

# Amt 45 i

## Cameron Rowland

*The slaveholder camouflaged his dependence, his parasitism, by various ideological strategies. Paradoxically, he defined the slave as dependent.*

—Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*

Racial slavery existed in every part of the Atlantic System. Racial slavery existed in colonial slave factories, slave ships, slave pens, plantations, masters' houses, encomiendas, haciendas, and mines. Racial slavery also existed in the European ports of slave ships, villages that produced goods expressly for the purchasing of slaves, mercantile hubs that bought and sold the commodities produced by slaves, and banking centers that financed every stage of enslavement. All of these locations were linked through exchange in what Joseph Inikori describes as a "quasi common market."<sup>1</sup> This common market was formed by European merchants, bankers, and rulers for the purpose of European enrichment, and was governed by European constructions of race. Europeans built vast political, mercantile, and financial networks to administer colonial extraction on the basis of race. These networks exceeded the logics of the nation-state and consolidated colonial rule. Racial slavery was not an adjunct to these networks, Inikori writes, but was "the central element in the development and operation of the Atlantic System."<sup>2</sup> Slavery was constructed by every European who capitalized on black and indigenous life.

Germany exemplifies the ways in which slavery and colonization were coordinated across Europe. In the absence of a nation-state or a unified colonial state, German merchants, patrician families, corporations, and prince-electors (politicians) exacted the violence of slavery and colonial domination for their own wealth accumulation.<sup>3</sup> They operated as contractors under other flags, as private traders, plantation owners, and financiers throughout Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, England, and France. The presence of German agents of slavery throughout the Atlantic System demonstrates the inextricably intertwined histories of European colonization.

In describing the ways that Portugal constituted "the historical force that laid the basis for the Atlantic slave trade,"<sup>4</sup> Cedric Robinson writes:

Fifteenth-century "Portugal," the singularly ambitious historical agent one encounters in countless scholarly studies, is a metaphor. It is, as we have already seen, largely a convenience, an appropriately deceptive categorical referent to what in actuality was a mixture of political and economic forces, both national and supranational in origins.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Joseph E. Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England: A Study in International Trade and Economic Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 156.

2 Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England*, 215.

3 From the Early Middle Ages until the 19th century the region that is now Germany was part of the Holy Roman Empire, which was organized as a series of semiautonomous states.

4 Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 103.

5 Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 101.

European expansionism and colonial domination was engineered by networked European forces, belying the narrow nationalism of dominant histories of slavery. In the case of Portugal Walter Rodney writes, “Much of the profit slipped out of Portuguese hands and went instead to Britain and Germany.”<sup>6</sup>

The Welser and Fugger families of Augsburg were German patricians who were integral to the slave economies attributed to the Portuguese and the Spanish.<sup>7</sup> Both families built their wealth in the 15th century through mining and trade in textiles, spices, and precious metals.<sup>8</sup> In the early 16th century, the Welsers established a sugar trading house in the Portuguese colony of Madeira, “the first place where the sugar industry developed in the Atlantic.”<sup>9</sup> This precipitated the Welsers’ purchase of sugarcane plantations and sugar mills in the Spanish colonies of La Palma, Tenerife, and eventually Hispaniola.<sup>10</sup> The Fuggers provided essential trade goods to the Portuguese that were used to purchase slaves, including pans, cauldrons, and manillas. Manillas were a commodity currency that had no purchasing power within Europe but were made in Europe to buy slaves in West Africa. The first European manillas were produced in Germany, Austria, and Hungary.<sup>11</sup> In 1548, the Fuggers sold the Portuguese 1,400,000 manillas.<sup>12</sup> During this time a slave cost 50 manillas.<sup>13</sup>

The Welsers and the Fuggers also financed the campaign of King Charles I of Spain to become King Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire in 1519. Charles’s grandfathers were Ferdinand, King of Spain, and Maximilian I, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Charles came to rule both Spain and Germany simultaneously.

When in the early sixteenth century, it became probable that the Habsburgs would also inherit Spain, South German merchants, who maintained close relations with the Habsburg monarchy, saw their chance to profit from the expansion into the Americas.... In 1519, the Welser and Fugger houses granted considerable large loans for the election of King Charles V as emperor. In return, the traders were granted privileges—such as licenses for trading enslaved Africans and partaking in the conquest of certain American regions—hardly any other actor enjoyed.<sup>14</sup>

During the reign of Charles V, Spain colonized the Aztec and Inca peoples, annexing their lands into the Spanish Empire. Under Charles V, Spain is credited as the first colonial power to ship slaves directly from Africa to the Caribbean and American colonies. In 1528, in exchange for the loans extended to the crown, Charles granted the Welsers the authority to settle and exploit all of what is now Venezuela and part of Colombia, as well as an *asiento*—a Spanish monopoly contract—to trade 4,000 slaves through Hispaniola.<sup>15</sup> The Welsers had already established a trading house in Santo Domingo in 1523, and in 1532 they bought

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6 Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, rev. pbk. ed. (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1981), 210.

