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# JEFFERSONIAN RACISM



# JEFFERSONIAN RACISM

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## Dissertation

Zur Erlangung der Würde eines Doktors der Wirtschafts- und  
Sozialwissenschaften

»Dr. phil.«

(gemäß der Promotionsordnung vom 24. August 2010)

vorgelegt von

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Hamburg, den 15. August 2016

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Datum der Disputation: 16. Mai 2017





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## I.

### Introduction: Studying Jeffersonian Racism

»Off His Pedestal«, *The Atlantic Monthly* headlined in October 1996, illustrating the bold claim with a bust of Thomas Jefferson being hammered to the floor. »The sound you hear is the crashing of a reputation«, writes journalist Conor Cruise O'Brien in the corresponding article and asserts that the »radical and racist« Thomas Jefferson is a »most unsuitable and embarrassing figure in the pantheon of the modern American civil religion« and a »patron saint far more suitable to white supremacists«. In a »postracist society«, O'Brien holds, a »Jeffersonian liberal tradition, which is already intellectually untenable, will become socially and politically untenable as well«. For the »multiracial version of the American civil religion« to prevail, he concludes, and in order to secure the »future of nonracial democracy, and of Enlightenment values generally«, the United States had to abandon the »neo-Jeffersonian racist schism« and basically drop the founding father altogether.<sup>1</sup>

In 2015, as the white supremacist murders in Charleston and multiple cases of racist police violence fatally demonstrated that the United States was hardly a »postracist society«, the author of its founding document was once again a matter of public debate. »Blame Jefferson for Ferguson«, one commentator provokingly suggested, since some policemen's racist attitudes allegedly stood in the tradition of the founding father's belief in the natural inferiority of »blacks«.<sup>2</sup> Other journalists and activists publicly considered taking down the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, as it supposedly celebrates an era of slavery and racism and therewith precludes the

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<sup>1</sup> Conor Cruise O'Brien, Thomas Jefferson. Radical and Racist, in: *The Atlantic Monthly*, 278, 1996, 4, pp. 53-74, here pp. 53 (»sound«), 68 (»unsuitable«, »postracist«), 72 (»liberal«), 74 (»patron«, »multiracial«, »future«, »neo-Jeffersonian«). For the critical reactions to this article, voiced by Merrill Peterson, Joyce Appleby and others, see *The Atlantic Monthly*, 279, 1997, 1, pp. 6 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Caryl Rivers, Blame Jefferson for Ferguson?, in: *The Detroit News*, Apr. 1, 2015, <http://www.detroitnews.com/story/opinion/2015/04/01/rivers-jefferson-ferguson/70738678/>.

American society from effectively overcoming discrimination and prejudice.<sup>3</sup> Spurred by self-declared ›revelations‹ about his slaveholding, public discourse rediscovered Jefferson as the »Monster of Monticello«, whose liberal rhetoric was just a smokescreen obfuscating private despotism and political failure to act on the institution of slavery.<sup>4</sup>

Conor Cruise O'Brien was not the first and contemporary critics will not be the last to challenge the often times idolized and whitewashed image of Thomas Jefferson in American public memory. Especially with regard to ›race‹ and racism, however, the last twenty years have witnessed an unprecedented polarization in the debate on Jefferson and his legacy. Building on scholarly spadework on Jefferson's slaveholding and fueled by ongoing speculations about his sexual relationship with his slave Sally Hemings, which was eventually confirmed by DNA evidence in 1998, the Virginian founder was increasingly treated not only as the embodiment of the United States' republican values, but also of its ›racial‹ tensions.<sup>5</sup> As the question of ›race‹ appeared to be the litmus test of American democracy, Jefferson was a natural object of investigation – so much so that at the turn of the millennium it was justifiably assessed »that our current absorption with Jefferson stems almost entirely from our preoccupations with matters of race«.<sup>6</sup>

Corresponding to the divisive debates about questions of ›race‹ and identity in political discourses, critics and defenders alike have been very determined in their opposing judgements of Jefferson. It is thus with some academic frustration that

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. David Ng, Jefferson Memorial, Confederate statues enter national race debate, in: Los Angeles Times, Jun. 24, 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/culture/la-et-cm-thomas-jefferson-confederate-statues-20150624-story.html>; Nicolaus Mills, Blame Jefferson for the Confederate Flag, in: The Daily Beast, Jun. 26, 2015, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/06/28/blame-jefferson-for-the-confederate-flag.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Finkelman, The Monster of Monticello, in: The New York Times, Nov. 30, 2012, [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/01/opinion/the-real-thomas-jefferson.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/01/opinion/the-real-thomas-jefferson.html?_r=0).

<sup>5</sup> For the changing image of Jefferson in public memory, see Gordon S. Wood, The Trials and Tribulations of Thomas Jefferson, in: Peter S. Onuf (ed.), *Jeffersonian Legacies*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia 1993, pp. 395-417; Joseph J. Ellis, Jefferson. Post-DNA, in: *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 57, 2000, 1, pp. 125-138; Peter Nicolaisen, Thomas Jefferson, Sally Hemings, and the Question of Race. An Ongoing Debate, in: *Journal of American Studies*, 37, 2003, 1, pp. 99-118; John B. Boles, Randal L. Hall, Introduction, in: John B. Boles, Randal L. Hall (eds.), *Seeing Jefferson Anew. In His Time and Ours*, Charlottesville etc.: University of Virginia Press 2010, pp. 1-11; Todd Estes, What We Think About When We Think About Thomas Jefferson, in: *Oakland Journal*, 20, 2011, pp. 21-46. The earlier debates are revisited in Scot A. French, Edward L. Ayers, Jr., *The Strange Career of Thomas Jefferson. Race and Slavery in American Memory, 1943-1993*, in: Peter S. Onuf (ed.), *Jeffersonian Legacies*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia 1993, pp. 418-456.

<sup>6</sup> Jack Rakove, Our Jefferson, in: Jan Ellen Lewis, Peter S. Onuf (eds.), *Sally Hemings and Thomas Jefferson. History, Memory, and Civic Culture*, Charlottesville etc.: University of Virginia Press 1999, pp. 210-235, here p. 227.

Andrew Burstein complains about the polarization in respective discussions, which portray Jefferson as either »all racist or all liberator«. <sup>7</sup> »But judge Jefferson we must«, historian Jack Rakove describes the American urge to come to terms with the founding fathers, although pointing out that »judging the past [...] is actually quite easy; explaining it is far more difficult«. <sup>8</sup> Concerning »racial« issues, however, attempts to »explain« the past are frequently guided by overriding political agendas. »Both sides want to pick and choose«, it has been noted, and »both groups have a stake in Jefferson« in so far as they render »Jefferson's virtues America's virtues and his flaws [...] America's flaws«. <sup>9</sup> The idolization of Jefferson as well as his critique have thus become a means to more generally express approval or opposition to contemporary political developments, a tendency that frequently interferes with the standards of academic investigation. <sup>10</sup>

As early as 1992, this problem of dealing with Jefferson from a perspective of late twentieth century »racial« sensitivity was influentially addressed by Douglas Wilson, the later founding director of the International Center for Jefferson Studies. Suspecting that an overcompensation for the failures of previous historians replaced the »saga of the glories of the old West« with a »saga of exploitation and greed«, Wilson argues that Jefferson fell victim to this »presentist« interpretation of history. »At a time like the present, when relations between the races are in the forefront of public discussion«, Jefferson's reservations concerning African Americans tended to overshadow his contributions to liberal and egalitarian thought, although they had to be qualified with regard to the historical contexts. Effectively, Wilson concludes, the »kind of racism« that Jefferson endorsed was inextricably linked to his colonial socialization and thus an inevitable accompaniment of eighteenth century life in America. <sup>11</sup>

Beyond these problematic assumptions and his one-sided approach to »presentist« tendencies in Jefferson studies, Wilson's critique hints at some important problems

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<sup>7</sup> Andrew Burstein, *Jefferson's Secrets. Death and Desire at Monticello*, New York: Basic Books 2005, p. 124.

<sup>8</sup> Rakove, *Our Jefferson*, p. 227.

<sup>9</sup> Francis D. Cogliano, *Thomas Jefferson. Reputation and Legacy*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press 2006, pp. 263 f.

<sup>10</sup> This can be exemplified with David Barton's *The Jefferson Lies*, which is prefaced by the prominent conservative spokesman Glenn Beck and promises to expose popular myths about the founder, including his endorsement of secularism, his racist attitudes towards African Americans and, of course, his paternity of Sally Hemings' children.

<sup>11</sup> Douglas L. Wilson, *Thomas Jefferson and the Character Issue*, in: *The Atlantic Monthly*, 270, 1992, 5, pp. 57-74, here pp. 62 (»glories«, »exploitation«), 69 (»time«), 72 (»kind«).

in the historical analysis of racism and has often been applied to debunk (race-) critical assessments of Jefferson's respective attitudes. Insofar as the present study aims at a comprehensive understanding of Jeffersonian racism, it implicitly tackles this line of criticism throughout the argumentation and will explicitly come back to it in the concluding chapter. In order to prepare the analysis, however, it is the principal aim of this introduction to outline some presuppositions that underlie large parts of the public and scholarly debates on Jefferson, ›race‹ and racism. These presuppositions can, in fact, be traced back to a different strain of ›presentism‹ that prevails in the wider field of racism studies. Against the backdrop of a more flexible and historically adaptable understanding of racism, the case of Jeffersonian racism emerges as subject that has hitherto not been studied in its ambivalence and therefore deserves a critical reassessment.

