. In the voluminous geographic-historical treatise *Den Danske Pillegrim, Eller en Almindelig Geographisk Og der hos kort Historisk Beskrivelse Over den heele Bekiendte Werden* (1707) (The Danish Pilgrim, Or a General Geographical and also Short Historical Description of the Entire Known World), Henrik Ovesen Pflug, who had tried in vain to become involved in Danish colonial projects in the Caribbean with a proposal for the settlement of Crab Island (today: Vieques off the coast of Puerto Rico), likewise did not describe the transatlantic slave trade in any detail. Drawing on the works of earlier writers such as Sebastian Müller (*Cosmographia*, 1544) and Wilhelm Johann Müller (*Die Africanische auf der Guineischen Gold-Cust gelegene Landschafft Fetu*, 1675), Pflug populated Africa with people who lacked faith, ate strange foods, and exhibited libidinous sexuality. At times, African rulers and elites also had slaves, such as the Abyssal emperor, who obtained his riches from the “fruits he has his slaves grow and prepare,” the Fetu elite, whose “magnificence, glory and wealth [. . .] consisted mostly of women, children, and slaves,” and the people of the Loango kingdom, whose fortunes comprised “slaves and female slaves” among other things.¹² Yet these enslaved people were rarely linked to the transatlantic slave trade.

The dissociation of West Africa and the Americas maintained by Pflug is particularly visible in his description of the Danish Atlantic colonial engagements. Drawing on Müller’s work on the Fetu region, where the Danes were active, Pflug explained in a

¹⁰ Waldemar Westergaard, *The Danish West Indies under Company Rule, 1671–1754. With a supplementary chapter, 1755–1917* (New York: Macmillan, 1917), appendix H, 318. See also Erik Gøbel, *Vestindisk-guineisk Kompagni 1671–1754: Studier og kilder til kompagniet og kolonierne, med Peder Mariagers beretning om kompagniet* (Odense: Odense Universitetsforlag, 2015), 178–319.

¹¹ *Moths ordbog*, entry “Vestindien”; Gøbel, *Vestindisk-guineisk Kompagni*, 45.

¹² Henrik Ovensen Pflug, *Den Danske Pillegrim, Eller en Almindelig Geographisk Og der hos kort Historisk Beskrivelse Over den heele Bekiendte Werden* (Copenhagen: Henrik Ovensen Pflug, 1707), 1030: “de Frugter hand ved Sine Slaver lader drive og forarbejde,” 1082: “pragt / Herlighed og Rigdom [. . .] som bestaar meest i Quinder Børn og Slaver,” 1043–1044: “Slaver og Slavinder.”

section on trade that the people of Fetu and the Europeans traded wools, linens, cottons, silks, veils, and East Indian cloth in addition to copper and brass, bracelets, and large and small red corals. Yet he failed to mention what Europeans received in return for all these goods. As a consequence, no Africans became objects of Atlantic slave trading in his prose.¹³ In Pflug's Americas people of African descent were also strangely absent. Pflug, who as mentioned had harbored colonial aspirations in the Danish Caribbean, praised St. Thomas for all its produce. There "absolutely nothing" was "lacking;" indeed, with "160 slaves' annual work," one could "produce 300,000 pounds of sugar." According to Pflug, St. Thomas was "very convenient for commerce when one knows how to trade with slaves and other goods." In Africa, there were "moors," "blacks," and "*nigritier*," while St. Thomas had "slaves" who could be traded.¹⁴

Although racialized slavery did not figure prominently in the writings of Moth and Pflug, the ties between bondage and color – which had been drawn with increasing strength in the Atlantic trading system since the fifteenth-century encounter between West Africans and the Portuguese – found their way into both of their works. Pflug, for example, related in passing that the Caribbean islands were linked to West Africa by the trade in Barbadian rum.¹⁵ Moth went even further: In a few topographical entries, he linked Africa to skin pigmentation and transatlantic slavery. In Africa, Moth noted, people were "yellow and black of color," with those of the former complexion living in the North and those of the latter "in the rest of Africa."¹⁶ In Moth's lexicon, Atlantic slavery emerged in a region he termed the "*Negeri*," which was inhabited by "*Negrer*." The toponym, Moth suggested, ought to count as a Danish translation of the French "*le país de Negres*," the Italian "*la Nigritia, la terra de Negri*," the Spanish "*la terra dos Negros*," the English "*Negroland*," and the Dutch "*het Negros, 't land der Zwartten*."¹⁷ He thereby indicated that the language of race came to Denmark through the experiences of and linguistic innovations made by other major Atlantic slave trading nations.¹⁸

In Moth's description, Africans were marked by their skin color, which in his discourse was associated with their involvement in commercial processes of enslave-

¹³ Pflug, *Den Danske Pillegrim*, 1121.

¹⁴ Pflug, *Den Danske Pillegrim*, 1173: "saa at der aldeelis intet mangler / og skulle 160 Slaver Aarlige arbejde og forskaffe 300000 Pund Sukker [. . .] meget bejelig til Købmandskab / naar mand veed at handle med Slaver og andet." For examples of the racial terminology used by Pflug, see also 1005 and 1016–1018.

¹⁵ Pflug, *Den Danske Pillegrim*, 1105.

¹⁶ *Moths ordbog*, entry "Afriken": "gule og sorte af farve" and "i resten af Afriken."

¹⁷ *Moths ordbog*, entry "Negeri." See also the entry "Ginedien," in which Moth briefly mentions the Danish forts established on the Gold Coast.

¹⁸ For two important contributions concerning the origins of racist thought, see James H. Sweet, "The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought," *William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (1997): 143–166; Benjamin Braude, "The Sons of Noah and the Construction of Ethnic and Geographical Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods," *William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (1997): 103–142.

ment and slave trading as enslavers and as slaves. According to Moth, the “*Negeri*” was a fertile and rich region yielding rice, flax, cotton, honey, grey amber, gold, and copper, but “the largest trade is in slaves, whom the inhabitants sell to the Europeans. The inhabitants are black and the largest part of them being Mahmotians and the others Heathens.”¹⁹ What stands out in this early and inchoate formulation of the effects of blackness in the region of the “*Negeri*” inhabited by “*Negrer*” were the transformations that people who were “black” or “negroes” were prone to undergo. They were malleable, both subjects and objects of the mutation of people into slaves and slaves into capital. By contrast, Moth figured Europeans as people with a pigmentation not worth noting, whose participation in the slave trade rendered them stable. Europeans remained the buyers of slaves, dissociated from the transformative processes that engulfed the people of the “*Negeri*.”²⁰

The early translation of the Atlantic slave trade and slavery into Danish scholarly works by Moth and Pflug would soon be paralleled and expanded by Ludvig Holberg, an important Enlightenment thinker, historian, and playwright as well as a small investor in the West India and Guinea Company and larger investor in the company’s sugar refinery in the shipping district Christianshavn in Copenhagen.²¹ In Holberg’s *Anhang. Til hans Historiske Introduction* (Supplement. To His Historical Introduction; 1713), Holberg noted that the English brought “*Negros* or black slaves” to the Americas and sold them to the Spanish.²² By associating the concept of the “negro” with English slave traders and Spanish slave buyers, Holberg extended its coverage: It was made to reference not merely dark complexion but also commercial enslavement in the Atlantic trading system.

As a learned scholar, Holberg could have opted for a straightforward translation of the Latin *niger* into the Danish (and German) term “*neger*,” which had been part of a Danish Caribbean vocabulary since the early days of colonization. It was used, for instance, by Jørgen Iversen, the first governor of St. Thomas in 1672, in his very first legal ordinance, which stipulated that “*negere*” were not allowed to leave their mas-

19 *Moths ordbog*, entry “*Negeri*”: “men den største handel er med slaver, som indbyggerne selger til Europerne. Indvånerne er sorte, og, den største del deraf, Mahmoter, og de andre Hedninger.”

20 *Moths ordbog*, entry “Europe,” “Europeer.”

21 Poul Peter Sveistrup and Richard Willerslev, *Den danske Sukkerhandels- og Sukkerproduktions Historie* (Copenhagen: Nordisk Forlag, 1945), 34–35. See also Sebastian Olden-Jørgensen, “Introduction, Part 1: Holberg’s Life and Career,” in *Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754): Learning and Literature in the Nordic Enlightenment*, ed. Sebastian Olden-Jørgensen and Knud Haakonssen (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017), 3–11; Knud Haakonssen, “Introduction, Part 2: The Author and the Work,” in *ibid.*, 13–25.

22 Holberg’s entire oeuvre is available as digitized originals and as searchable text at: Ludvig Holbergs Skrifter (hereafter abbreviated “LHS”), last accessed November 7, 2023, <http://holbergsskrifter.dk>. The following citations are based on this resource. Ludvig Holberg, *Anhang. Til hans Historiske Introduction Eller Underretning Om de Fornemste Europæiske Rigers og Republikvers, Uddrage af de oprigtigste particuliere State, Jure Publico, og itzige Seculi Historie, Og deelt udi 5 Parter. Første Part* (Copenhagen: Ove Lynnow, 1713), 130: “*Negros* eller Sorte Slaver,” my emphasis.

ter's premises after sunset; infractions would occasion punishment at the fort.²³ Instead of turning to the Danish West Indies, however, Holberg drew on an English (or Spanish) Atlantic vocabulary. Why he decided on the foreign term “negroes” to describe enslaved Africans despite otherwise making a strong case for writing in Danish remains unclear. The Danish West India and Guinea Company enjoyed full royal support, and there is no indication that censorship practices in Denmark targeted Danish colonial projects. After publishing the *Supplement* in 1713, Holberg applied as and was appointed professor designate by King Frederik IV, and in 1717 he attained a salaried professorship at Copenhagen University. As an aspiring university professor writing to a learned audience about a subject of interest for the absolutist and mercantilist state, it is unlikely that Holberg's foreign word choice was prompted by political concerns or pressure.²⁴ Yet what we have here is perhaps an indication that Holberg, like Moth and Pflug, saw racialized slavery as a phenomenon alien to Denmark and primarily in the hands of foreign and more powerful nations. While it was certainly not wrong that other European states were intensely engaged in the transatlantic slave trade and Atlantic colonization, it was nevertheless a presentation that effaced the slaving carried out by the Danish West India and Guinea Company on St. Thomas and St. John in the eastern Caribbean, as well as in the forts and lodges established on the Gold Coast.²⁵

In a subsequent treatise, *Dannemarks og Norges Beskrivelse* (1729) (Description of Denmark and Norway), Holberg argued that slavery was a specifically colonial phenomenon absent from Danish society. He took issue with the strong criticism of Danish absolutism voiced by the English envoy to the Danish court, Robert Molesworth, in his *Account of Denmark, as It Was in the Year 1692* (1694). Molesworth had claimed that bonded peasants in Denmark were comparable to the enslaved in Barbados. While Holberg did not question that slavery existed among “blacks in Barbadoes [sic],” he argued that it was not to be found in Denmark. The question hinged on the status of the *vornede* (villeins) found on Zealand, the eastern land of the Danish kingdom.²⁶ At the time of Holberg's writing, this status had been abolished by royal decree in 1702 for all males born in 1699 and thereafter. Yet it was reintroduced with age

23 Rigsarkivet, The Danish National Archives: 442, Generaltoldkammeret, Vestindisk-guineisk renteskriverkontor, Koloniale plakater, bekendtgørelser og befalinger for St. Thomas og St. Jan, 1672–1842, placard August 8, 1672, § 13.

24 For an analysis of censorship practices in Denmark during the eighteenth century, see Jesper Jakobsen, “Uanstændige, utilladelige og unyttige skrifter: En undersøgelse af cenuren i praksis, 1746–1773” (PhD diss., Københavns Universitet, 2017), in particular 42–69.

25 Holberg did not use the Danish terms *neger*, *negre*, *mulat*, *malat*, *mohr*, or *moor* in his writings. In fact, he did not use racial labels often. The term *negros* appears in three of his works and the term *negroes* in two; these results were generated by: LHS, last accessed November 7, 2023, <http://holbergs.skrifter.dk>.

26 Ludvig Holberg, *Dannemarks og Norges Beskrivelse* (Copenhagen: Johan Jørgen Høpffner Universitetets Bogtrykker, 1729), 536–541, quote at 536: “sorte udi Barbadoes.”

limitations as *stavnsbåndet* (adscription) in 1733. Until 1788, when it was finally abolished, it tied boys and men to the estates on which they were born until they were well into their thirties.²⁷

Holberg was keen to refute Molesworth's claim that Denmark was stained by slavery. In Denmark, he explained, there were "half-slaves."²⁸ This expression served to contain commercial and supposedly full slavery to the West African coast and the Caribbean colonies. Yet it also inadvertently pointed to overlaps between early modern forms of labor extraction despite Holberg's efforts to dissociate native bondage from colonial practices. In his polemic, Molesworth had noted that "in Zealand they [the villeins] are all as absolut [sic] slaves as the Negroes are in Barbadoes [sic]," which Holberg rendered as "the peasants of Zealand are just as much slaves as the blacks in Barbadoes [sic]."²⁹ According to Holberg, this was a hasty conclusion. Citing Roman precedents, he explained that Zealand's peasants were *adscripti glebae* (persons tied to estate soil) rather than *vernae* (slaves born in the household), and thus in a better position than their antique forebears.³⁰ They could be freed, and they could secure their own freedom by engaging in bookish arts and religious study. Nevertheless, these peasants were bound to serve and reside according to the wishes of their lords, who had "the power to free them or exchange them or to sell them their freedom."³¹

In their relation to estate land, as Holberg wrote, Danish bonded peasants were "absolutely un-free, and are to be counted as half thralls and slaves."³² The position of the half-slaves was characterized by their grounding and immobility. Their dependence was historically dictated; a result of ancient royal privileges bestowed on manorial lords. In Holberg's somewhat baroque rhetorical universe, what distinguished the half-slave from the slave was therefore that the latter's complexion made him or her the mobile object of the commercialized transactions taking place in the Atlantic slave trading system. After all, the English could not sell Zealand's peasants to the Spanish in America.

27 Ole Feldbæk, *Den lange fred*, vol. 9 of *Gyldendal og Politikens Danmarkshistorie*, ed. Olaf Olsen (Copenhagen: Gyldendal & Politikens Forlag, 1990), 154–157.

28 Holberg, *Dannemarks*, 540.

29 Holberg, *Dannemarks*, 536: "Det er: De Siællandske bønder ere ligesaa store slaver, som de sorte udi Barbadoes."

30 The attempt to characterize forms of bondage in Europe by reference to Roman precedents was a widespread phenomenon; see for example Michael Guasco, *Slaves and Englishmen: Human Bondage in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 26–33.

31 Holberg, *Dannemarks*, 537: "magt at frigive og bytte dem bort, eller at selge dem deres frihed."

32 Holberg, *Dannemarks*, 540: "gandske u-frie, og som halve trælle og slaver at regne."

The Vernacular of Race

Authors such as Moth, Plug, and Holberg although engaged in the Atlantic slave trading system, did not share with their readers their presumably detailed knowledge of the slave trade and Caribbean racialized slavery. Their positions may be read as half-hearted arguments for the irrelevance of racial slavery to Danish society, and their indifference to racial slavery was paralleled in the limited coverage of the topic in the Copenhagen press during the first half of the eighteenth century. Until the mid-eighteenth century, newspapers seldom contained pieces mobilizing the language of racial slavery.³³

Such positions would not endure, however. During the second half of the century, Copenhagen's newspapers and magazines frequently presented detailed reports – received via London, Paris, Amsterdam, The Hague, Madrid, Lisbon, and occasionally directly from the Americas – about the expanding world of the Atlantic slave trade and slavery. The emergence of this new and public flow of knowledge may have been connected to the growing maturity of news production in Copenhagen. It also coincided with the expansion of the Danish slave trade and slavery which boomed from the middle of the eighteenth century both in terms of slave voyages and numbers of people enslaved. In the West Indies, the purchase of St. Croix in 1733 enabled the Danish West India and Guinea Company – and the Danish-Norwegian state from 1754/1755 – to oversee the rapid development of a profitable sugar colony.³⁴

The language of race that subsequently emerged in Copenhagen was shaped by the fact that the city was the financial capital of a small empire whose officers often oriented themselves towards developments in the world beyond its imperial borders.³⁵ Links to other imperial capitals by way of postal services and a large mercantile fleet allowed information to reach Copenhagen not just from the Danish colonies

³³ The following is based on the online versions of Danish newspapers available at: Mediestream – Det kongelige bibliotek, last accessed November 7, 2023, <http://www2.statsbiblioteket.dk/mediestream/avis>.

I searched the period 1666–1799 for the following truncated terms: *neger**, *negre**, *mulat**, *malat**. While there were very few hits before 1750, the second half of the eighteenth century featured rich and detailed reporting of developments in the Atlantic world, including Denmark. One caveat should be made here, however: An initial search for the terms *mohr**, *moor**, and *morian** suggests that these terms were reserved for Muslims, primarily from North Africa. These groups and the way they were racialized are not taken into account here.

³⁴ Erik Gøbel, “Danmark – en slavehandelsnation,” in *Vestafrika: Forterne på Guldkysten*, ed. Per Oluf Hernæs (Copenhagen: Gad, 2017), 184–185; Gunvor Simonsen and Poul Erik Olsen, “Slavesamfundet konsolideres, 1740–1802,” in *Vestindien: St. Croix, St. Thomas og St. Jan*, ed. Poul Erik Olsen (Copenhagen: Gad, 2017), 132–209. The state bought out the stockholders of the company in 1754 and took over the Danish West Indies in 1755.

³⁵ On the politics of translation in early modern Europe, see Sophus A. Reinert, *Translating Empire: Emulation and the Origins of Political Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

but from most societies bordering the Atlantic Ocean. Editorial selection – a practice we know little about, but which presumably resulted from the interplay between the news items received from abroad, state censorship, and the preferences of native editors – introduced news criteria that established the “negro” as a category with multiple effects. Dark skin was synonymous with slavery, but it was also associated with the transformations and instability of the market and the changing political economy of the colonial world.

The knowledge mediated to Copenhageners in newspapers like *De til Forsendelse med Posten allene privilegerede Københavnske Tidender* (The Privileged Copenhagen News to Be Sent by Post) and *Kiøbenhavns Kongelig alene privilegerede Adresse-Contoirs Efterretninger* (Reports of the Royally Privileged Copenhagen Address Office) provided a reasonably comprehensive view of the locations of enslavement and slavery outside Denmark-Norway. In addition to news from the Danish West Indies and the Danish slave trading stations along the Gold Coast, Copenhageners could closely follow developments in the other Caribbean slave societies via reports from British islands such as Antigua, Barbados, Jamaica, and St. Vincent, from French islands such as Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Saint-Domingue, and from Dutch islands like Curaçao, Berbice, Sint Eustatius, and Suriname. News from South America, especially from Brazil, as well as from the North American mainland – for example from Nova Scotia, Rhode Island, Maryland, and South Carolina – also reached readers in the city, as did bulletins on the trade conditions, conflicts, and wars occurring along the West African littoral. Stories on specific forts such as Elmina and Christiansborg were provided alongside accounts describing larger regions such as Senegal and Guinea or individual kingdoms such as Dahomey and Kongo.

In detailed reports, mainly from the Seven Years War and the American Revolution, Copenhageners would learn that Africans were important to military success; their fighting strength could be used to bolster national and imperial ambitions. In 1759, for example, urban readers were informed via London that the British invasion of Martinique led by General Peregrine Hopson and Commodore John Moore had failed in part because of the fighting strength of Africans and African Caribbeans on the island. No “landing had ever happened with more courage than this,” the report claimed. Initially, the British troops had been “very content.” They knew that “all regular [French] forces were confined to Fort Royal,” the capital of Martinique, and that they therefore only “had to fight with the negroes.” Consequently, they had believed their “objective” could be achieved “easily.” Yet things turned out differently – or, as the article explained, these “people [the “negroes”], whom we had initially despised, wounded and killed many of our people in several skirmishes during the night and on the following day.”³⁶ In the end, the British had to give up their attempt to invade

³⁶ *Kiøbenhavnske Danske Post-Tidender* (hereafter abbreviated “KPT”), Danish newspapers online, Det kongelige bibliotek, last accessed November 7, 2023, <http://www2.statsbiblioteket.dk/mediestream/>

the island. Likewise, when Berbice was occupied by British forces in 1781, Danish readers learned that one Mr. Kinsbergen succeeded in taking back the Dutch colony “with the help of 700 negroes.”³⁷

These war reports related hopes of victory and provided evidence of how enslaved Africans could bolster white forces and perhaps even change the outcome of wars. As the American Revolution ran its course, the attempts by both sides to appropriate African Americans’ desire for freedom (such as Maryland’s offer of freedom to enslaved people and “1000 pd. sterl.” to enslavers for each of their enslaved persons, or General Clinton’s offer of freedom to fugitive enslaved people), allowed Copenhageneers to consume the idea that Africans could smoothly transition from plantations to armies, from enslaved to free – and also back again.³⁸ The selection of articles offered by the Copenhagen press thus accentuated the transformative power invested in the category of the “negro.” The many news stories allowed Copenhageneers to imagine Africans as something they were obviously not, namely racial others who could fulfill European ambitions and desires. As such, the Copenhagen press contributed to the instrumentalization of Africans undergirding early modern racial slavery.

In Copenhagen’s news stream, which mostly consisted of translated news items from foreign newspapers and state gazettes, the concept of the “negro” – in contrast to the bonded and non-tradeable peasant of Denmark – set in motion commercial transactions. In reports from West Africa, Copenhageneers could read how people labeled as “negroes” sold slaves to Europeans. Yet Danish people would also know that “negroes” became enslaved themselves. African enslavers and enslaved Africans were tied together through the category of the “negro,” which in turn was tied to trade and market conditions. An article reaching Copenhagen via Madrid in 1764, for instance, informed its readers that “the negroes on the coast of Juida [Quidah in the Bight of Benin] have captured 10,000 of their neighbors, with whom they are at war.” Such a great capture would prove to be “a great advantage to our slave traders,” the article’s author claimed.³⁹ Also in 1764, this time via Paris, people in Copenhagen were in-

avis, May 1, 1759: “Aldrig er nogen Landgang skeet med meere Mod end denne. Vi vare og heel fornøyede, da vi saae os saaledes faste paa det fiendtlige Land [. . .] Ligesom vi og vidste, at alle regulaire Tropper vare insluttede i Fort Royale, og at vi uden for samme havde alene at slaaes med Negerne, hvorfor vi og troede, at vi lettelig skulde opnaae vort Øyemærke; Men det gik langt anderledes; thi just disse Folk, som vi i Begyndelsen havde Foragtet, saarede og dræbte om natten og den følgende Dag mange af vore Folk i adskillige Skiernysler.” For the following and successful British occupation, see: *De til Forsendelse med Posten allene privilegerede Københavnske Tidender* (hereafter abbreviated “FPPKT”), Danish newspapers online, Det kongelige bibliotek, last accessed November 7, 2023, <http://www2.statsbiblioteket.dk/mediestream/avis>, March 29, 1762.

³⁷ FPPKT, June 29, 1781; FPPKT, September 17, 1781: “ved Hielp af 700 Negere.”

³⁸ FPPKT, October 18, 1779; FPPKT, July 23, 1779; see also FPPKT, May 7, 1781; FPPKT, June 11, 1781.

³⁹ FPPKT, October 5, 1764: “Capitainen paa et Fransk Skib har medbragt den Efterretning, at Negerne paa Kysten Juida i Africa have giort 10000 til Fanger af deres Naboer, som de ere udi Krig med. Dette vil være til stor Fordeel for vore Slavehandlere.”

formed that “the negroes sell for extremely good prices on the Gold Coast.”⁴⁰ Such information may have found a particularly interested readership in the merchants and nobles who had money invested in Denmark’s slave trading factories on the eastern Gold Coast.

Enslaved Africans as the subjects of commercial transactions were rendered as abstract and aggregate numbers. In 1769, *The Privileged Copenhagen News to Be Sent by Post* published a list of “the number of negroes purchased by several nations in Africa from Cap Blanco until Rio-Congo in the year 1768, namely by Great Britain 53,100, by the British colonies in America 6,300, by France 23,500, by the Dutch 11,300, by Portugal 8,700, and by Denmark 1,200, altogether 104,100 negroes that are paid for with goods, each negro estimated to value 15 pd. sterl., which amounts to 1,561,500 pd. sterl.”⁴¹ Such reports left little doubt that Africans were people whose enslavement had market value; they were bondable *and* tradeable.

By turning Africans and African Caribbeans into accountable items, the newspapers circulated the claim that slavery and enslaved people were to be understood primarily in terms of economic gains and losses rather than, for instance, through notions of strength and labor capacity or, for that matter, with reference to ideas of submissiveness and mastery. This conception of slavery stands out with particular clarity in an allegedly French report published in the *Reports of the Royally Privileged Copenhagen Address Office* in 1775. Entitled “A Frenchman’s Account of the French Slave Trade,” the article produced the argument that slave trading and slavery were economically unsound. Europeans would benefit from introducing wage labor instead. To make this point, the author turned Africans into goods representable as money. Ten years, the author claimed, was the average life span of an African in the Antilles and then proceeded to calculate the total expense of keeping one slave alive for a decade. The purchase price was added to expenses for provisions including clothing and benefits for particular slaves, as well as losses due to damage and marronage. This resulted in an average yearly cost of 420 *livres*. The author proceeded to ask rhetorically whether such an expenditure, if converted into salary, would be a “small day wage.” This arithmetic article – and there were many like it – described enslaved Africans in terms of their monetary value. It argued that Africans could profitably be converted from capital into free labor, and in doing so showed readers that the category of the “negro” was pliable and open to both economic and social transformation.⁴²

40 FPPKT, December 7, 1764: “hvilket gjør, at Negerne sælges for overmaade got Kiøb paa Guld-Kysterne.”

41 FPPKT, August 4, 1769: “Man har følgende Liste over Antallet paa de Negere, som i Aaret 1768 ere af adskillige Nationer opkiøbte i Africa fra Cap Blanco indtil Rio=Congo, nemlig af Storbritannien 53100, af de Storbritanniske Colonier i America 6300, af Frankrige 23500, af Hollænderne 11300, af Portugal 8700, og af Danmark 1200, tilsammen 104100, hvilket ere betalte med Vahre, hver Neger beregnet til 15 Pd. Sterl. hvilket udgjør 1561500 Pd. Sterl.”

42 FPPKT, June 28, 1775: “en liden Dagløn.”

While the purpose of this French article was to question the profitability of Caribbean slavery, it also highlighted that race – and in particular the concept of the “negro” – emerged as the result of commercial transactions. Transitioning without apparent friction from “slave” to “negro” and thus from bondage to race, the author related that as

a ship arrives to the coast of Guinea, the captain receives permission to trade *slaves* in return for presents to African regents, and he then makes known what price he will pay for them. Those inhabitants who have *slaves* for sale lead them there [. . .]. Each *slave* is examined in detail [. . .]. The buyer observes each *slave* for 4 hours or longer. He lets the *negro* laugh, sing, jump, run, he touches him all over; smells his breath [. . .] the sold *negroes* imagine that the Europeans purchase them to fatten and then consume them.⁴³

In this small narrative fragment, Africans turn from “*slaves*” into “*negroes*” without explanation during a complicated sales ritual. Commercialization, it appears, had the effect of enslaved people inexplicably becoming racialized subjects.

