

# German Abolitionism: Kotzebue and the Transnational Debate on Slavery

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OBENEWAA ODURO-OPUNI, Arizona State University

Die [Abolitionsdebatte] war eine der ersten über-national geführten, moralisch-politischen Debatten, die unter Einsatz moderner Printmedien die Massen erreichte, mobilisierte und plötzlich für eine Thematik interessierte, die zwar globale Dimensionen besaß, deren Bezüge zur eigenen Lebenswelt der Europäer jedoch auf den ersten Blick nicht ohne weiteres erkennbar waren.<sup>1</sup>

——Barbara Riesche, *Schöne Mohrinnen, edle Sklaven, schwarze Rächer: Schwarzendarstellung und Sklavereithematik im deutschen Unterhaltungstheater (1770–1814)*

## Introduction

The last decades of the eighteenth century heralded a significant, powerful transnational social movement that cut across classes, races, and nationalities as well as genders.<sup>2</sup> Despite the transnational nature of the abolitionist movement, scholars have generally suggested that it operated only within specific European nation-states and the Americas.<sup>3</sup> In this regard, literary scholar Heike Paul identifies a primary scholarly focus on Anglo-American contacts and networks regarding abolitionism in which German-language contributions are largely absent. She contends that the interest in circumatlantic abolitionist scholarship that included German-language material is a recent phenomenon.<sup>4</sup> Correspondingly, historians Eve Rosenhaft and Felix Brahm detect a dearth of scholarship on the entanglements of historical actors in German-speaking territories, areas that were less obviously linked to the transatlantic slave trade, slavery, and abolitionism.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, historian Sarah Lentz criticizes the lack of German representation in international research on abolitionism in Europe during

the early nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> In addition, Sigrid G. Köhler suggests that German-speaking abolitionist theater and its authors are nearly forgotten and rarely read.<sup>7</sup> She further addresses the fact that these plays, apart from two contributions, are hardly ever discussed or recognized in the field of German literary studies.<sup>8</sup> This speaks to a marginalization and scarcity of scholarship on German-speaking abolitionism and abolitionist efforts within German studies, more broadly. This is similarly relevant to transatlantic American studies, which usually does not consider German-language contributions in this context. Thus, this discussion broadens the discipline's scope by including additional voices within the context of slavery and abolition that belong to the spectrum of American literature and history. Discussions of this nature, outside of the Americas, speak to the transnational dynamics of American studies.

While there has been Euro-American scholarship on German abolitionist contributions,<sup>9</sup> an equal scholarly engagement of German- and English-speaking contributions prompted by the transnational nature of the transatlantic slave trade, slavery, and abolitionism by authors working in German-speaking contexts—which would address a German audience—has yet to be thoroughly developed.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, scholarship on German abolitionist contributions surprisingly does not consider the fields of Black German studies and Black studies. Critics rarely draw on theoretical models of Black studies and the initial transnational contributions by Black authors of slave narratives, which present an integral part of the discussion of abolitionism. In this sense, many German studies discussions on this subject matter lack instances of Black self-representation, rely on white scholarly contributions, and include few Black studies and critical race theories and frameworks that are clearly essential when discussing works on slavery that not only address the commodification of Black bodies, but also the overall portrayal of Black bodies within the transnational context of slavery. Thus, many of these scholarly works become somewhat of a carbon copy of these abolitionist contributions by white authors during the Age of Enlightenment, because they present an application and discussion of one white gaze layered upon another white gaze. Challenging this layering both theoretically and analytically, then, requires a radical shift that centers approaches rooted in Black thought and theories, which are the foundation of this essay. I deem these concepts adequate and necessary for engaging with issues of slavery and abolition while at the same time exposing white paternalist perspectives and gazes.

Thus, I use Black studies approaches to illustrate how German literary contributions indicate inscribed sociocritical commentary and take up transatlantic abolitionist discourses. For this reason, I intend to further call into question the notion that German abolitionist awareness did not exist in Europe during the Enlightenment. In so doing, I highlight the transatlantic significance of this historical era by analyzing and contextualizing *Die Negersklaven, ein historisch-dramatisches Gemälde: in drey Akten* (1796: *The Negro Slaves: A Dramatic-Historical Painting, in Three Acts*)<sup>11</sup> by German author August von Kotzebue (1761–1819) as a German-language transnational contribu-

tion within the larger discursive abolitionist context. This play belongs to the understudied and long-forgotten dramatic genre of the “Plantagenstücke” (plantation plays), which, through its critique of slavery and racism, bears witness to an early German-language discourse indicative of anticolonial and anti-imperial currents.<sup>12</sup> It also articulates humanitarian sentiments as interventional commentary on the transatlantic slave trade, which surfaced under the auspices of the Enlightenment. Because plays of this genre often foreground the horrors of slavery at the hands of cruel white slaveholders, they characterize enslaved Africans as unblemished, obedient, submissive, hard-working, and grateful “beings” deserving of humanitarian benevolence.<sup>13</sup>

Kotzebue’s play portrays various enslaved Black individuals and their daily trials and tribulations on a plantation in eighteenth-century Jamaica. The play has two endings, which are both performed, which shows the affective nature of abolitionist discourses at the time. By employing abolitionist literary strategies in the play, Kotzebue appeals to the morality of slaveholders and criticizes the enslavement of Black people. Hence, this work calls for a thorough exploration of Kotzebue’s antislavery trajectory as well as the rigor that is evident in his historically informed portrayal of plantation slavery in the West Indies. The accuracy of the portrayal of plantation life echoes and further solidifies abolitionist literary conventions.

In my analysis, I focus on the idea of intertextuality in cultural production. This conceptual framework, according to Ashraf H. A. Rushdy, posits that cultural productions emerge from and simultaneously contribute to social conditions. For this reason, Kotzebue’s production should be considered within the larger discourse of abolition through its sociocritical and interventional commentary.

In this essay, I first situate Kotzebue’s literary contributions in the German context. This section demonstrates Kotzebue’s popularity in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Germany as well as his affinity for addressing and depicting the culturally, ethnically, and racially “Other” in his works. In this, Kotzebue’s professional background is reflected in and associated with his political stance on slavery, which prompted this abolitionist literary contribution. Next, I turn to the discussion of *The Negro Slaves* and offer a short summary that highlights salient plot changes while providing a full discussion of the storyline. Third, I trace abolitionist literary techniques to embed Kotzebue’s formulation of antislavery sentiments within and in response to larger European-American abolitionist discourse. I then investigate more closely the kind of sources used to create this play, because they signify Kotzebue’s insertion into an existing transnational discourse through works that simultaneously confirm the existence of a critical engagement with the transatlantic slave trade, slavery, and abolition in German contexts at the time. Kotzebue’s use of various abolitionist literary sources illustrates that the entire play is informed by and responds to works that aim to provide historical information on the subject matter. Finally, I explore the construction of Black bodies within the play by way of Hortense Spillers’s concept of gender differentiation during slavery. This is then contextualized in Thomas Thistlewood’s

(1721–1786) journal entries from 1748 to 1786, which portray instances that contemporaries were cognizant of in the eighteenth century.<sup>14</sup> Thistlewood serves here as an instance of accurate historical information that accentuates the significance of historical knowledge regarding the depiction and condition of Black female slaves in both works.