Even the most cursory survey of respective public and scholarly references implies that the issue of Jefferson's racism is indivisible from his stand on the institution of slavery.<sup>12</sup> Given the closely intertwined histories of slavery and ›race‹ relations in the United States, which are widely recognized to have shaped ›racial‹ inequalities in American society down to the present day, this nexus seems almost self-evident and especially meaningful when dealing with a man who proclaimed the individual natural rights to life and liberty, while establishing his personal wealth on the labor of hundreds of enslaved individuals. The question of whether Jefferson was racist has thus become almost synonymous to the question whether he was a credible opponent of slavery. Thus, when Burstein asks why Jefferson had to be ›all racist or all liberator‹, he aims at more than the reasonable critique of a highly polarized debate about the founder's public image. In fact, he also addresses a widespread juxtaposition that equates racism with proslavery and abolitionism with the absence of racism.

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<sup>12</sup> It is not incidentally that most early references to Jefferson's racism are to be found in (critical) studies of his slaveholding. Thus, in 1964, Robert McColley pointed out that Jefferson hesitated to actively engage for abolitionism because »he shared too many of the traditional southern ideas about the character and potentialities of the Negro«, id., *Slavery and Jeffersonian Virginia*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press 1964, p. 124. Some five years later, William Cohen paraphrased this reading in the assessment that »racist ideology prevented him from working effectively against the system« of slavery and therewith introduced the notion of racism to Jefferson studies, id., *Thomas Jefferson and the Problem of Slavery*, in: *The Journal of American History* 56, 1969, 3, pp. 503-526, here p. 505.

This equation of racism with proslavery agitation is notable not only in the study of Jefferson, but characteristic to many historical approaches to racism in the United States. To some degree this conflation goes back to antebellum times, even though early commentators were aware that Jefferson's complex legacy regarding ›race‹ and slavery could not simply be utilized for either proslavery or antislavery agitation. From Jefferson's lifetime onwards, African Americans have addressed the hypocrisy in Jefferson's egalitarian rhetoric, criticized his invalid claims about ›black‹ inferiority and passed on the knowledge of his intimate relationship with Sally Hemings. At the same time, abolitionists like Frederick Douglass used not only the Declaration of Independence as inspiration for their cause, but also referred to other anti-slavery remarks by Jefferson.<sup>13</sup> By contrast, proslavery thinkers of that era endorsed Jefferson's elaborations on African Americans' natural deficiencies, but forcefully rejected his emancipatory proclamations. Thus, George Fitzhugh called the natural rights claims of America's founding documents »absurd and dangerous« and John C. Calhoun specified that »nothing can be more unfounded and false« than the assumption that »all men are born free and equal«.<sup>14</sup>

In the following century, this ambivalence of Jefferson's record on slavery and African Americans was met with a diverse scholarly response.<sup>15</sup> Whereas the traditional view holds that Jefferson's abolitionism was ahead of his time, but was limited by political and economic constraints, critical studies have portrayed Jefferson as only hypocritically paying lip-service to the natural rights of slaves, but effectively supporting the maintenance of the institution. The prevailing interpretation in contemporary scholarship lies somewhere in-between these opposed readings and accounts for Jefferson's credible advocacy of anti-slavery doctrines as well as his reluctance to implement appropriate policies or private acts of manumission. The

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<sup>13</sup> An account of Jefferson's role in abolitionist discourses can be found in Merrill D. Peterson, *The Jefferson Image in the American Mind*, New York etc.: Oxford University Press 1960, pp. 164-189. For the early African American reception of Thomas Jefferson, see Benjamin Quarles, *Black Mosaic. Essays in Afro-American History and Historiography*, Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press 1988, pp. 95-98. See also, Mia Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind. African-American Ideas about White People, 1830-1925*, New York etc.: Oxford University Press 2000, pp. 13-37.

<sup>14</sup> Citations in Thomas G. West, *Vindicating the Founders. Race, Sex, Class, and Justice in the Origins of America*, Lanham etc.: Rowman and Littlefield 1997, p. 33. See also, Peterson, *The Jefferson Image in the American Mind*, pp. 164-171.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Cogliano, *Thomas Jefferson*, pp. 199-229. A more critical reception can be found in Paul Finkelman, *Thomas Jefferson and Antislavery. The Myth Goes On*, in: *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 102, 1994, 2, pp. 193-228. The more general controversies about Jefferson in twentieth century historiography are revisited in Peter S. Onuf, *The Scholars' Jefferson*, in: *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 50, 1993, 4, pp. 671-699.

root cause for this discrepancy between theory and practice is frequently found in Jefferson's racism, that is: his assumption of a fundamental difference between a ›black‹ and a ›white‹ ›race‹ and his conclusion that it was impossible for the two ›races‹ to live freely together under one government. Like most of his contemporaries, this approach assumes, Jefferson was unable to dissolve the contradiction between entrenched racism and growing abolitionist sentiment.

As the intricate relation between Jefferson's racism, slavery and abolitionism, on the micro-level of his plantations and the macro-level of American society, will be discussed at some length in the course of this study, the historical evidence for his specific case will be left aside for now. Nevertheless, there are numerous studies demonstrating that neither racism and abolitionism nor racism and the liberal tradition of natural rights are mutually exclusive. Quite the contrary, it has been asserted that by the mid-nineteenth century ›white‹ pro-slavery and anti-slavery activists could agree on a »racial consensus« that assumed the inferiority of African Americans, drawing different conclusions only with regard to the legitimacy of their enslavement.<sup>16</sup> The long-lasting struggles about the institution were thus not primarily fought between racist southern slaveholders and non-racist northern abolitionists, but between the conflicting interests of two competing socio-economic systems within the Union. Against this backdrop, the eventual replacement of southern slavery with segregation, as the »highest stage of white supremacy« built on social practices of the antebellum north and found the support of former abolitionists.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The »underlying racial consensus in the United States« is described by George Fredrickson in reference to the debates about American imperialism at the turn of the twentieth century, *id.*, *The Black Image in the White Mind. The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914*, New York: Harper & Row 1971, p. 306. Fredrickson, however, describes a similar phenomenon for mid-nineteenth century abolitionist discourses, in which a »romantic racialist view simply endorsed the ›child‹ stereotype of the most sentimental school of proslavery paternalists and plantation romancers and then rejected slavery itself because it took unfair advantage of the Negro's innocence and good nature«, *ibid.*, p. 102. For the European context of abolitionism and the rise of scientific racism, see Seymour Drescher, *The Ending of the Slave Trade and the Evolution of European Scientific Racism*, in: *Social Science History*, 14, 1990, 3, pp. 415-450. The nexus of abolitionism and racism has also been addressed with regard to the cultural forms of anti-slavery agitation, cf. Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White On Black. Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture*, New Haven etc.: Yale University Press 1992; pp. 57-61; Heather S. Nathans, *Staging Slavery. Representing Race and Abolitionism On and Off the Philadelphia Stage*, in: Richard Newman, James Mueller (eds.), *Antislavery and Abolitionism in Philadelphia. Emancipation and the Long Struggle for Racial Justice in the City of Brotherly Love*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press 2011, pp. 198-228.

<sup>17</sup> John W. Cell, *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy. The Origins of Segregation in South Africa and the American South*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 1982. On the Northern tradition of segregation, see Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery. The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860*, Chicago etc.: University of Chicago Press 1961; Lois E. Horton, *From Class to Race in Early Amer-*

Consequently, American racism was certainly not a monopoly of the supporters of slavery and Jefferson's criticism of the institution says just as little about his racism as his speculations about African American inferiority reveal about his attitude towards slavery.

A similar ambivalence can also be observed with the Enlightenment traditions of liberalism and egalitarianism, which are most often referred to as rebuttals of Jefferson's racism, but whose universal claims often comprised implicit restrictions. Classical liberal doctrines that Jefferson embraced in his writings were not designed to include marginalized colonial populations – or women, or poor people – in their demands for the expansion of civic rights and political participation.<sup>18</sup> The occupation of populated overseas territories and their exploitation through slave labor went widely unchallenged by natural rights theorists, whose conceptions contained more or less explicit claims of European superiority. This is not to say that theories of universal natural rights could not and were not applied to address the evil of slavery and colonization, not least by ›racialized‹ groups themselves. In mainstream political and legal thought, however, it was by no means uncommon to unite progressive postulations of equality and liberty with exclusive frameworks of difference. This Enlightenment ambivalence, and its contemporary reverberation, is particularly striking in the case of the slaveholders that founded the United States of America on the very claims for universal natural rights and increasingly serves as a starting point for respective investigations.<sup>19</sup>

In the public debate on contemporary American racism, legal historian Annette Gordon-Reed has presented some illuminating thoughts on Jefferson's ambivalent legacy in light of the police killing of an unarmed African American in Ferguson, Missouri. Hoping that »America's black slaves were one day set free«, she argues, Jefferson believed that the »result would be conflict and an inevitable descent into

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ica. Northern Post-Emancipation Racial Reconstruction, in: *Journal of the Early Republic*, 19, 1999, 4, pp. 629-639.