Africans in Copenhagen

Compared to the relatively comprehensive coverage of the wider Atlantic world and the many discursive “negroes” – slaves, soldiers, and rebels – peopling the newspapers, the actual presence of Africans and their descendants in Copenhagen was limited. Africans and African Caribbeans arrived in the capital as enslaved (or more rarely as dependents) of captains, merchants, planters, and nobles engaged in the Atlantic trade. A glimpse of their presence in Copenhagen is provided by the city censuses of 1787 and 1801, which – in contrast to later population counts and for reasons that remain unclear – provided information about some of the people of color in the city. In 1787, at least fourteen people were labeled as “negroes” or “negresses.”⁴⁴ In the 1801 census, around sixty persons were listed as “negroes,” “negresses,” “mulattos,” or “mulattesses”; a number that increases to roughly one hundred if two groups of sailors in the merchant fleet presumably awaiting their next hire are included. These individuals represented less than 0.1 percent of the approximately 100,000 in-

43 FPKT, June 28, 1775: “Naar et Skib ankommer paa Kysten af Guinea, faaer Kapitainen af de africanske Regentere, imod Foræring, Tilladelse at tilhandle sig Slaver, og han gjør da bekiendt, for hvad Priis han vil imodtage dem. De Indvaanere, som have Slaver at sælge, føre samme derhen [. . .]. Enhver Slave bliver paa det nøyeste besigtiget [. . .]. Kiøberen betragter hver Slave i 4 Timer og længere. Han lader Negeren lee, synge, springe, løbe; føler ham overalt; lugter til hans Aande [. . .] De solgte Negere bilde sig ind, at Europæerne tilkiøbe sig dem for at fede dem, og siden fortære dem,” my emphasis in the translation.

44 Poul Erik Olsen, “Disse vilde karle: Negre i Danmark indtil 1848,” in *Fremmede i Danmark*, ed. Bent Blüdnikow (Odense: Odense Universitets Forlag, 1987), 110.

habitants of the city, including children and the elderly, and less than 1 percent of the approximately 13,000 domestic servants laboring in Copenhagen's households. They likely had little opportunity to form a community or get a grip on life in Copenhagen. None of the Africans and African Caribbeans in the 1801 census were married, and none of them were listed as the head of a household. Most were domestic workers, and many were relatively young.⁴⁵

As real enslaved Africans and African Caribbeans arrived in Copenhagen – such as the “two negroes belonging to” Christian Friderich Laurberg, the “slave” Jack and the “female slave” Amalia in the household of widow Johanne Frideriche Hage, and the “property people from the West Indies” found in the household of Johannes Magens – authorities engaged in long-winded but ultimately inconclusive discussions on the implications of having racialized slavery practiced on Danish soil.⁴⁶ Consequently, it was possible to own, sell, and buy Africans and African Caribbeans in Denmark during the eighteenth century. The practice was confirmed by the Supreme Court. In 1797, for example, it affirmed an order to ensure the appraisal of Jean Baptist, bought on St. Croix by midwife Sophie Magdalene Sørensen in 1778.⁴⁷ Lower legal instances and administrative units followed suit. In the mid-1770s, Count Scheel-Plessen, the prefect of the District of Copenhagen, was instructed to orchestrate the sale of four slaves belonging to the liquidated estate of Henning Frederik Bargum, the bankrupt director of the Guinea Company (1765–1775).⁴⁸ And in 1802, Copenhagen's Palace and Town Court (*Hof- og Stadsretten*) determined that the three fugitive enslaved people

45 Neither the census of 1787 nor that of 1801 included columns for individuals' racial status. We can therefore assume that the number of people of African descent living in Copenhagen was somewhat higher than the number listed in the censuses. There is no reason to believe that the number was significantly higher, however, since Africans living in Copenhagen are seldom mentioned in other sources such as journals, travel accounts, baptismal registers, and other administrative records.

Danish censuses are searchable online at: Dansk demografisk database, Folketællinger, The Danish Demographical Database, Rigsarkivet, last accessed November 7, 2023, <http://www.ddd.dda.dk/kiplink1.htm>; the digitized originals are available at: Folketællinger, Danish digitized censuses online, Folketællinger (hereafter abbreviated “FKT”) and København (hereafter abbreviated “KBH”), 1787 and 1801, Rigsarkivet, last accessed November 7, 2023, <https://www.sa.dk/ao-soegesider/da/rif/rif-collection/7>. The results presented here are generated from these two online resources. It is noteworthy that the data entries in the searchable resource often misrepresent how racial labels were entered into the census of 1801. For this reason, I refer to the digitized originals. A very fine analysis of urban servitude in Copenhagen is provided in: Hanne Østhus, “Contested Authority: Master and Servant in Copenhagen and Christiania, 1750–1850” (PhD diss., European University Institute, 2013), 1–432.

46 Laurberg: FKT, KBH, 1801, Købmager Kvarter I, 2. afdeling, 62: “Tvende dem tilhørende Negere”; Hage: FKT, KBH, 1801, Snarens Kvarter, 16: “Slave,” “Slavinde”; Magens: FKT, KBH, 1801, Vester Kvarter I, 5: “Eiendoms Folk fra Væstindien.”

47 Knud Waaben, “A.S. Ørsted og neger-slaverne i København,” *Juristen* 46 (1964): 335–337; Poul Erik Olsen, “Fra Danmark til verdens ende,” in *Danmark: En kolonimagt*, ed. Mikkel Venborg Pedersen (Copenhagen: Gad, 2017), 260–262.

48 Olsen, “Disse vilde,” 103–105.

Hans Jonathan, David Tams, and Peter Samuel were the legal property of their owners and could be sent to the West Indies at the latter's behest.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, various authorities continued to ponder the effects of “negroes” in Denmark. Presumably, these many indecisive reflections were a way for royal officers to demonstrate to their superiors, and ultimately to the absolutist king, that they were capable of administrating an empire and knowledgeable with regard to the adverse effects of race. In 1774, the Board of Supervisors for Education and Missions (*Generalkirkeinspektionskollegiet*) warned that the presence of Africans in Denmark would soon result in “mulattos, mestizos, [and] castizos.”⁵⁰ When legal experts in Denmark and the West Indies drafted a comprehensive slave code in the 1780s (which was never enacted), the metropolitan drafters – in contrast to their colonial counterparts – included a chapter on “how slaves can be sent to and how they are to be regarded in Europe.” Proposing a general ban on entry, the experts explained that “negroes and negroes” were not to be allowed into Denmark because they were “necessary there [in the West Indies] and superfluous here.” There were exceptions, however. Enslaved servants of planters and royal officers, as well as the men sent to Europe to train for a craft, were to be permitted to stay for one and three years, respectively. To keep track of the enslaved people present within the kingdom and ensure their timely return to the colonies, the Copenhagen chief of police and the provincial magistrates were to be instructed to maintain “negro ledger[s]” with the names of those deemed to fall into the “negro” category.⁵¹

The drafters did not explain in further detail why Africans and African Caribbeans were “superfluous” in Denmark. Yet their eleven articles show that they intended to confine trade in enslaved Africans to the colonies. Targeting both slavery and race, they began by suggesting a peculiar form of non-tradeable slavery. While in Denmark, the draft stipulated, enslaved people could be owned but were not to be traded, and anyone trying to sell would forfeit their property rights. Slaves were to be covered by indigenous master-servant law and subject to common criminal law. Although non-tradeable, they were still considered property, which meant that people assisting runaways could be fined for handling stolen goods.⁵² These suggestions were presumably aimed at translating Atlantic slavery to the Danish setting and making it

49 Waaben, “A. S. Ørsted,” 321; for a biographical account of Hans Jonathan's life, see Gisli Palsson, *The Man Who Stole Himself: The Slave Odyssey of Hans Jonathan* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016).

50 Olsen, “Disse vilde,” quoted from 104.

51 Rigsarkivet, The Danish National Archives: 420. Generaltoldkammeret, Vestindisk-guineisk renteskriverkontor, Genpart af anmærkninger og plakater ang. slaver m.v. 1672–1787, 344–349, quotes at 344: “Hvorledes Slaver kan forsendes til, og Hvordan de skal anses i Europa” and “efterdi de der [in the West Indies] ere nødvendige og her overflødige”; 348: “Neger Protocol.”

52 Rigsarkivet, The Danish National Archives: 420. Generaltoldkammeret, Vestindisk-guineisk renteskriverkontor, Genpart af anmærkninger og plakater ang. slaver m.v. 1672–1787, 344–349.

manageable within the legal regime governing bonded labor in Denmark. To do so, it appears, trade had to be separated from bondage.

To achieve this separation, the legislators addressed the concept of the “negro,” which had become inseparable from commercial transactions. Rather than leaving the presence of Africans and African Caribbeans in Denmark to market forces, they suggested that the “negro” was to exist in Denmark as an exclusive royal favor. Consequently, they stipulated that manumission should be possible, but only under the condition of the immediate return to the West Indies of the ex-slave in question. Furthermore, under no circumstances were enslaved people allowed to marry in Denmark. If any such ceremony had previously taken place, it was to be considered “undone,” and owners allowing it would lose their property. Clergymen performing slave marriages would be fined 100 *rigsdaler* if the matrimony was between “two negroes,” and even forfeit their living if “a white and a negro or negress” were joined in marriage. Likewise, the drafters targeted all “free negroes and negresses,” even those who held “a proper and legal letter of freedom,” informing them that “we reserve for us [the absolute king] [the right] to decide whether they can stay or not.” In other words, the presence of free Africans and African Caribbeans in Denmark was to be considered a particular royal privilege – and judging from the spirit of the draft, it was to be rare.⁵³

The metropolitan legislators who saw a need to regulate Africans and African Caribbeans in Denmark may have been responding to their presence in Copenhagen. As evidenced by the city census of 1801, Africans and their descendants were already slaving, or serving, in colonial households and families with strong ties to the Danish West Indies and the West African slave trading factories, such as the Schimmelmans, Søbøtkers, Oxholms, Magens, Hages, and Wrisbergs. In the census, Africans were often described as “*tjenere*” (servants) or “*tjenestepiger*” (maids), but the concept of the “negro” (and its many derivations) was just as often sufficient for the census takers, who apparently believed that the term adequately explained those carrying it and what they did. In addition to the domestic workers, the 1801 census also recorded a handful of lodgers such as 19-year-old Jan, who boarded in the household of Peder Pedersen, a “*kaffeskænker*” (literally a “coffee server”). Jan, whose trade or occupation was listed as “negro,” may have been employed on a day-to-day basis, searching for a long-term position, as were some of the other lodgers in the house. The census also listed a sailor and two apprentices as well as Marie Katrine (15 years old) and Jo-

53 Rigsarkivet, The Danish National Archives: 420. Generaltoldkammeret, Vestindisk-guineisk renteskriverkontor, Genpart af anmærkninger og plakater ang. slaver m.v. 1672–1787, 344–349, quotes: “*u-gjortd*,” 346; “*2de Negere*” and “*en Blank med en Neger eller Negerinde*,” 347; “*Frie Negere eller Negerinder*,” 347; “*ordentlige og lovlige Friehedsbreve*,” and “*We forbeholde Os at decidere, om de her maae forblive eller ej*,” 348.

hannes Paulus (13 years old), both people of color, living in the house of the city undertaker, a certain Søren Simonsen Backe, who was responsible for their education.⁵⁴

The way in which racial labels were applied to Africans and African Caribbeans in the 1801 census contributed to the emphasis on tradability and market dependence inherent in the concept of the “negro” in the Danish vernacular of race. The census provisions directed census officials to record the name, trade (or occupation or means of subsistence), and household position of the people they counted (that is, who they were in the respective “family”). The recording sheets did not, however, include a column for race, and the census takers consequently squeezed racialized labels in wherever they saw fit. Blackness and trade thus emerged in the census in various different ways. Most frequently, racial labeling appeared as part of, or as an attribute to, the name of the respective African or African Caribbean, such as Johannes Neger, servant in the house of former bookkeeper and titular councilor Johannes Magens, or Jenny Mulatinde (Jenny Mulatess), maid in the household of Johanne Sophie West, whose husband Hans West served as school headmaster on St. Croix.⁵⁵ Census takers also inserted racial labels in the column for household position otherwise filled with designations such as husband, wife, son, daughter, maid, and servant. For Jacob and Lowisa, this meant their position within their household was entered as “[t]wo negroes belonging” to West India agent Christian Friderich Laurberg and his wife Rebecca.⁵⁶ This was also the case for Lizette and Hanni, two maids in the house of Bent Christian Stenersen, who had served as judge on St. Thomas, where he married the locally born Margarethe Birgitte Aarøe in 1786.⁵⁷ Lizette and Hanni had presumably come to Copenhagen with the Stenersens. In 1801, they were each listed as “negress” under the census heading “What each person is in the family.”⁵⁸

Notably, however, the census takers also believed that the “negro” label could be used appropriately in the census column for trade or occupation. This was, for instance, the case for Johan in former planter Hans Wrisberg’s household, whose occupation was specified as “a black negro,” and for Lambert Mateis, whose occupation was listed as “negro” for a man named Giedde. Knowingly or not, the census takers thereby emphasized that Africans and their descendants were linked – as racialized subjects – to the Copenhagen market for labor and services. In the census, this link was further highlighted by the notarial practice used to record lodgers, who were often day

54 Jan: FKT, KBH, 1801, Sankt Annæ Vester Kvarter I, 2. afdeling, 75; Marie Katrine and Johannes Paulus: FKT, KBH, 1801, Øster Kvarter, 7. afdeling, 215.

55 Johannes: FKT, KBH, 1801, Vester Kvarter I, 4–5; Jenny: FKT, KBH, 1801, Sankt Annæ Vester Kvarter I, 1. afdeling, 30.

56 Jacob and Lowisa: FKT, KBH, 1801, Købmager Kvarter I, 2. afdeling, 61–62: “Tvende dem tilhørende Negere.”

57 Arild Falk-Jensen and Henning Hjorth-Nielsen, *Candidati og examinati juris, 1736–1939* (Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gad, 1954), see: Bent Christian Stenersen, 150.

58 Lizette and Hanni: FKT, KBH, 1801, Nørre Kvarter, 1. afdeling, 33, “Hvad enhver Person er i Familien.”

laborers or between between jobs. As noted above, a lodger named Jan had his occupation inscribed as “negro.” Likewise, lodger Peter Jacob’s occupation was that of “negro sailor.” By contrast, his Danish co-lodger Hans Engelbrecht was a “worker” (*arbejdsmand*, possibly a casual laborer), and their landlord, Søren Jørgensen Lund, earned his living as an “ale-housekeeper.”⁵⁹ In the same manner, a man named Louis lodging with innkeeper Lars Been had his occupation listed as “negro,” and a certain Sandig lodging with “night watchman” Mads Lillelund apparently earned his living by being a “black negro” while his Danish co-lodger Christen Ager was a “worker” (*arbejdsmand*).⁶⁰ These African and African Caribbean lodgers were obviously presumed to provide for themselves by being or performing as what the census takers referred to “negroes.”

By completing the census column asking for the “title, office, business, trade, occupation of persons, or what they live off” with variations of the concept of the “negro,” the census takers established it as an occupation. It was a choice that made sense in a semiotic setting where the concept was so tightly linked to commerce and trade. Hence, Sophie Carolina had her occupation specified as “negress” while another female servant in the same household, Wilhelmine Ulriche Horn, was listed as “lady’s companion” (*selskabsjomfru*).⁶¹ This recording practice was presumably related to the fact that Wilhelmine Ulriche Horn was of Danish ancestry and her skin color was not understood as a tradable asset that could be placed on the market. The same interpretation explains why Bertel Madsen, who together with his father Lars was the largest West India shipper operating out of Christianshavn, had people with the following occupations listed in his household: “warehouse master [. . .] clerk [. . .] apprentice clerk [. . .] coachman [. . .] negro man [. . .] negro man [. . .] negress [. . .] negress.”⁶²

A Market for African Slavery and Service

In Copenhagen, the niche trade in (and by) Africans and African Caribbeans – in their services and their bodies – was likely conducted outside of public view by owners and would-be owners, in the colonial networks that linked nobles, merchants, and small-scale traders to captains and colonial officers. It was presumably only when

⁵⁹ Peter Jacob: FKT, KBH, 1801, Christianshavns Kvarter I, 1. afdeling, 52. See also the “14 negroes” lodging at Søren Larsen Grenstrup’s house and described as “merchant sailors”: FKT, KBH, 1801, Sankt Annæ Vester Kvarter I, 10. afdeling, 240.

⁶⁰ Louis/Lovis: FKT, KBH, 1801, Øster Kvarter, 4 afdeling, 125; Sandig: FKT, KBH, 1801, Christianshavns Kvarter I, 6. afdeling, 225.

⁶¹ Johan: FKT, KBH, 1801, Frimands Kvarter, 1. afdeling, 20–21; Lambert Mateis: FKT, KBH, 1801, Snarens Kvarter, 119; Sophia Carolina: FKT, KBH, 1801, Udenbys Vester Kvarter, 67.

⁶² Bertel Madsen: FKT, KBH, 1787, Christianshavns Kvarter, Strandgade, 51: “Pakhuus Forvalter [. . .] Skriver Karl [. . .] Skriver Dreng [. . .] Kudsk [. . .] Neger Mand [. . .] Neger Mand [. . .] Neger Jnde [. . .] Neger Jnde.”

these networks failed to connect suppliers and buyers that glimpses of the slave trade and the “negro” occupation surfaced in city newspapers. In 1785, an unknown Copenhagen announced that he (or she) was leaving the city and had a “negro for purchase” who “understands very well to accommodate [*accommodere*, i.e. to dress and style hair], speaks English well, reasonable Danish and French, he is 18 years old.”⁶³ Perhaps also an advertisement of sale was the notice published in the *Reports of the Royally Privileged Copenhagen Address Office* in 1790 that anybody “wanting a young negro in attendance” could report to the office and be informed where such a person was to “be obtained.”⁶⁴ Copenhageners with financial means offered slaves for sale, and they also wanted to buy them. In 1783, one urban dweller announced under the heading “[f]or purchase” that he or she was seeking a “beautiful negro boy, 7 or 8 to 12 years old, who is in good health.”⁶⁵ Whereas the baptism of the “negress” Juliane Marie in the Norwegian town of Bergen in 1777 was described as “peculiar because it had never previously happened in public here in the town,” there is nothing in the preserved sales advertisements to suggest that the commodification of Africans and African Caribbeans was considered exceptional, rare, or out of place.⁶⁶

The enslavement of Africans and African Caribbeans in Copenhagen was also made known to a broader public when owners reported that their enslaved people had escaped. Although the number of Africans and African Caribbeans was small, some owners such as State Councilor Paul Prihn claimed that their enslaved property was “well known to many in the city.”⁶⁷ The fragmentary history of the young man Benoni, who ran away from his owner – presumably one Miss Ernst – several times in February, July, and September of 1771, is suggestive both of the enslavement of Africans in the city and of the commodification associated with the discursive figure of the “negro.” In 1771, several fugitive notices stated that a “black negro boy, namely Benoni, has run away from his owners at *Østergaden* no. 51; at the time of his escape he was dressed in a blue shirt, black trousers, shoes, and a turban.”⁶⁸ These announce-

63 *Kjøbenhavns Kongelig alene privilegerede Adresse-Contoires Efterretninger* (hereafter abbreviated “KKE”), Danish newspapers online, Det kongelige bibliotek, last accessed November 7, 2023, <https://www2.statsbiblioteket.dk/mediestream/avis>, June 28, 1785: “Formedelst Bortreyse er en Neger tilkiøbs, han forstaaer meget got at accommodere, taler got Englesk, skikkelig Dansk og Fransk, hans Alder er 18 Aar.”

64 KKE, October 22, 1790: “Dersom nogen maatte ønske en ung Neger til Opvartning, anviser Contoiret hvor saadan en er at faae.”

65 KKE, December 10, 1783: “Til Kiøb forlanges” and “En smuk Neger Dreng 7, 8, a 12 Aar gammel der er rask og sund.”

66 FPPKT, September 26, 1777: “mærkelig, som den aldrig tilforn er skeet offentlig i Byen.”

67 KKE, October 13, 1786: “af mænge i Byen er vel bekiendt.”

68 For a runaway often named Benoni escaping his owner at *Østergade* no. 51, see KKE, February 15, 1771; KKE, July 2, 1771; FPPKT, September 6, 1771; FPPKT, September 13, 1771; FPPKT, September 16, 1771; FPPKT, September 27, 1771, quote from the latter: “En Sort Neger Dreng, navnlig Benoni, er fra sin Eyere paa Østergaaden i No. 51, bortløben; ved Undvigelsen var han iklæd en blaae Trøye, sorte Buxer, Skoe og Turban.”

ments warned people that they would face legal charges if they housed the escapee, took him into their service or “fence[d]” (i.e., sold) him.⁶⁹ Bertel Madsen repeated the claim that slaves could be sold illegally in Copenhagen in 1786 when he announced the flight of “his negro” Tobias, a cooper by trade, cautioning Copenhageners against housing or fencing him. One year later, in 1787, Tobias was back in Madsen’s household.⁷⁰ These descriptions of fugitive enslaved people as stolen goods (rather than, for instance, as kidnapping victims or misguided children) can be understood as indications of an actual market for enslaved persons in Copenhagen. They resonated well with the focus on the “negro” as a trade object in the Danish vernacular of race.

The commodification undergirding the bondage of enslaved Africans and African Caribbeans made their situation substantially different from that of other dependents in Danish society, as is visible when comparing newspaper notices concerning underlings, such as farm laborers and soldiers, and enslaved people on the run. As mentioned above, Benoni escaped his owner in 1771, and city dwellers were subsequently warned against fencing him. In the same year, farm laborer Peder Ibsen also decided to abscond from his position. Ibsen was advertised as a runaway in December 1771, and Copenhageners were likewise warned not to “house or fence” him, with the threat of legal sanctions if they did.⁷¹ The escapes of Benoni and Ibsen illustrate the fact that very few people were actually free in eighteenth-century Denmark. Peasants, soldiers, servants, journeymen, apprentices, and many other groups and professionals were subject to various forms of bonded or contract labor, and they had restricted legal capabilities that placed them at a disadvantage when dealing with their superiors. Nevertheless, the words describing Benoni’s and Ibsen’s escapes illustrate that the bonds of Africans and African Caribbeans were different from those of native Danes on the run. Africans had owners and hence could be considered property, while farmhands like Ibsen had masters and were less tightly connected to the commercial logic of the market.

The concept of the “negro” as employed in Copenhagen’s newspapers undergirded the commercialization of Africans on the city’s market for service, and it was obviously connected to the pigmentation of actual Africans and their descendants. Yet the label was not exclusively used to reference ancestry. As a concept, it also operated as a trademark for commercial bondage and service, as it did in census records and in the works of Moth and Holberg in the early eighteenth century. A member of the Søbøtker family gave notice in the *Reports of the Royally Privileged Copenhagen Address Office* in 1776 that his property, the “mulatto negro Johan Gregorius Thombsen,” who had been christened three years earlier at the Church of St. Nicolai, was not to be trusted with goods and valuables and that he, Søbøtker, would not be liable for

69 KKE, February 15, 1771: “hæler.” See also FPPKT, September 6, 1771; KKE, July 2, 1771; KKE, March 31, 1786.

70 FPPKT, March 31, 1786; FKT, KBH, 1787, Strandgade, 51.

71 KKE, December 23, 1771, “huse eller hæle.”

Thombsen's purchases. The term "mulatto negro" obviously made little sense if both terms were understood as designations of descentance. It was, however, meaningful if "negro" referenced the tradable bondage established in the Atlantic trade system. The same probably holds true for the expression "black negro," which may have not been a pleonasm but in fact a way for urban slave owners to describe – with the adjective *black* – the exact kind of enslaved property they held.⁷²

As the case of the "mulatto negro" Thombsen highlights, commodification extended beyond questions of enslavement and property rights. And as illustrated by the report on the West African ritual of sale, racism and its races served to accentuate – or perhaps even enforce – the commodification of Africans and their descendants. This process by which people became tradable (and thereby functionally equal to other commodities circulating on the urban market) is traceable in Copenhagen newspapers of the period. Writers and editors added substance to the concept of the "negro" with detailed descriptions of Africans' bodies and clothing. Obviously, some Africans only received scant mention: Nicolay, who belonged to the shipmaster and slave ship captain Christian Baggesen, was merely described as a "negro."⁷³ Other fugitive Africans were portrayed in vivid detail, however. In 1776, one newspaper noted that an unnamed "negro" who had served in the navy was "16 years old, small and lively of stature, yellow-brown in color, with a clear-cut face, black long hair, and cut in front [possibly a reference to a scar or cleft lip]."⁷⁴ The term *smækker* – translated here as "lively" but also connoting pliant, adroit, and well-proportioned – was likewise applied to the French "mulatto Antony," who was described as a "tall and lively person, with a smooth face, black long hair, pigtail at the back of his head, [and he] has a decent nature."⁷⁵ It was not just Africans whose bodies received detailed attention in city newspapers. Farm laborers and especially soldiers, whose bodily characteristics were noted in conscription registers and therefore known to superiors, were also declared missing in this manner in newspapers. For example, Copenhageners could read a detailed description of the young runaway Lars Høy, who was attached to the manor Lundbygård in southern Zealand as a farmhand. Høy had "black hair, brown eyes, moderate height, and a large thick hooked nose."⁷⁶ J. F. Roeder, fugitive musketeer from the King's Regiment, was "21 years old, 64 and a half inches high, yellowish of hair and eyebrows, and [had] a chubby face, moderate shoulders and

72 KKE, February 12, 1779: "Mulat Neger Johan Gregorius Thombsen;" see KKE, April 2, 1792: "sort Neger."

73 KKE, February 12, 1779.

74 KKE, June 10, 1767: "16 Aar gl. liden og smækker af Væxt, guulbruun af Farve, skarp af Ansigt, sort langt Haar og skaaren forved."

75 KKE, October 30, 1780: "Mulat Antony" and "høi og smækker Person, glat af Ansigt, sorte lange Haar [sic], pidsk i Nakken, har et anstændigt Væsen."

76 KKE, March 31, 1786: "har sort Haar, brune Øyne, maadelig Høyde, og stor tyk kroget Næse."

legs,” while the maid Anne Margrete Rosted had a “neglectable stature” despite being “corpulent” and “round-faced.”⁷⁷ The descriptions of Africans’ bodily characteristics were thus part of a local Danish custom for advertising runaways, with the possible difference that owners emphasized the beauty and “liveliness” of enslaved Africans who had escaped.