7 “The members of the old ruling Augsburg families, who saw themselves as being equal to [titled] nobility, were called *patricians*.” Fugger and Welser Erlebnismuseum, Augsburg, 2022.

8 Giovanna Montenegro, *German Conquistadors in Venezuela: The Welsers’ Colony, Racialized Capitalism, and Cultural Memory*, 1st ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2022), 12, 33; Klaus Weber, “Linen, Silver, Slaves, and Coffee: A Spatial Approach to Central Europe’s Entanglements with the Atlantic Economy,” *Culture & History Digital Journal* 4, no. 2 (December 2015): 4.

9 Montenegro, *German Conquistadors in Venezuela*, 12, 33–35.

10 Klaus Weber, “Deutschland, der atlantische Sklavenhandel und die Plantagenwirtschaft der Neuen Welt,” *Journal of Modern European History* 7, no. 1 (March 2009): 41.

11 Stanley B. Alpern, “What Africans Got for Their Slaves: A Master List of European Trade Goods,” *History in Africa* 22 (January 1995): 13.

12 Alpern, “What Africans Got for Their Slaves,” 13.

13 John Vogt, “Notes on the Portuguese Cloth Trade in West Africa, 1480–1540,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 8, no. 4 (1975): 648.

14 Julia Roth, “Sugar and Slaves: The Augsburg Welser as Conquerors of America and Colonial Foundational Myths,” *Atlantic Studies* 14, no. 4 (October 2017): 438.

15 Montenegro, *German Conquistadors in Venezuela*, 37, 69–71.

one of the largest sugar mills on the island, which was fully reliant on black enslaved labor.<sup>16</sup> The Welsers' colonization of Venezuela, or Klein Venedig (Little Venice) as they named it, is well known for the torture, sexual violence, and murder they inflicted on indigenous people whom the Spanish crown had licensed them to enslave.<sup>17</sup> As they failed to discover gold, the Welsers "turned increasingly to capturing and selling Indians as slaves to make up for the loss in anticipated colonial revenue."<sup>18</sup> The Welsers continued to acquire asientos to trade more slaves in Spanish colonies, rights which they both exercised and resold to other slave traders.<sup>19</sup>

Mining was integral to the Atlantic system of racial slavery. Inikori writes, "On both sides of the Atlantic, the plantation and mining economies of the Americas were by far the most extensive market-oriented sectors of the Atlantic economies at the time."<sup>20</sup> German mining expertise was employed throughout the Americas. The Welsers used enslaved labor for their silver mining in Mexico and their copper mining in Cuba, where the Tetzels family also owned and operated a copper mine.<sup>21</sup> All of these mines were licensed by the Spanish crown. Between 1500 and 1800, approximately 85 percent of the silver mined throughout the world was extracted from the colonies administered by the Spanish and the Portuguese.<sup>22</sup> The large influx of silver into Iberia initiated a so-called "price revolution," dramatically increasing the cost of labor and manufactured goods in Spain and Portugal, with effects rippling out toward France, England, the Netherlands, and Italy.<sup>23</sup> Wages in Central Europe lagged behind those in Western Europe, rendering Germany "a low-wage region, which oriented its production toward high-price Western markets."<sup>24</sup> German merchants took advantage of this position by maintaining the depressed wages of the former peasant class, who they paid on a piece-work system. As a result, the German goods manufactured specifically for the slave trade—including textiles, metalwares, and glasswares—were sought-after throughout Western Europe for their affordability.<sup>25</sup>

Linen became the primary German good produced explicitly for the slave trade. "Bills of lading preserved from the 1660s show that hardly any East India [Company] ship would set sail from Britain for Africa without a substantial quantity of Silesian linen in its holds, labelled 'sletias.'"<sup>26</sup> Sletias were used as a trade good for the purchase of slaves. The price merchants paid for sletias in Germany had a direct impact on the effective purchase price of an enslaved person. "In short, low costs for labour in Silesia lowered the costs for slave labour on the plantations in the 'New World.'"<sup>27</sup> Cheap, coarse German linens were also a preferred textile for the clothes of enslaved people. "Osnaburgs" or "osnabrigs" were made in Osnabrück. According to a 1744 report on the British linen trade, all the "Negroes" in the colonies were "generally clothed with German linens, from 6d to 9d an Ell, called Osnaburghs."<sup>28</sup> Another report indicated that all 70,000 enslaved people in Barbados were "usually clothed with Foreign 'Osnaburghs.'"<sup>29</sup> This practice

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16 Roth, "Sugar and Slaves," 439, 440.

17 Montenegro, *German Conquistadors in Venezuela*, 67, 104–106.

18 Susanne Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770–1870*, Post-Contemporary Interventions series (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 20.

19 Roth, "Sugar and Slaves," 440–441.

20 Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England*, 210.