### **Kotzebue's *The Negro Slaves***

August Friedrich Ferdinand von Kotzebue was born in 1761 in Weimar, Prussia.<sup>15</sup> As an accomplished playwright, Kotzebue produced more than two hundred and thirty dramas along with several novels, history books, travelogues, and journal articles and greatly surpassed both his contemporaries Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) and Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) in the number of plays performed at theaters across German-speaking states.<sup>16</sup> Kotzebue's plays were widely distributed—some were actually performed under Goethe's direction in Weimar—and also prolifically translated into numerous languages such as English, French, Danish, Dutch, Italian, Russian, Swedish, and Spanish. These translations aided Kotzebue in becoming well-established outside of the German-speaking realm.

German studies critic Chunjie Zhang identifies Kotzebue's interracial as well as intercultural plots of love and conflict as having greatly contributed to his popularity in the years between 1787 and 1798.<sup>17</sup> While Zhang mentions entanglements between “Peruvians, Indians, Spaniards or Britons,”<sup>18</sup> Kotzebue's dramas also portray various African slave characters, both male and female, in the West Indies and are thus indicative of an interest in slavery and abolitionism overall. In this context, Zhang credits Kotzebue's apparent fascination with non-European settings and characters to a fondness for Daniel Defoe (1660–1731) and the literary genre he spawned, the *Robinsonade*.<sup>19</sup>

This fascination with non-German and non-European settings could be seen as originating in Kotzebue's biography. At the age of sixteen, Kotzebue left Weimar to study law at the University of Jena and the University of Duisburg, from which he graduated in 1780.<sup>20</sup> Then, he was sent to Saint Petersburg as a Prussian envoy in 1781. In 1783, he was appointed assessor to the high court of appeals in Reval (present-day Tallinn), which was in Estonia, then a province of the Russian Empire. He was ennobled in 1785 and became president of the Magistrat of the Governorate of Estonia.<sup>21</sup> While in the Baltic region, Kotzebue articulated his aversion to slavery.<sup>22</sup> As part of the ruling class in the Russian province, in which German immigrants made up one-third of the entire Estonian population, Kotzebue became acquainted with the predicament of Estonian peasants who served German aristocrats in a bondage relationship called *Leibeigenschaft* (serfdom).<sup>23</sup> This exposure heavily impacted Kotzebue and illustrates that he was influenced and informed by European colonial endeavors as well as his stay in Estonia.<sup>24</sup> Kotzebue worked to critique these severe and exploitative forms of governance, that Orlando Patterson typifies as “relations of inequality or domination,

which exist whenever one person has more power than another, range on a continuum from those of marginal asymmetry to those in which one person is capable of exercising, with impunity, total power over another.”<sup>25</sup> Kotzebue sought to elicit empathy and compassion through *The Negro Slaves* by morally educating his audience as well as shedding light on the conditions of the “relation of domination.”<sup>26</sup> He also tried to avoid an explicit critique of serfdom, which prompted his use of Jamaica as a setting as well as his adoption of an alternative ending. Kotzebue did not want to be held accountable for critiquing the German economically exploitative practices in Estonia that are portrayed in his play as inconceivably murderous, gory, and distasteful.

*The Negro Slaves* is set on a British plantation in Jamaica. After the previous owner dies, the plantation and wealth are left to his oldest son, John. John is now the owner of several slaves, with two of the enslaved women living in his house. John forces Ada, one of his female slaves, to decide whether to become his mistress within fourteen days. Ada refuses his proposal because she is married and in love with her husband, with whom she lost contact when she was sold into slavery. William, John’s younger and less wealthy brother, returns from England for a visit. Openly opposing the institution of slavery and John’s role in its perpetuation, he investigates the conditions on the plantation and speaks to the slaves about their daily suffering and brutalization at the hand of the plantation overseer, Paul.

Among the slaves is Ayos, who voluntarily joined the slave traders to be reunited with his son Zameo, who had sold himself to slave traders in order to spare his father this fate. Ayos and Zameo reunite on John’s plantation and it is revealed that Zameo is Ada’s long-lost husband. John is displeased with these developments, demands that Ada become his mistress at once, and threatens to kill Zameo. Seeing Zameo one last time, Ada begs him to kill her so she can escape John’s sexual harassment, thus also sparing Zameo’s life. There are two endings to this play that are both performed: In the first ending, Ada is murdered by Zameo, who then commits suicide. In the second ending, William frees Ada, Zameo, Ayos, and Ada’s enslaved female friend from the plantation by buying them from John. Both endings, although different, are reflective of the affective dimensions of abolitionist discourses at the time.

This summary graphically identifies the nature and conventions of abolitionist literature. By heavily playing on the emotions of the audience, abolitionists and—in this very case—Kotzebue aim at suggesting thought-provoking options to terminate the suffering and agony that the racial “Other” is subjected to. In the hope of calling the legitimacy of slavery into question, an incompatibility of slavery and Christian beliefs is expected to emerge, for which the key factor is an emotional bond between the audience and the suffering slave. In the following section, I will discuss the functions, ideas, and forms of abolitionist contributions that come to life in Kotzebue’s play and illustrate an intertextual approach.

### Transnational Intertextuality in German Abolitionist Literature

Kotzebue's condemnation of slavery can be discussed by utilizing the concept of intertextuality to emerge from and into (specific) social conditions.<sup>27</sup> In his chapter "Master Texts and Slave Narratives: Race, Form, and Intertextuality in the Field of Cultural Production," Rushdy asserts that intertextuality should also include an understanding of "the ways texts mediate the social conditions of their formal production."<sup>28</sup> Cultural productions would then be explored as emerging from and contributing to a particular social condition.<sup>29</sup> In this context, Rushdy states that "to read intertextually is to discern how a given text creatively alludes to and possibly rewrites a predecessor text, evokes the political dynamic in the field of cultural production, and inscribes into that dialogue its concerns with the social relations in the field of power" (14). Cultural production should therefore be considered social and material, because it clearly reveals "the way a culture thinks about itself, articulating and proposing solutions for the problems that shape a particular historical moment" (16). This approach is of interest for this essay because it emphasizes the "social forces that condition the relationships between (and within) texts" (15).