Forcibly turned into service commodities, Africans and African Caribbeans were confronted with the specific preferences prevailing on Copenhagen’s market for slavery and service. Slave owners, newspaper editors, and perhaps also the reading public valued Africans and African Caribbeans for their beauty and appearance. The Angolan Pedro Escardo had been enslaved since “his 9th year” and was in his early twenties when he escaped in 1790. He was graphically described as “strong, of beautiful figure, looks good, has beautiful eyes, a very shiny skin, curly hair, and small round signs in the shape of a beauty spot are branded on one temple. He speaks Spanish and Catalanian and had damaged one hand at the time of escape.”⁷⁸ In the opinion of his owner, Escardo’s most noticeable feature was beauty in all its forms. Indeed, even the small marks on his temple were described by his owner as a beauty mark, even though they were more likely ritual scarifications that Escardo – who obviously had not always gone by that name – had received before being captured and sold from his homeland in West-Central Africa.

The runaway notices established Africans as subjects with remarkable, often beautiful bodies. As noted, somebody wished to buy not merely a slave but a “beautiful negro boy” in 1783.⁷⁹ Aesthetics were likewise an issue in 1765, when Baron Heinrich Carl von Schimmelmann welcomed “9 negroes, quite beautiful, well-grown and well-built, though black” from the West Indies and West Africa. The men or boys were to be trained as artisans before being returned to “the plantations on the islands.”⁸⁰ Yet it was their beauty rather than their skill or dexterity that was praised. This search for beauty had a longer courtly history, of course. In search of a present for Queen Charlotte Amalie in 1688, the directors of the West India and Guinea Company had instructed company officials on St. Thomas to send to Copenhagen “a couple of beautiful small negro children.” The officials were to make sure the children were “well-built, and quite black as well as lively and well-proportioned in life and limb

77 KKE, July 2, 1771: “21 Aar gammel, 64 og en halv Tomme høy, guulagtig af Haar og Øyenbryn og pluus af Ansigtet, maadelig af Skuldre og Been”; and KKE, February 12, 1779: “Hun er af Statur undersetsig og corpulent, rundladen af Ansigt.”

78 KEE, November 11, 1790: “sit 9de Aar” and “stærk, af smuk Taille, seer godt ud, har smukke Øine, en meget glindsende Hud, krøllet Haar, og paa den ene Tinding er indbrændt runde Tegn i Form af en Skjønplet. Han taler spansk og catalonisk, og havde ved Undvigelsen beskadiget den ene Haand.”

79 KKE, December 10, 1783: “En smuk Neger Dreng.”

80 FPPKT, August 30, 1765: “9 Negere, ret smukke vel-voxne og skabte, skjønt sorte [. . .] da at sende dem tilbage til sine Plantager paa Eylandene.”

[sic] and neither limping nor bending, since misbegotten or mangled blacks can be suitable for staying there and cultivating the land” in the Caribbean colony.⁸¹ In Copenhagen, an enslaved person of African descent had to be shapely and lively rather than strong and industrious.

Black slavery and service in Copenhagen was also associated with the colorful clothing, or perhaps even costumes, that some African and African Caribbean domestic servants wore. In 1765, when the ten-year-old “black negro boy” Isaak escaped, he was dressed in “a red cloth frock coat and waistcoat, [and] black leather breeches.” Moreover, he wore “blue stockings as well as a so-called turban of red cloth and with white covers.”⁸² The turban was an outfit known from numerous paintings of the so-called court Moors serving in noble and royal houses throughout Europe, and it was also found in Denmark in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Copenhagen’s runaway notices indicate that colorful garments like Isaak’s were not merely used on festive occasions or when enslaved children were posing with their owners to be painted. In 1779, Nicolay fled his owner dressed in a blue waistcoat, white trousers, and a blue frock coat or greenish coat. Jacob Lauritz, who belonged to Paul Prihn and had been christened in the Church of Trinitatis in 1780, was described as wearing a brown frock coat, a green-and-white streaked silk waistcoat, and black trousers when he escaped in 1786. In addition, the runaway notice stated that his hair was cloth-bound, perhaps a reference to a turban-like headdress.⁸³ The aforementioned Antony not only had a “smooth face” and “lively” body, he was also conspicuously dressed in “a light green jacket with fashionable coattails, red upright collar, dark blue trousers with red cords, short boots, a round hat with cords, [and he] has since gotten a brown greatcoat.”⁸⁴ These descriptions suggest that some slave owners branded their property as service commodities of a particular noble type, presumably in an effort to have their enslaved domestic servants reflect their own high position or their aspirations for social elevation.

The way in which clothing signaled the serviceable positions of Africans and African Caribbeans in Copenhagen is also apparent in an incident where a black man was arrested after being found drunk in a street late at night in 1789. According to Chief of Police Johan Thomas Flindt, the man in question denied being in anyone’s service, but

⁸¹ Rigsarkivet, The Danish National Archives: 466, Det vestindisk-guineiske kompagni, Direktionen, Brevkopibog 1682–1688, 1688, 77–81, quotes from 81: “eet par Smucke smaae Neger-Børn” and “velskabte, og ret Sorte, Item Fridsche og wel proportioneret af Lief og Lemmer, og hvercken halt eller scheef, thi wanschafte heller Lemme Lestede sorte kand wære gode nock til at blifve der og dyrcke Landet.” The latter quote is also provided in Olsen, “Disse vilde,” 108–109.

⁸² KKE, December 6, 1765: “sort Negerdreng” and “en rød Klædes Kiol og Vest, sorte Skindbuxer” and had “blaa Strømper paa, samt en saakaldet Turban af rød Klæde med hvid Omslag.”

⁸³ KKE, February 12, 1779; KKE, June 23, 1780; KKE, October 13, 1786.

⁸⁴ KKE, October 7, 1799, “en lysegrøn Klædes Trøie med modens Skøder, rød opstaaende Krave, mørkeblaae Klædes Buxer med røde Snorer, korte Støvler, rund Hat med Snore om, har siden faaet sig en bruun Kavay.”

Flindt argued that “the garments he wore let one assume the opposite.” In Flindt’s opinion, African and African Caribbean servants could apparently be distinguished by their outfits from the unemployed and the day laborers. Consequently, the chief of police put out notice that anyone able to lay claim to the man should report to the authorities.⁸⁵ The significance of a colorful appearance may also have been known to Benoni, who escaped several times in 1771 as mentioned above. This seems at least to have been the impression of his owner, who worried in June 1771 that Benoni, who had run away in a “blue Norwegian shirt, black trousers, and a turban,” would “exchange” his garb for “another, which his supporters will lend him.”⁸⁶ To successfully escape, it seems, Africans and their descendants had to rid themselves of the costumes signaling to Copenhageners that they were in bonded service.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, a niche market for African and African Caribbean slavery and service emerged in Copenhagen. Enslaved people were traded on this market, but it was also via this market that a few Africans and African Caribbeans were able to carve out an independent, if tenuous existence in the city. In 1775, a “negro, who is given his freedom” announced that he sought “employment with a master or with other honorable families as servant.”⁸⁷ And in 1784, under the rubric “[s]eeking service,” a man speaking “Danish, English, and Portuguese” offered his services to a “gentleman who travels abroad and would need a negro-servant.”⁸⁸ Copenhagen was certainly home to employers interested in purchasing this particular brand of domestic service. On April 10, 1792, Copenhageners could read in the paper that a “black negro or servant from one of the provinces, who has received his letter of freedom and can accommodate and barber, wishes a position with a master on Mayday.”⁸⁹ One week later, on April 16, an employer – perhaps as a means of getting in touch with the man from the provinces – declared that a “good position” was on offer for “a capable negro who can show good recommendations and desires to travel abroad with a master.”⁹⁰ The service market thus allowed some Africans and African Caribbeans to engage in self-marketing, and they promoted their expertise in dressing and hair-styling as well as their linguistic competences.

In their efforts to secure a livelihood, Africans and African Caribbeans advertising their labor on the market for domestic services adapted to local labor practices.

85 KKE, January 5, 1789: “men Klæderne han bar paa, give at formode det modsatte.”

86 KKE, July 2, 1771: “klæd i en blaa Norsk Trøye, sorte Buxer og Turban, hvilken Klædedragt han dog skal omvexle med andet som hans Tilhængere laaner ham.”

87 KKE, June 28, 1775: “Neger, som er given sin Frihed, søger Tieneste hos et Herskab eller andre honette Familier som Tiener.”

88 KKE, August 18, 1784: “Tienestesøgende” and “For en Cavaleer, som reyser herfra, og skulle behöve en Neger-Tiener der accomodeerer Mandfolk, taler Dansk, Engelsk og Portugisisk.”

89 KKE, April 10, 1792: “En sort Neger eller Tiener fra en af Provindserne, der har faaet sit Frihedsbrev, kan accommodere og barbære, ønsker sig Condition hos et Herskab til Maidag.”

90 KKE, April 16, 1792: “For en skikkelig Neger som kan forevise gode Attester og som har lyst at reise udenlands med et Herskab, anvises en god Condition.”

As noted above, one man announced in 1792 that he sought hire on May 1, which had been declared a quarter day for servants and farmhands in Denmark in 1791.⁹¹ In 1799, another “free negro” who spoke five languages and was looking for employment with a family or a single master traveling abroad used a *fæstemand*, a facilitator for service contracts in Danish towns, to find work.⁹² Africans and African Caribbeans also referred to native concepts such as the honorable household, mastery (*herskab*), and the European grand tour when advertising their services in city newspapers. Yet these job-seeking individuals who had presumably attained their freedom were still confronted with the “negro” concept that was closely linked to tradeable bondage and had even emerged as an occupation in the official censuses of 1787 and 1801. At least for marketing purposes, they had to conform to this conception of the “negro” sought by their potential Copenhagen employers.

Conclusion

The history of race, slavery, and the service market in Copenhagen outlined above offers, so I hope, a valuable contribution to understanding the presence of Africans and African Caribbeans in early modern Europe. The historiographical debate described at the beginning of this chapter has seen historians opposing racism on the one hand and integration on the other, and for good reasons. Historians have highlighted how racial thinking was used to exclude Africans and African Caribbeans from European society – or alternatively, how the absence of or indifference to racism facilitated integration. While race was certainly not absent in eighteenth-century Copenhagen, it was clearly more than a purely exclusionary idea (though it was also that). Judging from the rich coverage of political and economic developments in the Atlantic region, newspaper editors and at least some Copenhageners found stories of race exciting and relevant. In the vernacular language of race that developed in Denmark, the concept of the “negro” was strongly linked to tradeable bondage, and this association shaped how Africans and African Caribbeans could navigate the city. The localization of racial slavery in the city generated patterned or bounded positions that Africans and African Caribbeans needed to negotiate in order to survive. One of these was the position as (enslaved) “negro” valet or dresser, beautiful and turban-clothed; another was the occupation of “negro.” Africans and African Caribbeans confronted these positions when they ran away from sulky, sometimes violent owners; when they divested themselves of the bright clothing that framed them as service commodities; and when they searched for employment by advertising their linguistic skills and domestic abilities. In Copenhagen, racism was a productive force in that it created both a language of race and a particular set of socio-

⁹¹ Østhus, “Contested Authority,” 106.

⁹² KEE, October 11, 1799, “Fæstemand.”

economic positions. Understanding this element of early modern Danish racism adds to our understanding of Africans' experiences in Europe by moving beyond questions of integration or exclusion. Indeed, integration of Africans and African Caribbeans was possible in Copenhagen, but this process of integration unfolded in racialized patterns. As such, the localization of the transatlantic racialized slave trading system in Copenhagen contributed to the creation of the particular form of racialized slavery and service that emerged in the city – far away from, but simultaneously close to, the deadly and nauseating slave dungeons of West Africa and the regimented and equally lethal sugar estates of the Caribbean.

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Arne Spohr

6 Free Through Membership in the Imperial Trumpeters' Guild? On the Legal and Social Position of Black Court Trumpeters in the Holy Roman Empire

Black court servants (frequently called *Hofmohren* in German-language sources)¹ appeared at German courts as early as the sixteenth century, and some of them were trained in a musical profession, especially as trumpeters and kettledrummers.² By the end of the seventeenth century, several courts in the Holy Roman Empire – large ones such as Brandenburg, Saxony, and Württemberg as well as medium-sized and smaller ones such as Bayreuth, Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, and Gottorf – employed Black trumpeters and kettledrummers for both ceremonial and military purposes. The importance of these Black musicians grew during the eighteenth century, when a significant number of them could be found in military bands (especially those emulating Ottoman Janissary bands) at the Prussian, Hessian, and Saxon courts. This tradition of

1 On the use of the racial signifiers “Black” and “white” as modern constructions in an early modern European context, see for instance Kate Lowe, “Introduction: The Black African Presence in Renaissance Europe,” in *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, ed. Tom F. Earle and Kate J. P. Lowe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2. Even though, as Kim Hall has noted, the use of the term “Black” runs the risk of homogenizing an ethnically and culturally diverse group of people, it can be used productively “as a term that [. . .] foregrounds the role of color in organizing relations of power.” See Kim Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 7. “Mohr” is an ambiguous, multivalent term whose meaning could differ significantly according to time period, language, location, and other contexts of use. As Kate Lowe has noted, the term was associated principally with religion (i.e., Islam) in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Kate Lowe, “The Black Diaspora in Europe in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries, with Special Reference to German-Speaking Areas,” in *Germany and the Black Diaspora: Points of Contact 1250–1914*, ed. Mischa Honeck, Martin Klimke, and Anne Kuhlmann (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 39; it was later increasingly associated with Blackness, see for example my article “Mohr und Trompeter”: Blackness and Social Status in Early Modern Germany,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 72 (2019): 619–620, and Sünne Juterczenka, “Chamber Moors’ and Court Physicians: On the Convergence of Aesthetic Consumption and Racial Anthropology at Eighteenth-Century Courts in Germany,” in *Entangled Knowledge: Scientific Discourses and Cultural Difference*, ed. Klaus Hoch and Gesa Mackenthun (Münster: Waxmann, 2012), 166. I agree with Anne Kuhlmann-Smirnov that the term, with its colonial and racist connotations, should be used only in the context of historical analysis, see Anne Kuhlmann-Smirnov, *Schwarze Europäer im Alten Reich: Handel, Migration, Hof* (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2013), 94.

2 The court of Duke Wilhelm V of Bavaria was among the first in the Empire to have Black court servants. Several Black servants, among them a “hörpagger” (kettledrummer), are mentioned in the court records between 1570 and 1575, see Berndt Baader, *Der bayrische Renaissancehof Herzog Wilhelms IV., 1568–1579* (Leipzig: Heitz, 1943), 85–86.

Black military musicians continued well into the German Empire. For instance, kettle-drummer Elo Wilhelm Sambo (1885–1933) served in the Imperial Hussar Regiment from 1907 until 1918, and in the Prussian Army from the end of World War I until 1923.³

The legal and social status of Black court servants, and more specifically of Black trumpeters and drummers, has been hotly debated in the field of early modern European Black studies. According to a frequently held view, Black court trumpeters and drummers who had been bought on the international slave market and sent as gifts to princely patrons were

regarded not only as free, but according to the eminent status of musicians at court and in the military, even as privileged. [. . .] Nearly all of the skilled musicians seem to have been fairly well integrated into German society; many married local women, and their social standing was sufficiently independent for them to negotiate interests.⁴

Their membership in the professional organization of trumpeters and drummers in the Empire, known in late eighteenth-century sources as the “Reichszunft der Trompeter und Pauker” (Imperial Trumpeters’ and Kettledrummers’ Guild), is usually cited as an argument for their free legal status and their privileged social position,⁵ since one of guild’s requirements for apprenticeship was that of having “honest parents” and being a “free person and not a serf.”⁶

In this essay, I will reevaluate this view from the perspectives of music sociology and institutional history by building on Lars E. Laubhold’s and Christian Ahrens’s critical research on trumpeters’ organizations in the Empire, and in particular by closely examining the lives of two Black trumpeters, namely Christian Real (active at the Württemberg court) and Christian Gottlieb (active in Schleswig-Holstein) as case studies. As my analysis of their careers will demonstrate, the legal and social status of

³ Peter Martin, *Schwarze Teufel, edle Mohren: Afrikaner in Bewußtsein und Geschichte der Deutschen* (Hamburg: Junius, 1993), 128. Sambo died in 1933 and not in 1935, as stated by Martin, see KP – Köln Postkolonial, last accessed November 26, 2023, [www.kopfwelten.org/kp/virtualmuseum/KP_08_Die%20\(koloniale\)%20Begegnung.pdf](http://www.kopfwelten.org/kp/virtualmuseum/KP_08_Die%20(koloniale)%20Begegnung.pdf).

⁴ Anne Kuhlmann, “Ambiguous Duty: Black Servants at German Ancient Régime Courts,” in *Germany and the Black Diaspora: Points of Contact, 1250–1914*, ed. Mischa Honeck, Martin Klimke, and Anne Kuhlmann (New York: Berghahn, 2013), 64–65.

⁵ See Monika Firla and Hermann Forkl, “Afrikaner und Africana am württembergischen Herzogshof im 17. Jahrhundert,” *Tribus* 44 (1995): 153, and note 24.

⁶ According to the second article of the Imperial Trumpeters’ Privileges issued by Emperor Ferdinand III in 1623, any trumpeter’s apprentice had to prove that he was “von ehrlichen Eltern geboren” (born of honest parents), see Detlef Altenburg, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Trompete im Zeitalter der Clarinblaskunst 1500–1800*, vol. 2 (Regensburg: Bosse, 1973), 49. See also Hans Friedrich von Fleming, *Der vollkommene Teutsche Soldat* (Leipzig: Martini, 1726), 585: “Der Junge, der die Trompeter-Kunst lernet, [muss] von ehrlichen Eltern und Herkommen seyn, ingleichen ein freund kein Leibeigner.” (A boy who learns the art of trumpet playing must be of honest parents and descent, and must also be a free person and not a serf.) Translations by the author unless otherwise noted.

Black musicians was far more ambiguous and fragile than that of their white colleagues, and I will illustrate how this fragility became particularly apparent when they moved out of the courtly sphere into that of the city.

As Anne Kuhlmann-Smirnov has recently shown in her comprehensive study *Schwarze Europäer im Alten Reich* (Black Europeans in the Old Empire),⁷ the social history of Black people in the Holy Roman Empire is inseparably connected to the institutional space of the princely court. Black presence at European courts can be traced as far back as the Middle Ages: The court of Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen in Sicily was one of the first European courts to employ Black slaves, who were used as symbols to signify the emperor's claim to rule over both Europe and Africa. In doing so, Frederick was likely following imperial models from ancient Rome, Byzantium, and the Arab world.⁸ Black individuals served as imperial guards, valets, and trumpeters, who were splendidly dressed and played instruments made of silver. From the fifteenth century onwards, other European nobility employed Black court servants in a similar symbolic function, for example at the courts of the Dukes of Burgundy, the King of Naples, and of Henry VII of England, who employed a Black trumpeter named "John Blanke."⁹

Kuhlmann-Smirnov has documented 308 Black court servants (mostly males) present at German courts between the late sixteenth century and 1800. They represent a broad spectrum of courtly duties and hierarchies ranging from lowly jobs such as stable boy and assistant gardener to the elevated position of chamberlain, which enjoyed a special relationship of trust with the princely patron. Musicians make up a significant group among these Black court servants: Based on Kuhlmann-Smirnov's list¹⁰ and my own research, I have been able to identify 10 court trumpeters, 21 kettle-drummers, and nearly 100 military oboists, pipers, and drummers ("Tambours") at the courts of various German-speaking states between 1573 and 1818. It seems safe to assume that future research will uncover further as yet unknown Black court and military musicians who were active in the Holy Roman Empire.¹¹

Black servants were seen as status symbols signifying the prestige and power of their noble patrons. In this respect, they functioned similarly to collections of artifacts in *Kunst- and Wunderkammern* (Cabinets of Curiosities) that were assembled to dem-

7 See note 1.

8 Martin, *Schwarze Teufel, edle Mohren*, 113–114; Kuhlmann-Smirnov, *Schwarze Europäer*, 117–119.

9 Martin, *Schwarze Teufel, edle Mohren*, 114–115. On Blanke and other Black musicians, dancers, and actors in Renaissance England and Scotland, see for instance Richardine C. Woodall, "Renaissance, Blacks in the," in *Encyclopedia of Blacks in European History and Culture*, ed. Eric Martone, vol. 2 (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2009), 439–442, and Imtiaz Habib, *Black Lives in the English Archives, 1500–1677: Imprints of the Invisible* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 39–40 (on John Blanke), and 29–30 (on a Black drummer, "morien taubronar," in the service of James IV of Scotland).

10 Kuhlmann-Smirnov, *Schwarze Europäer*, 285–373.

11 The author is currently writing a monograph on Black musicians in the German-speaking lands from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth century.

onstrate, in the words of Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, a “mastery of the greater world.”¹² Black court servants were meant to evoke imaginations of Africa as an exotic and mythical “Other” still present in early modern Europe. On a more practical level, they also highlighted their patrons’ far-reaching trade connections, and thus their economic power.¹³ As trumpeters and drummers, Black court and military musicians represented these claims to power on both a visual and an acoustic level.¹⁴

This connection between the visual and the aural becomes apparent when examining the functions of Black trumpeters and kettledrummers at court and in the military. They were often featured in public pageants during dynastic occasions (such as a wedding or a baptism) or visits by foreign princes or ambassadors. At the pageant staged on the occasion of the wedding of Duke Karl Eugen of Württemberg and Princess Elisabeth Friederike Sophie of Brandenburg-Bayreuth in Stuttgart in 1748, for instance, an unnamed Black kettledrummer featured prominently as part of the ducal guard, riding on a horse ahead of four trumpeters (see Fig. 6.1).¹⁵

The written account of the pageant emphasizes the visual splendor associated with the drummer: “A kettledrummer, who was a Moor, with his two drums entirely covered in silver, which were decorated with banderoles made of silver, gold, and yellow silk.”¹⁶ As the visual representation of the event shows, the Black drummer was dressed in a Turkish style, thereby reflecting the well-known European fascination with the military culture of the Ottoman Empire. Significantly, many Black military musicians in the Holy Roman Empire and other European countries during the eigh-

¹² Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, “Remarks on the Collections of Rudolf II: The *Kunstkammer* as a Form of *Representatio*,” *Art Journal* 38, no. 1 (1978): 27. On the parallels between the representative, symbolic function of Black court servants and *Kunst-* and *Wunderkammern*, see also Kuhlmann-Smirnov, *Schwarze Europäer*, 195–198.

¹³ As Anna Greve has demonstrated from the perspective of critical whiteness studies, Black court servants also served to emphasize – through the contrast of their Blackness – the whiteness of their employers, which was viewed as the normative standard of beauty. See Anna Greve, *Farbe, Macht, Körper: Kritische Weißseinsforschung in der europäischen Kunstgeschichte* (Karlsruhe: KIT, 2013), 210.

¹⁴ On trumpets and kettledrums as acoustic instruments of power, see Jörg Jochen Berns, “Instrumental Sound and Ruling Spaces of Resonance in the Early Modern Period: On the Acoustic Setting of the Princely *potestas* Claims within a Ceremonial Frame,” in *Instruments in Art and Science: On the Architectonics of Cultural Boundaries in the 17th Century*, ed. Helmar Schramm, Ludger Schwarte, and Jan Lazardzig (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 493.

¹⁵ Wilhelm Friedrich Schönhaar, *Ausführliche Beschreibung des zu Bayreuth im September 1748 vorgegangenen Hoch fürstlichen Beylagers* (Stuttgart: Jenisch, 1749), large inserted engraving showing the procession on October 12, 1748. The Black drummer is marked with the number 68.

¹⁶ Schönhaar, *Ausführliche Beschreibung*, 99: “Ein Paucker, so ein Mohr, mit denen zwey ganz silbernen Paucken, welche mit kostbar von Silber und Gold, auch gelber Seiden gestickten Banderolen behängt waren.”



Fig. 6.1: A Black kettledrummer at the pageant staged for the wedding of Duke Karl Eugen of Württemberg and Princess Elisabeth Friederike Sophie of Brandenburg-Bayreuth in Stuttgart on October 12, 1748. Detail from an inserted engraving in Wilhelm Friedrich Schönhaar, *Ausführliche Beschreibung des zu Bayreuth im September 1748 vorgegangenen Hoch fürstlichen Beylagers* (Stuttgart: Jenisch, 1749). Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel: Gm 4° 1164 [CC BY-SA].

teenth century were not only dressed in this Turkish fashion but also performed music modeled on Turkish Janissary ensembles.¹⁷

Besides their appearance in pageants, processions, and military campaigns, Black trumpeters and drummers also performed as part of their daily duties at court, on public and private occasions. To provide two further examples from the Stuttgart court, Christian Real (whom I will discuss later) was a member of the ensemble of court trumpeters that announced the beginning of meals every day,¹⁸ and Eberhard Wilhelm, a Black kettledrummer in the ducal guard during the first half of the eighteenth century, performed during the Sunday church services at the court chapel since – as mentioned in his petition for a salary increase – he was able to read music while the court kettledrummer was not.¹⁹ This not only demonstrates the wide range of duties that Black court and military musicians had to fulfill, it also illustrates that their musical skills and capacities were not limited to improvising military signals.

As stated above, the legal and social position of these Black musicians, and of Black court servants in general, has been the subject of spirited discussion. Some his-

¹⁷ Michael Pirker, “Janissary Music,” Grove Music Online, last accessed November 26, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.14133>.

¹⁸ Firla and Forkl, “Afrikaner und Africana,” 158.

¹⁹ Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart (HStAS), A 21 Bü 609. The *Oberkapellmeister* (chief kapellmeister) Johann Daniel Hardt, who supported Eberhard Wilhelm’s petition, stated in his letter that “der unterthänigste supplicant in seiner erlernten kunst *Musicalisch*, mithin vor dem hoffpaucker zu denen beyderley kirchen *Musiquen* bey forfallenten festtügen wohl zu gebrauchen und fast allerdingß ohn entbehrlich ist [. . .]” ([. . .] since the humble petitioner has learned how to read music, he should be used in both performances of church music that take place on the occurring feast days, in preference to the court kettledrummer; he [Eberhard Wilhelm] is indeed virtually indispensable [. . .]).

torians, including Peter Martin in his groundbreaking study on the history of Africans in Germany, argue that Black people in Germany were situated in a precarious “no man’s land” between freedom and slavery.²⁰ On the one hand, there was no explicit and binding legal regulation for slavery in the Holy Roman Empire. On the other hand, Martin cites a variety of sources such as petitions and manumissions demonstrating that Black people were, in fact, treated as slaves. Other historians working mainly in the field of local and regional history – for instance Monika Firla, who has published extensively on Black servants and musicians at the Württemberg court²¹ – have not only stressed the social integration of Black Africans in early modern German society but also claimed that they enjoyed legal equality once they reached adulthood and entered court service.

As evidence for this integration and equality, Firla cites the fact that almost all Africans were baptized once they had been instructed in the Christian faith and were thus integrated in Christian society. Moreover, she emphasizes that many of them married German women, and that they received regular salaries at court.²² However, the cornerstone of Firla’s argument, which has since been reiterated by other scholars, are the cases of Black court trumpeters and kettledrummers she examines:²³ “When they [i.e., the Black trumpeters and drummers] began an apprenticeship in the ‘knightly art’ of the Kettledrummers’ and Trumpeters’ Guild, they had to be free, since the opposite would not have been reconcilable with their guild membership.”²⁴ Citing Johann Ernst Altenburg’s 1795 treatise *Versuch einer Anleitung zur heroisch-musikalischen Trompeter- und Pauker-Kunst* (Essay on an Introduction to the Heroic and Musical Trumpeters’ and Kettledrummers’ Art) and older secondary literature,²⁵ Firla further argues that Black

²⁰ Martin, *Schwarze Teufel, edle Mohren*, 129.