21 Roth, "Sugar and Slaves," 441.

22 Weber, "Deutschland," 57.

23 Weber, "Deutschland," 57; Weber, "Linen, Silver, Slaves, and Coffee," 11.

24 Weber, "Deutschland," 57–58.

25 Weber, "Deutschland," 58, 66; Weber, "Linen, Silver, Slaves, and Coffee," 6–10.

26 Anka Steffen and Klaus Weber, "Spinning and Weaving for the Slave Trade: Proto-Industry in Eighteenth-Century Silesia," in *Slavery Hinterland: Transatlantic Slavery and Continental Europe, 1680–1850*, ed. Felix Brahm and Eve Rosenhaft, 1st ed. (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2016), 91.

27 Steffen and Weber, "Spinning and Weaving for the Slave Trade," 106.

28 Klaus Weber, "Germany and the Early Modern Atlantic World: Economic Involvement and Historiography," 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), 32.

29 Weber, "Linen, Silver, Slaves, and Coffee," 8.

translated into law in instances when the slave codes prohibited enslaved people from wearing anything other than “negro cloth.” The 1735 South Carolina slave codes dictated that:

Be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, That no owner or proprietor of any negro slave or other slave whatsoever, (except livery men or boys,) shall permit or suffer such negro or other slave to have or wear any sort of apparel whatsoever, finer, other, or of greater value, than negro cloth, duffelds, coarse kearsies, osnabrigs, blue linnen, checked linnen or coarse garlix or calicoes, checked cottons or scotch plaids, not exceeding ten shillings per yard for the said checked cottons, scotch plaids, garlix or calico, under the pain of forfeiting all and every such apparel and garment.<sup>30</sup>

German merchants made their linen a staple of the slave economy by ensuring its competitive pricing. The standardization of German linen as negro cloth and as a currency for purchasing black people as slaves created a growing market for this product. Linen remained the largest German export by value throughout the 17th and 18th centuries.<sup>31</sup> The slave economy created a market for underpaid wage labor in Germany, as it did elsewhere in Europe. Wage labor in Europe was contingent on black enslaved labor in the Atlantic.

The treatment of black life as property, as livestock, as real estate, as reproductive machine, and as endlessly exploitable labor had direct implications for population growth within Europe. “[E]conomies of proto-industrial regions throughout the Holy Roman Empire, and the additional income generated by hundreds of thousands of rural workers allowed the population in these specific regions to grow.’ In some regions, this growth led to a doubling of the population over the course of just fifty years.”<sup>32</sup> Without the slave trade, the demand for these German textiles would not have existed, nor would the profits they produced or the population growth they spurred.

Dutch merchant companies were key buyers of German linens and other trade goods produced for the slave economy. In turn, German merchant bankers and nobility invested large sums in these companies. The Duke of Württemberg, Johann Friedrich, was one of the founding shareholders of the Dutch West India Company.<sup>33</sup> Johann von Bodeck, said to be the wealthiest person in Frankfurt am Main at the time, invested several tons of gold in both the Dutch East and West India Companies. Von Bodeck “was among those who made Frankfurt the successor of the Empire’s previously leading financial cities of Nuremberg and Augsburg.”<sup>34</sup> Investments in these joint-stock slave-trading companies were pivotal to this shift. The Dutch East India Company (VOC), founded in 1602, is cited as the first publicly traded joint-stock company. The Amsterdam Stock Exchange was created that same year for the purpose of trading these shares and became the basis for the contemporary stock market. The VOC served as a model for numerous subsequent slave-trading companies, whose stocks were traded across Europe on the newly established stock markets of Amsterdam, London, and Frankfurt. Due to the success of its stock exchange, Frankfurt has remained the financial center of Germany for over 400 years, and now operates as the monetary center of the eurozone.

Approximately half of those employed by the VOC were not Dutch, and of these, most were German.<sup>35</sup> Joachim Nettelbeck, a German slave trader working on Dutch ships, wrote that Suriname could have been called “a German colony rather than a Dutch one, because on plantations such as Paramaribo, one discovers out of one hundred whites perhaps as many as ninety-nine who had assembled here from

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30 “An Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes and Other Slaves, 1735,” in *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina: Containing the Acts Relating to Charleston, Courts, Slaves, and Rivers*, ed. David J. McCord (Columbia: A. S. Johnston, 1840), 396.

31 Weber, “Germany and the Early Modern Atlantic World,” 46.

32 Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, Sarah Lentz, and Josef Köstlbauer, “Beyond Exceptionalism – Traces of Slavery and the Slave Trade in Early Modern Germany, 1650–1850,” in *Beyond Exceptionalism*, 12.

33 Weber, “Germany and the Early Modern Atlantic World,” 33.

34 Weber, “Linen, Silver, Slaves, and Coffee,” 5.

35 Mallinckrodt, Lentz, and Köstlbauer, “Beyond Exceptionalism,” 10.

all the regions of Germany.”<sup>36</sup> Even in the 17th century, the contradictions of colonial nationalism were clear, given that colonial state expansionism was being executed by multinational corporations, whose stockholders were located throughout Europe, and whose stocks were designed to continually change ownership. The growth of the joint-stock company allowed for these mercantile affiliations to be rapidly reorganized, and for investment to determine the course of colonial domination. The presence of Germans in the Dutch colonies was not unique. “Germans could be found as owners of slaves in the Danish islands of the Caribbean or the British colonies in America. And from these colonies, they brought people of African origin into the Holy Roman Empire and its successor states.”<sup>37</sup> As this practice of forced migration of slaves into Europe became common, the laws governing slavery in the Holy Roman Empire were clarified.