<sup>18</sup> For the underlying social exclusions in the contractarian tradition, see Carol Pateman, Charles W. Mills (eds.), *Contract and Domination*, Cambridge etc.: Polity Press 2007. With specific regard to ›race‹ and racism, see Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (ed.), *Race and the Enlightenment. A Reader*, Cambridge etc.: Blackwell 1997; Julie K. Ward, Tommy L. Lott (eds), *Philosophers on Race. Critical Essays*, Oxford etc.: Blackwell 2002; Andrew Valls (ed.), *Race and Racism in Modern Philosophy*, Ithaca etc.: Cornell University Press 2005.

<sup>19</sup> Cf., among others, Robin Blackburn, *The American Crucible. Slavery, Emancipation and Human Rights*, London etc.: Verso 2011. On Jefferson, see John P. Diggins, *Slavery, Race, and Equality. Jefferson and the Pathos of the Enlightenment*, in: *American Quarterly*, 28, 1976, 2, pp. 206-228; Alexander O. Boulton, *The American Paradox. Jeffersonian Equality and Racial Science*, in: *American Quarterly*, 47, 1995, 3, pp. 467-492.

racial war«, a war that according to Gordon-Reed »has been waged against blacks in America from Jefferson’s time until our own«. The founder was »more prescient than many would care to admit«, she continues, when he anticipated that »deep rooted prejudices [...] made black people [...] presumptive felons outside the boundaries of full citizenship«. Her nuanced analysis, however, avoids the crucial questions of how Jefferson could conceive of emancipated slaves as a »permanent group of second-class citizens« that »would undercut America’s republican experiment« and what effect this construction of difference had on the United States and its »tortured racial past«. <sup>20</sup>

That racism, and Jefferson’s racism in particular, has not been reconciled with liberal and egalitarian thought, becomes especially obvious when looking at another presupposition that prevails in respective scholarship. While his assessment of African Americans as naturally inferior is commonly discussed as racist, his culturalistic elaborations on Native Americans are widely perceived as assimilationist, but essentially egalitarian. <sup>21</sup> In a recent interview with the *New York Times* about the »roots of American racism«, for example, Noam Chomsky paid much attention to Jefferson as a political supporter of expanding slavery and as a representative of the »shocking racism in otherwise enlightened circles«. When he continues to address the »parallel founding crime over centuries«, the racist and genocidal expulsion of Native Americans, he fails to address Jefferson as one of its pioneers and rather refers to contemporaries like Henry Knox and Joseph Story. <sup>22</sup> While this incidence alone is merely a legitimate omission by a public intellectual in a cursory format, Chomsky’s narrative mirrors a more general tendency in public and academic discourse to acknowledge Jefferson’s racism towards African Americans and to neglect the racist quality of his attitudes and political actions towards Native Americans. This is especially remarkable as the violent colonization of the American

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<sup>20</sup> Annette Gordon-Reed, US has yet to overcome its tortured racial past, in: *Financial Times*, Aug. 17, 2014, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/b59d0c0a-25f9-11e4-8bb5-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3eihtUP5U>.

<sup>21</sup> Therewith echoing Winthrop Jordan’s assessment that »confronted by three races in America he determinedly turned three into two by transforming the Indian into a degraded yet basically noble brand of white men«, id., *White Over Black. American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1968, p. 477.

<sup>22</sup> George Yancy, Noam Chomsky, Noam Chomsky on the Roots of American Racism, in: *The New York Times*, Mar. 18, 2015, [http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/03/18/noam-chomsky-on-the-roots-of-american-racism/?\\_r=0](http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/03/18/noam-chomsky-on-the-roots-of-american-racism/?_r=0).

West and the expropriation of Natives have long been discussed within the field of racism studies and constitute policies that were undisputedly shaped by Jefferson.<sup>23</sup>

Phrased under reference to theoretical ideas of civilization and assimilation, and thus in apparent contrast to his claims of African American natural and immutable difference, Jefferson's construction of Native Americans as savage and culturally backward is not usually recognized as racist even though it was couched in ›racial‹ terms. As potential citizens of the American society, it is argued, Jefferson held out to Native Americans the opportunity to acquire the protection of their natural rights, in case they abandoned their original ways of life and assimilated to the settlers' practices of agriculture and small-scale landownership. In the course of American history, however, the power to determine the preconditions of incorporation remained with the ›white‹ political elites and was repeatedly exercised to rule out the recognition of Native Americans as citizens of the United States. Practically and theoretically, these policies date back to the early republic, when Jeffersonian doctrines established the cultural gap between the ›white‹ and the ›red‹ ›race‹ as the second racist foundation on which to build the economic and territorial expansion of the new nation.

There are a couple of notable exceptions to the black and white bias in the historiography of early America. Naturally, these are to be found mostly where studies explicitly focus on the racism towards Native Americans and address its neglect in public and academic memory. As early as the 1970s, Ronald Takaki noticed that »studies of Jefferson [...] often completely overlook the Indian, almost as if he did not exist in America or in Jefferson's life and mind«. <sup>24</sup> Just shortly after, Richard Drinnon pointed out that Winthrop Jordan in his seminal analysis of American ›racial‹ attitudes »went deeper into [Jefferson's] racism than anyone before or since«, but »when Jordan [...] turned from blacks to reds [...] he suffered his vision to cloud by vapor rising off Jefferson's lines«. <sup>25</sup> Similarly, another commentator addressed the historiography of Jefferson's racism, noting that respective studies

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<sup>23</sup> Thus, Jefferson is critically referred to in relevant studies on racist and genocidal policies towards Native Americans, cf. David E. Stannard, *American Holocaust. The Conquest of the New World*, New York etc.: Oxford University Press 1992, pp. 240 f.; Lawrence Davidson, *Cultural Genocide*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press 2012, pp. 29 f.

<sup>24</sup> Ronald Takaki, *Iron Cages. Race and Culture in 19th-Century America*, New York etc.: Oxford University Press 1990 [1979], p. 55.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Drinnon, *Facing West. The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building*, Norman etc.: University of Oklahoma Press 1980, pp. 80 f.

usually »place American Indians above African Americans in the hierarchy of Jefferson's mind«. In effect, however, »unlike African Americans, American Indians were not useful for to the yeomen settler state that Jefferson envisioned and so assimilation or ethnocide was advanced as a hallmark of United States Indian policies«. <sup>26</sup>

More recent scholarship also recognizes that, for example, the »parallels between black colonization and Indian removal are striking« in commonly building on the idea »that contact between non-whites and whites tended to ›degrade‹ the former«. <sup>27</sup> While accounting for the fact that in context of American nation-building, the problem of slavery and that of Native Americans were equally challenging to the architects of the republic, these approaches tend to conflate Native Americans and African Americans in the category of ›non-whites‹ and therewith obscure the specifics of the underlying ›racial‹ constructions. In fact, ›racial‹ categories are frequently reproduced and therewith to some degree confirmed, when scholars carelessly apply the twentieth century concept of ›race relations‹ to the founding period. This ahistorical backdating of ideas about ›race‹ is rooted in some more general problems of racism analysis and constitutes the ›presentist‹ bias that is addressed by this study.

Despite the frequent references to Jefferson's racism in public and academic discourses, this overview illustrates the lack of systematic approaches to Jefferson's racism. By way of explanation, it has been argued that »Jefferson is not often discussed in essays devoted to the history of the concept of race, because he did not contribute anything original to the discussion and his views on the matter appear to be a jumble of inconsistencies«. In fact, Jefferson's contrasting elaborations on Africans and Native Americans do not fit into many conceptions of ›race‹ and racism. This, however, does not necessarily imply »apparent lapses of logic« in his thought, but can also be interpreted as the inappropriateness of certain notions and concepts to grasp the complexity of a social phenomenon that historically took on a variety of forms. <sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Donald A. Grinde, Jr., Thomas Jefferson's Dualistic Perceptions of Native Americans, in: James Gilreath (ed.), *Thomas Jefferson and the Education of a Citizen*, Hanover etc.: University Press of New England 1999, pp. 193-208, here p. 208.

<sup>27</sup> Nicholas Guyatt, *Bind Us Apart. How Enlightened Americans Invented Racial Segregation*, New York: Basic Books 2016, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> Ladelle McWhorter, *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America. A Genealogy*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2009, pp. 87 f.

Up to this point, the notions of racism and ›race‹ have been used without much clarification – just like many above-cited accounts uncritically apply the terms as if they evoked some sort of common knowledge. At a closer look, however, there are few concepts in the humanities that are discussed more controversially. This did not change significantly since 1997, when a leading scholar in the field assessed that the »area of race and ethnic studies lacks a sound theoretical apparatus«, because »too many analysts researching racism assume that the phenomenon is self-evident«.<sup>29</sup> Partly due to the fact that racism is used as a »polemical as much as a theoretical concept« in contemporary political discourses, its scientific study is characterized by disparaging assessments, concerning the »topic, which is diversely defined, as well as [...] its scope, which oscillates historically between Antiquity and Modernity and geographically between Europe and the world«.<sup>30</sup> Given the broad range of sometimes contradictory definitions, the following will outline some guiding principles for the analysis of Jeffersonian racism and expand on the theoretical problems it is addressing.