²¹ See notes 5, 22, and 64.

²² Firla and Forkl, “Afrikaner und Africana,” 149, 153, 157–158; Monika Firla, “Afrikanische Pauker und Trompeter am württembergischen Herzogshof im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert,” in *Musik in Baden-Württemberg, Jahrbuch 1996*, ed. Helmut Völkl, vol. 3 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1997), 12, 26–27.

²³ See for instance Mark Häberlein, “‘Mohren’, ständische Gesellschaft und atlantische Welt: Minderheiten und Kulturkontakte in der Frühen Neuzeit,” in *Atlantic Understandings: Essays on European and American History in Honor of Hermann Wellenreuther*, ed. Claudia Schnurmann and Hartmut Lehmann (Münster: LIT, 2006), 77–102 (on Firla’s position specifically: 85–88); Anne Kuhlmann, “Ambiguous Duty,” 57, 62, 64–65; Andreas Becker, “Preußens schwarze Untertanen: Afrikanerinnen und Afrikaner zwischen Kleve und Königsberg vom 17. Jahrhundert bis ins frühe 19. Jahrhundert,” *Forschungen zur Brandenburgischen und Preußischen Geschichte* 22 (2012): 2.

²⁴ See Firla and Forkl, “Afrikaner und Africana,” 153: “Auch wenn sie [d.h., die schwarzen Hoftrompeter und -pauker] eine Lehre in der ‘rittermäßigen Kunst’ der Pauker- und Trompeterzunft antraten, mußten sie frei sein, denn das Gegenteil hätte sich mit der Zunftzugehörigkeit nicht vereinbaren lassen.”

²⁵ Particularly Detlef Altenburg’s *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Trompete*, see note 6. For an English translation of the treatise by Johann Ernst Altenburg, see Johann Ernst Altenburg, *Essay on an Introduction to the Heroic and Musical Trumpeters’ and Kettledrummers’ Art*, trans. Edward H. Tarr (Nashville: Brass Press, 1974).

court and military musicians were not only legally free but also socially privileged, since trumpeters and kettledrummers fulfilled important functions in the context of warfare: They communicated acoustic signals and written messages, and military success often depended on their reliability. According to Altenburg, trumpeters were even considered equal in rank to military officers.

Recent research on the profession of trumpeters and drummers in early modern Germany strongly suggests that such generalizing statements should be avoided, however, not least because Altenburg's much-quoted *Versuch* cannot simply be taken at face value. In his 2009 monograph *Magie der Macht* (Magic of Power), musicologist Lars E. Laubhold subjects Altenburg's treatise to a critical examination.²⁶ Through in-depth textual analysis of the *Versuch* and its sources, Laubhold shows that Altenburg was mainly concerned with the "invention of tradition"²⁷ – a tradition that never existed in such an idealized form. Altenburg himself was never employed in the capacity of a court trumpeter, serving only briefly as a military trumpeter in the French army during the Seven Years' War, and he was impoverished and socially marginalized by the time of the publication of his treatise.²⁸ These aspects of his biography may have contributed to his idealizing and biased view.

Laubhold's conclusions question frequently held notions of the trumpeters' organization in an "Imperial Guild," as well as of their professional and social privileges. As he points out, the term "Zunft" (guild) is not used at all in seventeenth-century sources, and only rarely in eighteenth-century sources, to denote professional organizations of trumpeters.²⁹ Even though these associations exhibited some similarities to guilds, especially in how they regulated apprenticeship, they also differed significantly from guilds in that they were associated with the courtly and not the civic sphere.³⁰ Laubhold also contends that the terms actually used for these organizations, such as "Kameradschaft" (fellowship), do not suggest that contemporaries viewed them as proper guilds.³¹ Moreover, he emphasizes that the actual structures of the trumpeters' organizations, their social milieu, and their claim to regulate trumpet-related matters within the entire Empire are all aspects inconsistent with key characteristics of guilds.³²

Laubhold further argues that the organization of trumpeters and drummers was not conceived as an economic or socio-political institution representing the interests

26 Lars E. Laubhold, *Magie der Macht: Eine quellenkritische Studie zu Johann Ernst Altenburgs Versuch einer Anleitung zur heroisch-musikalischen Trompeter- und Pauker-Kunst, Halle 1795* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2009).

27 Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Laubhold, *Magie der Macht*, 79.

28 Laubhold, *Magie der Macht*, 32–47.

29 Laubhold, *Magie der Macht*, 104.

30 Laubhold, *Magie der Macht*, 99–103.

31 Laubhold, *Magie der Macht*, 106–108.

32 Laubhold, *Magie der Macht*, 103.

of its members.³³ Rather, the separation of trumpeters from other musicians through privileges, such as the Imperial Privileges of 1623, served aristocratic interests exclusively. Laubhold points out that these oft-quoted privileges did not benefit trumpeters but instead their princely employers, who wished to ensure that the sound of the trumpet as an acoustic symbol of power³⁴ remained their own prerogative. Accordingly, exemptions from articles in these privileges were always possible upon princely demand. For instance, a provision in the first article of the Imperial Privileges of 1623 (according to which a trumpeter was allowed to have only one apprentice) states that the regulation could be waived if a prince so desired.³⁵

Christian Ahrens's investigation of the social position of court trumpeters and drummers supports and complements Laubhold's findings in the areas of social and institutional history.³⁶ Based on substantial archival studies carried out in central Germany, Ahrens comes to the conclusion that trumpeters and drummers did not enjoy the prominent social position purported by Altenburg since their financial and social status within the court hierarchy was not above average level.³⁷ Ahrens is also able to show that the Imperial Trumpeters' Privileges of 1623 were not applied equally within the entire Empire as has often been assumed, with their interpretation and application varying from territory to territory. Furthermore, Ahrens demonstrates that the jurisdictional power of the Elector of Saxony over all trumpeters' organizations in the Empire claimed by Altenburg and earlier sources was widely disputed.³⁸ He also qualifies Altenburg's assertion that trumpeters and drummers were treated as equals to military officers, a status symbolically expressed by the privilege of displaying ostrich feathers on their hats.³⁹ According to a regulation passed by the administration of the Saxon court in 1754, trumpeters and drummers were not subjected to corporeal punishment by their immediate supervising officer but rather by a higher-ranking authority. Ahrens argues that this regulation does not reflect a legal status equal to offi-

33 Laubhold, *Magie der Macht*, 103.

34 See the highly insightful discussion of acoustic instruments of power in Berns, "Instrumental Sound and Ruling Spaces of Resonance," 479–503.

35 Laubhold, *Magie der Macht*, 93: "So konnte es geschehen, dass bereits dem ersten Artikel [des kaiserlichen Privilegs von 1623] eine Ausnahmeklausel beigegeben wurde, die die Verfügung außer Kraft setzte, sofern sie dem Belieben des jeweiligen Dienstherrn entgegenstand."

36 Christian Ahrens, "Fiktion und Realität: Die Privilegien der Trompeter und Pauker," *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 68 (2011): 228.

37 Ahrens, "Fiktion und Realität," 239–242.

38 Ahrens, "Fiktion und Realität," 229–231.

39 Johann Ernst Altenburg, *Versuch einer Anleitung zur heroisch-musikalischen Trompeter- und Pauker-Kunst* (Halle: Hendel, 1795), 33: "Ein Zeichen ihres Ansehens ist es auch, daß dieses Metier in den Freiheitsbriefen den Namen einer Adelig-Ritterlichen Kunst erhalten; wie denn auch ausdrücklich darinnen begriffen, daß man einen Trompeter oder Pauker einem Offizier gleich halten solle. Eben deswegen haben sie auch die Freyheit, gute Straußfedern auf ihren Hüthen, gleich denen vom Ritterstande, zu tragen." See also Ahrens, "Fiktion und Realität," 232.

cers but rather the practical concern of political authorities that trumpeters and drummers might be injured by excessive punishment and thus lose their ability to perform. Ahrens concludes that trumpeters enjoyed special privileges only when they had been entrusted with an official military task or whenever they fulfilled a specific political function.⁴⁰

Laubhold's and Ahrens's findings not only change our understanding of the meaning of trumpeters' privileges, but they also have implications for the legal status of Black trumpeters in the Holy Roman Empire. They suggest that princely employers were able to exempt Black trumpeters from the requirement of a "free and honest birth," one of the key conditions for apprenticeship,⁴¹ and that the decision to free a Black trumpeter ultimately rested on a prince's legal authority and not on the bylaws of a trumpeters' organization. The claim that Black trumpeters belonged to an "Imperial Guild" and were socially privileged and legally free solely because of this membership therefore seems difficult to maintain in such a generalizing form. Instead, further research on the legal and social status of Black trumpeters and drummers in the Empire should take into account the localized nature of both the trumpeters' organizations and princely patronage.

The issue of "guild membership" aside, research on Black trumpeters and drummers needs to consider two further aspects. Firstly, the legal uncertainty regarding slavery in the Holy Roman Empire as well as the general structure of estate-based societies in early modern Europe with their various forms of dependency must be taken into account. In light of this legal uncertainty, Rebekka von Mallinckrodt has argued that the term "slavery" needs to be applied in a case-specific fashion, taking into consideration legal grey zones in which explicit confirmation of slave status was the exception and only expressed in cases of conflict.⁴² Secondly, the frequently stated notion of a successful "social integration" of Black trumpeters and drummers in German society also warrants critical examination, since it implies that Black musicians were treated the same as their white colleagues. Kate Lowe has observed for fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe in general, and more specifically for the colonial powers of Portugal and Spain, that "African ancestry and possession of a black skin led directly to all sorts of differentiation, prejudice and discrimination."⁴³ She argues that this discrimination was ultimately based on the

⁴⁰ Ahrens, "Fiktion und Realität," 227.

⁴¹ See note 6.

⁴² Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, "There Are No Slaves in Prussia?" in *Slavery Hinterlands: Transatlantic Slavery and Continental Europe, 1680–1850*, ed. Felix Brahm and Eve Rosenhaft (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016), 109–131; Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, "Verhandelte (Un-)freiheit: Sklaverei, Leibeigenschaft und innereuropäischer Wissenstransfer am Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 43 (2017): 347–380.

⁴³ Lowe, "Introduction," 7. On the question whether the concepts of race and racism existed in Europe before the emergence of "scientific" racism in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see for instance Robert Bartlett, "Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity," *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31 (2001): 39–56; David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and*

persisting image that “all black Africans in Europe [. . .] were (and by extension were only fit to be) slaves.”⁴⁴

Indeed, the study of actual life experiences of Black court trumpeters and drummers in early modern Germany can shed light on their fragile and ambiguous social and legal position. Their situation has been characterized with the notion of “privileged dependency,” a term coined by historian Vera Lind.⁴⁵ On the one hand, Black court servants did receive a salary, gifts, and housing in most cases. On the other hand, they were more dependent on their noble patrons than their white colleagues owing to their past or present status as slaves. Because they had been abducted, enslaved, and trafficked, they lacked the network of family or other social relations that their colleagues could rely on. Moreover, when they were baptized – and thus “saved” from paganism according to contemporary theological reasoning – their noble patrons and families very often acted as godparents, thereby enforcing the notion of dependency on a spiritual level. Lowe has pointed out that their “arrival in Europe as slaves meant the systematic erasure of all the more significant aspects of their past, starting with their names, their languages, their religions, their families and communities, and their cultural practices [. . .].”⁴⁶ Given this specific situation, I argue that it was much harder for Black court servants than for their white colleagues to independently and successfully achieve social mobility, for instance by moving to a new position at another court.⁴⁷ In 1768, a Black kettledrummer named Carl, who had been dismissed from his service at the Brunswick court, referred to this particular form of dependency when he asked the duke in his petition to “show his benevolence towards me, a poor African, since I have neither father nor mother who could take care of me. I am, in other words, an abandoned orphan, who does not have anyone else to ask for help than Your Ducal Highness, who I revere as my greatest father.”⁴⁸

Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity and Islam (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Francisco Bethencourt, *Racisms: From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013); Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

⁴⁴ Kate Lowe, “The Stereotyping of Black Africans in Renaissance Europe,” in *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, ed. Tom F. Earle and Kate J. P. Lowe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 21.

⁴⁵ Vera Lind, “Privileged Dependency on the Edge of the Atlantic World: Africans and Germans in the Eighteenth Century,” in *Interpreting Colonialism*, ed. Byron R. Wells and Philip Stewart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 369–391.

⁴⁶ Lowe, “Introduction,” 2.

⁴⁷ For a different view, see for instance Kuhlmann, “Ambiguous Duty,” 65.

⁴⁸ Wolfenbüttel, Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv, 2 Alt, Nr. 3232, 20r–v: “wollen die hohe, Gnade haben, und für den armen *Africaner* von Dero mildigkeit etwas zu fließen laßen weil ich weder Vatter noch Mutter die sich meiner annehmen, so bin ich eine verlaßene Wäyse, und weis mich auch nirgendt hin zu wenden, als zu Eur. Herzogl. Durchl. welche ich in diesem zeitlichen für meinen grösten Vatter verehere.” See also Martin, *Schwarze Teufel, edle Mohren*, 159.

In the following two case studies, I will illustrate the legal and social ambivalence experienced by Black court trumpeters, shifting my focus from institutions and societal structures to individual life experiences. In my close source reading, I will specifically ask whether their profession as trumpeter gave them a role of agency and made their social upward mobility possible. I will also investigate how forms of “differentiation, prejudice and discrimination” and the association of Blackness with slavery and servitude were realities for Black trumpeters in the context of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Germany.⁴⁹

Christian Real was employed first as a servant and later as a trumpeter at the Württemberg court at Stuttgart between 1657 and 1674.⁵⁰ He had been brought from West Africa to Lindau on Lake Constance by Joß Kramer, a German slave trader and former vice commander of the Swedish Africa Company on the Gold Coast. On May 17, 1657, Real (who was around 14 years old at the time) was baptized by Jacob Fussenegger, a Lutheran pastor in Lindau, in the presence of the city’s entire congregation. A 48-page print entitled “Mohren Tauff” (A Moor’s Baptism) that included the sermon, a description of the service, and gratulatory poems was published on this occasion.⁵¹ “Christian” was the name he received at his baptism, while “Real” was the slave name he retained, suggesting his supposed royal origins. The mentioned publication is not only interesting in that it provides some biographical information on Christian; it also contains an attempt to justify slavery from the perspective of Christian theology and sheds light on contemporary views on Blackness, presented here as an allegory of sin that can only be remedied if the soul is baptized and thus turned white: “The blackness does no harm / provided a white faith peers out through the black skin,” as one of the poems puts it.⁵² As Pastor Fussenegger mentions in his sermon, Christian was still considered a “slave” at this point – a legal situation not changed by his baptism. Following the baptism, Christian was gifted to another man, Valentin Heider, and brought to Stuttgart, where he was presented to Duke Eberhard III.⁵³ By this time, he had been sold ten times and exchanged as a gift twice. Soon after his arrival in Stuttgart, he ran away and had to be

49 For a more detailed discussion of the source material related to these two cases, see Spohr, “Mohr und Trompeter,” 631–657.

50 On Christian Real, see Firla and Forkl, “Afrikaner und Africana,” 153–163; Firla, “Afrikanische Pauker und Trompeter,” 17–25.

51 Jacob Fussenegger, *Mohren Tauff / das ist: Christliche Tauffpredigt Aus der ordentlichen und gewöhnlichen Fest=Epistel des heiligen Pfingsttags / Actor. II, 11–13 bey der Tauff eines bekehrten Mohrens [. . .] gehalten [. . .]* (Nürnberg: Endter, 1658), copy kept in the Württembergische Landesbibliothek Stuttgart, Signature Theol. qt. 2535. On the poems, see Monika Firla, “‘Amicorum Carmina’: Gelegenheitsgedichte anlässlich der Taufe des ‘Mohren’ Christian Real am 17.V.1657 in Lindau am Bodensee,” *Etudes Germano-Africaines* 15 (1997): 135–144.

52 Fussenegger, *Mohren Tauff*, 42v: “Die Schwärze schadet nicht / Wann durch die schwarze Haut ein weißer Glaube sicht.”

53 For this and the following information on Christian Real’s biography, see Firla and Forkl, “Afrikaner und Africana,” 153–163.

forcibly returned to the court, where he likely became a servant to Duchess Maria Dorothea. In 1665, Christian was made an apprentice to court trumpeter Marcell Kerbß and, after completing his two-year apprenticeship, was appointed as court trumpeter in 1668. He received a salary of 37 gulden and 30 kreuzer per year, slightly more than half of what the other trumpeters were paid (62 gulden).⁵⁴

Only a year later, he was nearly killed when, on the night of November 10–11, 1669, he was violently and cruelly attacked by four young court servants of the lowest rank (“Jäger Jungen” or hunter’s boys) while he and a friend were walking back to his lodging from a wine tavern in the middle of the night. According to the legal court files – mostly interrogation records – held at the Hauptstaatsarchiv (Central State Archives) Stuttgart and discussed by Firla, the four young men seem to have assaulted Christian out of the blue, without warning or a preceding argument. The extensive documentation of the case⁵⁵ (around 200 pages) provides a fascinating glimpse into Christian’s life and position in Stuttgart society: On the one hand, they suggest he was socially well integrated – he drank and conversed with friends extensively in the wine tavern. On the other hand, the documents show his vulnerability (in this case, in a quite literal sense) outside of the courtly sphere. Firla rejects a possible racist motive⁵⁶ in her discussion of the case, stating “social envy” as the most likely reason. It seems significant that Christian proudly wore his “green hat” (“grüne Kapp”) as part of his livery as court trumpeter that night, which, Firla posits, may have provoked the attackers’ envy. The fact that Christian also carried a sword (“Degen”) is another important detail that might have added to his attackers’ aggression, since the sword visually demonstrated his status as a legally free person.⁵⁷ Moreover, his attempt to put

54 Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart (HStAS), A 256, Bd. 153: Jahresband der Landschreiberei 1669/1670, “Besoldungen. Den Trompetern,” Nr. 467. That Real appears to have received both free lodging at the house of his former teacher Marcell Kerbß and free meals at court might account to some extent for the lower salary. After he was attacked in 1669, his payment was raised to fifty gulden annually, perhaps as a form of compensation for his injuries; see HStAS, A 256, Bd. 153: Jahresband der Landschreiberei 1669/1670–Bd. 156: Jahresband der Landschreiberei 1672/1673.

55 Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart (HStAS), A 210 (Oberrat Stuttgart Stadt und Amt) III, Büschel 43, “Tödliche Verwundung eines Mohren.” The file consists of thirty-three individual documents, most of them (presumably) in original numbering, although no. 10 and 12 are missing and other documents lack numbers. The following citations refer to this original numbering. For an overview and description of the contents of this source, see Spohr, “Mohr und Trompeter,” 650–652.

56 Firla and Forkl, “Afrikaner und Africana,” 161–162; Firla, “Afrikanische Pauker und Trompeter,” 23–24.

57 On the right to bear arms as an indication of legal status, see B. Ann Tlusty, *The Martial Ethic in Early Modern Germany: Civic Duty and the Right of Arms* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 56. The “Degen” is mentioned several times in the interrogation of the injured Christian Real by Stuttgart court officials, see HStAS, A 210 III Bü 43, no. 1, “Die verhör deß am ii. hujus bey nächtllicher weil tödlich verwundeten Mohren Christian betr.,” dated November 14, 1669.

the four young men in their place by referring to himself as a “Herrendiener” (“prince’s servant”) may have further fueled their aggression.⁵⁸

Discrimination based on skin color could well have been part of the assailants’ motivation as well, however.⁵⁹ The fact that one of them publicly boasted after the attack that he had “so bravely cured the Moor”⁶⁰ (a detail omitted by Firla) points in this direction. As the statement implies, the attacker likely believed that the “Moor” Christian had to be “cured” of the hubris that made him wear his green hat and sword in public as status symbols inappropriate for a former slave. The fact that the attackers intended to disfigure his face⁶¹ also strongly supports this interpretation: Three of the young men used their small hunting knives (“Hirschfänger”) while the fourth held Christian so he could not defend himself. The inherent symbolism of their weapons might likewise be significant: Commonly used to kill animals, the hunting knives could have implied a form of degradation.⁶² As Valentin Groebner has pointed out, according to early modern theological and legal views, “the face [. . .] was the noblest part of the body and expressed a person’s honor.”⁶³ Therefore, disfigurement of the human face aimed at dishonoring the entire person.

In conclusion, the fact that Christian wore his trumpeter’s hat and carried a sword (both are mentioned in the court documents several times) played a significant role in the event. His privileged position as court trumpeter, visually marked by both status symbols, clearly added to his vulnerability outside the courtly sphere. As a consequence of the attack, he lost one of his eyes, but otherwise eventually recovered. He participated in the funeral procession for his patron Eberhard III in 1674 (in the depiction of the procession, he is shown as a white person)⁶⁴ before disappearing from the court records. Kuhlmann supposes he may have returned to Africa following the

58 HStAS, A 210 III Bü 43, no. 6, statement by Jacob Friderich Heller, one of the witnesses, “Bedienter bey fürstlicher Leibguardie”: “Er [i.e., Christian Real] were ein Herrendiener und der Christian, thue ja niemand nichts solten ihme mit friden lassen.”

59 For a more specific discussion of this assumption, see Spohr, “Mohr und Trompeter,” 638–642.

60 HStAS, A 210 III Bü 43, no. 5, “Unterthänigste Relation, die gepflogene examination, wegen des tödtlich verwundten Mohren und Trompeters, Christian Rojalen betr.,” dated November 17, 1669: “[. . .] daß er unterwegs im heimgehen gegen Ihnen sich gerühmet, wie er den Mohren so prav curiret hette.” This statement is repeated in the same document; “Hirschfänger” (daggers) are also mentioned there.

61 See for instance HStAS, A 210 III Bü 43, no. 1. For a broader discussion of the aspect of violence in Real’s case, see Arne Spohr, “Violence, Social Status, and Blackness in Early Modern Germany: The Case of Black Trumpeter Christian Real (ca. 1643–after 1674),” in *Beyond Exceptionalism. Traces of Slavery and the Slave Trade in Early Modern Germany, 1650–1850*, ed. Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, Josef Köstlbauer, and Sarah Lentz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 69–77.

62 I would like to thank Dr. Kate Lowe, Queen Mary University of London, for her helpful suggestion.

63 Valentin Groebner, *Defaced: The Visual Culture of Violence in the Late Middle Ages* (New York: Zone Books, 2004), 76.

64 Monika Firla, *Exotisch – höfisch – bürgerlich: Afrikaner in Württemberg vom 15. bis 19. Jahrhundert. Katalog zur Ausstellung des Hauptstaatsarchivs Stuttgart* (Stuttgart: Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart, 2001),

death of his patron.⁶⁵ This assumption is not as unlikely as it might initially appear: The Brandenburg merchant Otto Friedrich von der Groeben, for example, reports in the diary of his voyage to West Africa in 1682/83 that he met former Black court servants, who had returned to Africa after living “for about ten years among Europeans,” in several places.⁶⁶ The possibility that Christian Real did indeed go back to Africa after 1674 would in turn confirm that he was freed at some point during his time in Stuttgart.

Our second case study, the story of field trumpeter Christian Gottlieb, likewise illustrates the ambiguous legal and social position of Black court servants in Germany, this time in the context of marriage. Christian Gottlieb’s story was first made known to a wider audience by Johannes Christian Kinder (1843–1914), a former mayor of the city of Plön in Schleswig-Holstein and local historian who published his “Historische Erzählung” (Historical Narrative) on the Black trumpeter in 1887.⁶⁷ Kinder’s highly fanciful narrative has been cited frequently; it is mostly taken at face value even though he himself emphasized its primarily literary character by calling it a *narrative*. However, it has gone largely unnoticed that the original sources used by Kinder are still kept in the Plön City Archive. Even a cursory evaluation of these sources suggests that Kinder’s story needs to be largely rewritten.⁶⁸

Christian Gottlieb is first mentioned in a baptism record from St. Nikolai’s Church in Kiel dated January 23, 1675 as an “African and Moor whom Colonel Bartram Rantzau sent to be baptized; [he] was named Christian Gottlieb, and had several nobles as godparents or witnesses.”⁶⁹ Bartram Rantzau was a member of one of the oldest and most influential noble families in the Schleswig-Holstein region, which at the time had close political ties to the Kingdom of Denmark. In the early 1670s, Denmark had joined other European trading powers such as Portugal, England, and the Netherlands as a participant in the transatlantic slave trade, and it seems likely that Christian Got-

44. Firla interprets this fact as evidence for Christian Real’s “integration.” See also Spohr, “Mohr und Trompeter,” 634–635.

65. Kuhlmann-Smirnov, *Schwarze Europäer*, 238.

66. Kuhlmann-Smirnov, *Schwarze Europäer*, 238–240; Adam Jones, *Brandenburg Sources for West African History, 1680–1700* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1985), 40, 234.

67. Johannes Christian Kinder, *Aus der Chronik der Stadt Plön. I. Christian Gottlieb der schwarze Feldtrompeter* (Plön: Hirt, 1887).

68. A reevaluation of the sources used by Kinder and still largely extant at the Stadtarchiv Plön, as well as of other hitherto unknown sources on Christian Gottlieb, was undertaken during the 1990s by a group of local historians, see Claus Ulrich, Elisabeth Rübcke, and Ada Bues, *Der Schwarze Trompeter von Plön: Geschichte und Geschichten* (Eutin: Struve, 1996). Unfortunately, this important study has been almost completely overlooked by historians and music historians alike.

69. “Eodem einen Africaner und Mohren welchen H. Oberst Bartram Rantzow zur Taufe gesand, und unterschiedlichen – vom Adell zu TauffPaten oder Zeugen gehabt. Ist genandt worden Christian Gottlieb.” See the reproduction of this entry in Martin, *Schwarze Teufel, edle Mohren*, 183.

lieb was brought to Schleswig-Holstein by a slave trader involved with the Danish West India Company.