In this context, Kotzebue indirectly draws on a larger transnational discourse that emerged from and was religiously inspired by intellectual debates and an increasing opposition to slavery, especially on the part of the Quakers, "who took the lead in confronting the institution of slavery with the principle of religious egalitarianism."<sup>30</sup> Quakers on both sides of the Atlantic abandoned the practice of slavery due to a 1761 ban, as well as resolutions of the Pennsylvania Society between 1774 and 1776 "declaring that no one who held slaves could be a member" (195). Quakers petitioned the Parliament of Great Britain for the cause of abolition in 1783 while circulating many copies of a pamphlet called *The Case of Our Fellow-Creatures, the Oppressed African*. Soon after, the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade (1787) was established through a twelve-member committee, of whom nine were Quakers.<sup>31</sup>

The intellectual genesis of this discourse emerged from larger debates on human rights expressed in French and Scottish Enlightenment writings (231). Thus, Kotzebue is particularly influenced by secular opposition brought forth by philosophical figures such as Montesquieu (1689–1755), Adam Ferguson (1723–1816), and James Beattie (1735–1803), who were supported by religious objections on the part of the English Evangelical movement, which included individuals such as John Newton (1725–1807) and William Wilberforce (1759–1833).<sup>32</sup> This evangelical movement sought to assert the "equality of [B]lack humanity" (231) as well as Black rights, which were part of a "wider level ... of a growing religious criticism of slavery" (231) in the 1760s and 1770s in Great Britain. This religious critique was promoted through publications, pamphlets, speeches, and notable correspondence (231). Through sermons, various faith groups jointly developed abolitionist beliefs (231). In this context, Wright et al. describe the various media channels that promoted

antislavery thought and made a “unity of anti-slavery sentiment” possible by reaching many citizens (231).

Further, Brycchan Carey describes various forms of communication that abolitionists employed to spread their message,<sup>33</sup> relying heavily on graphic accounts of the horrors of slavery to evoke and engage their audience’s pity.<sup>34</sup> Stephen Ahern discusses the workings of affect—“the fleeting, volatile registers of embodied subjectivity”—with regard to abolitionism and points to abolitionist accounts in which “invoking the language of feeling might wield a political force beyond appeals to mere reason.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, works promoting the abolition of the slave trade and the emancipation of slaves spoke to the audience’s emotions through displays of the unstable, ephemeral nature of the lives of the enslaved.

The most successful method of appealing to the morality of readers and slaveholders was the slave narrative. These truthful firsthand accounts of slavery and the slave trade were either written directly by a slave or dictated to an abolitionist friend who then put pen to paper.<sup>36</sup> Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. discuss the significance of slave narratives’ appeals to morality, humanity, and pity in the introductory chapter of *The Slave’s Narrative* (1985) through a review of *Henry Bibb’s Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (1849): “This fugitive slave literature is destined to be a powerful lever. We have the most profound conviction of its potency. We see in it the easy and infallible means of abolitionizing the free States. Argument provokes argument, reason is met by sophistry. But narratives of slaves go right to the hearts of men.”<sup>37</sup> This message addressed anyone, including free Black and white individuals in the American colonies and beyond. As a heartfelt appeal, fugitive slaves hoped for help. Thus, abolitionist literature was not limited to the Americas; rather, abolitionists of the circumatlantic were able to contribute to the discussion through any form of cultural production that demonstrated solidarity, vigilance, and activism. This emotional appeal of abolitionist literature (slave narratives) also extended to countries that were not involved in slavery and the slave trade, which reflects the transatlantic proliferation of abolitionist discourse. The vast circulation of abolitionist literature encouraged intellectuals and writers in Europe to act in different ways, because “bridging the gulf between self and marginalized other through affective identification may well be the first step toward grasping the lived reality of that other, and may lead to action that could alleviate a situation. ... By bringing closer the realities of this far-off trade, antislavery writers shocked their readers on both sides of the Atlantic into an awareness.”<sup>38</sup> Kotzebue’s *The Negro Slaves*, then, not only presents one example of abolitionist literature, but also sheds light on some of the ways in which antislavery discourse resurfaced in the German-speaking realm.

Kotzebue appeals to the conscience of his audience based on historical data and mentions William Wilberforce: “In England lives a man who loves you; who, day and night, ponders your liberation, and warms of the beautiful love of man, and defends your rights with ardent eloquence.”<sup>39</sup> Thus, *The Negro Slaves* articulates a

sociocritical and political agenda with direct references to current affairs, similar to the antislavery speech by Wilberforce in the House of Commons in 1789. Kotzebue adopts this presentation for *The Negro Slaves* by directly addressing his audience and readers in the preface. He reveals his political stance on slavery through his commentary in the preface, which illustrates the urgency of abolition: “The author asks his readers, viewers and reviewers, not to regard this piece as a mere drama. It is destined to present all of the terrible cruelties in a single group, which are inflicted upon our Black brothers.”<sup>40</sup> Kotzebue alludes to the terrible cruelties that Wilberforce articulated in his famous speech. Wilberforce defines the transatlantic slave trade as “inhuman traffic”<sup>41</sup> that leads to an “effusion of human blood.”<sup>42</sup> He sees this traffic as setting “fear and terror in every family, setting millions of our fellow creatures ... hunting each other for slaves, creating fairs and markets for human flesh.”<sup>43</sup> The reference to this key player in British abolitionism illustrates Kotzebue’s opposition to contemporary inhumane and violent slavery, which he seeks to abolish.

Wilberforce refers to historical elements of the transatlantic slave trade, which Kotzebue aspires to include in *The Negro Slaves* by basing it on historical data. Kotzebue aims to present a historical and truthful picture of the condition of slavery through the scholarly work referenced in his preface.<sup>44</sup> Writings by well-known abolitionists like Guillaume Thomas François Raynal (1713–1796), Johann Jakob Sell (1754–1816), Matthias Christian Sprengel (1746–1803), and Paul Erdmann Isert (1756–1789) ensure that “unfortunately, there is not a single fact in this play which is not literally true,” while at the same time manifesting *The Negro Slaves* as an accurate “*historisches Gemählde*” (historical painting or portrait), which is the subtitle of the play.<sup>45</sup> This subtitle hints at a visual rhetoric of historical portraits that provides accurate and truthful insights into the realities of plantation slavery through a “tableaux of bodies frozen in attitudes of affective excess to capture moments” of intense horror.<sup>46</sup> In this sense, Kotzebue indicates that graphic elements and descriptions of plantation life were omitted in the performance of the stage play because they were too dreadful. The printed version, however, aims for accuracy in its portrayal of slavery.<sup>47</sup> Kotzebue’s intertextual portrayal of the realities of slavery through a “*Gemählde*”<sup>48</sup> prompted the critic Köhler to use Denis Diderot’s (1713–1784) notion of the dramatic tableau in her discussion of *The Negro Slaves*. In an attempt to engage the senses and emotions of the audience, sequences of lifelike authentic scenes are used, resulting in a susceptibility to the moral agenda of the play.<sup>49</sup> Thus, drawing on authentic pictures in the form of a painting elicits a linkage between the spectator, the events of the plot, and the characters on stage. This amplifies appeals to the senses, imagination, and morality.<sup>50</sup> Köhler appropriately links this portrayal of slavery with an overall abolitionist agenda that is based on emotional critical reflections on contemporary societal structures also relevant to German discourses.<sup>51</sup>

As previously mentioned, Kotzebue saw theater as the most effective way to voice his opinion about German wrongdoings: “Kotzebue claimed that theater was the place where human sympathy and fine feelings can be educated and influenced.”<sup>52</sup> In

this regard, the contemporary discourse on ethical educational theory resonates in larger discussions of aesthetics. In the treatise “On the Aesthetic Education of Man” (1795), Schiller considers the betterment of sociopolitical issues along with humanity to depend on art. In this sense, artists were considered to set precedents through aesthetic cultural production that resulted in an emergence of essential humanistic ideals.