Ludwig Höpfner, a Hessian judge and state administrator, was the author of the “most important book of his time on civil law,” which became required reading in legal education throughout the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>38</sup> Written in 1783, *Theoretical-Practical Commentary on the Heineccian Institutions*, was meant as a guide for the interpretation of Ancient Roman law that governed the Holy Roman Empire, previously interpreted by Johann Gottlieb Heineccius.<sup>39</sup> Höpfner’s interpretation of Roman slave law as it applied in the 18th-century Holy Roman Empire specified:

§. 70 On present-day slavery.

We have today 1) true slaves in the sense of Roman law; 2) serfs; 3) free servants and maids. True slaves are the Negro slaves and the captured Turks. For as the Turks turn our prisoners of war into slaves, so we proceed in the same way with theirs. The Turkish slaves are not likely encountered in Germany at this time since we have not conducted any wars with the Turks for so long. Negro slaves, however, are sometimes brought to us from Holland and other empires. Both kinds of slaves are to be adjudged according to Roman law, for Roman law is accepted in its entirety. The King of Prussia has confirmed these clauses in one of his own resolutions by recognizing that a Moor purchased in Copenhagen and brought to the Prussian lands cannot demand freedom simply because he is now living in Prussia.<sup>40</sup>

Höpfner further defined true slaves as “Whoever has no civic status is not a person but instead assigned to the class of things. Such are the slaves (*servi*) according to Roman law. They possess not a single civic status, no rights whatsoever in the Roman state; they are therefore not regarded as persons but as things, *res*.”<sup>41</sup> Höpfner defined this category of the subhuman on the basis of race. This definition not only informs the legal status of slaves within the Holy Roman Empire, but contextualizes the perception of black people as nonpersons, and German slave traders, slave owners, and slave financiers as participating in a legally sanctioned trade of “things.”

Emulating the success of Dutch maritime companies, Friedrich Wilhelm, prince-elect of Brandenburg, formed the Brandenburg Africa Company (BAC) in 1682. Like the Dutch East and West India Companies, it was established as a state-chartered, joint-stock slave-trading company. Benjamin Raule, former owner of a Dutch shipping business, was the director and one of the principal stockholders. The BAC built numerous slave-trading factories in Ghana: Fort Gross Friedrichsburg in Princes Town in 1683, named after Friedrich himself; Fort Dorothea in Akwidaa in 1685, named after Friedrich’s daughter; and Fort Sophie

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36 Mallinckrodt, Lentz, and Köstlbauer, “Beyond Exceptionalism,” 9.

37 Mallinckrodt, Lentz, and Köstlbauer, “Beyond Exceptionalism,” 9–10.

38 Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, “Slavery and the Law in Eighteenth-Century Germany,” in *Beyond Exceptionalism*, 142.

39 Mallinckrodt, “Slavery and the Law in Eighteenth-Century Germany,” 141.

40 Ludwig Julius Friedrich Höpfner, *Theoretisch-practischer Commentar über die Heineccischen Institutionen*, 1st ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Varrentrapp & Wenner, 1783), 67.

41 Höpfner, *Theoretisch-practischer Commentar*, 62.

Louise near Cape Three Points in 1690, named after his daughter-in-law.<sup>42</sup> In 1685, the BAC negotiated a lease within the Danish colony of St. Thomas, where the BAC created a large slave market to sell enslaved people it shipped from its African slave factories.<sup>43</sup> In 1695, the BAC rebuilt the Portuguese fort on the Mauritanian island of Arguin, resulting in their colonization of the entire island.<sup>44</sup>

In the 18th and 19th centuries, Germans primarily engaged in modes other than the state-chartered company to expropriate, buy, sell, and speculate on the lives of black people. Family firms operated in multiple locations and markets simultaneously. "The international scale of German trade houses reveals how much they contributed to the internationalization of trade in an era of mercantilist, nationally protectionist economic policy."<sup>45</sup> The Schimmelmans operated a textile mill in Hamburg; purchased sugar plantations in the Danish colonies of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John; and produced arms for the Danish that fueled the slave trade.<sup>46</sup> The Rombergs operated a maritime insurance company in Bruges, a slave-trading company in Ghent, one of the largest slave-trading companies in Bordeaux, and a branch in Saint-Domingue, which managed twenty plantations.<sup>47</sup> The Bethmanns of Frankfurt financed the Rombergs' slave trading to maintain their own shipping business, which operated between Bordeaux and the French Antilles.<sup>48</sup> The Barings became one of the wealthiest banking families in London through their evolving business of owning slaves, importing slave-produced sugar, and financing plantations through mortgages that used enslaved people as collateral. Schroders Bank began as a sugar-trading company and grew by financing the slave economy in Cuba.<sup>49</sup> Family trade houses operated as multinational corporations whose influence on colonial development contradicts nationalist renderings of slavery and colonization.