We do not know when and under what circumstances Christian Gottlieb arrived in the Rantzau household, but we do know that he was treated exceptionally well there. Rantzau, who was highly experienced in military matters, had Christian Gottlieb trained as a “field trumpeter,” which besides his two-year apprenticeship involved participation in a military campaign. Christian Gottlieb must have completed this training by July 1677, since an official document from the City of Kiel calls him a “manly and art-loving field trumpeter Christian Gottlieb.”⁷⁰

Even more significantly, Rantzau also provided Christian Gottlieb with a coat of arms, demonstrating that he was not only legally free but also held a socially privileged position.⁷¹ Coats of arms were usually reserved for nobles, their closest officials (such as court administrators), and members of the upper bourgeoisie. To my knowledge, it was exceptionally rare at this time for a trumpeter (or in fact any musician) to carry their own coat of arms. To match this elevated social status, Rantzau endowed Christian Gottlieb with a significant fortune that enabled the trumpeter to become a successful businessman. As early as 1677, two years after his baptism, Christian Gottlieb lent the significant amount of 400 *Reichstaler* (a sum roughly equaling the annual salary of an upper-level court official) to the City of Kiel. Several other documents on similar loan transactions are preserved as well. There is also evidence that Christian Gottlieb owned at least two farms in Schleswig-Holstein, and obtained the privilege to operate a local grain mill towards the end of his life.⁷²

Christian Gottlieb's remarkable career and status did not go unchallenged, however. For instance, in a letter to the ducal court, Rantzau's son-in-law and heir Christian Rantzau complained bitterly about the trumpeter, who “does not realize that it was actually my father-in-law who placed him in a position above his actual social rank,” implying that a “Moor” should never have come into such a position of social privilege and economic power.⁷³ In the young Rantzau's opinion, Christian Gottlieb essentially belonged at the social rank of a legally and economically dependent Black court servant, a rank turned upside down by his actual position. With this implication, Christian Rantzau not only verbally attacked the Black trumpeter but also implicitly criticized his own father-in-law, who appeared to have disregarded the preordained social hierarchy.

70 Ulrich, Rübcke, and Bues, *Der Schwarze Trompeter von Plön*, 38: “Manhaffter und Kunstliebender Christian Gottlieb, Feldtrumpeter.”

71 Ulrich, Rübcke, and Bues, *Der Schwarze Trompeter von Plön*, 47. For a reproduction of Christian Gottlieb's coat of arms, which is also depicted on his tombstone, see Martin, *Schwarze Teufel, edle Mohren*, 193.

72 On Christian Gottlieb's economic situation, see Ulrich, Rübcke, and Bues, *Der Schwarze Trompeter von Plön*, 46, 64, 67–69, 77–81.

73 Quoted according to Ulrich, Rübcke, and Bues, *Der Schwarze Trompeter von Plön*, 77: “so wenig erkennt das Er von meinem Sel(igen) Schwieger Vatter uber seinem Standen befindendes wolsein gesetzt.”

We do not know why Bartram Rantzau supported Christian Gottlieb so generously, essentially as though he was his own son. It seems reasonably certain, however, that Rantzau wished to provide his trumpeter with the means to support himself in the future, independent of his own patronage and protection.

This plan was put to the test when, in 1684, Christian Gottlieb intended to marry Gertrud Radeleff, the daughter of a Plön city councilman (not the mayor's daughter, as Kinder claims) and member of one of the city's wealthy merchant families. Kinder's melodramatic story emphasizes the difference in wealth and status between groom and bride: on the one hand the trumpeter, a faithful servant without a fortune of his own,⁷⁴ and on the other the daughter of the wealthiest and most powerful family in town. As the sources demonstrate, however, the opposite was true. Christian Gottlieb's proposal met the resistance of the bride's family *despite* his wealth and social status.

The intensity of part of the Radeleff family's resistance to the engagement – which occasionally even devolved into physical violence – is remarkable. As a surviving interrogation record written by a city official reveals,⁷⁵ two male relatives of the bride entered the house of Gertrud's widowed mother and demanded the engagement to be dissolved. This request was met with fierce defiance by mother and daughter, who according to the men's account not only heavily insulted but also physically assaulted them, hitting one of them in the face and throwing his wig on the floor while beating the other so badly that he fell under a table. In their own version of the events, the women stated that they had legitimately defended themselves, since one of the men had previously threatened to draw his sword against them.

The resistance of Gertrud's male relatives to the engagement was likely motivated by a mixture of different reasons. As other archival sources besides the court records suggest, quarrels over inheritance issues were typical for the Radeleff family; it thus seems conceivable that the relatives feared losing part of the inheritance of the bride's recently deceased father as a result of the potential union.⁷⁶ Significantly, however, the only aspect explicitly mentioned in the legal court records that strongly suggests a motive is Christian Gottlieb's identity as a Black person: During the argument, one of the male relatives insulted the bride as a "Moor devil" ("Mohrenteufel"), thereby extending to the young woman the common early modern European association of Blackness with the devil.⁷⁷ The fact that the couple had become engaged se-

74 Ulrich, Rübcke, and Bues, *Der Schwarze Trompeter von Plön*, 113.

75 Stadtarchiv Plön, Nr. 1408, September 13, 1684, without pagination [p. 2], statement by the bride's mother: "Wehren Klägere, Clauß Radleff und Johann Jochim Mack, nicht, wie wieder sie und ihre tochter angebracht, in aller güte zu I[hnen] in ihr Hauß gekommen, sondern mit schelten und schla-gen, maßen Johann Jochim Mack ihre Tochter vor einen Mohren teuffel gescholten [. . .]" (Contrary to what Clauß Radleff und Johann Jochim Mack stated previously against her and her daughter, the prosecuting party did not enter the house peacefully, but with verbal insults and violence. Johann Jo[a]chim Mack in particular called her daughter a Moor devil.)

76 Ulrich, Rübcke, and Bues, *Der Schwarze Trompeter von Plön*, 49–56.

77 On the history of this association, see for instance Martin, *Schwarze Teufel, edle Mohren*, 19–27.

cretly (with the consent of the bride's mother but without that of the male relatives, as demanded by law) suggests that Christian Gottlieb and Gertrud were well aware that their union would not be socially accepted in the city of Plön.

Following the dispute, mother and daughter were accused of a "secret engagement" and unruliness; Gertrud was placed under the control of a guardian, and the case was brought to the legal court of the local Duke, Johann Adolf of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Plön.⁷⁸ Significantly, however, the ducal legal court did not rule against the unruly couple, instead urging for a settlement between the couple and the bride's family. Bartram Rantzau, Christian Gottlieb's employer, was asked to write a manumission letter and provide an additional property as dowry. This manumission, one of the few currently known documents of its kind written in the Holy Roman Empire,⁷⁹ casts a more specific light on the tenuous legal position of Black trumpeters in Germany. It is significant that Christian Gottlieb needed a manumission at all as a requirement to marry. The fact that he had fulfilled the requirements of the Trumpeters' Guild with regard to his apprenticeship (not to mention his coat of arms) apparently did not mean he was automatically considered a "free person" in the city of Plön, even though his employer had evidently been treating him as such even before the manumission was written.

Christian Gottlieb's uncertain legal position is reflected in the wording of the document: On the one hand, Rantzau states that he had "for no reasons in this world claimed ownership of him, but consider[s] him an honest and free man and field trumpeter."⁸⁰ This statement clearly refers to the time prior to the writing of the manumission, as emphasized by the tense (present perfect) of the first verb ("has claimed", in German: "praetendieret"). It is noteworthy that Christian Gottlieb's profession of "field trumpeter" is added here to emphasize his free legal status ("free man"). On the other hand, all the specific aspects of freedom listed in the following section, such as his freedom to travel or to seek employment elsewhere, are stated to come into effect "from now on" ("von nun an") as a result of the letter, implying that he had not been free before. This seemingly contradictory logic suggests that the manumission letter was written to appease the relatives of Christian Gottlieb's bride, who apparently had strong doubts concerning the trumpeter's legal position.⁸¹ The conflict arising from a marriage outside of the courtly social networks ultimately points to a conflict between different

78 On the following course of events, see Ulrich, Rübcke, and Bues, *Der Schwarze Trompeter von Plön*, 56–61; Kinder, *Aus der Chronik der Stadt Plön*, 14–17.

79 Stadtarchiv Plön, Nr. 1408, dated October 4, 1684. On the day of my visit to the Plön city archive in January 2017, only a photocopy of the original letter was available.

80 Stadtarchiv Plön, Nr. 1408, dated October 4, 1684: "Ich dennoch deßwegen, ümb keener uhrsachen in der welt einige Leib Eigenschaft an Ihm *praetendiret*, besondern Ihn alß einen Ehrlichen freyen Mann undt Feldtrompeter erkenne undt halte."

81 See Ulrich, Rübcke, and Bues, *Der Schwarze Trompeter von Plön*, 46.

courtly and civic value systems and sentiments, between which Black court servants frequently had to navigate.

Despite this solution facilitated by ducal mediation, other last-minute complications arose, and another intervention by Christian Gottlieb's patron Rantzau was required to finally allow the wedding to happen.⁸² Christian Gottlieb and his wife moved to a farm that his employer had gifted to him, and when Bartram Rantzau died, Christian Gottlieb became court trumpeter to Duke Johann Adolf. The marriage produced three children but did not last long, since Christian Gottlieb died only five years after the wedding.

Christian Gottlieb's impressive tombstone remains visible outside the *Johanniskirche* (St. John's Church) in Plön⁸³ as a tangible symbol of his remarkable success (see Fig. 6.2) – a success, however, that would not have been possible without the support and intervention of his noble patrons.⁸⁴

In conclusion, the cases of the Black trumpeters Christian Real and Christian Gottlieb cast doubt on the notions of a universally recognized free legal status and frictionless social integration of Black court trumpeters and kettledrummers in early modern Germany as suggested by Firla, Kuhlmann, and others. Without a doubt, both musicians enjoyed privileges as court and field trumpeters, and both were legally free and integrated in social networks. Christian Real lived with his former teacher and had friends among the other court servants. Christian Gottlieb represents a particularly impressive case of economic success: He was so wealthy that he could lend money to the City of Kiel, he owned significant property, his coat of arms elevated him socially above the majority of colleagues in his profession, and he married a local woman from one of the leading merchant families in the city of Plön. The visual presence of a trumpet in his coat of arms inscribed on his tombstone, as well as the emphasis on his legal status and profession as an "honest and free man and Field Trumpeter" in Rantzau's manumission letter strongly suggest that his profession as trumpeter was indeed a factor for the obtainment of his free legal status – a status that clearly already existed before the manumission was written.

However, both case studies also show that the social and legal status of the two trumpeters did not go unchallenged and unquestioned. As demonstrated by my close

⁸² On this and the following events in Christian Gottlieb's life, see Ulrich, Rübcke, and Bues, *Der Schwarze Trompeter von Plön*, 56–69, 77–107.

⁸³ The inscription reads: "Dieser Stein gehört Hern Christian Gottlieb Ihro Hoch Furstlichen Durchleucht Hof und Feld Trumpeter, ist gestorben Ao 1690 Den 3. Junius. [Wappen] Hier ruhet Gottlieb als ein Christ. Bedenck das End, der Du dies liest, weil Du gleich ihm auch sterblich bist." (This stone belongs to Master Christian Gottlieb, Court and Field Trumpeter of His Most Princely Highness. He died in the year 1690, on June 3rd. [Coat of arms] Here rests Gottlieb as a Christian. You, who reads this, contemplate the end, since you are mortal like him.) See also Martin, *Schwarze Teufel, edle Mohren*, 192.

⁸⁴ On Duke Johann Adolf's support of Christian Gottlieb after Bartram Rantzau's death (1686), see Ulrich, Rübcke, and Bues, *Der Schwarze Trompeter von Plön*, 64–69.



Fig. 6.2: Tombstone of Christian Gottlieb with his coat of arms. Plön, Johanniskirche, 1690. Photo: Antje Spohr.

reading of the sources, their identity as Black Africans was at the core of these challenges. The fact that Christian Real wore his court attire in nightly Stuttgart provoked an aggression that almost proved deadly; his attackers saw him as a “Moor” they needed to “cure” of his hubris by defacing and thus dishonoring him. Similarly, Christian Gottlieb’s unusual wealth and status not only aroused envy in Bertram Rantzau’s son-in-law, but they were also doubted in the urban sphere to the degree that his patron had to produce a manumission letter for him to be able to marry his bride Gertrud. Because of her union with a Black man, Gertrud was stigmatized as a “Moor

devil” by her male relatives. Overall, both case studies illustrate that the common association of Blackness with servitude and slavery observed by Lowe not only occurred in countries directly involved in the transatlantic slave trade but also in a “slavery hinterland” such as seventeenth-century Germany.⁸⁵

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⁸⁵ On the term “slavery hinterland,” see Felix Brahm and Eve Rosenhaft, “Introduction: Towards a Comprehensive European History of Slavery and Abolition,” in *Slavery Hinterland: Transatlantic Slavery and Continental Europe, 1680–1850*, ed. Felix Brahm and Eve Rosenhaft (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2016), 1–23. Further research is necessary to add to and refine the study of the social and legal position of Black trumpeters and drummers in early modern Germany. Additional case studies comparing the situation of Black musicians to that of their white colleagues can provide deeper insights into both structures of social integration and patterns of discrimination and exclusion. More specifically, these case studies will need to further investigate issues of social mobility and dependency as well as salaries, gifts, and extra allowances received by Black court musicians. Other important issues are that of marriage (e.g., the social status of their white or Black spouses), and the difference between courtly and civic cultures of sentiment towards Blackness. Finally, I concur with Kate Lowe’s call to intensify the search for archival records that would allow “for some notional black African voices to be heard” (Lowe, “Introduction,” 14).

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Rebekka von Mallinckrodt

7 Iconography and the Law: Slaves at the Dresden Court

At first glance, the painting looks like one of the countless relatively uniform early modern ruler portraits: Louis de Silvestre's full body picture of Augustus the Strong, dated to 1723, shows the Elector of Saxony and King of Poland in life size as commander in armor with his general's staff (Fig. 7.1). In the background, mounted troops ride into battle; in the foreground, Augustus is accompanied by two servant figures slightly to his side and rear: A light-skinned young man looks almost negligently to one side while carrying Augustus' helmet, whereas the second figure, a Black African boy holding his ermine coat, bows deeply with his eyes fixed on the ruler. The second boy's body only enters the picture from the side and is almost entirely covered from the chest down by the long, flowing ermine coat. The figures are contrasted not only in terms of their positions but also by the lighting: Augustus' face – framed by a white-powdered allonge wig – is brightly lit, and his armor glistens in the light, which also shines on the light-skinned servant's face. By contrast, the sub-Saharan boy is literally standing in the shadows. His darkness is further enhanced by the portrayal of his curly black hair (instead of the often-depicted colorful turban). Yet something on this servant figure glitters as well: a long earring and a silver slave collar.

Why did Frederic Augustus I, during whose reign (1694–1733) the portrait was produced, have himself depicted with a slave? What did the iconography of slavery mean in a territory that owned no colonies nor operated any plantations with slaves? Was this simply a pictorial motif, or did the painting refer to a real person? Were there slaves at the Dresden court, and did slavery exist as a legal status in Saxony?

To answer these questions, there is ample international research on the early modern iconography of slaves, on free, freed, and enslaved Black Africans, and on the presence of people of color on the European continent. Germany, however, still plays a marginal role in this literature, for the Old Empire and its territories – given their few and short-lived colonies and slave-trading companies – are only gradually coming to be seen as part of early modern globalization and as a “slavery hinterland.”¹ This applies

1 See e.g. the most recent publications: Felix Brahm and Eve Rosenhaft, eds., *Slavery Hinterland: Transatlantic Slavery and Continental Europe, 1680–1850* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2016); Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, Josef Köstlbauer, and Sarah Lentz, eds., *Beyond Exceptionalism: Traces of Slavery and the Slave Trade in Early Modern Germany, 1650–1850* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2021); Rebekka

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Fig. 7.1: Louis de Silvestre: Augustus II, King of Poland and Elector of Saxony, with light-skinned servant and African slave, 1723. Oil on canvas, 262 x 155 cm. © Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Gallery No. 3944. Photo: bpk, Elke Estel/Hans-Peter Klut.

von Mallinckrodt and Magnus Ressel, eds., *From Practices to Structurations: German Involvement in Slavery and the Slave Trade*. Special Issue *Journal of Global Slavery* 8, 2–3 (2023); Jutta Wimpler and Klaus Weber, eds., *Globalized Peripheries: Central Europe and the Atlantic World, 1680–1860* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2020). For comparative research on the presence of people of African descent in Europe, see Annika Bärwald, Josef Köstlbauer, and Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, “People of African Descent in Early Modern Europe,” in *Oxford Bibliographies Online: Atlantic History*, ed. Trevor Burnard, last modified January 15, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199730414-0326>, last accessed October 19, 2023. There has also been initial research work on iconography in Germany, but it has attracted very little international attention, e.g. Manja Anaid Dettmann, “Bloss ein weiterer ‘Kammernohr’? Das schwarze (Figuren-)Personal in der preußischen Hofmalerei des 18. Jahrhunderts” (Master’s thesis, Technical University of Berlin, 2011); Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff, “Mit Mohrenpage,” in *Ästhetik der Differenz: Postkoloniale Perspektiven vom 16. bis 21. Jahrhundert. 15 Fallstudien*, ed. Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 2010), 249–266; Katja Wolf, “‘Und ihre siegreichen Reize steigert im Kontrast ein Mohr.’ Weiße Damen und schwarze Pagen in der Bildnismalerei,” in *Weiße Blicke: Geschlechtermythen des Kolonialismus*, ed. Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff, Karl Hölz, and Herbert Uerlings (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 2004), 19–36. See also the forthcoming dissertation by Carolin Alff, “Repräsentation und Realität: Die Afrikabilder in Nürnberg und Augsburg im 16. Jahrhundert” (PhD diss., University of Hamburg, 2023).

equally to the wealth of publications on Dresden that have contributed to this study: They usually avoid the topic of slavery or even explicitly deny its existence in Saxony.² In this chapter, I therefore intend to pursue this evasive movement and these conflicting findings, examining how deeply (both geographically and analytically) early modern systems of slavery penetrated continental Europe.

Since their desired (as well as inevitable) visibility by way of deliberate staging and a physique perceived as alien shaped the situation of people of color at early modern courts, I will first approach the aforementioned questions with reference to visual sources. Taking the representation of people of sub-Saharan origin in ruler portraits of Augustus the Strong and his wife Christiane Eberhardine (r. 1694–1727) as a starting point allows both intended roles and functions to be analyzed especially well. Was the depiction of Africans as slaves the exception or the rule, and what conclusions can be drawn from this?

Secondly, I will examine the presence of people of color at the Dresden court, and hence also the relationship between pictorial representation and historical practice. In contrast to the depiction of sub-Saharan people, written sources were less clear regarding ethnic and geographic origin: In the absence of additional information, the contemporary term “Moor” could refer to Black Africans, lighter-skinned people from North Africa, North American natives, Indians, and sometimes even “Turks.”³ People

2 The slave status is denied by Donath and Greve (Matthias Donath, “Schwarze in Sachsen im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert,” in *Augusts Afrika: Afrika in Sachsen, Sachsen in Afrika im 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. André Thieme and Matthias Donath (Königsbrück: Via Regia Verlag, 2022), 42–80, here 60; Anna Greve, “Das europäische Verlangen nach Exotik: Die afrikanischen Krieger im Grünen Gewölbe,” *Dresdener Kunstblätter* 2 (2006): 81–85, here 84). Equal footing with native servants through conversion to Christianity respectively by reaching adulthood is assumed by Silke Herz, *Königin Christiane Eberhardine – Pracht im Dienst der Staatsraison: Kunst, Raum und Zeremoniell am Hof der Frau Augusts des Starken* (Berlin: Lukas Verlag, 2020), 119–120. Junger as well as Schnitzer and Hölscher omit the topic of slavery entirely despite showing depictions of slave collars (Stella Junger, *Präsentation im Bildnis deutscher Fürsten des 18. Jahrhunderts: Sachsen-Polen, Bayern und Brandenburg-Preußen zwischen Absolutismus und Aufklärung* (Münster: Verlagshaus Monsenstein und Vannerdat, 2011), 88 with regard to a copy of the picture described here; Claudia Schnitzer and Petra Hölscher, eds., *Eine gute Figur machen: Kostüm und Fest am Dresdener Hof* (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 2000)). Bloh assumes a “staging” of the slave status (Jutta Charlotte von Bloh, “Faszination des Fremden: Afrika-Inszenierungen am kurfürstlichen Hof in Dresden im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert,” in *Äthiopien und Deutschland: Sehnsucht nach der Ferne*, ed. Kerstin Volker-Saad and Anna Greve (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2006), 76–84). An exception, albeit with a focus on representation during festivities, is Claudia Schnitzer, “Herrschende und dienende ‘Mohren’ in den Festen Augusts des Starken,” in *Äthiopien und Deutschland: Sehnsucht nach der Ferne*, ed. Kerstin Volker-Saad and Anna Greve (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2006), 87–101. Mikosch is noncommittal about whether the collar was used to signify “former or actual slave status” (Elisabeth Mikosch, “Ein Serail für die Hochzeit des Prinzen: Turquerien bei den Hochzeitsfeierlichkeiten in Dresden im Jahre 1719,” in *Im Lichte des Halbmonds: Das Abendland und der türkische Orient*, ed. Claudia Schnitzer (Dresden: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, 1995), 235–243, here 236; ead., “Court Dress and Ceremony in the Age of the Baroque: The Royal/Imperial Wedding of 1719 in Dresden. A Case Study,” 2 vols. (PhD diss., New York University, 1999), vol. 1, 306).

3 On this issue, cf. among others Anne Kuhlmann-Smirnov, *Schwarze Europäer im Alten Reich: Handel, Migration, Hof* (Göttingen: V & R unipress, 2013), 17, 80–84. “People of color” is a self-designation

from almost all these parts of the world were present in early modern Dresden. Was their status as homogeneous as the generic term “Moor” suggests, or do we find them in differing legal and social positions?

In the final section, I will return to the question of whether the enslavement portrayed in De Silvestre’s work can be seen as a (metaphorical) means of staging domination or whether it can be attributed to contemporary practices and legal notions. I will show that slavery was a legally sanctioned practice in Saxony which, while displayed particularly prominently in ruler portraits, extended far deeper into early modern German society than has hitherto been assumed.

People of Sub-Saharan Origin in Ruler Portraits of Augustus the Strong and Christiane Eberhardine

Among the numerous portraits of the ruling couple, we find a series of representations with “African attendant figures”. These were not always autonomous designs; for example, at least five copies of the painting described above are preserved. In these, the contrast between status and appearance is accentuated further in that the light-skinned servant disappeared in later versions, while the dark-skinned boy as well as his shiny slave collar remained.⁴ Portraits were often copied as well as reproduced in various materials and media, and individual elements – such as Black African servants – were sometimes even literally traced.⁵ The iconographic motif of African attendant figures was thus not necessarily connected to the physical presence of people of color.

by dark-skinned people, who simultaneously criticize such categorization. It is used here descriptively as an umbrella term to take into account the heterogeneous origins of people who were perceived as physically and/or culturally “foreign,” and at the same time to avoid as far as possible the term “Moor,” which occurs in the sources but is now considered discriminatory. Since the early modern use of the word “Turk” is diffuse from a present-day perspective (not least due to the fact that the Ottoman Empire was itself a multi-ethnic state), the term is likewise used with quotation marks here.

⁴ See in addition to the version illustrated here: 2. Louis de Silvestre, *König August II. mit Diener und afrikanischem Knaben*, c. 1723, oil on canvas, 251.5 x 166 cm, Cracow, Wawel Royal Castle Collection, Inventory No. 1137 (d. 119); also in Junger, *Präsentation*, Fig. II.1.12; 3. Louis de Silvestre, *König August II. von Polen, Kurfürst von Sachsen*, c. 1737, oil on canvas, 307 x 179 cm, Dresden, Old Masters Picture Gallery, armory, Gallery No. 3947, digitized version: <https://skd-online-collection.skd.museum/Details/Index/185726>; also in Junger, *Präsentation*, Fig. II.1.28; 4. a copy of the picture can also be found in the Bavarian State Painting Collections (on permanent loan to the Bavarian National Museum in Munich), Inventory No. 3828, digitized version: <https://www.sammlung.pinakothek.de/de/artwork/QLW9VX4NO>; 5. Palace Museum in Wilanów, Inventory No. Wil. 1155; digitized version: https://www.wilanow-palac.pl/files/57_07.august%20ii-wil.1155.jpg. All three last accessed October 19, 2023.

⁵ Evidence of such tracing has been provided in the case of Antoine Pesne by Manja Dettmann (“Bloss ein weiterer ‘Kammermohr’?”, 55–56).



Fig. 7.2: Watercolor created after a painting by Louis de Silvestre: The Saxon electress and Polish queen Christiane Eberhardine with an African slave, before 1725, 24.3 x 14.3 x 3.3 cm. © Grünes Gewölbe, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Inventory No. VI 69. Photo: Jürgen Karpinski.⁶

This is apparent in a watercolor of Christiane Eberhardine created after a painting by Louis de Silvestre and framed in 1725 (see Fig. 7.2): Very similar to the first in pictorial

⁶ There are at least two more copies of this portrait: 1. Louis de Silvestre (workshop), *Christiane Eberhardine*, c. 1736, Dresden, Old Masters Picture Gallery, Dresden State Art Collections, Inventory No. 75/37, oil on canvas, 173.5 x 126 cm (illustrated in Herz, *Königin*, 515, Fig. 339); 2. Anonymous painter, eighteenth century, Stockholm National Museum, NMGrh 1183 (I am grateful to Dr. Stefanie Walther in Bremen for this information).

composition but much smaller, it shows the electress and queen seated on a sumptuous blue-upholstered chair and gazing directly at the viewer. With her right hand she is taking hold of a medallion showing the likeness of her husband which a Black African slave wearing a silver collar and an earring is presenting to her on a velvet cushion. Lavishly draped curtains in the background indicate an interior space. The warm orange-hued fabric of Christiane Eberhardine's dress matches the color of the livery worn by the slave, which together with the blue tone of the chair covering reappearing in the sleeves of the livery creates a link between the two figures, whereas their skin colors are deliberately contrasted: The electress' face, cleavage, and forearms seem to glow, while the forehead of the Black African servant, who only reaches her bosom in height and therefore must look up at her, is in shadow. In reality, however, there were only women and girls of sub-Saharan origin among Christiane Eberhardine's courtiers, so that the scene portrayed here was probably entirely fictitious (see below).

With their contrasting of skin colors and body sizes, thereby emphasizing the different nature as well as the subordination of the dark-skinned figures, the Saxon ruler portraits were in perfect accordance with European developments from the second half of the fifteenth century onwards.⁷ Moreover, they corresponded to the image type of a noble main character with a sub-Saharan attendant figure equally widespread within Europe starting in the sixteenth century.⁸ Both phenomena were connected to the expansion of the colonial empires, the growing transatlantic slave trade, and hence also the increased presence of people of African descent on the European continent. The iconography served not least to justify these developments, and this visual idiom was likely transmitted to Saxony through the French models that became authoritative for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European ruler portraits.⁹ Accordingly, the pictures examined here and below are derived from two French painters who worked at the Saxon court: Louis de Silvestre (1675–1760) was employed as court painter in Dresden for over thirty years beginning in 1716,¹⁰ and Antoine Pesne (1683–1757) worked at

7 See e.g. Valentin Groebner, "Haben Hautfarben eine Geschichte? Personenbeschreibungen und ihre Kategorien zwischen dem 13. und dem 16. Jahrhundert," *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* no. 1 (2003): 1–17; Schmidt-Linsenhoff, "Mit Mohrenpage"; Wolf, "Und ihre siegreichen Reize."