In this context, Kotzebue employs abolitionist strategies by accentuating the emotional and physical suffering of enslaved Africans and condemns the institution of slavery as terrible cruelty<sup>53</sup> to appeal “to a shared human capacity for affective response, especially for a fellow-feeling that wells up in encounters with suffering of others”<sup>54</sup> as a significant part of Enlightenment culture. Kotzebue abides by this sentiment by emphatically drawing attention to the condition of the marginalized “Other” by explicitly referring to slaves as “our Black brothers.”<sup>55</sup> This move establishes a connection between the European reader and the suffering and enslaved African in the New World. In so doing, Kotzebue seeks to generate sufficient sympathy to encourage the reader “to try to relieve the conditions that produced the pain.”<sup>56</sup> This visual rhetoric is used to “engage in imaginative identification with the plight of the victim”<sup>57</sup> and is further intensified by the disclosure of Kotzebue’s personal sentiments. Hence, his emotional outburst seeks to elicit political action with reference to the unjust enslavement of Africans: “The author is not ashamed to confess that he shed a thousand tears while he wrote this play. If the spectator’s tears mix with his own, then his efforts will be rewarded.”<sup>58</sup> This disclosure by the author, then, is a strategic move that further embeds *The Negro Slaves* within the traditions of abolitionist sentimental literature and shows the author as establishing a sociopolitical betterment that is to take place alongside a betterment of humanity according to humanistic ideas.

Applying Rushdy’s conceptual framework to *The Negro Slaves* requires a closer look at Kotzebue’s sources of inspiration that address the sociocultural discourse of this time. Kotzebue inserts himself into the abolition movement to add a German perspective to the ongoing discourse. To accurately contribute to this discourse, Kotzebue consults various German as well as international sources regarding the subject matter that ultimately become part of his play. Kotzebue’s interest was piqued during his stay in Estonia. Hence, he aspired to contribute to the larger transnational debate on unequal power relations—especially those including German actors—from a German perspective, which is why he mainly centered his play on German sources based on true events to ensure historical accuracy. For example, Johann Ernst Kolb’s anthology served as one of Kotzebue’s sources and shows a critical engagement with slavery and the slave trade as early as 1789.<sup>59</sup> *The Negro Slaves* is based on a short story called *Zimeo*, which appeared in the anthology *Erzählungen von den Sitten und Schicksalen der Negersklaven: Eine rührende Lektür für Menschen guter Art*.<sup>60</sup> It can therefore be considered a rewrite of a predecessor text.<sup>61</sup> This Swiss anthology contained factual information on slavery and the slave trade in the Caribbean from

newspaper articles and periodical contributions from European writers.<sup>62</sup> Kolb rewrote this information to create an almost continuous narrative in which abuses of “bad” European slaveholders alternate with examples of the generosity of “good” slaveholders and the plight of slaves. It is not certain if Kolb was a passionate supporter of the abolition of slavery, because he presented voices in favor of both the enslaved Africans and the white slavers.<sup>63</sup> Nonetheless, Kolb encouraged Europeans to help alleviate the suffering of slaves.<sup>64</sup>

With reference to Rushdy’s understanding of social forces that determine relations between texts and discourses, Kotzebue resorts to scholarship by French and German writers in weaving together *The Negro Slaves*.<sup>65</sup> It is remarkable that three of the referenced scholars, who all discuss the subject matter from a factual and historical angle, are German. In line with my key argument, German scholars exemplify abolitionist voices that have not been echoed. The variety of texts produced in a German context is indicative of the political dynamic of cultural production. It further illuminates the importance of the transnational social condition that was discussed on various levels, including in stage plays such as *The Negro Slaves*.<sup>66</sup> It is noteworthy that some of these works discuss and advocate abolitionism in an eighteenth-century fashion, which does not necessarily dispute or reject an understanding of African barbarism or inferiority. These viewpoints were also often present among abolitionists and not considered contradictory to the agenda of terminating slavery. The works demonstrate that German discourses on this subject matter were needed to reflect and propose “solutions for the problems that shape a particular historical moment”<sup>67</sup> transnationally. Furthermore, these sources prove the existence of German discourses on slavery and abolition. They negate an understanding of the historical “absence of an institutionalised abolitionist movement from the German-speaking realm,” as Lentz wrote in her critique of a lack of German abolitionist activism scholarship.<sup>68</sup>

If we consider abolitionism to be a transnational phenomenon, then, it is not surprising that the French abolitionist and revolutionary Abbé Henri Grégoire (1750–1831), known for his relentless activism in support of human rights<sup>69</sup> and his correspondence with the German writer Therese Huber (1764–1829),<sup>70</sup> dedicates his work *On the Cultural Achievements of Negroes* to a number of “men who have had the courage to plead the cause of the unhappy [B]lack and mulattoes, whether in their writings or by their speeches in national assemblies and in societies devoted to the abolition of the slave trade, in order to relieve the sufferings of the slaves and to free them.”<sup>71</sup> Among these men are those on whose works Kotzebue based the plot of his stage play production. In turn, Kotzebue is mentioned along with Raynal, Sprengel, and Isert; Wilberforce is named in the actual play.

This inclusion by Grégoire confirms transnational communication among writers who may not have known each other personally but still were familiar with each other’s works that contributed to the same cause—abolition. At the same time, it manifests intertextuality as an essential method for contributing to this larger discourse in order to abide by strategies and techniques unique to abolitionist cultural

production at the time. For this reason, many plays had similar plots or were translated from different language contexts, reworked, and used for abolitionist purposes. Cultural critic Sander L. Gilman suggests that the French-language context heavily influenced German literature, because “the second half of the eighteenth century saw a radical change in the approach of European writers to the figure of the Black and to the question of slavery ... It is the influence of ... works produced in France during the second half of the eighteenth century which reshaped the manner of viewing the Black in contemporary German literature.”<sup>72</sup> This illustrates the true transnational and intertextual nature of this discursive moment that allowed for a rich participation from different parts of the Euro-American public sphere through cultural production. Therefore, this transatlantic social movement easily cut across classes, races, nationalities, and genders, as I will show in the following section.<sup>73</sup>

### **Gender and Sexuality in *The Negro Slaves* and Thomas Thistlewood’s Journals**

Addressing the realities of slavery, Kotzebue comments specifically on the gender-related aspects of slavery, and here we see again how his approach is tied to the larger abolitionist discourse. Similarly, Hortense Spillers emphasizes a significant difference in the treatment of female and male bodies during slavery.<sup>74</sup> She stresses that sexual abuse and violence against Black bodies was mainly heterosexual and relegated the female to the loss of her own body.<sup>75</sup> It entailed women’s further dehumanization through sexual exploitation, which was often invisible because it was kept a secret by enslaved women as well as by the slavemasters who took advantage of these women as they pleased. Sexual violence was inflicted on the female body while more visible physical violence was imposed at the same time: “[T]he African female subject, under these historic conditions, is not only the target of rape ... but also the topic of specifically *externalized* acts of torture and prostration that we imagine as the peculiar province of *male* brutality and torture inflicted by other males.”<sup>76</sup>

Kotzebue establishes this gender difference in the treatment of male and female slaves at the very beginning of the play. The female characters Ada and Lilli live separately from the male slaves. This spatial separation is similarly confirmed in Thistlewood’s journals when he writes that “the occupations of the women are only two, the house, with its several departments and supposed indulgences, or the fields with their exaggerated labors. The first situation is the most honourable, the last the most independent.”<sup>77</sup> The house of the slavemaster illustrated the imminent and constant threat of sexual exploitation that enslaved women faced. As emphasized in Trevor Burnard’s discussion of Thistlewood, “[c]ontemporaries were well aware that slave women’s experiences were very different from those of slave men.”<sup>78</sup> Kotzebue exemplifies this in his portrayal of the nature of sexual advances toward enslaved women.