German reliance on racial slavery continued into the 20th century. The German East Africa Company was established in 1884 to colonize Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi to provide African plantation products to German industry. Germans established plantations that were worked by leased slave labor. Germany never legally abolished slavery in its East African colonies.<sup>50</sup> Beginning in 1901, slave ransoming became the official procedure of German gradual emancipation:

Slave ransoming met specific political and economic goals and solved a series of problems for the administration of the protectorate. Slave owners were compensated for the loss of their property.... In exchange, laborers were tied to plantations until their labor contracts were worked off.... The humanitarian lobby at home was quelled because the administration could argue that slavery was dying out gradually and slaves were determining the rate of their emancipation.<sup>51</sup>

Like emancipationism in the British Empire and the United States, German emancipation in East Africa was governed by political-economic self-interest and maintained anti-black domination. The returns of slavery and its afterlives were not limited to the plantation, and continue to operate beyond the boundaries of the nation-state.

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42 J. D. Fage, ed., with Douglas Coombs, J. R. Lander, A. W. Lawrence, G. E. Metcalfe, Margaret Priestley, and Ivor Wilks, "A New Check List of the Forts and Castles of Ghana," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 4, no. 1 (1959): 58–59.

43 Adam Jones, *Brandenburg Sources for West African History, 1680–1700*, Studien zur Kulturkunde, volume 77 (Stuttgart: F. Steiner-Verlag-Wiesbaden, 1985), 7; Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies*, 18–19; Princes Town retains this name attributed to it in reference to Friedrich's role as a Prince Elector of the Holy Roman Empire.

44 Jones, *Brandenburg Sources for West African History*, 7–8.

45 Margrit Schulte Beerbühl, *The Forgotten Majority: German Merchants in London, Naturalization, and Global Trade, 1660–1815*, English-language edition, Studies in British and Imperial History, volume 3 (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 88.

46 Weber, "Deutschland," 51.

47 Weber, "Linen, Silver, Slaves, and Coffee," 7.

48 Weber, "Deutschland," 50–51.

49 Weber, "Deutschland," 46.

50 Thaddeus Sunseri, "Slave Ransoming in German East Africa, 1885–1922," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 26, no. 3 (1993): 486.

51 Sunseri, "Slave Ransoming in German East Africa," 482.

The slavery that Europe instituted is part of Europe. The value extracted from enslaved life has been retained, recirculated, and grown. This value is sustained within European states, institutions, corporations, and families. Museum MMK für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt city government department Amt 45 i, is one such institution. This value is an index of the racial dispossession that produced it. The continued presence of this value does not disclose, however, the limits on accumulation set by people who were enslaved. These limits were inscribed every day. They existed in excess of formal record and as an absence of value. Describing the struggle that constituted these limits, Saidiya Hartman writes, “The negation and refusal of one’s status as transactable object or the vehicle of another’s rights was an essential aspect of this spatial practice.”<sup>52</sup> Negations of accumulation manifested in theft, fugitivity, praise meetings, and plots.<sup>53</sup> Stealing the crops, eating the livestock, and refusing to work diminished the output of the plantation.<sup>54</sup> The formation of fugitive communities emptied the plantation of its value.<sup>55</sup> Sharing information evaded supervisory control.<sup>56</sup> Coordinated poisonings of masters and overseers instilled fear of the slave population.<sup>57</sup> Arson destroyed sugar mills, masters’ houses, and entire fields, inflicting property damage and halting production.<sup>58</sup> These black negations are unwritten losses. They are neither failed nor successful. Their impact is incalculable. They operate beyond the rubrics of value and production. Rather they were grounded in “the shared sense of obligation to preserve the collective being, the ontological totality” of blackness.<sup>59</sup>

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52 Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*, rev. pbk. ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2022), 117.

53 Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 116–117.

54 Steven Hahn, Steven F. Miller, Susan E. O’Donovan, John C. Rodrigue, and Leslie S. Rowland, eds., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861–1867: Series 3, Volume 1: Land and Labor, 1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 539–541.