8 The stylistic model was Titian's portrait of Laura Dianti, c. 1523 (Dettmann, "Bloss ein weiterer 'Kammermohr'?", 53). See for example Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 211–253; Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth-Century British Painting* (Durham (NC)/London: Duke University Press, 1999), 27–55; Carmen Fracchia, "Black but Human." *Slavery and Visual Art in Hapsburg Spain, 1480–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

9 Junger, *Präsentation*, 25–26, 31.

10 Harald Marx, "Silvestre, Louis de," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 24 (2010): 418–420, <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd122656849.html#ndbcontent>, last accessed October 19, 2023.

the Saxon residence in 1718 and in 1728.¹¹ Both had learned their craft at the Parisian *Académie Royale de peinture et de sculpture*.

Two further portraits of Augustus the Strong with an African attendant figure show – despite certain variations – the strong schematization and uniformity of the image type.¹² In both, the elector and king is presented as a commander: in one case on horseback, imitating classical antiquity; in the other, standing in a contemporary early modern setting. In the first image, the Black African servant is holding the helmet; in the second, the ermine coat. The attendant figure is only as tall as the ruler's chest in the standing portrait, suggesting a child or adolescent, while the one in the mounted picture only reaches Augustus' hip due to the pictorial composition. In both cases, the resulting upward gaze is intended to direct the desired reception of the image: admiration for the powerful, successful ruler. In each picture, a turban, short decorative feathers, and pointed slippers recall Ottoman costume. Yet just as in the other paintings, an earring as a typical accessory of African attendant figures and a metal collar as a sign of slave status are clearly discernible.

But why did Augustus and Christiane Eberhardine have themselves displayed in these portraits (including the numerous contemporary copies and variants) not just with a Black African servant – as was customary in pictures of other rulers and nobles to demonstrate their cosmopolitanism and *white* superiority – but specifically with a slave? Comparison with contemporary portraits in the Old Empire shows that this was not necessarily part of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century representational conventions. What we find instead are numerous different variants ranging from clearly recognizable metal rings through (perhaps deliberately) ambiguous depictions (a white shirt collar or silver band?) to no collar at all. By identifying the dark-skinned figure clearly and customarily as a slave, the ruling pair who commissioned

¹¹ Helmut Börsch-Supan, "Pesne, Antoine," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 20 (2001): 212–213, <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118592904.html#ndbcontent>, last accessed October 19, 2023. Pesne worked as court painter at the Prussian court from 1710 to 1757.

¹² An equestrian portrait dating from before 1728 was painted in Louis de Silvestre's entourage (Dresden, Old Masters Picture Gallery, Inventory No. 2005/01, oil on canvas), and a series of copperplate prints based on an original by Antoine Pesne was produced by Johann Martin Bernigeroth: 1. *August der Starke*, Dresden, print room, C 1961-227, digitized version: <https://skd-online-collection.skd.museum/Home/Index?page=1&inv=C%201961-227>, gray-washed black pen; 2. *ibid.*, A 24859, digitized version: <https://skd-online-collection.skd.museum/Details/Index/1024218>, water-colored copper print, opaque white, and gold on parchment; 3. *ibid.*, A 24860, etching and copperplate engraving, printed on silk, digitized version: <https://skd-online-collection.skd.museum/Details/Index/1010949>; 4. *ibid.*, A 25005, etching and copperplate engraving, printed on blue paper, digitized version: <https://skd-online-collection.skd.museum/Details/Index/1010948>; 5. *ibid.*, A 25147, etching and copperplate engraving, printed in brown, digitized version: <https://skd-online-collection.skd.museum/Details/Index/1010947>; 6. *ibid.*, A 25874, etching and copperplate engraving, digitized version: <https://skd-online-collection.skd.museum/Details/Index/1010945>. See also 7. Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, graphic collection (Paul Wolfgang Merkel Family Foundation), Inventory No. MP 7851, Capsule No. 35P3, digitized version: <http://www.portraitindex.de/documents/obj/33814457>. All last accessed October 19, 2023.

the portraits were thus sending a signal in the context of a highly formalized genre. Neither the couple's different denominations (Christiane Eberhardine had remained Lutheran while Augustus had converted to Catholicism in order to secure the Polish throne) nor differing notions of gender evidently played any part here. In the portraits, they both primarily displayed themselves as representatives of their estate. By contrast, slave status was only assigned to men and boys in the examples studied here.

Especially in allegorical depictions, slave figures were commonly used as symbols for the subjugation and punishment of infidels. They could also represent positively connoted metaphors for a courtier's devotion, or be used negatively to criticize the subjection of individuals or groups. Finally, enslaved prisoners had been part of the imagery of military triumph since ancient times.¹³ It therefore seems plausible to relate the pictorial language of the Dresden court to the wars with the Ottoman Empire, especially since it was presumably in this context that Saxons first encountered enslaved Africans.¹⁴ This assumption is supported by the oriental-looking clothes of the sub-Saharan servant figures as well as by the preference for boys or men, who were involved in the war in far greater numbers. Augustus the Strong also stylized himself as the "Conqueror of the Turks" even though his campaigns in Hungary were rather unsuccessful.¹⁵ On the other hand, the remains of a life-sized sandstone statue of a shackled "Turk" who had sunk to the ground – originally located in a courtyard of the stable building – indicate that Ottoman prisoners of war were represented in a different manner. Moreover, at the time when the portraits were painted, a sensuous and opulent orientalism prevailed as the Ottoman Empire represented less and less of a threat.¹⁶ Therefore, Augustus the Strong and Christiane Eberhardine – through their French court painters – probably adopted the slave motif from the Western colonial powers or fused Western and Eastern themes. Significantly, the use of silver collars as a mark of slave status – both as a visual motif and in actual practice – only developed in Western Europe with the emergence of the colonial empires and their involvement in

13 Elizabeth McGrath, "Sklaverei," in *Handbuch der politischen Ikonographie*, ed. Uwe Fleckner, Martin Warnke, and Hendrik Ziedler (Munich: Beck, 2011), vol. 2, 350–357.

14 Bloh, "Faszination des Fremden," 77.

15 Jörn Ludwig, "Sachsen und Übersee im Zeitalter Augusts des Starken," in *August der Starke und seine Zeit: Beiträge des Kolloquiums vom 16./17. September 1994 auf der Festung Königstein*, ed. Christine Klecker (Dresden: Sächsisches Druck- und Verlagshaus, 1995), 54–60, here 57–58; Holger Schuckelt, "Die Rolle Sachsens in den Türkenkriegen des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts," in *Im Lichte des Halbmonds: Das Abendland und der türkische Orient*, ed. Claudia Schnitzer (Dresden: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, 1995), 170–177, here 175–176; Mikosch, "Serail," 235.

16 Friedrich Reichel, "Die Türkenmode und ihr Einfluß auf die sächsische Kunst," in *Im Lichte des Halbmonds: Das Abendland und der türkische Orient*, ed. Claudia Schnitzer (Dresden: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, 1995), 263–272, here 269; Mikosch, "Serail," 235.

slavery and the slave trade,¹⁷ whereas iron rings – in artistic representations and in reality – were used for enslaved people in the Mediterranean area.¹⁸ By choosing silver collars, the ruling couple thus indicated which nations they wanted to be associated with, and the rank to which Saxony-Poland aspired. Accordingly, Augustus was not only involved in the Ottoman wars and married his eldest son to the emperor's daughter, but in 1731 he also sent a first Saxon expedition to Africa and planned to establish a Saxon-Polish trading company for the exchange of goods with Africa, Asia, and America – though this plan never came to fruition.¹⁹ The ruler and his wife therefore chose the depiction of enslaved Africans to underscore their imperial ambitions.

This gesture of subjection was at odds with the role of sub-Saharan figures in the numerous African pageants that Augustus staged, however. Although such *Gesamtkunstwerke* had already been created by his predecessors,²⁰ they reached a new level in terms of scale and expense under Augustus.²¹ In the very first carnival of his reign, in 1695, the king and elector even dressed up as a Black African himself; a painting by Johann Samuel Mock from 1706 shows him leading a “Moorish quadrille” in Warsaw (see Fig. 7.3).²² Another work from 1709 by Johann Mock or his son Johann Samuel

17 David Bindman, “Subjectivity and Slavery in Portraiture: From Courtly to Commercial Societies,” in *Slave Portraiture in the Atlantic World*, ed. Agnes Lugo-Ortiz and Angela Rosenthal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 71–87, here 75; Elizabeth McGrath, “Caryatids, Page Boys and African Fetters: Themes of Slavery in European Art,” in *The Slave in European Art: From Renaissance Trophy to Abolitionist Emblem*, ed. Elizabeth McGrath and Jean Michel Massing (London: The Warburg Institute and Nino Aragno Editore, 2012), 3–38, here 14–15; Iain Whyte, *Scotland and the Abolition of Black Slavery, 1756–1838* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 15. This is confirmed by the Renaissance expert Kate Lowe: “[. . .] most depictions of slaves in slave collars, which could be highly decorated, expensive pieces of jewelry, are from a later period [than the second half of the sixteenth century]” (Kate Lowe, “The Lives of African Slaves and People of African Descent in Renaissance Europe,” in *Revealing the African Presence in Renaissance Europe*, ed. Joaneath Spicer (Baltimore: Walters Art Museum, 2012), 13–33, here 14–15).

18 Jean Michel Massing, “The Iconography of Mediterranean Slavery in the Seventeenth Century,” in *The Slave in European Art: From Renaissance Trophy to Abolitionist Emblem*, ed. Elizabeth McGrath and Jean Michel Massing (London: The Warburg Institute and Nino Aragno Editore, 2012), 85–120, here 87 and 89, with examples from early seventeenth-century Italy.

19 Anna Greve, “Weiß-Schwarz-Malerei: Whiteness studies in der Kunstgeschichte – Die Suche nach einer neuen Perspektive,” in *Äthiopien und Deutschland: Sehnsucht nach der Ferne*, ed. Kerstin Volker-Saad and Anna Greve (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2006), 18–25, here 22; Ludwig, “Sachsen und Übersee,” 55; Margitta Hensel, “Die erste sächsische Expedition nach Afrika 1731–1733 und ihr Bezug zu Moritzburg,” in *Augusts Afrika: Afrika in Sachsen, Sachsen in Afrika im 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. André Thieme and Matthias Donath (Königsbrück: Via Regia Verlag, 2022), 81–103.

20 See e.g. Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden, abbreviated below as SächsStA-D, 10006 Oberhofmarschallamt (abbreviated below as OHMA), G, No. 07, fol. 6v, 8r: “Mohrenballett.”

21 Schnitzer, “Herrschende und dienende ‘Mohren,’” 87.

22 *Ibid.* and Fig. 47 on p. 91.

Mock depicts Augustus clad as an African prince at the Carousel of the Four Continents in Dresden.²³ His guests imitated him on various festive occasions, appearing at processions, banquets, and tournaments disguised as Africans with wigs as well as leather or black silk satin costumes.²⁴ However, with their figures of rulers, warriors, pages, and slaves, African pageants provided a broad spectrum of roles – from which Augustus naturally did not choose that of the slave but that of “Chief of the Africans,” thereby extending the range of his rule in his imagination. Despite stereotypical traits, courtly festivities thus permitted greater variation. Ultimately, however, these African figures – just like the ones in the royal portraits – primarily served to



Fig. 7.3: Johann Mock: Augustus the Strong and members of his court blackfaced as riders in the “Moorish quadrille” on February 5, 1701 in Warsaw, 1706. Watercolor and gouache, opaque white, gold and silver over graphite, 39.4 x 55 cm. © Kupferstich-Kabinett, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Inventory No. Ca 193/ 32. Photo: Herbert Boswank.

²³ For more detailed information on the various costumes and designs, see Schnitzer and Hölscher, *Eine gute Figur machen*, 158–167.

²⁴ See SächsStA-D, 10006 OHMA, F, No. 15, fol. 143r–221v: carousel of four squadrons – Europeans, Asians, Africans, and Americans – in the large arena on June 19, 1709; *ibid.*, G, No. 15, fol. 21r–31r: carousel race of four squadrons – “Moors,” Spaniards, Swiss, and miners – in Maria Villa in Warsaw, February 5, 1701; *ibid.*, G, No. 26, fol. 126r–129v: pageant order of the “Moors” and Americans; *ibid.*, G, No. 27, fol. 116r–131v: racing for rings by four squadrons, Hungarians, “Turks,” “Moors,” and French, on two tracks. See also Schnitzer, “Herrschende und dienende ‘Mohren’,” 87.

express Augustus' imperial ambitions. The resplendent fantasy costumes had less to do with a real interest in the “other” than with conspicuous consumption by the court.

Mention should also be made of a third form of visual presentation besides ruler portraits and pageants: In paintings created in the wider context of the Electoral Saxon court, persons of sub-Saharan origin were by no means invariably shown as slaves – and women were depicted as well as men. A painting by Johann Samuel Mock dated to around 1730, for example, features a salacious scene at the court, with a *white* Catholic cleric who is sitting at a table leaning towards a dark-skinned woman standing next to him (Fig. 7.4).²⁵ Significantly, the Black pageboy waiting in the background is wearing a silver slave collar while the sub-Saharan woman in the foreground, who is identified by her name as a free servant at the court, is not. This leads us to assume that the decision whether to depict a person as a slave depended not only on the genre of an artwork but perhaps also referenced the legal status of the respective individual. A look at the persons of sub-Saharan origin present at the Dresden court during the same period corroborates this assumption.



Fig. 7.4: Johann Samuel Mock: “Signr. Jonimo with the Mooress Friederika,” c. 1730. Oil on canvas, 174 x 200 cm. © National Museum in Warsaw, Inventory No. 129887.

²⁵ According to Donath (“Schwarze in Sachsen,” 64), the painting was entitled “Signr. Jonimo mit der Möhrin Friederika” in the inventory of Warsaw Castle in 1739. It apparently shows the free wife of the “chamber Moor” Andreas Mirthel mentioned below on p. 165. The picture was thus doubly offensive: on the one hand because the Catholic priest was supposed to be celibate (which means the image might be a pictorial form of denominational criticism), and on the other because he was making advances to a married woman. That he approached a Black woman might also point to racialized notions that African women were more accessible and/or sensual.

People of Color at the Dresden Court

From the mid-seventeenth century onwards, we regularly find dark-skinned persons referred to as “Moors” at the Electoral Saxon court.²⁶ Frederic Augustus I and Christiane Eberhardine followed this tradition. At the same time, the handwritten court registers and printed court calendars make it clear that people of color were only one of many groups serving to lend the court a cosmopolitan air. During the period of their reign, we find not only “Turks” – including Augustus’ long-standing mistress Fatima (the later Maria Aurora Spiegel) – but also, according to the sources, “Hajduks,” “Indians,” “Kalmyks,” “Cossacks,” and “Tartars.”²⁷ These designations must be treated with caution, however: For example, the court account books stated that miners from Freiberg should be “used as Hajduks.”²⁸ Nor should the term “chamber Turk” always be taken literally, since some of the men betokened in this fashion bore Italian names.²⁹ Additional information about places of origin therefore provides important clues to where people of color referred to generically as “Moors” most likely came from.

In principle, two groups can be distinguished: (1) a small number of long-term servants who were close to the rulers, usually enjoyed special privileges, and must have been legally free, as some of them married and started families; (2) a far greater number of people of color who often spent only a few years at the court and are therefore difficult to pin down in the sources – some of whom are known to have remained slaves for years after their arrival in Saxony. Differences between these two groups can also be detected in their individual naming or their collective listing in the sources, as well as in their pay – though not in the mere fact that they *were*

26 See for example SächsStA-D, 10006 OHMA, A, No. 10, fol. 20r–28v, 38r–41v; *ibid.*, A, No. 13, fol. 1r–17r; *ibid.*, C, No. 30, fol. 67r–70r; *ibid.*, 11330 Kriegsgerichte der Artillerie-Formationen bis 1867, No. 543.

27 SächsStA-D, 10006 OHMA, K 02, No. 05, fol. 24v–27r; No. 07, unpaginated; No. 08, unpaginated; No. 09, unpaginated; *Königlich-Polnischer und Churfürstlich-Sächsischer Hoff- und Staats-Calender Auf das Jahr [. . .]* (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1728), unpaginated. For more on native North Americans at the Dresden court, see Craig Koslofsky, “Slavery and Skin: The Native Americans Ocktscha Rinscha and Tuski Stannaki in the Holy Roman Empire, 1722–1734,” in *Beyond Exceptionalism: Traces of Slavery and the Slave Trade in Early Modern Germany, 1650–1850*, ed. Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, Josef Köstlbauer, and Sarah Lentz (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2021), 81–108.

28 SächsStA-D, 10036 Finanzarchiv, Loc. 12053/08, fol. 30v–31r, 52v–54r, 66v–67r, 74v–75r, quote fol. 53r. See also Friderich Carl von Moser, *Teutsches Hof-Recht [. . .]*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt/Leipzig: Johann Benjamin Andrea, 1754–1755), vol. 2, 217: “Die Heyducken seynd ursprünglich Ungarn, ihre Genealogie an den Teutschen Höfen ist mir nicht bekannt, so vil ist aber desto gewisser, daß von ihrem Ursprung nur noch die Tracht und der Nahme übrig seynd und ein jeder Herr in seinem Land aus langen und auf die Dauer gebauten Bauren sich seine Heyducken selbst creirt.” (“The Hajduks are originally Hungarians, their genealogy at the German courts is not known to me, but it is all the more certain that only the costume and the name have remained of their origins and that any ruler creates in his country his own Hajduks from tall and sturdy peasants.”)

29 SächsStA-D, 10006 OHMA, K 02, No. 08, unpaginated.

paid, since even explicitly enslaved people received wages (see below).³⁰ The term “privileged dependency” coined by Vera Lind for the situation of Black Africans at court thus only applied to a minority of people of color at the Dresden court.³¹ Even with regard to this minority, the sources suggest that their situation may have been more conflictual than external data convey.

Besides the longtime “chamber Turk” Christiana Eberhardina Cattko, who remained at the court from 1696 until the electress’ death in 1727, the latter group included two girls in Christiane Eberhardine’s household who seem to have arrived in Dresden as children and are known to have been there between 1699 and 1713.³² They were both part of the queen’s immediate household, were given an education and baptized, received medical care, and accompanied their mistress on journeys.³³ We hardly know anything about Lucia, the younger of the two; her fate after 1713 is obscure. The older girl, Aischa Christiana Eberhardina, was purchased by the electress as a slave from England and originally came from Africa.³⁴ In 1712, she married the Brandenburg-Bayreuth gamekeeper Georg Andreas Knoll, receiving a dowry from the electress for the occasion.³⁵ That Aischa’s situation was more difficult than these formal facts might suggest is shown by a letter from Christiane Eberhardine to her brother in 1714 asking him to intervene with regard to the gamekeeper’s violence against his wife: “although I have no reason whatsoever to look after her, as I am partly aware of her former stubbornness and nasty behavior, I have felt impelled by my own accord to rescue her from imminent mortal danger, because she is a for-

30 Nor was payment incompatible with slave status in other European countries. See e.g. Kathleen Chater, *Untold Histories: Black People in England and Wales during the Period of the British Slave Trade, c. 1660–1807* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 85–86, 89; Alessandro Stella, *Histoires d’esclaves dans la péninsule ibérique* (Paris: Édition de l’École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2000), 21, 135, 138; Salvatore Bono, “Sklaven in der mediterranen Welt: Von der Ersten Türkenbelagerung bis zum Wiener Kongress (1529–1815),” in *Angelo Soliman: Ein Afrikaner in Wien*, ed. Philipp Blom and Wolfgang Kos (Vienna: Christian Brandstätter Verlag, 2011), 35–49, here 43.

31 Vera Lind, “Privileged Dependency on the Edge of the Atlantic World: Africans and Germans in the Eighteenth Century,” in *Interpreting Colonialism*, ed. Byron R. Wells and Philip Stewart (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2004), 369–391.

32 SächsStA-D, 10026 Geheimes Kabinett, Loc. 00755/07, fol. 43v, 47v, 65v. On this and the following, see also Herz, *Königin*, 122–123.

33 SächsStA-D, 10006 OHMA, K 04, No. 2, fol. 452r; *ibid.*, 10006 OHMA, I, No. 21, fol. 119v; Herz, *Königin*, 122, notes 465, 466, 468 and p. 123, note 472.

34 Landeskirchenarchiv Sachsen, Regionalkirchenamt Dresden, Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchgemeinde Dresden, Tauf- und Traubuch Evangelische Hofkirche 1660–1710, fol. 256r; Herz, *Königin*, 122, note 468.

35 Herz, *Königin*, 122, note 470. The fluctuation in designations of origin is shown by the parish records in Bayreuth, according to which the “chamber Moor” Christiana Eberhardina Eische was suddenly “of Chinese origin” (Pfarramtsarchiv der Stadtkirche Bayreuth, Vermählungen und Hochzeiten, Leichbegängnisse 1693–1726, fol. 7r: “Cammer Möhrin,” “aus China gebürthig”; quoted from Herz, *Königin*, 123, note 471).

eigner and a slave that I purchased.”³⁶ Aischa Christiana Eberhardina had obviously not fulfilled the role the electress had expected of her. Rather, she appears not to have come to terms with the situation she was in, and which worsened after she married the gamekeeper. Because she had been taken from her family as a slave, Aischa was dangerously exposed to her husband’s violence, since there were no relatives who could come to her aid and curb his misconduct. Her long-term service as one of the queen’s closest attendants had apparently not resulted in strong emotional ties with the latter, who according to her own statement acted more out of a sense of duty or responsibility than out of compassion.

Still, being part of the household apparently allowed for a more differentiated perception, as evidenced by an extremely rare individual portrait of a person of color probably depicting Aischa Christiana Eberhardina (see Fig. 7.5). The painting shows a remarkably beautiful, self-confident young woman sitting upright and looking directly at the viewer. Although the turban adorned with a yellow, bell-shaped bonnet suggests imaginary exotic clothing as it had no equivalent in contemporary headgear,³⁷ her neck is encircled by a pearl necklace instead of a slave collar. Its close-fitting form may in fact be a discreet iconographic reference to the woman’s former slave status.³⁸ The portrait could have been painted on the occasion of or in preparation for Aischa Christiana Eberhardina’s wedding. Although she cannot be identified with certainty since (like most early modern depictions of persons of color) the painting bears no specific name, its location at the rural summer castle in Pretzsch³⁹ as well as the age of the portrayed woman make it seem very likely that it is in fact an image of Aischa. Apparently, the more private setting allowed an imagery that was not dominated by subjection like the official representations of the two rulers while still exhibiting traits of exoticism.

36 Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz Berlin, BPH, Rep. 43 II, W1, No. 43, letter from Christiane Eberhardine to her brother, dated September 1, 1714, unpaginated: “wiewohl ich nun nicht Ursach hatte, mich derselben da mir zum theil ihre vormahlige Hartnäckigkeit und üble Conduite, bekandt im geringsten anzunehmen, so habe ich iedoch, da sie ein Fremdling und eine von mir erkaufte Sclavin gewesen, aus eigenen Trieb mich gemüßiget befunden, umb sie aus bevorstehender Lebens Gefahr zu retten.”

37 Herz, *Königin*, 463.

38 This is not the only possible interpretation, however: In pictorial allegories of the four continents, Africa was often represented with a pearl necklace, referring to its natural resources (Ralf Giermann, “Das personifizierte Bild der Erdteile im Augusteischen Sachsen an Beispielen aus Skulptur, Malerei, Kunstgewerbe und höfischem Fest,” in *Augusts Afrika: Afrika in Sachsen, Sachsen in Afrika im 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. André Thieme and Matthias Donath (Königsbrück: Via Regia Verlag, 2022), 16–41, here 23). On the other hand, pearls may also have been depicted here as symbols of purity, virtue, and beauty.

39 Originally only a summer estate in the courtly calendar, Pretzsch became Christiane Eberhardine’s main residence throughout the six months of the summer from 1721 onwards (Herz, *Königin*, 68–69).



Fig. 7.5: African woman in a red dress, with a yellow bonnet and a pearl necklace, early eighteenth century. Formerly SPSPG, GK I 5023, lost in wartime, 73 x 59.5 cm. © Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg. Photo: Oberhofmarschallamt / Verwaltung der Staatlichen Schlösser und Gärten (1927–1945).⁴⁰

Besides this likeness, which was reused for an exoticizing genre scene, two other portraits of the dark-skinned maidservants (which have not survived) were produced, including one full-length, life-size picture; all of them hung in Pretzsch and were part of a group of 22 pictures displaying people perceived and depicted as “different” because of their small stature, dark skin, or rustic appearance.⁴¹ The visual space granted to these individuals clearly contrasted with the depictions of enslaved persons relegated to the margins or background in the iconography of ruler portraits. In this respect, the individual portraits confirm the distinguished status of these servants among the ranks of the domestic staff, although the collection still reduced them to presenting “otherness.”

Similarly, the three “chamber Moors” who were members of Augustus the Strong’s household were confined to their role as “exotics” by their very designation.⁴² “Chamber Moor” Andreas Mirthel had apparently acquired a particularly trusted position and evidently also started a family. In 1717, Augustus the Strong gifted a house to him and his wife Friederika – the woman in the abovementioned portrait – “that they may pos-

⁴⁰ Listed and illustrated in Herz, *Königin*, 464, Fig. 257 and 571, GV 213. According to Silke Herz, the style recalls Adam Manyoki, who worked for the Saxon-Polish court as portrait painter from 1713 to 1723; it remains uncertain who the painter was, however.

⁴¹ Herz, *Königin*, 462 and 465.

⁴² SächsStA-D, 10006 OHMA, K 02, No. 05, fol. 24v–25r: Andreas Mirthel, Carl Christian Gustav, and Johann Heinrich Franz.

sess it as their own true property and pass it on to their descendants or, should they so wish, sell it.”⁴³ Difficulties arose, however, for Mirthel was a Catholic – and under Saxon law, Catholics were not permitted to own real estate.⁴⁴ Accordingly, he was only granted a right of residence, and when he eventually had to give up the house so that the castle gardens could be extended, he was promised 1,500 thalers in compensation. But when the time came to pay out the sum, the treasury merely disbursed the annual interest on the capital amounting to 90 thalers, informing the elector that there was no designated fund from which the promised money could be taken.⁴⁵ Perhaps Mirthel lacked the networks and connections to make his matter appear as urgent as those of other court personnel. It was only in 1727 that the treasurer was finally ordered to pay out the 1,500 thalers to Mirthel in yearly installments.⁴⁶ Still, Andreas Mirthel’s annual salary of 200 thalers not only exceeded that of most other “chamber Moors” (120 thalers) but also that of ordinary footmen and hajduks (120–125 thalers) as well as runners (166 thalers). At the same time, “chamber Moors” as “low court servants”⁴⁷ were paid less than valets (400 thalers plus 150 thalers for board), who were in closest contact with the ruler, not to mention employees with special knowledge or skills such as a court trumpeter (300 thalers) or personal surgeon (1,000 thalers).⁴⁸

However, Mirthel’s fate as a “chamber Moor” serving the elector and king for eighteen years until the latter’s death was not comparable to the experiences of the numerous free and unfree people of color whom Augustus brought to the Saxon court during his long reign and who belonged to the second, clearly less fortunate group of “Moors.” The wedding ceremony for Augustus’ son Frederick Augustus in 1719 marked the beginning of a considerable expansion of the “exotic” court staff. By marrying his scion to the eldest daughter of Emperor Joseph I, the elector hoped to secure the imperial crown for the House of Wettin. Chamberlain Johann Alphonso was to arrange for additional dark-skinned persons to be brought from Lisbon for the opulently staged wedding. The center of the Portuguese colonial empire housed numerous free and enslaved people of color. Because of the dynastic ties between the Habsburg Empire and the Iberian Peninsula as well as the trading links between Portugal and Hamburg,

43 SächsStA-D, 10026 Geheimes Kabinett, Loc. 01295/07, quote on fol. 1r and (identical) fol. 2r: “daß sie solches als ihr wahres Eigenthum besitzen und auf ihre Nachkommen transferiren, oder auch nach Gefallen veräußern mögen.”