To a large extent, this study builds on the strand of racism studies that recognizes ›race‹ as a social construct and attempts to investigate racism as the »sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed«.<sup>31</sup> This approach rests on the firm historization of the respective constructs and takes into account their cultural and discursive representations as well as socio-economic contexts. Other than many relevant studies, however, the analysis will focus on the processual character of racist constructions and trace back the resulting ›racial‹ constructs to multiple and traditional logics of racism.<sup>32</sup> This slight change in

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<sup>29</sup> Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Rethinking Racism. Toward a Structural Interpretation*, in: *American Sociological Review*, 62, 1997, 3, pp. 465-480, here p. 465.

<sup>30</sup> Étienne Balibar, *Racism Revisited. Sources, Relevance, and Aporias of a Modern Concept*, in: *PMLA*, 123, 2008, 5, pp. 1630-1639, here p. 1631 (›polemical‹); Wulf D. Hund, *W. E. B. Du Bois in the Ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto. Notes on the Relations of ›Race‹ and ›Racism‹*, in: *Confluence*, 4, 2016, pp. 188-205, here p. 189.

<sup>31</sup> Michael Omi, Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States. From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., New York etc.: Routledge 1994 [1986], 124. On ›race‹ as an »ontologically empty« and ›metaphysical‹ category«, which at the same time codifies social and economic realities, see also David Roediger, *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness. Essays on Race, Politics, and Working Class History*, London etc. 1994, pp 1-17. »To acknowledge this problem – without necessarily solving it«, this study follows Richard Perry and others in parenthesizing ›race‹ and ›racial‹ to stress the constructed character of respective concepts, id., ›Race‹ and Racism. *The Development of Modern Racism in America*, New York etc.: Palgrave Macmillan 2007, p. ix.

<sup>32</sup> As Patrick Wolfe has recently argued, the »well-worn piety that race is a social construct does not get us very far«, but actually »founds a set of questions: how are races constructed, under what circumstances, and in whose interests«, id., *Traces of History. Elementary Structures of Race*, London

the perspective on a transitional moment in the ›racialization‹ of American thought and society accounts for the flexibility and diversity of racist exclusion, which has often been overlooked when a narrow idea of ›race‹ was used as the starting point of research. In fact, the ›race‹ paradigm that underlies most approaches to racism especially in the United States conceptually privileges a certain historical manifestation of racism (that of the color line) and obscures the functional capacity of racism to adapt to societal transformations. The problems deriving from this ahistorical bias can be exemplified with some recent accounts of the history of racism.

It is a truism in social sciences that European cultures developed essentialized notions of difference long before Africans, Asians or Native Americans were considered separate color-coded ›races‹. Even for ancient times, many analysts have assessed predecessors of modern racism that were couched in the barbarian stereotype or, to a lesser extent, in descriptions of phenotypical difference. Lacking an accompanying ›racial‹ concept, however, scholars disagree about the racist quality of the respective incidences. Whereas some struggle with pre-modern applications of the notion of racism and prefer to talk of ethnocentrism, others assume the existence of an ancient proto-racism.<sup>33</sup> The linkage of racism to an essentialist notion of ›racial‹ human diversity, thus, complicates the assessment of racism in pre-modern times, because ›race‹ as a biological category based on skin-color or other physical characteristics was absent from ancient thought, although similar modes of exclusion were established that would later be incorporated in ›racial‹ categories.

With regard to the transition of pre-›racial‹ to ›racial‹ discrimination, a similar problem can be exemplified with the account of David Goldberg, who writes that the »shift from medieval premodernity to modernity is in part the shift from a religiously defined to a racially defined discourse of human identity«. Arguing that »medieval discourse had no catalog of racial groupings«, he implies that a flexible and vague pattern of cultural and religious discrimination was substituted by a rigid system of ›racial‹ classification.<sup>34</sup> Although this is in accordance with the modern

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etc.: Verso 2016, p. 6. Although this study endorses Wolfe's assessment and the deriving questions, it assumes his clinging to the concept of ›race‹ as fundamentally obstructing the inquiry.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham. Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, Princeton etc.: Princeton University Press 2003, p. 198; Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, Princeton etc.: Princeton University Press 2004, p. 26. Similar to Goldenberg's interpretation is Lloyd A. Thompson, *Romans and Blacks*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press 1989.

<sup>34</sup> David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture. Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning*, Oxford etc.: Blackwell 1993, p. 24.

emergence of ›racial‹ hierarchizations, Goldberg, in talking about one ›catalog of racial groupings‹ that allegedly was at the heart of modern racism, misses the fact that the scientific racists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries came up with countless frameworks of human ›races‹. The sheer mass of classificatory schemes and hierarchies, assuming between three and fifty or sixty different ›races‹ and ›types‹,<sup>35</sup> illustrates not only the uselessness of ›race‹ as an ontological category, but also the flexibility of a ›racial‹ thought that always reflected traditional modes of discrimination and incorporated stereotypes based on such different markers as skin-color, cultural identity, religion and social class.

As these examples demonstrate, the »idea, that human beings are obviously members of races« and that ›race‹ constitutes an »all-pervading natural phenomenon« has become so deeply embedded especially in twentieth-century American thought that scholars anachronistically apply the term to all kinds of discriminatory concepts.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, ›race‹ is often treated as a precondition for racism, which means that looking for racism in the past is understood as tantamount to searching for evidence of ›racial‹ thought, or, in other words, notions of natural difference based on specific descent and/or geographic origin. This said, it has to be examined in what way racism is related to ›race‹ and to challenge some prevalent, but misleading premises.

Deriving from an Iberian signifier of social distinction, ›race‹ (›raza‹, ›raça‹) was used for Jews, Muslims and converted Christians during the Spanish Reconquista, was exported to the New World in the Age of Discovery and designated a mythical notion of purity of blood, which connected religious prejudices with descent and kinship, but was far from what modern thinkers would accept as a naturalistic scientific category.<sup>37</sup> Transferred to English, French and other languages, ›race‹ was applied in attempts to generally define human varieties by William Petty and François Bernier in the late seventeenth century; its semantic change, however, was not accompanied by fundamentally new patterns of prejudice. In fact, Petty's elabo-

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Gossett, *Race. The History of an Idea in America*, New York: Schocken 1965 [1963], p. 82 f. Some participants of racial discourses were aware of this unscientific variation. Thus, Samuel Stanhope Smith, as early as 1810, »observed that numerous writers had been unable to agree on the number of races in existence, and he concluded that the entire exercise of dividing humanity into such bounded categories was senseless«, Perry, ›Race‹ and Racism, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Ivan Hannaford, *Race. The History of an Idea in the West*, Washington: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press 1996, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Max Sebastián Hering Torres, *Rassismus in der Vormoderne. Die ›Reinheit des Blutes‹ im Spanien der Frühen Neuzeit*, Frankfurt a. M.: Campus 2006, pp. 219-223.

rations on human varieties were starting from the ancient concept of the great scale of beings, while Bernier suggested a division of mankind that was inspired by traditional humoral pathology and Renaissance climate theories.<sup>38</sup> Although a further ›biologization‹ of the concept can be assessed for the following century, namely through naturalists like Buffon and Linnaeus, there was no understanding of ›race‹ that was uniformly accepted as a natural principle.

By contrast, the early ›racial classifiers‹ rather ›began to align science behind new ideas of white supremacy‹, which sprang from the material conditions of European expansion and colonial slavery.<sup>39</sup> The resulting patterns of social discrimination were reflected in contemporary science and slowly incorporated in the idea of human ›races‹. This process was accompanied by steady scientification, as naturalism was generally gaining ground against traditional religious modes of knowledge acquisition. As ›race‹ was not a natural phenomenon to be discovered, traditional culturally-coded stereotypes remained vital to the construction of ›racial‹ categories. When Linnaeus provided his color-coded classification of humankind, he therefore could not rely on complexion alone, but had to include ›cultural and political judgements, in addition to describing generic bodies‹.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, subsequent ›race‹ theories, either by Scottish moral philosophy or French environmentalism, by empiricists or rationalists, applied the concept of ›race‹ not only to phenotypical features, but ›connected them to mental abilities and cultural peculiarities and passed off the social categories they thus constructed as products of nature‹.<sup>41</sup> Consequently, Jefferson's flexible application of the term ›race‹ to Native Americans and African Americans is characteristic for an inherently fluid conception of identity that has to be examined with regards to the discursive context and the material conditions of contemporary social relations.

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<sup>38</sup> For Petty see Margaret T. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1964, pp. 419-422. For Bernier and the following see Thierry Hoquet, *Biologization of Race and Racialization of the Human*. Bernier, Buffon, Linnaeus, in: Nicolas Bancel, Thomas David, Dominic Thomas (eds.), *The Invention of Race. Scientific and Popular Representations*, New York etc.: Routledge 2014, pp. 17-32.

<sup>39</sup> Bruce Baum, *The Rise and Fall of the Caucasian Race. A Political History of Racial Identity*, New York etc.: New York University Press 2006, p. 57.