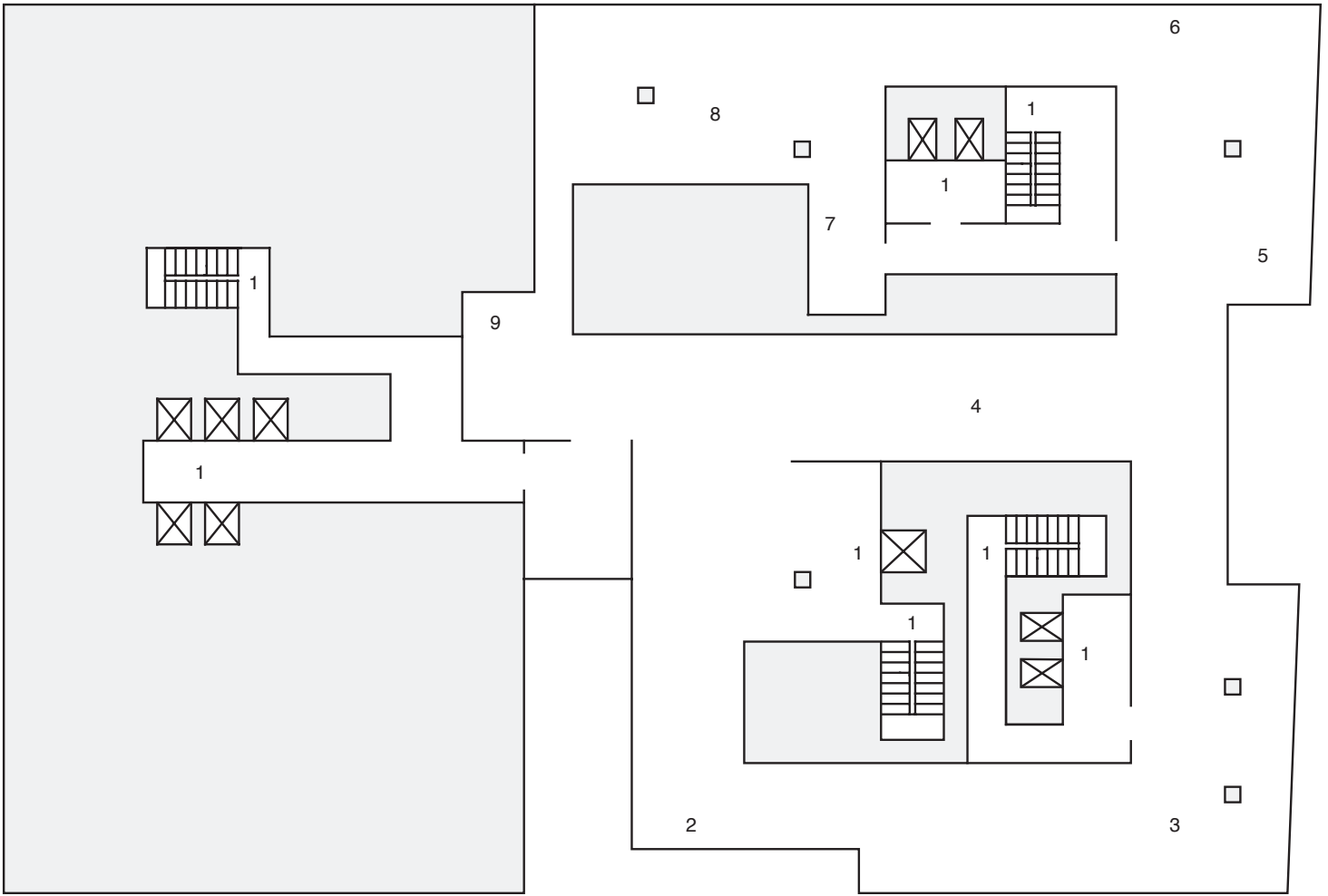
55 Julius Sherrard Scott, *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution* (London: Verso, 2018), 7–14.

56 Aisha K. Finch, *Rethinking Slave Rebellion in Cuba: La Escalera and the Insurgencies of 1841–1844*, Envisioning Cuba series (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 168–198.

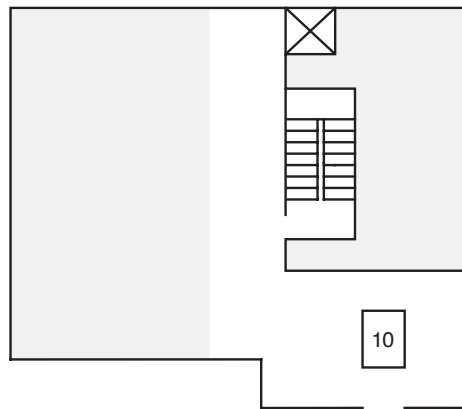
57 Crystal Nicole Eddins, *Rituals, Runaways, and the Haitian Revolution*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 116–126.

58 Finch, *Rethinking Slave Rebellion in Cuba*, 79–110.

59 Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 171.



SECOND FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



The building located at Taunustor 1 was developed by Commerzbank and Tishman Speyer. To fulfill the city of Frankfurt am Main's public use requirement, the developers contracted with the Museum für Moderne Kunst to include a location of the museum on the second floor of the building. The developers agreed to subsidize the museum's rent and utilities for 15 years.

Museum für Moderne Kunst was one of the 15 cultural institutions created in Frankfurt am Main between 1968 and 1994 that became part of the city's Museumsufer project. Between 1950 and 1992, the city's cultural funding budget grew nearly twentyfold. City taxes on financial firms fueled cultural development. Cultural development was used to attract workers to expand the city's financial sector.