44 *Ibid.*, fol. 3r.

45 *Ibid.*, passim.

46 Donath, “Schwarze in Sachsen,” 59.

47 Moser, *Teutsches Hof-Recht*, vol. 2, 216.

48 All figures taken from SächsStA-D, 10006 OHMA, K 02, No. 06. No comparison can be made with the pay of “chamber Turks,” since none of them appear in this court book and later registers from Augustus’ reign make no mention of the listed “chamber Turks” salary.

people of color were repeatedly brought to the Old Empire via Lisbon.⁴⁹ Accordingly, at the end of the chamberlain's mission we find a:

Summary of the persons, livestock, and goods that Privy Chamberlain Alphonso is bringing to Saxony from Portugal. As [the following]

21 tall male Moors, including 13 slaves well purchased with royal funds; the other 8 are only volunteers who wish to serve Your Royal Majesty as free men, but among these 8 is the tallest Moor to be found in all of Lisbon

1 male Moor, and

1 female Moor, both less than 12 years old, and both siblings from one birth slaves and purchased

3 other small creatures, also less than 12 years old, which Count Asumar, Grandee of Portugal, is sending to Your Royal Maj.[esty] as a present

One is a small Chiocie Model,⁵⁰ the other an Indian, have been sick, but are now better again.

The 3rd a small American Moor, now lying sick [. . .].⁵¹

Alphonso thus arranged for the transport of free and unfree people of color – adults and children, males and females, Black Africans, native North Americans, and perhaps also Indians (the wording of the source is equivocal). Despite being listed first in

49 Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440–1870* (London: Picador, 1997), 119; Kuhlmann-Smirnov, *Schwarze Europäer*, 47; Hans Werner Debrunner, *Presence and Prestige: Africans in Europe. A History of Africans in Europe before 1918* (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 1979), 36–38; Didier Lahon, “Black African Slaves and Freedmen in Portugal during the Renaissance. Creating a New Pattern of Reality,” in *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, ed. Thomas Foster Earle and Kate J. P. Lowe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 261–279; Jorun Poettering, *Handel, Nation und Religion: Kaufleute zwischen Hamburg und Portugal im 17. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 199–200; Mark Häberlein, “‘Mohren’, ständische Gesellschaft und atlantische Welt: Minderheiten und Kulturkontakte in der Frühen Neuzeit,” in *Atlantic Understandings: Essays on European and American History in Honor of Hermann Wellenreuther*, ed. Claudia Schnurmann and Hartmut Lehmann (Hamburg: LIT, 2006), 77–102, here 83; Walter Sauer, “Und man siehet die im Lichte, die im Dunkeln sieht man nicht.’ Neue Beiträge zur Kollektivbiographie von Afrikanern und Afrikanerinnen im frühneuzeitlichen Österreich,” *Wissenschaftliches Jahrbuch der Tiroler Landesmuseen* 9 (2016): 232–247, here 238.

50 Probably a Cherokee, i.e. a native North American.

51 SächsStA-D, 10026 Geheimes Kabinett, Loc. 00357/02, fol. 93r: “Extract der ienigen Menschen, Vieh und Wahren welche der H. Geh. Cämmerer Alphonso aus Portugal nacher Saxon über bringet. Alß. 21. große Mohre, darunter sindt 13 Slaven mit königl. Geldern wohl bezahlt, die andern 8. Sindt nur Volountairs die alß Freye Leute Ihro Königl. Majest. Dienen wollen, unter diesen 8. Aber ist der größte Mohr so in gantz Lissabon zu finden gewesen 1. Mohr, undt 1. Möhrin beide unter 12. Jahr alt, und beyde Geschwister von einer Gebuht Slaven undt gekaufft 3. andere kleine Creaturen, auch unter 12 Jahr alt, die der Graff Asumar Grande de Portugal, an Ihro Königl. May[estät]. Zum praesent schicket das eine ist ein klein Chiocie Model, der andere eine Indienne, sindt krank gewesen, ietzo aber wieder besser. Das 3te ein klein Americanischer Moor, der anietzo krank lieget [. . .].” The list is undated. See also Schnitzer, “Herrschende und dienende ‘Mohren’,” 96; Mikosch, “Court Dress,” vol. 1, p. 351, note 161.

the summary, it is clear from the phrasing “persons, livestock, and goods” that in this context they were primarily viewed as commodities.

After their arrival in Saxony, the court gardener Anton Brenio in Moritzburg was put in charge of supplying the newcomers with food.⁵² But they were evidently also locked up and beaten; the “court provost” or jailer was paid 4 thalers and 12 groschen “to discipline and confine the Moors.”⁵³ The sources do not reveal whether a distinction was made between free and unfree people of color in this regard, but there was evidently none concerning their role in the wedding celebrations: The adults formed the entourage for the entrance of the emperor’s daughter. A “royal Moor” wearing a turban and armed with a mace in Turkish style rode on horseback ahead of the princess’s coach.⁵⁴ He was followed on foot by twenty-four people of color likewise clad in Turkish garb and armed with double-edged battle axes.⁵⁵ They wore gold bands around their necks, as can be seen in a painting by Christian Ehrenfried Kaiser.⁵⁶ These “gilded collars”⁵⁷ – in contrast to silver or iron slave rings – may have been ornaments of a kind also worn on the Gold Coast.⁵⁸ European travelers were so enthralled by these that gold jewelry regularly served to symbolize the riches of Africa in the visual arts.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the collars may also have been intended to suggest slave status. At any rate, such neck bands were not part of Ottoman costume.⁶⁰

Even if the meaning of the golden collars remains ambiguous, the newcomers’ status was not: Court records from the 1720s regularly distinguish between “ten Moors that are not slaves” and “twelve Moors that are slaves.”⁶¹ By 1729, their number had been reduced to nine free and eleven (and ultimately eight) unfree people of

52 SächsStA-D, 10036 Finanzarchiv, Loc. 12053/08, fol. 53v–85v; 10026 Geheimes Kabinett, Loc. 00762/05, vol. 1, fol. 67v–68r.

53 SächsStA-D, 10036 Finanzarchiv, Loc. 12053/08, fol. 32r, 76v–77r: “wegen Züchtigung und Schließung derer Mohren.” See also Schnitzer, “Herrschende und dienende ‘Mohren,’” 96.

54 This was likely one of the three “chamber Moors” who had already been working at the Dresden court for a longer period of time.

55 SächsStA-D, 10006 OHMA, B, No. 20a, 1719, fol. 201r, 203r; Mikosch, “Serail,” 236.

56 Christian Ehrenfried Kaiser, *Sächsisch-polnische Hof- und Militärtracht beim Einzug 1719 in Dresden*, Dresden, print room, Inventory No. Ca 100, fol. 65r.

57 SächsStA-D, 10006 OHMA, B, No. 20a, 1719, fol. 201r, 203r: “vergoldte Halßbänder.”

58 Toby Green, *A Fistful of Shells: West Africa from the Rise of the Slave Trade to the Age of Revolution* (London: Penguin Books, 2020), 115.

59 Kate Lowe, “The Stereotyping of Black Africans in Renaissance Europe,” in *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, ed. Thomas Foster Earle and Kate J. P. Lowe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 17–47, here 24.

60 See Suraiya Faroqhi and Christoph K. Neumann, eds., *Ottoman Costumes: From Textile to Identity* (Istanbul: EREN, 2004), *passim*.

61 SächsStA-D, 10006 OHMA, K 02, No. 06, fol. 50v–51r: “Zehne Mohren so keine Slaven sind” and “Zwölf Mohren so Slaven sind.” I am grateful to Dr. Eva Seemann (German Historical Institute Paris) for referring me to this source, which initiated the following research.

color.⁶² We cannot tell whether some of them were given away or sold, died, left the court, or rose to different positions, for the court records make no mention of their names, ages, origins, or tasks.⁶³ Only in the first surviving printed *Royal Polish and Electoral Saxon Court and State Calendar*, dated 1728, are “Nine royal Moorish free men and ten Moorish slaves” neatly listed by name in two separate columns.⁶⁴ In other words, almost ten years after arriving in Saxony, at least two thirds of the fifteen people explicitly purchased as slaves were still enslaved. This was also reflected in their pay: Whereas the free “Moors” received 96 thalers a year, the enslaved ones had to subsist on 60 thalers.⁶⁵

The group of non-privileged people of color at Augustus the Strong’s court probably also included six young men who arrived in Electoral Saxony ten years after the wedding celebrations, although they were not explicitly designated as slaves. In 1729, these youths were brought to Dresden by a Colonel Meyer via Hamburg, again from Portugal; aged between 14 and 19, they originally came from the Portuguese colony of Cape Verde, the West African coastal strip Costa da Mina, Angola, and India according to court records.⁶⁶ As most of these places were prominent centers of the slave trade,⁶⁷ the young men were most likely slaves when they reached Portugal, and perhaps also the Dresden court. In any case, their ages were entirely in accordance with the Elector of Saxony’s desires; a letter stated that – in contrast to many other German rulers and even the electress – “the King does not wish to feed and bring up little boys.”⁶⁸ In 1731, Thomas Alfonso and Dominico Gonsalvi also came to Dresden from Portugal via Hamburg to serve as “Moors”,⁶⁹ the phrasing “were brought” suggests that their journey was involuntary.⁷⁰ We also learn that “Moriz” and “Schims” came from Britain to Warsaw, Augustus’ residence as King of Poland, in 1729. In total, a further sixteen “Moors” arrived at the elector’s court between 1729 and 1733, including

62 SächsStA-D, 10006 OHMA, K 02, No. 06, fol. 97v–98r; *ibid.*, No. 07, unpaginated.

63 The fact that the three aforementioned “chamber Moors” were partly replaced with three new ones over the course of the 1720s suggests changes in position (SächsStA-D, 10006 OHMA, K 02, No. 06).

64 *Hoff- und Staats-Calender von 1728*, unpaginated: “Neun königl. Frey Mohren, u. zehen Slaven-Mohren.” Also in the *Hoff- und Staats-Calender von 1729*.

65 This contradicts Donath (“Schwarze in Sachsen,” 61), who assumes that no “Moorish slaves” were listed in the court records and does not note any difference in treatment.

66 SächsStA-D, 10006 OHMA, K 02, No. 08, unpaginated.

67 Green, *A Fistful of Shells*, 108, 113, 233, 289, 295.

68 SächsStA-D, 10026 Geheimes Kabinett, Loc. 00663/15, letters from Imhoff in Amsterdam to General de Brosse in The Hague, 1725, here: letter dated March 28, 1725, fol. 7v: “le Roy ne souhaite pas de nourir et elever des petits garçons.” For more on the trade in children that was preferred elsewhere, see Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, “Verschleppte Kinder im Heiligen Römischen Reich Deutscher Nation und die Grenzen transkultureller Mehrfachzugehörigkeit,” in *Transkulturelle Mehrfachzugehörigkeiten: Räume, Materialitäten, Erinnerungen*, ed. Dagmar Freist, Sabine Kyora, and Melanie Unseld (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2019), 15–37.

69 SächsStA-D, 10006 OHMA, K 02, No. 08, unpaginated.

70 *Ibid.*, No. 09, unpaginated: “bracht worden.”

three “drummer apprentices.” In 1730, Augustus even gifted a “court Moor” to the Duke of Saxony-Weimar at the Zeithain encampment – evidently to show that he had plenty of dark-skinned people available.⁷¹

The fluctuation (and hence also mobility) among the listed but unspecified “Moors” was high. This may help to explain why many columns in the court records – which in the case of other court servants were at least partly filled (“place and time of birth,” “taken into service,” “departed”)⁷² – remained empty: Either the scribes lacked this information, which may imply problems in communication, or they were simply less interested in the dark-skinned servants because they remained at the court for such a short time. The missing details regarding their assigned tasks may also have to do with the fact that they were mainly there to display their physical appearance perceived as exotic. Josef Köstlbauer therefore refers to this service as “representation labor.”⁷³

In a few cases, however, we do know more: Of the two “drummer apprentices”⁷⁴ Pory Dominico and Franciscus de Sylva, only de Sylva qualified after two years and was assigned to the *Carabiniers-Garde*; by contrast, Pory Dominico was “expelled from the *Corps des Grenadiers à Cheval* in 1731 after the encampment at Radewitz for misconduct.”⁷⁵ What exactly happened there remains unclear, but a satirically connoted eulogy for the “Drummer-Moor Runsifax Schwarzmus” printed in Dresden in 1731 may be linked to the dismissal.⁷⁶ The source is difficult to contextualize due to its fictionalization.⁷⁷ Its pseudonymous author “Deutsch Francoss” (“German French”), who was apparently quite familiar with the courtly environment, offers a decidedly congenial description of the putative deceased despite the parodying corruption of his name. According to the eulogy, the dead man was married, had twelve children, and

71 Stefanie Freyer, *Der Weimarer Hof um 1800: Eine Sozialgeschichte jenseits des Mythos* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2013), 204–205. The person involved was “Ernst Albrecht Carl Christiani.”

72 “Orth u Zeit der Geburt,” “In Dienste kommen,” “Wiederabgangen.”

73 Josef Köstlbauer, “Ambiguous Passages: Non-Europeans Brought to Europe by the Moravian Brethren during the Eighteenth Century,” in *Globalized Peripheries: Central Europe and the Atlantic World, 1680–1860*, ed. Klaus Weber and Jutta Wimmmler (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2020), 169–186, here 185; id., “‘I Have No Shortage of Moors.’ Mission, Representation, and the Elusive Semantics of Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Moravian Sources,” in *Beyond Exceptionalism: Traces of Slavery and the Slave Trade in Early Modern Germany, 1650–1850*, ed. Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, Josef Köstlbauer, and Sarah Lentz (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2021), 109–136, here 114 and 130.

74 “Paucker-Scholaren.”

75 SächsStA-D, 10006 OHMA, K 02, No. 08, unpaginated: “1731 nach dem Campement bey Radewitz, von dem Corps der Grenadiers à Cheval wegen übel Verhaltens fortgejaget.”

76 *Ehn Parentation uff ehne Paucker-Mohr* [. . .] ([Dresden]: [unknown printer], 1731).

77 As Pory Dominico does not appear among the deceased of the Catholic court church, it was perhaps his departure rather than his death that was being mourned (Kirchenbücher der Dresdener Hofkirche, No. 28, Tote 1724–1762, p. 32–33; online at <https://data.matricula-online.eu/de/deutschland/dresden/dresden-hofkirche/28/?pg=15>; last accessed October 19, 2023). For the Protestant counterpart, i.e. the Protestant castle church in Dresden, church books for the period between 1710 and 1766 are not preserved due to wartime losses.

was not only tall and handsome but also charming and honest. The text is imbued with sorrow over the lost “good comrade,” whose burial is attended by numerous fellow musicians. Most notably, however, the source provides a rare glimpse of how persons outside the royal household apparently responded to dark-skinned Africans in Augustus the Strong’s entourage – as well as of the reactions that people of sub-Saharan origin were confronted with: The villagers were frightened of the “Drummer-Moor,” hiding or running away because they thought he was the devil.⁷⁸ “Suchlike, and more in so daft a manner / happened with Drummer-Moor every day.”⁷⁹

While this semi(?)-fictional text might be read as employing the topos of the “foolish peasant,” a non-fictional report by duty officer Gottlob Christian Vitzhumb von Eckstädt on the occasion of the accommodation of 24 “janissary” and nine “Moor” musicians at Ortenburg castle near Bautzen (around 50 km from Dresden) likewise conveys a certain uneasiness. Von Eckstädt requested additional soldiers from the troops stationed in the vicinity “since so much foreign folk shall be staying at the castle, for more security of the treasures and so that someone might be at hand if – God forbid! – fire should break out at the castle, also so that these people can better be kept at bay.”⁸⁰ He also described the reluctance of women from the nearby village to render services at the castle. Von Eckstädt linked this to the “very venereal complexion”⁸¹ of the “Moors” (but not the “janissaries”⁸²), using a term from temperament theory to imply that the “Moors” had a tendency towards indecent behavior, which was also associated with venereal diseases.

Both sources thus show perspicuously which notions influenced the perception of people of sub-Saharan origin. While the rural population’s fear can likely be traced to sermons explicitly linking dark skin with sinfulness, devils, and the curse of Ham,⁸³ the officer of the guard formulated (proto)racist ideas. On the other hand, the satirical eulogy conveys great sympathy for the “good comrade,” demonstrating that unfamiliarity could be overcome – even more so by people who had experienced othering themselves; the pseudonym “German French” hints at such a (partly) foreign origin.

Whereas Christiane Eberhardine does not seem to have employed people of color after 1713, Augustus’ desire for exotic representation apparently persisted until the

⁷⁸ *Ehn Parentation*, 15–17.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 18: „Der kleick, und ander mehr uff so närrisch Manier,/ Es thu mit Paucker-Mohr an alle Tagk passir.“

⁸⁰ SächsStA-D, 10025 Geheimes Konsilium, Loc. 5822/06, fol. 2v: “da so vieles frembdes Volck aufm Schloße sich aufhalten soll, zu mehrer Sicherheit des Depositi und damit doch Jemand parat sey, wenn das Gott vor sey! feuer aufm Schloße auskommen solte, auch damit diese Leuthe beßer im Zaum gehalten werden können.” The report dates from 1729.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, fol. 10v: “sehr venerische[n] Complexion.”

⁸² This term in the source is to be interpreted with caution: It most likely refers to Saxon or Polish soldiers in janissary uniforms (as is unambiguously the case in other instances).

⁸³ Cf. e.g. Johann Andreas Gleich, *Die beantwortete Frage: Ob ein Mohr seine Haut verwandeln könne* [. . .] (Dreßden: Joh. Riedel, 1716), 3, 14, 16.

end of his life. The 1731 *Court and State Calendar* refers to 24 “Moors,” but this time (as well as in the two years that followed) without any distinction made between slaves and non-slaves.⁸⁴ Twenty-two “Moors” and eight “Turks” were still listed in the 1732 calendar,⁸⁵ followed by 23 people of color and eight “Turks” in 1733, the year of Augustus’ death.⁸⁶ That the former group regularly outnumbered the latter had to do with the fact that, as noted by Friderich Carl von Moser, “[chamber Turks] are less frequent, for unlike the Moors they cannot be purchased for money but are usually prisoners of war.”⁸⁷

The succession of Augustus’ son to the throne brought about a clear change in the employment of “chamber Moors”: Within two years, Frederick Augustus II (r. 1733–1763) had substantially cut back on his father’s expenditure on “exotic” personnel: Twenty-two people of color were dismissed and remained in Warsaw.⁸⁸ Besides Peter Ambrosius from Portugal, who served as a drummer, only the three “chamber Moors” Andreas Mirthel, Johan Baptist Malabar,⁸⁹ and August Joseph, “otherwise known as Tall David,” were left.⁹⁰ In 1746, Frederick Augustus II employed only two “chamber Moors”; by 1757, after Andreas Mirthel had died and one Joseph Benno Manino “had been transferred to the jail in Leipzig because of his misbehavior,” there was only one person of color left.⁹¹ In 1768, Samuel Ramsey Christ, who had been serving the dowager electress, fled to Berlin and upon his arrest threatened to kill himself or anyone attempting to send him back to Saxony.⁹² After his extradition, he was apparently no longer employed at the court. Following the death of the widow’s second “chamber Moor” Nicolaus Louis Giepile in 1769, no further dark-skinned servants are documented at the Dresden court.⁹³ While almost all sources were produced and thus shaped by the court, brief notes and comments like the ones mentioned above provide us with glimpses of how persons of color not only suffered but also made choices, resisted or fled, started families, and/or succeeded professionally and tried to make a life for themselves.

84 *Hoff- und Staats-Calender von 1731*, unpaginated.

85 *Hoff- und Staats-Calender von 1732*, unpaginated.

86 *Hoff- und Staats-Calender von 1733*, unpaginated.

87 Moser, *Teutsches Hof-Recht*, vol. 2, 216: “[Cammer-Türcken] seltener seynd, weil sie nicht, gleich den Mohren, um baar Geld erkaufft werden können, sondern meistens im Krieg gefangene seynd.”

88 SächsStA-D, 10006 OHMA, K 02, No. 09, unpaginated.

89 “Malabar” suggests possibly Indian origins, although a court register states “Africa” as the “place of birth” (which cannot be ruled out, since Africans were also sold to India). SächsStA-D, 10006 OHMA, K 02, No. 07, unpaginated; No. 08, unpaginated.

90 *Hoff- und Staats-Calender von 1735*, unpaginated: “sonst der lange David genannt.”

91 *Hoff- und Staats-Calender von 1746*, 14; *Hoff- und Staats-Calender von 1757*, 20; SächsStA-D, 10006 OHMA, K 12, No. 29, fol. 44r: “wegen seiner üblen Aufführung nach Leipzig in das Zucht-Hauß gebracht worden.”

92 SächsStA-D, 10026 Geheimes Kabinett, Loc. 03396/04, No. 56.

93 Donath, “Schwarze in Sachsen,” 74, No. 83.

Slavery in Early Modern Saxony?

In contrast to people of color, “chamber Turks” could still be found at the Dresden court as late as 1819.⁹⁴ Perhaps they mattered more to the self-image of the Saxon rulers because they could be linked to notions of military superiority. Their prominent role was also evident in terms of clothing: As late as the mid-eighteenth century, the livery of “chamber Moors” was based on Ottoman costume, as shown by tailors’ bills for cloth: “Tall David’s” costume was said to have been “a long robe made in the Turkish manner.”⁹⁵ But the long-term effect of the Ottoman Wars manifested not only in the pictorial representation of people of color and their garments but also in the legal treatment of enslaved persons from the transatlantic slavery system.⁹⁶ For in the opinion of Electoral Saxon jurists, slavery had been reintroduced in the Old Empire through the conflicts with the Ottomans. Thus, Johann Christian Königk stated in his 1689 dissertation at Leipzig University that “slavery has penetrated anew, as it were, because of the so far – by the grace of God – favorable course of the war against the Turks, from whom we have gained very many slaves [. . .].” And with regard to their legal treatment, he explained: “There can accordingly be no doubt that the ancient rights associated with and dependent on slavery can be applied to such prisoners, for they have not been abolished anywhere.”⁹⁷

Königk was referring to the reception of Roman law by the German cities and territories: If territorial laws or German customary law provided no regulations, Roman law applied.⁹⁸ This view was shared by Samuel Stryk (1640–1710), who from 1690 headed the faculty of law at the Saxon university of Wittenberg and served as judicial council at the high court of appeal in Dresden.⁹⁹ His magnum opus *Specimen usus moderni Pan-*

94 *Königlich Sächsischer Hof, Civil- und Militär Staat im Jahre 1819* (Leipzig: Weidmannische Buchhandlung, 1819), 48. It is doubtful, however, whether one “Johann Wilhelm Müller” was of “Turkish” origin.

95 SächsStA-D, 10006 OHMA, K 12, No. 29, fol. 46r, 47r, 48r, fol. 45r–v (quotation): “soll des so genannten langen Davids seines, ein langes, auf türkischer Arth gemachtes Kleid gewesen seyn.”

96 On the legal development of slavery in Saxony, cf. Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, “Return of a Ghost: Slavery and the Law in Early Modern Saxony (Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries),” in Rebekka von Mallinckrodt and Magnus Ressel, eds., *From Practices to Structurations: German Involvement in Slavery and the Slave Trade*. Special Issue *Journal of Global Slavery* 8, 2–3 (2023): 145–177.

97 Johann Christian Königk, *Disputatio Juridica de Mancipiorum Turcicorum Manumissione Baptismo implicata* [. . .] (Leipzig: Christoph Balthasar Lampius, [1689]), 4: “[Postquam igitur] servitus de novo quasi invasit ex bello huc usque per DEI gratiam fausto contra Turcas, quorum mancipia nobis obvennerunt quàm plurima, [. . .].” *Ibid.*: “quin igitur in tales captivos pristina illa jura servituti coherentia, & ab ea dependentia applicari possint, extra dubium est, cum nullibi sint sublata [. . .].”

98 Cf. e.g. Klaus Luig, “Samuel Stryk (1640–1710) und der ‘Usus modernus pandectarum’,” in *Die Bedeutung der Wörter: Studien zur europäischen Rechtsgeschichte*, ed. Michael Stolleis et al. (Munich: Beck, 1991), 219–235, here 223.

99 Hagen Hof, “Samuel Stryk (1640–1710),” in *Deutsche und Europäische Juristen aus neun Jahrhunderten: Eine biographische Einführung in die Geschichte der Rechtswissenschaft*, ed. Gerd Kleinheyser

dectarum of 1690 would lend its name to the early modern interpretation of Roman law. The frequency with which Roman law was referenced in Saxon legal opinions of the seventeenth and eighteenth century clearly shows that this theoretical principle was also applied in practice.¹⁰⁰ It was therefore highly consequential that slavery was neither negated nor abolished in the *Codex Augusteus* named after Augustus the Strong and published in two volumes in 1724, which systematically compiled all Electoral Saxon laws since 1485¹⁰¹ – for it was this legislative gap that was filled subsidiarily by Roman slavery laws.

Samuel Stryk, for example, distinguished categorically between *Christian* prisoners of war, who were not considered slaves, and *non-Christian* prisoners of war, who could be enslaved.¹⁰² This connection to the Ottoman wars and the justification of enslavement with the right of retaliation was already weakening during Augustus' reign, however. Although Samuel Stryk referred to it as well, later authors quoted a more general phrasing from his *Specimen usus moderni Pandectarum*: "It follows that Tartars, Turks, and Africans [literally "Ethiopians"], just like slaves of the Romans, can be bestowed, sold and bequeathed, as experience confirms."¹⁰³ In this way, the group of potentially enslavable people was extended to include people of color and thus to skin color as a criterion of enslavability,¹⁰⁴ for early modern authors were well aware of the Christian tradition of Ethiopia (used here as a *pars pro toto* to refer

and Jan Schröder, 6th revised and expanded edition (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 432–436, here 432–433; Mathias Schmöckel, "Das Märchen vom Usus modernus Pandectarum und die sächsische Rechtswissenschaft der Frühen Neuzeit," in *Ad fontes! Werner Schubert zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Frank L. Schäfer, Mathias Schmöckel, and Thomas Vormbaum (Berlin: LIT, 2015), 1–31, here 15.

100 Hiram Kümper, *Sachsenrecht: Studien zur Geschichte des sächsischen Landrechts in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2009), 294–295.