While living at the house of the master, Ada is repeatedly propositioned by John and described as follows: “[O]ur master ... wants to extort Ada’s predilection, how

one squeezes the juice from a sugar cane.”<sup>79</sup> This statement is indicative of the commodification of natural resources, which are then compared to the enslaved female body that is violently taken by the white slaveholder. Both sugarcane and the female slaves are sweet and for his satisfaction. John’s previous relations to female slaves are symptomatic of the inescapable violence inflicted on female slaves and align with Köhler’s notion of *Schockästhetik*.<sup>80</sup> Accordingly, Kotzebue has John exclaim: “I had her whole body torn gently with pins. Then cotton dipped with oil, was wrapped around her fingers, and lit. Three days after, she loved me tenderly.”<sup>81</sup> Violence is inflicted as a form of pressure to force the enslaved female to favorably engage in sexual acts. While John often implies the sexual nature of his advances toward Ada, there is hardly any explicit mention of rape within the play. This section of *The Negro Slaves* illustrates Kotzebue’s principles concerning the accurate portrayal of slavery and in particular the condition of the Black female slave, which aligns with Spillers’s discussion of the African female subject. This very condition also lends itself to examination through its description of the realities of eighteenth-century plantation slavery in Jamaica, which was considered common knowledge among contemporaries.<sup>82</sup>

The plight of the female slave is accurately illustrated, though likely not for this very purpose, in Thistlewood’s journals. These journals chronicle the continuous sexual molestation and exploitation of Black enslaved women from the perspective of a white British slaveowner in eighteenth-century Jamaica. Patterson describes Thistlewood as inconceivable in his treatment of female (and male) slaves, while alluding to this being the “real” face of slavery that existed everywhere.<sup>83</sup> These journal entries of true events show parallels to Kotzebue’s play and highlight dimensions that are grounded in historical experience. Analyzing Thistlewood’s journal entries, Burnard mentions an enslaved female called Sally who in 1768 had been raped up to thirty-seven times by Thistlewood, who also controlled her sexual partners from the young age of fifteen or sixteen.<sup>84</sup> Accounts of violent sexual encounters resulting in “her private parts ... [being] tore in a terrible manner ... having bled a great deal” and venereal disease are emblematic of the violent nature of being burdened with sexual abuse and slavery.<sup>85</sup> These accounts also hark back to Spillers’s discussion of external and internal violence.<sup>86</sup> In both Kotzebue’s and Thistlewood’s work, the desire of the white slavemaster is illustrated as superior to all other desires, which confirms the existence of a significant gender hierarchy. Thistlewood immortalizes the plight of the female slave within the larger context of slavery through his trophylike diary entries.

This gender dynamic remained true for the nineteenth century, as well. Harriet Jacobs similarly illustrates the plight of the female slave in her slave narrative *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861). In this sense, Jacobs describes how “the slave girl is reared in an atmosphere of ... fear. The lash and the foul talk of her master and his sons are her teachers. When she is fourteen or fifteen, her owner, or his sons, or the overseer, or perhaps all of them, begin to bribe her with presents. If these fail to accomplish their purpose, she is whipped or starved into submission to their will.”<sup>87</sup>

While Jacobs and Thistlewood represent inherently different and opposing positions, both accounts confirm the condition of the female slave in the eighteenth and nineteenth century and were used to advocate for abolition.

Jacobs's narrative and Thistlewood's journal entries show parallels that are captured in Kotzebue's play and demonstrate dimensions based on historical experience. Jacobs was aware that this gender hierarchy also applied to white families, which is why she specifically appealed to the morality of white women in the North of the US. This is expressed in the preface of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, in which she directly addresses the reader to appeal to those in the North and to highlight the truthfulness of her accounts.<sup>88</sup> Jacobs's appeal and overall account strategically illustrate sexual exploitation and motherhood while being enslaved to draw attention to the condition of the African female subject by addressing women in the North. In this sense, Jacobs tried to find a solution for this particular historical moment, which she only knew how to do through writing. Thus, the slave narrative emerged from this particular historical moment of slavery and provides a truthful account in the hope of expediting the abolition of slavery by emphasizing the urgency of the matter, which Kotzebue similarly highlights with John's forceful behavior toward Ada.

Jacobs's experiences of being repeatedly sexually abused and Thistlewood's accounts *both* illustrate the forced submission of the enslaved female body. In Kotzebue's play, enslaved men and women are also shown to be commodified and forced into submission due to a capitalist agenda and a presumed innate African inferiority that requires supervision by the white slaveholder. This paternalism is especially reflected in the ending of *The Negro Slaves*. Kotzebue openly advocates for the abolition of slavery while indirectly endorsing it,<sup>89</sup> as his visual rhetoric of slave suffering is contrasted by an understanding of the rightful submission of Black bodies to white men. At the end of the play Kotzebue portrays Zameo's submissive nature in happily and voluntarily eternally serving William, who freed him: "He who bindeth by good deeds will not need chains. You freed me, and I am your slave forever; with bound arms I could have run away, but you tied my heart—I can never turn away from you."<sup>90</sup> It is not surprising that slavery on the plantation remains at the violent hand of William's brother John and the overseer Paul, while Lilli, Ada, Ayos, and Zameo continue to be slaves to William. Kotzebue does not indicate the freedom of these characters. On the contrary, they are happily absorbed into the household of their new white and male master, William, who is also Wilberforce's namesake. The twofold ending is indicative of the ambivalent nature of abolitionism.

Kotzebue demonstrates a contemporary understanding of abolitionism. In this sense, violence against slaves was not condoned for several reasons, including religious beliefs and friendly relationships with slaves. Kotzebue responds to this common and contemporary portrayal and thus takes an intertextual stance, shown by his "happy" ending of the play. Carey identifies this notion to have been especially prevalent in the 1760s and 1770s among authors who supported the amelioration of slavery and claimed that "happy slaves were more productive than unhappy slaves,

and so a humane plantation would therefore be an efficient plantation.”<sup>91</sup> This understanding exposes a white paternalist gaze grounded and possibly inherent in Kotzebue’s understanding of abolitionist sympathy toward slaves that directly responds to and aligns with notions of eighteenth-century abolition. For this reason, the transnational and intertextual historical discourses within Kotzebue’s play constitute *The Negro Slaves* as an exemplary abolitionist drama of the eighteenth-century.