Museum für Moderne Kunst, Tower MMK is a public museum inside of a private office building in the banking quarter. Tower MMK materializes the relationship between Frankfurt's public cultural development and private financial development. Tower MMK is subsidized through the rent paid by the numerous financial corporations located in the building. These include inheritors of the profits of slavery: Barclays, Schroders, J.P. Morgan, and Credit Suisse.

Frankfurt am Main has been the financial center of Germany since the 17th century.

Commerzbank was founded in Hamburg in 1870 by a group of 12 Hanseatic merchants. Most of its founders accumulated their wealth through slavery and colonization. The names of these founders are excluded from the Commerzbank corporate history chart on display at the Historisches Museum Frankfurt.

William Henry O'Swald's company specialized in the trade of cowries, which were used to buy slaves.

Carl Woermann's company was established to export linen to the Caribbean and to import sugar and coffee to Europe.

Conrad Hinrich Donner operated a tobacco factory, owned ships that transported tobacco between Europe and South America, and issued maritime insurance to other shippers of colonial goods.

Carl Georg Heise's company was established to trade colonial goods between Hamburg, the Caribbean, Central America, and South America.

Ludwig and Gustav Amsinck's company was established to trade colonial goods between Hamburg, New York, South America, Mexico, and the Caribbean.

Emile Nölting's company was established to trade colonial goods between Europe and the Caribbean.

Theodor Wille owned multiple coffee plantations in Brazil and shipped coffee between Brazil and Hamburg.

Linen was the largest German export by value throughout the 17th and 18th centuries.<sup>1</sup> Linen was the primary German good produced explicitly for the slave trade. During this time, labor costs in Central Europe lagged behind those in Western Europe, rendering Germany “a low-wage region, which oriented its production toward high-price Western markets.”<sup>2</sup> German merchants took advantage of this position by maintaining the depressed wages of the former peasant class, who they paid on a piece-work system. These merchants made German linen a staple of the slave economy by ensuring it was sold for less than the competition. The less money the slave owner spent on clothing, feeding, and housing slaves, the greater the plantation’s net profits would be. The slave economy was an essential market for the products of underpaid wage labor in Germany, and elsewhere in Europe.

“Osnaburgs” or “osnabrigs,” were made in Osnabrück. According to a 1744 report on the British linen trade, all the black people in the West Indies were “generally clothed with German linens, from 6d to 9d an Ell, called Osnaburghs.”<sup>3</sup> Another report indicated that all 70,000 enslaved people in Barbados were “usually clothed with Foreign ‘Osnaburghs.’”<sup>4</sup> This practice translated into law in instances when the slave codes prohibited enslaved people from wearing anything other than “negro cloth.” The 1735 South Carolina slave codes dictated that:

Be it enacted by the authority aforesaid. That no owner or proprietor of any negro slave or other slave whatsoever, (except livery men or boys,) shall permit or suffer such negro or other slave to have or wear any sort of apparel whatsoever, finer, other, or of greater value, than negro cloth, duffelds, coarse kearsies, osnabrigs, blue linnen, checked linnen or coarse garlix or calicoes, checked cottons or scotch plaids, not exceeding ten shillings per yard for the said checked cottons, scotch plaids, garlix or calico, under the pain of forfeiting all and every such apparel and garment.<sup>5</sup>

Black fugitives were tracked by their appearance. Fugitive slave ads circulated descriptions of black people who had run from bondage. These descriptions allowed any white person who read them to function as a deputy of the slave patrol and a sentry of the plantation. Osnaburgs were an identifier of enslavement. As such, they were one of the most common descriptors of fugitives from slavery.

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1 Klaus Weber, “Germany and the Early Modern Atlantic World: Economic Involvement and Historiography,” 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), 46.

2 Klaus Weber, “Deutschland, der atlantische Sklavenhandel und die Plantagenwirtschaft der Neuen Welt,” *Journal of Modern European History* 7, no. 1 (March 2009): 57–58; Klaus Weber, “Linen, Silver, Slaves, and Coffee: A Spatial Approach to Central Europe’s Entanglements with the Atlantic Economy,” *Culture & History Digital Journal* 4, no. 2 (December 2015): 11.

3 Weber, “Germany and the Early Modern Atlantic World,” 32.

4 Weber, “Linen, Silver, Slaves, and Coffee,” 8.

5 “An Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes and Other Slaves, 1735,” in *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina: Containing the Acts Relating to Charleston, Courts, Slaves, and Rivers*, ed. David J. McCord (Columbia: A. S. Johnston, 1840), 396.

4

*Bug trap, 2023*

Rope

Rental

“Bugs in the wheat” was code among the enslaved. It meant that slave patrollers had discovered their secret meeting. Enslaved people protected these meetings by tying a rope across the path. The rope tripped the patrol horse and threw the patroller.

Seasoning was a process of torturing newly enslaved people to break their will. White slave owners instituted this procedure to exert domination over the enslaved, to coerce them to work, and to force obedience. Seasoning included solitary confinement, whipping, and rubbing salt and pepper in enslaved people's wounded flesh.