101 This is also true of the two subsequent volumes published in 1772, which thus cover Augustus' reign up to 1733. Slavery is not discussed at all. By contrast, the treatment of Lusatian *Erbuntertanen* (hereditary serfs) and (Christian) prisoners of war is discussed extensively and repeatedly.

102 Samuel Stryk, *Specimen Usus Moderni Pandectarum* [. . .] (Frankfurt/Wittenberg: Jeremias Schrey and Hered. Henr. Joh. Meyer, 1690), 79–80: "Servitutum inter Christianos ubique locorum esse abrogatam. [. . .] Communiter tamen excipiunt bella cum infidelibus gesta, ubi Captivos adhuc hodie servos fieri, & sic omnia Servorum Jura in illis locum invenire, consentiunt Dd. [. . .]." ("Slavery has been abolished among the Christians everywhere. [. . .] But all exclude the wars being fought with the infidels, where the prisoners become slaves until now, and so the doctors agree that slave law is applicable with regard to them, [. . .].") These and the subsequent cited statements appear in identical form in all nine editions of the *Specimen* up to and including 1749.

103 Stryk, *Specimen*, 80: "Ex quo est, quod Tartari, Turcæ & Æthiopes pariter ut Servi Romanorum donari, vendi & legari possint, uti experientia idem comprobatur." For more on the reception history, see Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, "Sklaverei und Recht im Alten Reich," in *Das Meer: Maritime Welten in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Peter Burschel and Sünne Jüterzenka (Cologne: Böhlau, 2021), 29–42; ead., "Slavery and the Law in Eighteenth-Century Germany," in *Beyond Exceptionalism: Traces of Slavery and the Slave Trade in Early Modern Germany 1650–1850*, ed. Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, Josef Köstlbauer, and Sarah Lentz (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2021), 137–162.

104 On this process, cf. in detail Mallinckrodt, "Return of a Ghost."

to Africa as a whole). As a consequence, baptism did not free people from slavery in the view of most contemporary jurists.¹⁰⁵ Christian Thomasius (1655–1728), who rejected the application of Roman law to slavery but entirely approved of the latter’s existence under natural law and *ius gentium*,¹⁰⁶ cited numerous reasons for this and told of a “Turkish” convert to Christianity in Leipzig whose owner, the senior postal official Wilhelm Ludwig Daser, “retained the very same rights over this slave after baptism as he had had before, and not much later gave his slave away to someone else as a gift.”¹⁰⁷ Similarly, the Christian names of the enslaved “Moors” listed in the *Court and State Calendars* for 1728 and 1729 indicate that they had already been baptized without this process leading to their liberation.

The depiction of Augustus the Strong and Christiane Eberhardine with enslaved people of color, as well as their purchase and ownership of slaves, was thus in accordance with contemporary Saxon legal notions and practices. The Leipzig fair repeatedly served as a venue for the sale and purchase of humans, and slave ownership extended to bourgeois circles as well.¹⁰⁸ However, with the reintroduction of slavery, Saxon lawyers were not reacting to the transatlantic slave trade but to the wars with the Ottoman Empire; they subsequently transferred the model to enslaved people from the Atlantic system. Dressing Africans in oriental costume was thus not simply the result of Europeans’ eclecticism but pointed to this deeper connection: Treating “Turks” as slaves was evidently the blueprint for how to deal with enslaved people from various backgrounds and parts of the world.

The court of Augustus the Strong and Christiane Eberhardine thus provides an example of how deeply the Atlantic slavery system penetrated the European continent. The portrayal of sub-Saharan individuals with slave collars was not just an iconographic motif or a simple indication of former slave status; it referred to contemporary practices and legal notions. At the same time, the origins as well as the legal and social

¹⁰⁵ See e.g. Stryk, *Specimen*, 80.

¹⁰⁶ Christian Thomasius, *Dissertationvm Academicarvm Varii Inprimis Iuridici Argvmenti*, vol. 1 (Halle/Magdeburg: Gebauer und Sohn, 1773), 832–835.

¹⁰⁷ Christian Thomasius and Henning Adolph Koch, *De Ratione Status Dissertationem XV. & XVI. De votorum pluralitate et arbitrio imperatoris, [. . .] Cum adjuncta Qvæstione An Mancipia Turcica per Baptismum manumittantur [. . .]* (Halle/Magdeburg: Christopher Salfeld, [1693]), *An Mancipia Turcica*, [unpaginated], § III: “[. . .] Dominus æquè post baptismum Dominium in servum istum retinuit, atqve ante habebat, eumqve non diu post donando alii, alienavit.” Max Mannsfeld (“‘Türkische’ Kriegsgefangene in der sächsischen Messestadt Leipzig um 1700,” *Jahrbuch Leipziger Stadtgeschichte* (2016): 23–50, here 42) provides a divergent translation of the Latin source suggesting that the postmaster freed the boy after he was baptized. This interpretation is not afforded by the wording of the sentence itself nor the surrounding ones, however: Thomasius begins the passage by stating that freedom [through baptism] was also not introduced by custom and usage, and hence by customary law.

¹⁰⁸ Mannsfeld, “‘Türkische’ Kriegsgefangene,” 23, 28–29. The case of Rudolf August Mohr, who was sold at the Leipzig fair in 1684 for 50 thalers, is relatively well known (*Beständiges Andencken der Redlichkeit Des Weyland Hoch-Fürstl. Cammer-Dieners Rudolph Mohrens* [n.p.: unknown printer], [1725], unpaginated).

status of the dark-skinned staff were actually much more diverse and heterogeneous than the ruler iconography and the generic collective designation as “Moors” suggest: Free and unfree persons were recruited equally, and unlike the highly mobile and briskly fluctuating set of often “nameless” servants, the “chamber Moors” frequently occupied their positions for many years.

Nevertheless, people of color in the courtly environment – regardless of their legal standing – were deliberately made to embody alterity. There is no evidence at the Dresden court of any dark-skinned servants advancing beyond this assigned position. In addition, repeatedly mentioned conflicts up to and including physical violence, escape, dismissal, and incarceration suggest that *white* rulers, courtiers, servants, peasants, and soldiers not only coveted people of color but also feared and rejected them, and that persons of color did not necessarily accept the role they were expected to fulfill. Besides proof of empathy as well as partner- and friendships, we find (proto)racist statements and physical attacks that dark-skinned court personnel were dangerously exposed to as a result of their weaker familial and corporative networks owing to their abduction. Thus, persons of color were racialized by way of legal treatment, religious sermons, assigned posts, daily actions, and iconographic presentations long before (pseudo)scientific racist theories were developed in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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Eve Rosenhaft

8 On Intimate Terms – An Afterword

At first glance, the title of this book seems to contain an error of syntax: the European experience *in* slavery? But of course the title is well considered: This is a volume that showcases a vision of a European past framed and defined by enslavement practices and by a global economics of slavery. Its authors locate this historical moment not in the colonies or the “(trans)Atlantic world”, but very firmly (with a welcome glance at Scotland) on the territory of the European continent (including what Felix Brahm and I called the hinterland of the Atlantic slave trade in 2016).¹ And they show us both Black and white Europeans living with, and bound together by, the conditions and relationships forged by slavery.

The contributions in this volume represent a body of research that creatively brings together two distinct historiographical impulses instigated in earlier decades: In 2023–24, we mark 80 years since the publication of Eric Williams’ *Capitalism and Slavery*, whose propositions about the structural implications of slavery for European economic modernity have come into their own as critical historians have been able to deploy new information technologies (like the Slave Voyages Database) to “follow the money” from European investors and merchants to the plantations and back via records of slave ownership. The British *Legacies of British Slave-ownership* project (2009–12) was pioneering in this regard. In particular, it provided a solid empirical foundation for conversations about how deeply financial interest in the slave economies penetrated into British society, demonstrating that institutions and individuals from many social strata and all parts of the British Isles owned slaves and benefited from the compensation provided by the British government when slavery was abolished in the Empire in 1833. The resulting understanding of slavery as a project in which the whole of society was implicated, fuelled by the urgency of the Black Lives Matter campaign, has led to self-examination and candid conversations about what white Britons need to do to acknowledge their responsibilities to the enslaved and their descendants. As I write this afterword, the Church of England – having accepted an internal report of 2023 demonstrating that a significant proportion of the income of its welfare fund (Queen Anne’s Bounty) came either from direct investment in slave trading enterprises or from benefactors who had profited from the slave trade – is debating the advice of a Black-led advisory committee that it should create a billion-pound fund for a programme of reparations.² When Felix Brahm and I launched the 2012 conference project that generated the *Slavery Hinterland* volume, we had in mind the model of *Legacies of British Slave-*

¹ Felix Brahm and Eve Rosenhaft, eds., *Slavery Hinterland: Transatlantic Slavery and Continental Europe, 1680–1850* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2016).

² Church Commissioners for England, *Church Commissioners’ Research into Historic Links to Transatlantic Chattel Slavery* (London: The Church Commissioners for England, 2023). The Church also

ownership and the impact it was already having: How could the issues of moral and financial complicity that it foregrounded be applied to other parts of Europe – even to those without (apparently) direct involvement in the trade? There was already an impetus to this line of enquiry coming from a body of research and activism that focused on German and Swiss entanglements in the slave economy, much of it conducted outside of academia. So we knew what we were building on, and we might even have guessed that the next step would be taken by colleagues in Bremen, but we could not predict what the outcomes of this new research would be.

Among the outcomes of the Bremen project, as recorded most emphatically in the present volume, is a compelling vision of the normality or everydayness of Atlantic chattel slavery *in* early modern Europe. This applies to the evidence of what “ordinary” white people did and could know as well as to the geographical breadth and intensity of interactions between enslaved and free people of African descent and white Europeans – interactions that take for granted the agency of both. In the present volume, the dimension of structural social and economic “penetration” first proposed in the work of Eric Williams – the real presence of slavery embedded in the texture of the European economies – is thus combined in transformative ways with a second historiographical tradition: the study of the Black presence in Europe. Hans Werner Debrunner’s *Presence and Prestige* is 45 years old in 2024, and Peter Martin’s *Schwarze Teufel, edle Mohren*, the first comprehensive study of Black people in German-speaking Europe, ten years younger. More recent research across Europe – to whose richness the footnotes in this volume attest – has produced ever more traces of individual Black lives as well as lively debates about the quality, origins and power of racial thinking in relation to pre- and early modern social structures.

The studies in this volume not only make clear the extent of the Black presence, but they show how knowledge of and participation in enslavement practices went well beyond the courtly circles so powerfully visualized in the now seemingly endless archive of images and texts about Court Moors. Moreover, they show us Black and white Europeans across a broad spectrum of society, named individuals like Madeleine, Furcy, Caesar, Christiaan van der Vegt, Arij de Graaff, Marie Katrine, Christian Real, Christian Gottlieb and Aischa Christiana Eberhardina living, fighting, negotiating with, marrying or escaping from other named individuals – Marie Anne Routier, Joseph Lory, Hector Munro, Abraham d’Arrest, Jurriaan Lindenbergh, Søren Simonsen Backe, Jacob Friedrich Heller, Gertrud Radeleff and Georg Andreas Knoll, among others. They point to the existence not only of networks of traders and traffickers, but also of social networks and even communities of the enslaved and emancipated whose breadth, density and resilience still await exploration. Giving these people

benefited from slave ownership (and from state compensation after abolition) through the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, which owned the Codrington Plantations in Barbados.

their names allows us to see them, operating as they did in a range of spaces with widely varying life skills and scopes for action, as co-authors of European society.

To be sure, a review of the names of the Black and white subjects of this book (respectively) brings home how the relations between them were fundamentally defined by the power that the enslaver exercised over the enslaved. Gunvor Simonsen's analysis of generic terms for unfree Blacks shows how they served to "brand" them as items for the market (while the term "servant" itself long obscured the fact of chattel slavery). Even more telling are the practices for naming individuals – always the choice of the slave owner, a "tyrannous interpellation"³: first names only, versions of the owner's own or family name, or the kind of playful or fantastical names normally reserved for pets. Simon Newman draws attention to these practices in his chapter. Annemieke van der Vegt and Arne Spohr, writing about their respective Christia[a]ns, remind us that the enslaved might acquire through baptism names that marked a kind of membership in the civic community – but rarely as a matter of unconstrained choice (and certainly not, as we used to imagine, as a ticket to freedom).

At the same time as they illustrate a radical power differential, however, these naming practices also bespeak intimacy (and sometimes the show, at least, of affection). They express a connection, rather as the naming of Caribbean plantations after metropolitan home towns both inscribed an explicit territorial claim and gave expression to a need to plant familiar domesticity on a distant shore.⁴ Early in the scholarly discussion of the place of slavery in metropolitan life, Catherine Hall pointed to the importance of families for the maintenance of slavery as a transatlantic system, as sites of intimacy and domesticity as well as of reproduction of social and economic capital.⁵ For France, Jennifer L. Palmer has written explicitly of "intimacy" in describing the situation of the enslaved in metropolitan households.⁶ The chapters in this volume demonstrate compellingly that the implication in the slave economy ran wide and deep in European society. For many (if not all) ordinary Europeans, they tell us, the fact of slavery was a fact

3 Susan Benson, "Injurious Names: Naming, Disavowal, and Recuperation in Contexts of Slavery and Emancipation," in *An Anthropology of Names and Naming*, ed. Gabriele vom Bruck and Barbara Bodenhorn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 177–199, here 181. On the naming of slaves, see Margaret Williamson's bibliography "Slave Names and Naming in the Anglophone Atlantic," *Obo in Atlantic History*, 2018 (doi: 10.1093/obo/9780199730414-0291); Michael Zeuske, "The Names of Slavery and Beyond: The Atlantic, the Americas and Cuba," in *The End of Slavery in Africa and the Americas: A Comparative Approach*, ed. Ulrike Schmieder, Katja Füllberg-Stolberg, and Michael Zeuske (Münster: LIT, 2011), 51–80.

4 This is based on my own observations about plantations in Suriname. The literature on plantation names is very limited. See for example Paul Musselwhite, "Naming Plantations: Toponyms and the Construction of the Plantation System in the English Atlantic," *Journal of Social History* 54 (2021): 741–774.

5 Catherine Hall, "Afterword," in *Slavery Hinterland*, ed. Brahm and Rosenhaft, 213–221.

6 Jennifer L. Palmer, *Intimate Bonds: Family and Slavery in the French Atlantic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

of their own lives, openly acknowledged at least when it was necessary to talk about it. More than this, though, the present book offers a vision of a Europe in which enslavers *typically* lived and worked in close proximity to and confidential communication with the enslaved: in households and workshops.⁷

This observation seems to me to open up a new horizon for research. At least it offers new perspectives and lends a new degree of urgency to familiar questions. These questions are mainly about white *Europeans*, but they are thrown into relief by the evidence of Black agency that the chapters also provide. They are questions about knowing, speaking, and remembering. Acknowledging what I referred to above as the real presence of slavery embedded in the texture of the European economies has made scholars and activists attentive to the ways in which enslavement as a regime of social relations was materialized and disseminated in commodities, cash and financial instruments. We have also learned to recognize in these things-of-the-economy certain processes of veiling the brutality of enslavement – how those very commodities served the sequestration (or displaced embodiment) of the unfree labour that produced them, and how that labour was de-materialized in the emerging business of insurance.⁸ But the chapters in this book insist on materiality, and they evidence knowledge and awareness. As such, they add to a growing challenge to critical historical and cultural studies of slavery that focus on synchronous mechanisms of sublimation and repression – regimes of denial and unknowing – or assert (for example) a purely emblematic quality of Black figures in art and literature and their function in discursive constructions of whiteness. The questions they raise are questions about what and how historians can know about everyday practices “in slavery”.

They are empirical questions, necessarily situated and inflected in specific local contexts, though they surely test the ingenuity and imagination of historians. In metropolitan worlds in which slave-owning was optional and without explicit public sanction but at the same time ubiquitous, notorious, and embedded in household economies, what everyday practices allowed slave owners and their friends and neighbours to negotiate the balance between intimacy and ownership, and to situate themselves in relation to global practices and discourses of enslavement? To return to

7 The material circumstances of slavery in domestic settings and the interpretative issues it raises have heretofore been addressed mainly in accounts of “house slaves” on plantations and in studies of slavery in the northern states of the USA. For a survey of the latter, see Marc Howard Ross, *Slavery in the North: Forgetting History and Recovering Memory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), Chapter 2.

8 On the concept of slavery “sequestered” in objects: Macushla Robinson, “The Hidden Histories of Heirlooms: Slavery, Decorative Arts, and the Domestic Labor of Forgetting,” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 48, no.1–2 (Spring–Summer 2020): 45–59; cf. also Janet Neary, *Fugitive Testimony: On the Visual Logic of Slave Narratives* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 159–162. On the function of insurance in de-materializing slavery: Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Charles Dannreuther and Oliver Kessler, “Racialised Futures: On Risk, Race and Finance,” *Millennium. Journal of International Studies* 45 (2017): 356–379.

the subject of the slave names whose very peculiarities recalled the fact of slavery on the doorstep or in the parlour: Who enunciated those names, and to whom? Did speaking them in white company call for, invite, provoke or suppress comment? Was the man baptized Christiaan van der Vegt still known as Presto in the household?

In her study of the domestic labour of forgetting, Macushla Robinson, following Holocaust scholar Gabriele Schwab, calls slavery an “unthought known” – a taken-for-granted condition that is not reflected on.⁹ This seems to me to be particularly relevant to understanding the situation of metropolitan individuals and families who, without employing enslaved people in their own households, observed their presence and/or participated actively in the transatlantic plantation economy. How might we research the history of reflection, non-reflection and refusal to reflect? Who spoke to whom about slavery – and when, where and for whom was knowing a problem? We may presume that knowledge of or even engagement in enslavement on European soil did not necessarily entail knowledge of the most atrocious practices of enslavement, of the Middle Passage and plantation life. But as new research (including the work of the Bremen project) makes apparent that that knowledge was available by word of mouth and increasingly in print by the late eighteenth century, one empirical challenge is to identify how particular actors accessed or might have accessed such information, as well as what they did with it.¹⁰ The examples of flight and other acts of resistance documented in this volume must also have kept those who practised and witnessed slaveholding alert to the precarity of intimacy – and its ethical implications.

Wendy Sutherland’s study of Karl Gotthelf Lessing’s *Die Mätresse* (1780) is instructive in this regard, since the play can be read both as an exemplary text for the discursive construction of race (as Sutherland does) and also as a document of eighteenth-century Germans’ knowingness about slavery. In a phrase that mirrors Schwab/Robinson’s “unthought known”, Sutherland writes in terms of “looking at the overlooked” – Norman Bryson’s characterization of still life painting. She approaches her analysis through the stage properties specified by Lessing, which include colonial goods “that connect this European, Prussian family to the outside world of slavery and colonialism.” She goes on to argue, “The invisibility of colonialism and slavery ‘at home’ in Europe is, therefore, made visible through the stage properties of the global trade, and like that which is hidden but in full view, they are visible but not seen.” But she

9 Robinson, “Hidden Histories,” 53. Cf. Gabriele Schwab, *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

10 Sarah Lentz, “*Wer helfen kann, der helfe!*” *Deutsche SklavereieigenerInnen und die atlantische Abolitionsbewegung, 1780–1860* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021); Sarah Lentz, “No German Ship Conducts Slave Trade! The Public Controversy about German Participation in the Slave Trade during the 1840s,” in *Beyond Exceptionalism: Traces of Slavery and the Slave Trade in Early Modern Germany, 1650–1850*, ed. Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, Josef Köstlbauer, and Sarah Lentz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 287–311; Jasper Henning Hagedorn, *Bremen und die atlantische Sklaverei: Waren, Wissen und Personen, 1780–1860* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2023), 425–448.

also explores the key plot element consisting in the fact that a central character, while on a sojourn in America, had purchased and married an enslaved woman, who later died in childbirth along with his child. Sutherland observes that while this fact is made known to the other characters, it is not an object of moral or political critique; more specifically, it “is not [even] a topic for family discussion.”¹¹ Here, the question of visibility joins that of speakability in an interplay of paradoxes: The contributions in the present volume make clear that behind Lessing’s fiction of a Black presence in a Prussian family there was a material reality in the everyday experience and knowledge of many Germans – and thus the point is not actual invisibility, but silence in the face of visibility. In *Die Mätresse*, that silence is enacted. Can we continue to assume that such silence was a feature of daily life in eighteenth-century European households, or have we been looking in the wrong places?

My own research on Germany and transatlantic slavery, inspired not least by conversations with the authors of this volume, has brought home to me the challenge of filling the gap between what we know people knew (and did) and conversations which (so far) have left no trace, and in fact may never have been voiced. That research began as a study in sociability and business networking in an eighteenth-century provincial merchant family – a tale of the formation of a new middle class in a German “home town” (Braunschweig). On a number of occasions in 1765, this family hosted an elaborate parlour game that friends and guests took part in, and in order to understand why, I needed to identify the participants. This called for genealogical research, which in turn added an entirely new dimension to my picture of the family: The second son of the widowed matriarch had died in Suriname while working as a salaried plantation administrator (managing a plantation named Bronswijk, in Dutch, after his German birthplace). Searches in Dutch and German archives revealed the involvement of key Braunschweig families in transnational and transatlantic networks that linked them directly to the slave economy. Yet the world of the parlour game and that of the plantation appear in the sources as entirely separate – and indeed in entirely separate bodies of sources.¹²

Germans’ (Europeans’) relationship with Atlantic chattel slavery was real, but it is fraught with discursive, communicative and mnemonic aporias which test the capacity of historical narratives to connect the domestic with the global and the known

11 Wendy Sutherland, *Staging Blackness, Performing Whiteness in Eighteenth-Century German Drama* (London: Routledge, 2016), 97. Cf. Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008).

12 Eve Rosenhaft, “Two Inventories – Two Braunschweigs: Home Town Germans and the Eighteenth-Century Slave Economy,” in *Encountering the Global in Early Modern Germany*, ed. Christina Brauner, Renate Dürr, Philip Hahn, Anne Sophie Overkamp, and Simon Siemianowski (Oxford: Berghahn, 2024); Eve Rosenhaft, “Between Home Town and Plantation? Eighteenth-Century German Merchant Families at Play,” in *Essays in Memory of Professor Kate Marsh (1974–2019)*, ed. Charles Forsdick and Mark Towsey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024).

with the unspoken. In relation to global history as a field, Martin Dusinberre refers to this challenge as “the great silence”, arguing that historians need to develop new ways of reading and narrating the sources to articulate such connections, and of telling stories that remain unrecorded by their subjects.¹³ We are learning that it is, after all, as hard to hear and write through the white noise of the sources generated by European enslavers as it is to retrieve the voices of the enslaved and marginalized.

As I have already mentioned, these discursive and communicative aporias invite not only new narrative strategies but also further empirical research. In addition, asking what contemporaries said to each other and under what circumstances should also lead us to think in new ways about the more familiar questions of generational and historical memory of slavery (the mnemonic aporia). Here, too, this volume adds new urgency to an old question: How did the everydayness of slavery that it documents come to be lost to cultural memory? In this sense, it places us in a position to revisit the history of remembering and forgetting, considering also the longer-term human impacts not only of practices of enslavement and discrimination but also of the mental and emotional gearing that has facilitated them.

There is now a well-established critical account of the European memory of transatlantic slavery which among other things recognizes abolitionism and colonialism as vehicles for the whitewashing of the enslavement past. In white Europe, intimacy with enslavement was displaced onto de-personalized anti-slavery discourses which allowed enslavers to be remembered as liberators: German abolitionist politics was associated with a myth of national virtue arising from imagined non-involvement in the slave economy, whereas in Britain, the memory of legal abolition trumped acknowledgement of the crime itself. The Berlin Conference of 1884 authorized colonial exploitation in the name of fighting slavery on the African continent, while less tyrannous interpellations like the Basel Mission were cast as projects of atonement for slavery.¹⁴

The evidence of intimacy presented in this volume invites a more fine-grained analysis of mnemonic processes and practices, though attention to the preservation and loss of the traces of slavery by individuals, families and households will surely raise contradictions and paradoxes. For example, Macushla Robinson insists on the domestic and gendered character of the work of preserving family heirlooms as “mechanisms of inheritance that metabolize violence . . . reproduc[ing] a bundle of silences that protect the attachment of whiteness to wealth”.¹⁵ At the same time, we

¹³ Martin Dusinberre, “Japan, Global History and the Great Silence,” *History Workshop Journal* 83 (2017): 130–150.

¹⁴ See among others Lentz, “*Wer helfen kann, der helfe!*”, 19–20; Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau, ed., *From Slave Trade to Empire: Europe and the Colonisation of Black Africa, 1780s to 1880s* (London: Routledge, 2004); Peter Haenger, “Basel and the Slave Trade: From Profiteers to Missionaries,” in *Slavery Hinterland*, ed. Brahm and Rosenhaft, 65–84.

¹⁵ Robinson, “Hidden Histories,” 50.

know that it was women's intimate and tactile knowledge of the fruits of slavery that placed them at the forefront of abolitionist boycott movements.¹⁶

It may also be the case that what appears as paradoxical at a distance turns out to be evidence of unexpected links. One set of connections (often of the most intimate kind) which can no longer be denied are those between Black and white Europeans – and after posing so many questions about enslavers and their families, I return in conclusion to the enslaved and their agency so eloquently recorded and reflected here. Patterns of enslavement in metropolitan Europe bear some relationship to those in the northern United States in terms of the mainly domestic settings and relatively small numbers of enslaved (compared with the plantations of the South). In his account of how and why the fact of Northern slavery was long forgotten, Marc Howard Ross adduces the absence of public memorial sites, and more broadly of the conditions for retaining “place memory”, pointing out how its rediscovery has depended on the unearthing of sites like the African Burial Ground in Manhattan that had literally been covered over in the intervening centuries.¹⁷ A similar recovery or reconstruction of place memory is ongoing in the attention being given to identifying the graves of individual Africans in Europe. In considering the apparent gaps in memory among the formerly enslaved, Ross emphasizes pain, shame and powerlessness as conditions militating against remembering. He addresses largely by indirection the simple absence of a mnemonic community of the formerly enslaved, resulting from the dispersal and dilution of the pre-abolition Black presence in the North Atlantic states (again, by contrast with the southern states). But having confirmed that Black individuals and families were “there”, we may want to look again for genealogical connections and material traces of intergenerational transmission of memories of enslavement – heirlooms, perhaps. There are models and starting points in this volume, for example in the family histories of Christiaan van der Vegt and Madeleine. And there were those like Anton Wilhelm Amo who took their stories of the European experience in slavery back to Africa. In the past two generations, the activism of Black Europeans (of whom few, if any, are the descendants of the ones who feature in this volume) has demonstrated the power of their voice to contest, fracture and transform national memory cultures. But the enslaved themselves also spoke when they were alive, and listening for what *they* said to whom can further transform our understanding of the global past.

¹⁶ Clare Midgley, “Slave Sugar Boycotts, Female Activism and the Domestic Base of British Anti-Slavery Culture,” *Slavery & Abolition* 17, no. 3 (1996): 137–162.

¹⁷ Ross, *Slavery in the North*, Chapter 3. “Place memory” is Paul Connerton’s term: Paul Connerton, *How Modernity Forgets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

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