### Concluding Thoughts

Kotzebue articulates his antislavery argument by employing abolitionist literary strategies and drawing on nonfiction abolitionist texts, which enable him to insert himself into an already existing transnational discourse. Biographically, Kotzebue’s aversion to serfdom and slavery emerged while in Estonia, which prompted him to articulate his feelings discursively in *The Negro Slaves* in the hopes of finding a resolution for the problem that people in both Estonia and the New World were facing. Thus, utilizing this existing debate and its array of cultural production intertextually serves as a stepping-stone to also articulating his passionate convictions, although in a veiled manner, about German undertakings in Estonia. To truly participate in this transnational discourse, Kotzebue practices intertextuality by adopting abolitionist literary conventions that are more likely to resonate with his audience. His engagement with serfdom is illustrated through *The Negro Slaves* and speaks to the social and material realities of this time. The political dynamic in *The Negro Slaves* is reinforced by Kotzebue’s emphasis on historical accuracy, which further highlights the urgency of the moment. For the educational purposes of shaping the human through art, as addressed, for example, by Schiller, Kotzebue chose to create a play that reflected abolitionists’ strategies, conventions, and understandings. This shows Kotzebue’s full immersion in the topic of abolition through his intertextual approach, which highlights his hopes to elicit political action that would ultimately outlaw or alleviate inhumane practices of slavery and serfdom through this German-language abolitionist contribution.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> “It was one of the first transnationally conducted moral–political debates that reached the masses with the help of modern print media, mobilized and suddenly interested in a topic that had a global dimension, but its connections to the lifeworld of Europeans were not easily recognizable at first glance.” Barbara Riesche, *Schöne Mohrinnen, edle Sklaven, schwarze Rächer: Schwarzendarstellung und Sklavereithematik im deutschen Unterhaltungstheater (1770–1814)* (Hannover: Werhahn Verlag, 2010), 10. All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are mine.

<sup>2</sup> David Wright, James Walvin, and Michael Craton, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation: Black Slaves and the British Empire: A Thematic Documentary* (London: Longman, 1976), 195.

<sup>3</sup> Heike Paul, "The German Reception of African American Writers in the Long Nineteenth Century," in *Germany and the Black Diaspora: Points of Contact, 1250–1914*, ed. Mischa Honeck, Martin Klimke and Anne Kuhlmann (New York: Berghahn, 2016), 115.

<sup>4</sup> David Armitage's "Three Concepts of Atlantic History" defines circumatlantic history to center the genocidal and diasporic nature of African as well as South and North American histories pertaining to the emergence of the culture of modernity. David Armitage, "Three Concepts of Atlantic History," in *The British Atlantic World, 1500–1800*, ed. David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 16–18. Paul, "German Reception," 115.

<sup>5</sup> Eve Rosenhaft and Felix Brahm, eds., *Slavery Hinterland: Transatlantic Slavery and Continental Europe, 1680–1850* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2016), 1–3.

<sup>6</sup> Sarah Lentz, "Abolitionists in the German Hinterland? Therese Huber and the Spread of Anti-slavery Sentiment in the German Territories in the Early Nineteenth Century," in *Slavery Hinterland: Transatlantic Slavery and Continental Europe, 1680–1850*, ed. Eve Rosenhaft and Felix Brahm (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2016), 187–88.

<sup>7</sup> Sigrid G. Köhler, "Ein 'historisches Gemälde' gegen Sklaverei. Kotzebues dramenästhetische Bildpolitik und die Abolition im ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert," in *The Black Diaspora and Germany / Deutschland und die Schwarze Diaspora*, eds. BDG Network (Münster: edition assemblage, 2018), 67.

<sup>8</sup> The two contributions Köhler discusses are: Barbara Riesche, *Schöne Mohrinnen* (2010) and Uta Sadjji, *Der Mohr auf der deutschen Bühne des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Salzburg: U. Müller-Speiser, 1992). Sigrid G. Köhler, "Menschenrecht fühlen, Gräuel der Versklavung zeigen—Zur transnationalen Abolitionsdebatte im deutschsprachigen populären Theater um 1800," in *Recht fühlen*, ed. Florian Schmidt, Sabine Müller-Mall and Sandra Schnädelbach (Paderbon: Fink Verlag, 2017), 63.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Stephen Ahern, *Affect and Abolition in the Anglo-Atlantic, 1770–1830* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013); John R. Oldfield, *Transatlantic Abolitionism in the Age of Revolution: An International History of Anti-Slavery, c. 1787–1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Jenna M. Gibbs, *Performing the Temple of Liberty: Slavery, Theater, and Popular Culture in London and Philadelphia, 1760–1850* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014); Lawrence C. Jennings, *French Anti-Slavery: The Movement for the Abolition of Slavery in France, 1802–1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and Richard S. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> While explored from various perspectives, scholarship addressing abolitionist and antislavery sentiments in German-language plays between 1775 and 1815 hardly exists. Notable exceptions are works by Köhler and Wendy Sutherland, *Staging Blackness and Performing Whiteness in Eighteenth-Century German Drama* (London: Routledge, 2016) and older contributions by Riesche and Sadji. Jeannette Eileen Jones, “‘On the Brain of the Negro’: Race, Abolitionism, and Friedrich Tiedemann’s Scientific Discourse on the African Diaspora,” in *Germany and the Black Diaspora: Points of Contact, 1250–1914*, ed. Mischa Honeck, Martin Klimke and Anne Kuhlmann (New York: Berghahn, 2016), 134–52; Sigrid G. Köhler, “Beautiful Black Soul? The Racial Matrix of White Aesthetics (Reading Kotzebue against Kleist),” *Image & Narrative* 14, no. 3 (2013): 34–45, <http://www.imageandnarrative.be/index.php/imagenarrative/article/view/346>; Köhler, “Menschenrecht fühlen, Gräuel der Versklavung zeigen”; Köhler, “Ein ‘historisches Gemälde’”; Lentz, “Abolitionists in the German Hinterland?”; Paul E. Logan, “Images of the Black: J. E. Kolb’s *Erzählungen von den Sitten und Schicksalen der Negersklaven*,” *Monatshefte* 72, no. 4 (1980): 389–400; Paul, “German Reception”; Riesche, *Schöne Mohrinnen*; Rosenhaft and Brahm, eds., *Slavery Hinterland*; Susanne Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770–1870* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); and Chunjie Zhang, *Transculturality and German Discourse in the Age of European Colonialism* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2017).

<sup>11</sup> This translation of the title is my own, as well as all translations of quotes from the text. An English translation was published in 1796 shortly after the original was published in German, but my translations capture the phrasing of the original text better. The translation is anonymous and was titled *The Negro Slaves, A Dramatic-Historical Piece, In Three Acts. Translated from the German of the President De Kotzebue* (London: T. Cadell, Jr., and W. Davies, 1796). To my knowledge, no new English translations of the play exist.