<sup>40</sup> Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race. Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture*, University of Pennsylvania Press 2000, p. 169.

<sup>41</sup> Wulf D. Hund, *Negative Societalisation. Racism and the Constitution of Race*, in Wulf D. Hund, Jeremy Krikler, David Roediger (eds.), *Wages of Whiteness & Racist Symbolic Capital*, Berlin etc.: Lit 2010, pp. 57-96, here p. 69.

Against the background of this checkered history of ›racial‹ thought, in which »pseudoscientific classification of persons based on race [...] gave greater legitimacy to racism«, the »new science merely reinforced old ideological notions«. <sup>42</sup> In a centuries-long process, the argument goes, ›race‹ only acquired its seemingly scientific meaning and articulated notions of superiority that have long been present in social relations, particularly in slaveholding colonies. As a widely accepted fact, the Jim Crow policies in the American South, that were justified by the scientific racism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, mirrored power structures that had come into existence through the mass importation of African slave laborers since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The systematic enslavement of Africans (and expropriation of Native Americans), however, was not from the outset justified in explicit ›racial‹ terms. By contrast, the history of colonialism rather supports the assessment that »›race‹ [...] is the child of racism« and as a modern construct rests on patterns of racist social exclusion that had been established long before. <sup>43</sup>

To assume that racism historically produced the pseudoscientific category of ›race‹, but also embraces earlier and later constructions of collective identities does away with anachronistic applications of ›racial‹ concepts to pre-modern societies and accounts for the historicity of contemporary modalities of racism despite their ever-changing appearance. Quite aptly, it has been stated that »we should not expect the ›racial discourse‹ of the Dutch in late nineteenth-century Java or among the LePenist constituency in turn of the twenty-first century France to reveal a common set of intentions, consequence, and/or themes«. Indeed, racist discourse constantly shifts and even posits itself against outdated positions, so that »racists in the post-modern era are encouraged not to see themselves as such«. <sup>44</sup> That different patterns of racist exclusion cannot be firmly attributed to certain historical periods, but always overlapped and were steadily reinforced, leads to the increasing recognition of

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<sup>42</sup> James H. Sweet, *The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought*, in: *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 54, 1997, 1, pp. 143-166, here p. 144.

<sup>43</sup> Antonia Darder, Rodolfo D. Torres, *After Race. Racism After Multiculturalism*, New York etc.: New York University Press 2004, p. 100.

<sup>44</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, *Racial Histories and Their Regimes of Truth*, in: Philomena Essed, David Theo Goldberg (eds.), *Race Critical Theories. Text and Context*, Malden etc.: Blackwell 2002, pp. 369-391, here pp. 379 (›expect‹), 381 (›postmodern‹). Even stronger, Alana Lentin claims »that the notion that we are post-racial is in fact, the dominant mode in which racism finds discursive expression today«, cf. Alana Lentin, *Post-race, post politics. The paradoxical rise of culture after multiculturalism*, in: *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2012, DOI:10.1080/01419870.2012.664278, p. 3.

multiple racisms, as a means to integrate systematically similar but differently rationalized exclusions of ›racial‹ and non-›racial‹ groups.<sup>45</sup>

That the mere historization of specific manifestations of racism cannot make up for the theoretical analysis of the underlying social practices becomes obvious with the example of historian Francisco Bethencourt and his account of *Racisms* since the crusades. Arguing that »classification did not precede action« and that the »theory of races was permeated by conflicting points of view«, which is why he »address[es] its subject in the plural«, Bethencourt avoids further reflection on the conception of racism. Consequently, his numerous historical examples only imply that racism is always »relational, placing specific groups in contextualized hierarchies according to precise purposes«, so that each manifestation of racism has to be treated as a singular occurrence, only vaguely connected to other instances through a common root in ethnic (later ›racial‹) prejudice.<sup>46</sup> In a somewhat similar sense, David Goldberg suggests to displace the »presumption of a single monolithic racism [...] by a mapping of the multifarious historical formulations of racisms«. Although he basically hints at the »transformations between successive racist standpoints assumed and discarded since the sixteenth century«, his approach does not elaborate on the possible overlaps and interrelations between multiple forms of racism.<sup>47</sup>

In an influential contribution to the debate, Kwame Anthony Appiah has proposed to identify »at least three distinct doctrines that might be held to express the theoretical content of what we call ›racism‹«. Besides the mere belief in different ›races‹ (›racialism‹), which allows each ›race‹ »its ›separate but equal‹ place«, he distinguishes between extrinsic and intrinsic racism, with the former being based on the assessment of allegedly empirical inferior qualities in other ›races‹ and the latter being characterized by the idea of the inherent moral inequality between the ›races‹,

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<sup>45</sup> This study holds that ambivalent logics are inherent to the very concept of racism, so that multiple racist modalities does not have to be treated as racisms, but constitute the flexible essence of racism.

<sup>46</sup> Francisco Bethencourt, *Racisms. From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century*, Princeton etc.: Princeton University Press 2013, pp. 3 (›classification‹, ›subject‹), 4 (›relational‹). For a critical perspective on Bethencourt's study, see Stefanie Affeldt, Malte Hinrichsen, Wulf D. Hund, (Review of) Francisco Bethencourt, *Racisms. From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century*, in: *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 55, 2015, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/afs/81630.pdf>.

<sup>47</sup> David Theo Goldberg, Introduction, in: David Theo Goldberg (ed.), *Anatomy of Racism*, Minneapolis etc.: University of Minnesota Press 1990, pp. xi-xxiii, here p. xiii. In his later writings, Goldberg introduces a more systematic divide of naturalist and historicist racisms, but still maintains the centrality of ›race‹ as fundamental for any kind of racism, cf. id., *The Racial State*, Malden etc.: Blackwell 2002, pp. 74 ff.

impervious to empirical evidence.<sup>48</sup> Starting with the emergence of ›race‹ in a ›racialist‹ form, however, Appiah's history of racism rests on an essentialist notion of ›racial‹ categories, which appear as possibly founded in reality and potentially unbiased markers of difference that were only misused in hostile racist adaptations. If ›race‹ is accepted as a product of racism, a non-racist ›racialism‹ is as impossible as the socio-psychological division between extrinsic and intrinsic racisms is inadequate to grasp the conceptual difference between, for example, Thomas Jefferson's beliefs in African Americans' physical inferiority and Native Americans irrevocable cultural backwardness.

Although many scholars still take the ›racial‹ thought of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a starting point and assume that plural racisms must have in common the idea that the »human race is divisible into distinct ›races‹, each with specific natural characteristics«,<sup>49</sup> the increasing discrediting of a biological understanding of ›race‹ in the second half of the twentieth century has led to the assessment of other forms of racisms, which have frequently been characterized as ›cultural racism‹. When Frantz Fanon described this variety of racism in the 1960s, he perceived it as substituting a »vulgar, primitive, over-simple racism [that] purported to find in biology [...] the material basis of the doctrine«. Cultural racism, by contrast, took into account the »memory of Nazism, the common wretchedness of different men, the common enslavement of extensive social groups, the apparition of ›European colonies« and did not only discriminate against the »individual man but a certain form of existing«.<sup>50</sup>

Fanon's interpretation still echoes through contemporary racism studies, suggesting that the »new cultural racism points to the urgency of comprehending racism and notions of race as changing and historically situated within particular spatial contexts«.<sup>51</sup> Despite their valuable updates of racism theory, however, neither Solomos and Back nor their French counterparts Balibar and Wallerstein noticed that the supposedly new racism (or ›neo-racism‹), which »fits into a framework of ›racism without races« and »whose dominant theme is not biological heredity but the

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<sup>48</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, Racisms, in: David Theo Goldberg (ed.), Anatomy of Racism, Minneapolis etc.: University of Minnesota Press 1990, pp. 3-17, here pp. 4 (›doctrines‹), 5 (›separate‹).

<sup>49</sup> Steve Garner, Racisms. An Introduction, London etc.: Sage 2010.

<sup>50</sup> Frantz Fanon, Racism and Culture, in: Frantz Fanon, Toward the African Revolution. Political Essays, transl. by Haakon Chevalier, New York: Grove Press 1967 [1964], pp. 29-44, here pp. 32 (›vulgar‹, ›individual‹), 33 (›Nazism‹).

<sup>51</sup> John Solomos, Les Back, Race, Politics and Social Change, London etc.: Routledge 1995, 35 f.

insurmountability of cultural differences« not only followed on ›racism with races‹, but in fact predated it and never vanished.<sup>52</sup>

Even after the recognition of ›race‹ as a social construct and of possible ›non-racial‹ racisms, most scholars of racism still resort to the central importance of this »unscientific idea«. <sup>53</sup> Exemplarily, the editors of an anthology on racism hold that »even if there is no such thing as race, people have behaved as if there were«, and for another author »racism is conceptualized [...] as racial ideology«. <sup>54</sup> Despite the fact that it is a »slippery [...] concept«, fears prevail that without a close linkage to ›race‹, racism could no longer be recognized as »something specific that is located in the processes of racialization and the histories of racial science, colonial domination, slavery, genocide etc.«. <sup>55</sup> As has been argued, however, the category of ›race‹ is itself a racist construct, responding to social statuses and signifying cultural identities that were established its emergence and that continued to be fluid. In order to examine what racism is and which specific forms it can assume in different historical contexts, it is thus not sufficient to define its precise and ever changing objects (as various ›racial‹ groups or ethnicities), but to deal with the recurring social mechanisms of racist construction.