Reparations were paid to slave owners. Compensated emancipation allowed slave owners to retain the value they had assigned to the lives of slaves in addition to the profits they had extracted from slaves' labor. Compensated emancipation in Haiti, Brazil, Cuba, Washington, D.C., the British colonies, the Danish colonies, the Dutch colonies, and German East Africa paid slave owners for their loss of enslaved property. Slave owners and their financiers were provided monetary compensation, high-interest debt obligations, and indentured servitude as repayment.

British compensation payments fueled the growth of British financial institutions that held outstanding plantation mortgages including Barclays, Lloyds Bank, and the Royal Bank of Scotland. The Haitian compensation debt, originally paid by formerly enslaved people to French slave owners, has been bought and sold by numerous banks including *Crédit Industriel et Commercial*, *Crédit du Nord*, Citibank, and ODDO BHF. These compensation payments continue to grow within European banks alongside the profits of the slave economy. The value of slave life, labor, and reproductive capacity remains integral to European financial institutions, corporations, universities, museums, and governments.

Frankfurt am Main is the monetary center of the eurozone and houses offices of nearly every major European financial firm. The concentration of financial firms in Frankfurt am Main has enriched the city since the 17th century.

A loan of 20,000 euros was issued to the Museum MMK für Moderne Kunst from Bankrott Inc., a company created for the purpose of holding an indefinite debt. Because it is a demand loan, no payments can be made until the lender demands repayment. Bankrott Inc. will never demand repayment. The debt will accrue interest indefinitely. It will increase at a rate of 18 percent each year, the highest rate legally allowable. The Museum MMK für Moderne Kunst is a city government department, Amt 45 i. For this reason this debt is owed by the city of Frankfurt am Main.

As reparation, this debt is a restriction on the continued accumulation derived from slavery. As a negation of value, it does not seek to redistribute the wealth derived from slave life but seeks to burden its inheritors.

7

*Means, 2023*

Billhook

162 x 18 x 4 cm

Rental

Plantation tools were made in Europe to be sold to plantation owners in the Atlantic colonies. Land, tools, livestock, and slaves collectively constituted the master's plantation.

The status of the slave as property was contradicted by the slave's violations of the regime of property. Enslaved people misused the tools. Misuse included destroying the field, working slowly, clearing the swamp, breaking the tools, injuring the overseer, and killing the master.

*Ingenio*, 2023

19th-century sugar kettle, made in England, used in Louisiana

185 x 185 x 68 cm

In Spanish the colonial sugar mill was called the *ingenio*, which meant “the engine.” The mill was a necessary component of the sugar plantation. Harvested cane had to be milled quickly to keep it from rotting. The mill operated 16–18 hours a day. Enslaved black people grew the cane, harvested the cane, crushed the cane, and boiled the juice. The mill consisted of a series of open kettles that were made in Europe, exported to the colonies, and used by slaves to reduce cane juice into syrup and raw crystals.

The ingenio operated through systematic torture. The regularity of punishment kept the sugar mill in near-constant production. “The slaves received the whip with more certainty and regularity than they received their food. It was the incentive to work and the guardian of discipline.”<sup>1</sup> Sugar was made this way for 400 years.

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<sup>1</sup> C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint l’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 12.



9

*macandal*, 2023

Oxalic acid

37.5 x 30.5 x 67 cm

Packets of materials that could invoke spirits, protect against punishment, and poison slave masters were called macandals. They were at the center of a plot in 1757 to poison all the white people in Haiti. The plot was organized by hundreds of enslaved and free black people. All macandals were subsequently outlawed. Their trade and use continued despite their criminalization.

Enslaved people throughout the Atlantic world used arsenic, manioc juice, ground glass, and oxalic acid to poison overseers, masters, masters' children, and livestock. Oxalic acid is a stain remover and household cleaner.

10

*Haus zur Goldenen Waage 2018, 2023*

Postcards 5 euros each

The House of the Golden Scales was established as a colonial spice trade house in 1619. It was destroyed in 1944 during World War II. Between 2004 and 2018 the city of Frankfurt am Main rebuilt the medieval and renaissance buildings that were once the center of the city. This is known as Frankfurt's New Old Town or Neue Altstadt. The House of the Golden Scales was reopened in 2018. It now functions as a coffee shop and tourist attraction. The reconstructed House of the Golden Scales is a monument to European colonial domination.

German racial ideology has been grounded in colonization, genocide, and racial slavery since the 15th century. This was explicitly articulated in the work of numerous German Enlightenment thinkers in the 18th century including Immanuel Kant, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, and Christoph Meiners. Their theories of *rasse* remain integral to contemporary forms of racism, white supremacy, and anti-blackness.

In the essay for the exhibition *Amt 45 i* the English word race will be directly translated into German as *rasse*.

11 February – 15 October 2023

MUSEUM MMK FÜR MODERNE KUNST  
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