<sup>12</sup> Riesche categorizes plantation plays as taking place on plantations in the West Indies. Riesche, *Schöne Mohrinnen*, 122–23.

<sup>13</sup> There is a visible rise in German-speaking theater plays between 1775 and 1815 that address slavery and the transatlantic slave trade as well as abolition. Riesche categorizes these plays as *Sklavenstücke* (slave plays), which she subcategorizes into: *Heimkehrerstücke* (returnee plays), *Mohrinnenstücke* (female moor plays), *Plantagenstücke* (plantation plays), *Revolutionsstücke* (revolution plays) and *Ein afrikanisches Sklavenstück* (an African slave play). Riesche, *Schöne Mohrinnen*, 118–25.

<sup>14</sup> Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 171.

<sup>15</sup> Karl-Heinz Klingenberg, *Iffland und Kotzebue als Dramatiker* (Weimar: Arion Verlag, 1962), 80.

<sup>16</sup> For performance history and translations, see Zhang, *Transculturality and German Discourse*, 87.

<sup>17</sup> Zhang, *Transculturality and German Discourse*, 87.

<sup>18</sup> Zhang, *Transculturality and German Discourse*, 87.

<sup>19</sup> Zhang, *Transculturality and German Discourse*, 88.

<sup>20</sup> Klingenberg, *Iffland und Kotzebue*, 80.

<sup>21</sup> Klingenberg, *Iffland und Kotzebue*, 80.

<sup>22</sup> Zhang, *Transculturality and German Discourse*, 90.

<sup>23</sup> Zhang, *Transculturality and German Discourse*, 90.

<sup>24</sup> Zhang, *Transculturality and German Discourse*, 90.

<sup>25</sup> Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 1.

<sup>26</sup> Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 1.

<sup>27</sup> As widely known, the term intertextuality is associated with Julia Kristeva who proposes texts to be dynamic in their relations and references to other texts. Thus, literary words are considered intersections of texts like discourses or dialogues amid writings. For this reason, Kristeva argues “each word (text) is an intersection of word (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read.” This understanding has been elaborated on by Ashraf H. A. Rushdy, who identifies a renaissance of debates on slavery in African American fiction in the 1960s illustrating the “contemporary narrativity of slavery” and which he titled neoslave narratives. Having emerged from ongoing political and academic debates in the 1960s, these initial original debates on slavery are mirrored by Rushdy by way of an intertextuality that focalizes the political function of these debates. In my discussion, I primarily draw on Rushdy regarding discursive interactions between texts of political significance. In this sense, Kotzebue becomes part of an overall political and discursive dialogue through fictional and nonfictional textual elements of his play which highlight an intertextual approach. Julia Kristeva, “Word, Dialogue and Novel,” in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 66. Ashraf H. A. Rushdy, *Neo-slave Narratives: Studies in the Social Logic of a Literary Form* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3.

<sup>28</sup> Rushdy, *Neo-slave Narratives*, 14.

<sup>29</sup> Rushdy, *Neo-slave Narratives*, 14.

<sup>30</sup> Wright, Walvin, and Craton, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 195.

<sup>31</sup> Wright, Walvin, and Craton, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 195.

<sup>32</sup> Wright, Walvin, and Craton, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 231.

<sup>33</sup> “Eighteenth-century British abolitionism was acted out on many stages. From the mid-1760s, when the new and, at the time, rather eccentric antislavery ideals of American Quakers began to reach the British public, to 1807, when parliament voted to outlaw the trade in human beings in British ships, the reading public were bombarded with thousands of poems, pamphlets, novels, tracts, sermons, articles, treatises, and essays offering reasons why, or why not, the slave trade should be abolished. Some of these were performed: essays read out at public meetings, speeches delivered to parliament, poems and novels shared among family members, sermons intoned before pious congregations, tracts read aloud to illiterate village swains.” Brycchan Carey, “To Force a Tear: British Abolitionism and the Eighteenth-Century London Stage,” in *Affect and Abolition in the Anglo-Atlantic, 1770–1830*, ed. Stephen Ahern (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), 109.

<sup>34</sup> Wright, Walvin, and Craton, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 231.

<sup>35</sup> Stephen Ahern, “Introduction: The Bonds of Sentiment,” in *Affect and Abolition in the Anglo-Atlantic, 1770–1830*, ed. Stephen Ahern (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), 1.

<sup>36</sup> Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., eds., *The Slave’s Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), xiv–xv.

<sup>37</sup> A quoted review of *Henry Bibb’s Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (1849), in *The Slave’s Narrative*, ed. Davis and Gates, Jr., xvii.

<sup>38</sup> Ahern, “Introduction: The Bonds of Sentiment,” 6.

<sup>39</sup> “In England lebt ein Mann, der euch liebt; der Tag und Nacht auf eure Befreyung sinnt, und von der schönen Glut der Menschenliebe erwärmt, mit feuriger Beredsamkeit eure Rechte vertritt.” August von Kotzebue, *Die Negersklaven: ein historisch-dramatisches Gemählde in drey Akten* (Leipzig: bey Paul Gotthelf Kummer, 1821), 65.

<sup>40</sup> “Der Verfasser ersucht seine Leser, Zuschauer und Recensenten, dieses Stück nicht bloß als Schauspiel zu betrachten. Es ist bestimmt, alle die fürchterlichen Grausamkeiten, welche man sich gegen unsre schwarzen Brüder erlaubt, in einer einzigen Gruppe darzustellen.” von Kotzebue, *Die Negersklaven*, 3.

<sup>41</sup> Wilberforce, William. “From Speech in the House of Commons,” in *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself: Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism*, ed. Werner Sollors (New York: Norton & Company, 2001), 283.

<sup>42</sup> Wilberforce, “From Speech,” 283.

<sup>43</sup> Wilberforce, “From Speech,” 283.

<sup>44</sup> Köhler alludes to a documentary-style historical truthfulness brought to life by vivid depictions and acting on stage. Köhler, “Menschenrecht fühlen, Gräuel der Versklavung zeigen,” 79.