What this approach means for the historical research into racism can be demonstrated by reference to the framework of one of the preeminent scholars in the field. George Fredrickson in one of his seminal contributions to racism analysis introduces the distinction between explicit and implicit racism. The former, he says, is the »conscious belief and ideology« about the existence of separate ›racial‹ stocks, whereas the latter labels the »societal racism that can be inferred from actual social relationships«. In his view, explicit racism historically predated and anticipated implicit racism »by giving legitimacy to pre-existing patterns of racial subordination«,

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<sup>52</sup> Étienne Balibar, Is There a ›Neo-Racism‹?, in: Étienne Balibar, Immanuel Wallerstein (eds.), *Race, Nation, Class. Ambiguous Identities*, transl. by Chris Turner, London etc.: Verso 1991 [1988], pp. 17-28, here p. 21.

<sup>53</sup> Building on the spadework of Stephen Jay Gould and others, this was recently examined in Robert Wald Sussman, *The Myth of Race. The Troubling Persistence of an Unscientific Idea*, Cambridge etc.: Harvard University Press 2014. See also, Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, New York etc.: W.W. Norton 1981.

<sup>54</sup> Kevin Reilly, Stephen Kaufman, Angela Bodino (eds), *Racism. A Global Reader*, New York etc.: M. E. Sharpe 2003, p. 15; Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Introduction – ›Racism‹ and ›New Racism‹. The contours of racial dynamics in contemporary America, in: Zeus Leonardo (ed.), *Critical Pedagogy and Race*, Malden etc.: Blackwell 2005, pp. 1-36, here p. 18.

<sup>55</sup> Stephen Cornell, Douglas Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race. Making Identities in a Changing World*, Thousand Oaks etc.: Pine Forge Press 1998, p. 21 (›slippery‹); Alana Lentin, *Racism and Ethnic Discrimination*, New York: Rosen Publishing 2011, p. 84 (›specific‹).

which are today maintained by social practices that do not any more rely on a »conscious and consistent rationale«. <sup>56</sup> In his later work, Fredrickson suggests to add another stage, »culturalism«, for pre-racial modes of social exclusion, which he characterizes as the »inability or unwillingness to tolerate cultural differences«. Explicitly non-racist »if assimilation were genuinely on offer«, Fredrickson admits that »there is a substantial grey area between racism and ›culturalism««, as »culture can be reified and essentialized to the point where it becomes the functional equivalent of race«. Considering this reification possible for pre-modern societies in which »genealogical determinism [...] could turn racial when applied to entire ethnic groups«, Fredrickson evokes questions about the plausibility of his chronology of racism. <sup>57</sup>

If societies without any notion of ›race‹ or biological concept of mankind could produce modes of exclusion that were functionally equivalent to racism, it is hard to believe that the biologicistic racism (›explicit racism‹) of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the necessary precondition for the development of contemporary racist discrimination devoid of an explicit ›racial‹ doctrine (›implicit racism‹). Given the possibility of racist exclusion without, before and after ›race‹, it seems more likely that it was not ›explicit‹, but ›implicit‹ racism to come first, and to eventually yield the other as one of its specific manifestations. Pre-modern forms of ›culturalist‹ exclusion, thus, did not ›turn racial‹, but were already racist as they carried the essentialist characteristics of later racisms, although they did not operate with a notion of ›race‹. In fact, with regard to revolutionary America, Fredrickson recognizes that »societal racism did not require an ideology to sustain it so long as it was taken for granted« and therewith implicitly circumvents the chronology he suggested elsewhere. <sup>58</sup>

This societal dimension of racism is captured in several concepts, although most of them still cling to ›race‹ as the inevitable result of racism. Thus, George Boulukos has stated that slave societies initially produced the »›practice‹ of race«, which only later was later followed by the »›theory‹ of race«. <sup>59</sup> In recent years, several scholars

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<sup>56</sup> George M. Fredrickson, *The Arrogance of Race. Historical Perspectives on Slavery, Racism, and Social Inequality*, Middletown: Wesleyan University Press 1988, p. 189.

<sup>57</sup> George M. Fredrickson, *Racism. A Short History*, Princeton etc.: Princeton University Press 2002, pp. 7 f.

<sup>58</sup> Fredrickson, *The Arrogance of Race*, p. 202

<sup>59</sup> George Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave. The Emergence of Race in Eighteenth-Century British and American Culture*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 2008, p. 95.

have theorized this idea of ›doing race‹, assuming racism to be perpetuated by various social practices in hierarchically ordered societies, constantly reproducing ›racial‹ statuses.<sup>60</sup> In this vein, it has been noted that »whiteness is a performance of racializing activity«, in which »whites‹ ›do‹ race, as a social act«, and the category of ›race‹ was rendered to a »concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests« and which is constituted in a »social and historical process«.<sup>61</sup> This process, it is specified, has to be understood as necessarily twofold, because »race is a matter of both social structure and cultural representation«. Addressing the problem that »too often, the attempt is made to understand race simply or primarily in terms of only one of these two analytical dimensions«, the conciliation of discursive and material elements in the construction of ›racial‹ (and non-›racial‹) targets of racist exclusion appears as a central problem of racism analysis.<sup>62</sup>

As a social relation, racism (rather than ›race‹, which is sometimes treated like an -ism in its own right)<sup>63</sup> thus incorporates both ideological and structural dimensions, insofar as it emerges from socio-economic tensions and redirects social pressure to assumed ›others‹ that are stigmatized and stereotyped via cultural representations. This process of ›negative societalisation‹, however, is not limited to the negative

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. Hazel Rose Markus, Paula M. L. Moya, *Doing Race. 21 Essay for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, New York etc.: W. W. Norton 2010. This approaches go back to the gender studies assumption of »doing gender« in a »complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine ›natures‹«, cf. Candace West, Don H. Zimmerman, *Doing Gender*, in: *Gender and Society*, 1, 1987, 2, pp. 125-151, here p. 126. With regard to racism studies, Kristen Myers has hinted at the reification of the category of ›race‹ that is inherent to these models and suggested to speak about »doing racism«, as »racism consists of structural forces that constrain as well as enable certain categories of people according to the valuation of race/ethnicity at a given historical period«, cf. id., *Racetalk. Racism Hiding in Plain Sight*, Lanham etc.: Rowman & Littlefield 2005, p. 45.

<sup>61</sup> Steve Martinot, *The Machinery of Whiteness. Studies in the Structure of Racialization*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press 2010, p. 96; Omi, Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, p. 55.

<sup>62</sup> Omi, Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 125. In theoretical debates between post-structuralist and materialist approaches to racism, this contrast reverberates – with some scholars claiming that »racist opinions and beliefs are produced and reproduced by means of discourse«, while others continue to perceive racism »as a structure, that is, as a network of relations a social, political, economic, and ideological levels that shapes the life chances of the various races«, Ruth Wodak, Martin Reisigl, *Discourse and Racism. European Perspectives*, in: *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 28, 1999, pp. 175-199, here p. 175 f. (›opinions‹); Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, David Dietrich, *The New Racism. The Racial Regime of Post-Civil Rights America*, in: Rodney D. Coates (ed.), *Covert Racism. Theories, Institutions, and Experiences*, Leiden etc.: Brill 2011, pp. 41-67, here p. 41 (›structure‹).

<sup>63</sup> Thus, Patrick Wolfe explicitly states that the ›term ›racism‹ seems redundant, since race already is an ›ism‹ [...] a fertile, Hydra-headed assortment of local practices«, id., *Traces of History*, p. 10. Therewith, however, Wolfe surrenders to the identity logics of the ›race‹ concept and obscures the various modalities of historical racism as well as the diversity of respective constructions of essentialized cultural, religious or natural difference.

construction and denigration of collective identities, but at the same time warrants for the coherence of heterogeneous societies through the symbolic inclusion of disadvantaged parts of the hegemonic in-group. Thus, »hierarchically organised societies have regularly developed legends of negative identity« that »allowed the subalterns to place themselves in one category with the dominant groups« and experience the uplifting effect of racist exclusion.<sup>64</sup> As early as 1920, this effect of racism in class societies has been described by W. E. B. Du Bois in materialist terms, when he assumed that the »exploitation of darker peoples« was a »chance for exploitation [...] not simply to the very rich, but to the middle class and to the laborers«.<sup>65</sup> Framed in her adaption of Bourdieu's theory of class distinctions to contemporary racism, Anja Weiß has called this including dimension of racism, the »racist symbolic capital« that is experienced especially by »persons with a low level of economic and cultural capital [...] as a central and explicit dimension of their class position«.<sup>66</sup>

A historical investigation of racism, therefore, cannot rely solely on the analysis and deconstruction of discriminating representations of essentialized others, but has to take into consideration the social and economic conditions, from which these representations emanate and to which they respond. With regard to their material contexts, different discriminatory concepts can be examined for their including and excluding functionality and assessed for their racist quality. In fact, only the profound historical contextualization allows for the recognition of various and flexible racist logics and prevents the reification of specific (racial) constructs of identity. Consequently, racism has to be studied as social practice and discursive formation.