- <sup>45</sup> “leider keine einzige Thatsache in diesem Stücke vorkommt, die nicht buchstäblich wahr wäre.” von Kotzebue, *Die Negersklaven*, 4.
- <sup>46</sup> Ahern, “Introduction: The Bonds of Sentiment,” 6.
- <sup>47</sup> Kotzebue, *Die Negersklaven*, 6–7.
- <sup>48</sup> Painting or portrait.
- <sup>49</sup> Romira Worvill, “From Prose *peinture* to Dramatic *tableau*: Diderot, Fénelon and the Emergence of the Pictorial Aesthetic in France,” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 39 (2010): 152.
- <sup>50</sup> Worvill, “From Prose,” 152.
- <sup>51</sup> Köhler, “Ein ‘historisches,’” 73.
- <sup>52</sup> Zhang, *Transculturality and German Discourse*, 91.
- <sup>53</sup> Kotzebue, *Die Negersklaven*, 3.
- <sup>54</sup> Ahern, “Introduction: The Bonds of Sentiment,” 5.
- <sup>55</sup> “unsre schwarzen Brüder,” von Kotzebue, *Die Negersklaven*, 3.
- <sup>56</sup> Ahern, “Introduction: The Bonds of Sentiment,” 2.
- <sup>57</sup> Ahern, “Introduction: The Bonds of Sentiment,” 5.
- <sup>58</sup> “Der Verfasser schämt sich nicht zu gestehen, daß er, während er dieses Schauspiel schrieb, tausend Thränen vergossen hat. Wenn des Zuschauers Thränen sich mit den seinigen mischen, so ist seine Mühe belohnt,” von Kotzebue, *Die Negersklaven*, 4.
- <sup>59</sup> Logan notes “no biographical information about Kolb has been discovered,” (Logan, “Images of the Black,” 389).
- <sup>60</sup> *Narratives of the Customs and Fates of the Negro Slaves. A Touching Reading for Kind-Hearted Men*. Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies*, 149.
- <sup>61</sup> According to Sander L. Gilman, *Ziméo* was written by the French poet Jean François de Saint-Lambert (1716–1803) in 1769. Sander L. Gilman, *On Blackness without Blacks: Essays on the Image of the Black in Germany* (Boston: G. K. Hall and Co., 1982), 36. Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies*, 149. Rushdy, *Neo-slave Narratives*, 14.
- <sup>62</sup> Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies*, 149.
- <sup>63</sup> Logan, “Images of the Black,” 390.
- <sup>64</sup> “Man wird bey der Uebersicht der verschiedenen Kapitel dieses Werkchens bemerken, daß ich unpartheyisch gesammelt habe. Stimmen für die Neger und für die Weissen. Das Resultat bleibt dem Menschenforscher überlassen, und die Summe guter Empfindungen zur Milderung des Elendes auch unter den Sklaven, wird diese Schrift bey allen wohldenkenden Europäern gewiß vermehren. Wer helfen kann, der helfe!” (Upon reviewing the titles of the various chapters, it will be apparent that I have collected

unbiasedly, voices in favor of the Negroes and voices in favor of the whites. The result is left to the researcher of humans, and the overall positive sentiments in favor of the alleviation of misery among the slaves, will surely increase with this writing among most prosperous Europeans. Who can help, shall help!) Johann Ernst Kolb, *Erzählungen von den Sitten und Schicksalen der Negersklaven: Eine rührende Lektür für Menschen guter Art* (Bern: Haller, 1789), 288.

<sup>65</sup> *L'Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* (Amsterdam: Anonymous, 1770) by the French writer Guillaume Thomas François Raynal; *Vom Ursprung des Negerhandels: Ein Antrittsprogramm* (Halle: Johann Christian Hendel, 1779) by the German geographer and historian Matthias Christian Sprengel; *Reise nach Guinea und den Caribäischen Inseln in Columbien, in Briefen an seine Freunde beschrieben* (Copenhagen: J. F. Morthorst, 1788) by the German botanist Paul Erdmann Isert; *Versuch einer Geschichte des Negersclavenhandels* (Halle: Johann Jacob Gebauer, 1791) by the German historian Johann Jacob Sell.

<sup>66</sup> Rushdy, *Neo-slave Narratives*, 14.

<sup>67</sup> Rushdy, *Neo-slave Narratives*, 16.

<sup>68</sup> Lentz, "Abolitionists in the German Hinterland?," 188.

<sup>69</sup> Jean-François Brière and Thomas Cassirer, eds., *On the Cultural Achievements of Negroes* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), xv.

<sup>70</sup> Lentz, "Abolitionists in the German Hinterland?," 187–211.

<sup>71</sup> Henri Grégoire, *On the Cultural Achievements of Negroes*, trans. Jean-François Brière and Thomas Cassirer (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 1.

<sup>72</sup> Gilman, *On Blackness without Blacks*, 36.

<sup>73</sup> Wright, Walvin, and Craton, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 195.

<sup>74</sup> Hortense J. Spillers, *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 207.

<sup>75</sup> While both female and male slaves were sexually abused by male slave owners, there is less scholarship that corroborates the latter.

<sup>76</sup> Spillers, *Black, White, and in Color*, 207.

<sup>77</sup> Burnard quotes Thistlewood's planter neighbor William Beckford in 1788. Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 171.

<sup>78</sup> Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 171.

<sup>79</sup> "daß unser Herr ... Ada's Gegenliebe zu erpressen strebt, wie man den Saft aus einem Zuckerrohr gewaltsam preßt?" von Kotzebue, *Die Negersklaven*, 15.

<sup>80</sup> Köhler uses this term to address the horrific and inhumane passages directly illustrating the treatment of African slaves through narration and on stage within slave plays. This move results in an aesthetics, naturally shocking to the audience, that reinforces the urgency of abolition. Köhler, “Menschenrecht fühlen, Gräuel der Versklavung zeigen,” 77–78.

<sup>81</sup> “Ich ließ ihr den ganzen Leib mit Stecknadeln sanft zerprickeln. Dann wurde ihr in Oel getauchte Baumwolle um die Finger gewickelt, und angezündet. Drey Tage nachher liebte sie mich auf das zärtlichste.” von Kotzebue, *Die Negersklaven*, 20.

<sup>82</sup> Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 171.

<sup>83</sup> “In the long annals of slavery no slave-owner wrote more prolifically and candidly about the brutally gendered nature of slavery and its consequences for female, and male, slaves than the mid-eighteenth century Jamaican Thomas Thistlewood, who kept a diary of his sexual and other corporeal using up of his slaves over a period of 37 years during which he engaged in 3,852 sexual acts with 138 slave women. Although he had an average of 14 different partners per year, some of whom he raped ...” Orlando Patterson, “Trafficking, Gender and Slavery: Past and Present” in *The Legal Understanding of Slavery: From the Historical to the Contemporary*, ed. Jean Allain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 326–27.

<sup>84</sup> Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 176.

<sup>85</sup> Thistlewood, qtd. in Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 176.

<sup>86</sup> Spillers, *Black, White, and in Color*, 207.

<sup>87</sup> Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 29.

<sup>88</sup> “READER, be assured this narrative is no fiction. I am aware that some of my adventures may seem incredible; but they are, nevertheless, strictly true. I have not exaggerated the wrongs inflicted by Slavery; on the contrary, my descriptions fall far short of the facts ... . But I do earnestly desire to arouse the women of the North to a realizing sense of the condition of two millions of women at the South, still in bondage, suffering what I suffered, and most of them far worse. I want to add my testimony to that of abler pens to convince the people of the Free States\* what Slavery really is.” Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life*, 3.

<sup>89</sup> Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies*, 153.

<sup>90</sup> “Wer durch Wohlthaten fesselt, der bedarf keiner Ketten. Du hast mich frey gelassen, und ich bin dein Sklave auf ewig; mit gebundenen Armen hätte ich entlaufen können, aber du fesseltest mein Herz—ich weiche nimmer von dir!” von Kotzebue, *Die Negersklaven*, 89.

<sup>91</sup> Carey, “To Force a Tear,” 124.

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