In light of these theoretical and methodological reflections, the object of this study is twofold. Firstly, in going beyond socio-psychological and »race«-centered approaches to racism, it aims at a comprehensive study of Jeffersonian racism, insofar as it integrates the complex interplay of racist exclusion and inclusion in Jefferson's thought and actions. Unlike many previous accounts, this investigation neither equates to the trivial question whether Jefferson »was« racist nor results in a value

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<sup>64</sup> Hund, *Negative Societalisation*, p. 85.

<sup>65</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *Darkwater. Voices from Within the Veil*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe 1920, p. 43.

<sup>66</sup> Anja Weiß, *Racist Symbolic Capital. A Bourdieuan Approach to the Analysis of Racism*, in Wulf D. Hund, Jeremy Krikler, David Roediger (eds), *Wages of Whiteness & Racist Symbolic Capital*, Berlin etc.: Lit 2010, pp. 37- 56, here p. 49.

judgement of his personality or achievements. By contrast, Jefferson's theoretical and practical contributions to the controversies on slavery, the processes of American nation-building and the formation of scientific racism are analyzed with respect to the underlying ambivalences of Enlightenment thought and the social tensions that unleashed in the age of revolutions. Jeffersonian racism is studied not as Jefferson's personal fallacy that contradicted his otherwise egalitarian thought, but as a pattern of social action that corresponded to contemporary social and political developments. Although the study embraces insights from Jefferson's private life and letters, his position as a public intellectual, planter aristocrat, legislator and executive leader makes him a nodal point of discursive and material practices in the early republic. Like the notion of ›Jeffersonian democracy‹, which has been studied as a set of economic, anthropological and political claims that far exceeded the thought and life of its namesake, Jeffersonian racism has to be understood as equally foundational to American intellectual history and social relations.

The second purpose of the study is closely entangled with the first and addresses the above-described problems of racism analysis. Through the profound historization of a transitional moment in the development of a racist (and, in this case, ›racial‹) social structure, it can be demonstrated that the prevalent focus on narrowly defined (biologistic) concepts of identity does not capture the flexibility of racist social constructions. Although the eighteenth-century shift towards ›racialized‹ discourses on human variety has to be acknowledged and, in fact, is critical for an understanding of Jefferson's stand on the issue, this recognition must neither overshadow the capacity of emerging ›racial‹ categories to include more traditional markers of difference nor the persistence of culturalistic patterns of social exclusion beyond naturalistic frameworks of ›race‹. The analysis of Jeffersonian racism thus serves as an argument for widening the perspective of racism analysis, focusing on its social functions of inclusion and exclusion rather than its ever-changing subject groups.

Following these research objectives, the study is organized in two main parts. The first section pays attention to the complex historical contexts and presents a thick description of Thomas Jefferson contact points with various forms of racist social exclusion. Moreover, the consulted secondary sources also allow for a simultaneous meta-analysis of existing accounts of Jefferson's racism. In the second section, Jefferson's involvement with racisms of the time is further scrutinized in light

of diverse theoretical approaches to racism and divided into three analytical fields: the plantation complex and Jefferson's position towards American chattel slavery, his role in the early U.S. imperialism and contributions to the formation of national identity, and his scientific assessments of human varieties in both culturalistic and naturalistic terms. Eventually, the study will come back to the divisive debates about contemporary assessments of Jefferson and discuss its findings with regard to the more general insights of historical racism analysis against persistent claims of ›presentism‹.



## II.

### The History of Jeffersonian Racism

The biography of Thomas Jefferson has long been recognized as larger than life. With reference to the founding father, historians have told stories of the American Revolution, of religious freedom, of education and citizenship, of slavery in the early republic, of architecture, science, and wine.<sup>1</sup> Jefferson has become a cipher for an era, for a class of politicians and for America in general.<sup>2</sup> One does not need to know the exact numbers of written biographies, shelf meters or, more up-to-date, Google-hits to realize that Thomas Jefferson's life and times have inspired countless authors of fictional stories and factual histories. A number of scholars have invested decades into researching the multi-faceted character of the founding father, his private life, political legacy or historical significance. Given the abundant amount of literature available, in addition to the voluminous writings of Jefferson himself, the present study is unlikely to extend the historical knowledge about the man and his time. Indeed, it is not even a historical study in the narrower sense. Although the case is presented in its temporal context and much of the consulted literature is written by historians, the two entangled quests of this work are primarily sociological: how can contemporary theories of racism contribute to a reassessment of Jeffer-

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<sup>1</sup> Besides countless monographs, this multiplicity of subjects can be seen in numerous anthologies on the founding father. The most relevant are Merrill D. Peterson (ed.), *Thomas Jefferson. A Reference Biography*, New York: Scribner 1986; Peter S. Onuf (ed.), *Jeffersonian Legacies*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia 1993; Frank Shuffelton (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Jefferson*, New York etc.: Cambridge University Press 2009; Francis D. Cogliano (ed.), *A Companion to Thomas Jefferson*, Malden etc.: Wiley-Blackwell 2012. See also Frank Shuffelton, *Thomas Jefferson. A Comprehensive, Annotated Bibliography of Writings about Him, 1826-1980*, New York: Garland 1983, and the amendments Shuffelton added.

<sup>2</sup> Most prominently the symbolic meaning of Jefferson has been phrased by his early biographer James Parton, assessing that »if Jefferson was wrong, America is wrong. If America is right, Jefferson was rights«, id., *Life of Thomas Jefferson*, Boston: James R. Osgood 1874, pp. iii, 165. On the usurpation of Jefferson through various political factions, see the recent book by Andrew Burstein, *Democracy's Muse. How Jefferson Became an FDR Liberal, a Reagan Republican, and a Tea Party Fanatic, All the While Being Dead*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press 2015.

son's thought; and what does the example of Thomas Jefferson add to the study of racism?

However, as the social scientific approaches to racism frequently suffer from ahistorical generalizations about seemingly transcendent ›racial‹ categories, or, equally problematic, overemphasize singular moments of transformation and revolution in their impact on social order, the book will first focus closely on the historical material, which will then be analyzed in the subsequent chapters. Selected according to the abovementioned theoretical presuppositions about racism, this material includes Jefferson's ›racial‹ observations, but also accounts for his attitudes towards American and deviant identities in general. As a first object of research, these will be studied with regard to the personal and professional environment of Jefferson, his political and scientific influences, and the discourses he engaged in. Secondly, as the discursive level constantly interacts with the social and economic conditions, which only constitutes racism as a social relation rather than a mere ideology based on prejudice, these conditions will be considered as both structurally facilitating Jefferson's concepts of inclusion and exclusion. Finally, Jefferson's political actions not only responded to, but also shaped the material world and, especially in form of his legal and military measures, serve as a third pillar of evidence regarding Jefferson's racism, revealing the political dimensions of racism in the context of American nation building.

The narrative provided in the following is derived mostly from secondary sources and combines widely undisputed information about Jefferson's life, thought and times. Also, from a present day perspective, the variety of discussed incidents and constellations clearly fall within the department of racism studies. It is all the more striking that, although these connections are widely accepted, the literature does not discuss Jefferson within a theoretical framework of racism. Consequently, there is a meta-analytic subtext to the following elaborations, hinting at omissions in early American studies. As indicated above, these shortcomings are closely related to definitions of racism that differ from the approach adopted in the present examination. That being said, the historical sketch itself tells something about how Jefferson's thoughts and actions can be critically reassessed with regard to their racist dimensions. Despite the fears of many commentators, this does not necessarily

mean to »overshadow his fundamental commitment to human rights and his great contributions to the history of freedom in the modern world.«<sup>3</sup>

The past and present controversies about Thomas Jefferson's biography suggest that the United States as a whole is on trial when this ›American synecdoche‹ is publicly challenged. Thus, in the course of historiography, not only his involvement with racism has been glossed over, but so have many of his other alleged personal or political deficiencies. Jefferson's relationships with women, as an example, especially those that had started after his wife's death, have been equally hushed up by historians and commentators. Fawn Brodie has shown how attempts to describe Jefferson as a »somewhat monkish, abstemious, continent, and virtually passionless president« resulted from stereotypical convictions about the founding father as a »supreme man of reason«, whose »heart was always rigidly controlled by his head«. Although Brodie supports her argument with some dubious psychoanalytic speculations about Jefferson and his biographers, she has a point in assessing that in the light of plentiful signs for Jefferson's sexual contacts with Maria Cosway and, most notably, Sally Hemings »historians and biographers [...] refuse to believe the evidence only because they do not want to«. She is also correct when she states that scholars do not always deliberately canonize Jefferson, but »glorify and protect by nuance, by omission, by subtle repudiation«.<sup>4</sup> Similar tendencies to whitewash or neglect unwelcome aspects of Jefferson's biography will be (more or less implicitly) addressed in the following. With the difference that Brodie attempted some sort of sexual liberation of the founding father, whereas the present study will try to explore the role of racism in his long life's journey.<sup>5</sup>

In keeping with the example of Jefferson's sexuality, there is irony in the fact that the same historians that in their ahistorical »Victorian sexual sensibility [...] have a hard time thinking about their leaders with their pants down«, as Clarence Walker put it, conversely attack the alleged ›presentism‹ in addressing the issue of

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<sup>3</sup> This is how Peter Onuf paraphrases »Jefferson's defenders« in id., *The Mind of Thomas Jefferson*, Charlottesville etc.: University of Virginia Press 2007, p. 207.

<sup>4</sup> Fawn M. Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson. An Intimate History*, New York etc.: W. W. Norton 1974, pp. 28-30.

<sup>5</sup> Thus I will also have to ask, how Brodie, just a couple of pages after her lament about the canonization of Jefferson in mainstream historiography, could fail to notice the uncritical glorification that is contained in her judgement of his relationship with Sally Hemings: »that he was a man richly endowed with warmth and passion but trapped in a society which savagely punished miscegenation, a man, moreover, whose psychic fate it was to fall in love with the forbidden woman«, *ibid.*, p. 32.

Jefferson's racism.<sup>6</sup> This argument, aptly phrased by Leonard Levy who »deliberately ignored the strain of racism in Jefferson's thought simply because he cannot be held responsible for having been born a white man in eighteenth century Virginia«, is accounted for in the historical focus of this study.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the first part of the biographical sketch will deal precisely with what it meant to ›be born a white man in eighteenth century Virginia«, a slave and land owning ›white« man that is. What it almost certainly did not mean – this much can be disclosed – is that it is the same as being ›white« in the United States of the one-drop rule and scientific racism. Although this is frequently implied in respective accounts.

Another line of arguments that biographers have often applied ›in defense of Thomas Jefferson« is not as simple to refute, but will also shape the following narrative and arguments: the much-cited complexity and opaqueness of his character. From his lifetime through to the famous volumes by Dumas Malone and Merrill Peterson, and the work of Joseph Ellis and others, the »very unanimity with which Jefferson biographers agree on the fact of [his impenetrability] suggests that it was an important aspect of his character«. <sup>8</sup> For almost the same amount of time, scholars and commentators tried to deal with this problem by dividing their subject into multiple personalities. Among others, Dumas Malone characterized Jefferson as »a half dozen men in one«, who is »endlessly interesting for just that reason«. <sup>9</sup> Decades later, John Saillant in his critical study approached Jefferson with a »synthesis of thought about the private man [...], the public man [...], the scientific man [...], and the slaveholder«, since »Jefferson was at least the totality of these four men«. <sup>10</sup>

As these divisions frame the studies that this biographical approach relies on, they, to some degree, also structure the following narrative. Whereas the first chapters address primarily the personal background of Jefferson's upbringing in colonial Virginia, Jefferson is subsequently examined within the scientific and political revo-

<sup>6</sup> Clarence Walker, *Mongrel Nation. The America Begotten by Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*, Charlottesville etc.: University of Virginia Press 2009, p. 71.

<sup>7</sup> Leonard W. Levy, *Jefferson and Civil Liberties. The Darker Side*, Cambridge etc.: Harvard University Press 1963, p. ix.

<sup>8</sup> Fawn M. Brodie, *Jefferson and the Psychology of Canonization*, in: *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 2, 1971, 1, pp. 155-171, here p. 161. Later it was especially Ellis' biography of the same name that fostered Jefferson's reputation as an »American Sphinx«, id., *American Sphinx. The Character of Thomas Jefferson*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1997.

<sup>9</sup> Dumas Malone, *Thomas Jefferson as Political Leader*, Berkeley etc.: University of California Press 1963, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> John Saillant, *The American Enlightenment in Africa. Jefferson's Colonizationism and Black Virginians' Migration to Liberia, 1776-1840*, in: *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 31, 1998, 3, pp. 261-282, here pp. 263 f.

lutions of his time, and eventually portrayed as a statesman involved with the various ›racial‹ dimensions of early American politics. Throughout these chapters, however, there will be no attempt to psycho-historically explore the depths of his character. The perspective of the present study will rather follow the approach of Winthrop Jordan, who declared that Jefferson' »enormous breadth of interest and his lack of originality make him an effective sounding board for his culture«.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, racism shall not be treated as a potential character flaw of the founder, as in trivial assessments restricted to his overt prejudices, but as a social phenomenon that in its various manifestations was mirrored and updated by Jefferson's thought and actions.

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<sup>11</sup> Jordan, *White Over Black*, p. 429. This nuanced and contextual reading is echoed in Andrew Cayton's apt summary of Jefferson as »neither the avatar of human freedom nor the ultimate hypocrite but an eloquent Virginian operating within eighteenth-century cultural parameters«, id., *Thomas Jefferson and Native Americans*, in: Francis D. Cogliano (ed.), *A Companion to Thomas Jefferson*, Malden etc.: Wiley-Blackwell 2012, pp. 237-252, here p. 238.

## 1. ›Cushioned by Slavery‹ Colonial Virginia

In the 1970s, Edmund Morgan assessed the prevalent »contempt for both the poor and the black« in a country perceiving itself as a »nation of equals«. Searching for the historical roots of these social and ›racial‹ inequalities, he asked whether »America [was] still colonial Virginia writ large«. <sup>12</sup> In his seminal study *American Slavery, American Freedom*, Morgan elaborated on the significance of Virginian colonial history for the establishment of racism and slavery in the later United States. Echoing Eric Williams' argument about anti-›black‹ racism as a result from the economic conditions of slavery, Morgan argues that still in mid-seventeenth century Virginia, »it might have been difficult to distinguish race prejudice from class prejudice«. <sup>13</sup> With poor English servants, Native American and African slaves initially all in similar low ranks of society, the fraternization of these underclasses increasingly posed a threat to the prospering colony. When Nathaniel Bacon united slaves and servants against the Governor and Native Americans in his rebellion of 1676, this incident at the time provided for the »first lessons in the social usefulness of racism« and illustrated the permeability of early skin color categories. Symbolically including ›black‹ and ›white‹ lower classes in the racist struggle for land and opportunities, racism also appeared as a possible way to »separate dangerous free whites from dangerous slave blacks by a screen of racial contempt«. <sup>14</sup>

In his interpretation, Morgan unambiguously advocated for the materialistic position in a long-standing debate about the relation of slavery and racism in the Old Dominion, equivalent to the chicken-and-egg dilemma of Atlantic history. <sup>15</sup> Using Virginia as the paramount example, historians have long been arguing whether imported ›racial‹ prejudices triggered the spread of African slavery in the colonies, or

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<sup>12</sup> Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom. The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia*, New York: W. W. Norton 1975, p. 387.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 328. For Eric Williams' classical thesis, see *id.*, *Capitalism and Slavery*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1944. For further reading, see among others William A. Green, *Race and Slavery. Considerations on the Williams Thesis*, in: Barbara L. Solow, Stanley L. Engerman, *British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery. The Legacy of Eric Williams*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 1987, pp. 25-49.

<sup>14</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, p. 328.

<sup>15</sup> For a comprehensive survey of this scholarly discourse, see Alden T. Vaughan, *The Origins Debate. Slavery and Racism in Seventeenth-Century Virginia*, in: *id.* (ed.), *Roots of American Racism. Essays on the Colonial Experience*, New York etc.: Oxford University Press 1995, pp. 136-174.

vice versa. Although this question will be discussed later in the present study, it has to be noted that the conflicting interpreters commonly conflate the existence (or non-existence) of racism with that of ›racial‹ thought. Thus, even Morgan, a proponent of racism as a product of social tensions, held that »race [...] was an ingredient« of slavery and that the »only slaves in Virginia belonged to alien races from the English«. <sup>16</sup> As outlined above, this often-read conflation of ›race‹ and racism frequently yields ahistorical assumptions or analytical fallacies.

The conditions of slavery and expansion in the colony of Virginia witnessed the spread of the ›race‹ concept only in the early eighteenth century and even then, the »colonial system and vocabulary of race did not immediately create a theoretical framework«. <sup>17</sup> Emerging at a time when »observable human differences could not be so conveniently split between innate biological and cultural categories«, the word was initially used to address differences that »could be physical, rooted in the body; cultural; religious; or a combination of all three«. <sup>18</sup> In contradiction to many widespread definitions of racism, the long absence of ›race‹ in colonial Virginia (and its lack of biologicistic substance) led some scholars to the assessment that in mid-seventeenth century »ethnocentrism was probably a more powerful force shaping human relations than racism«. <sup>19</sup> Just as Jefferson's flexible application of ›race‹ was met with suggestions »to shift the terms of discussion from race, the usual frame of reference, to ethnicity, a broader and more subtle strain of discourse«. <sup>20</sup> By contrast, the following chapter will trace the social (and potentially racist) conditions that led to the emergence and spread of ›racial‹ thought in Virginia along with the biography and family history of Thomas Jefferson. Illustrating the increasingly popular claim that ›race‹ is a product rather than the root cause of racism, this case study stresses the importance of historical contextualization to reveal the complexity of racism as a social relation.

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<sup>16</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, p. 315.

<sup>17</sup> Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave*, p. 11.

<sup>18</sup> Rebecca Anne Goetz, *The Baptism of Early Virginia. How Christianity Created Race*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press 2012, pp. 3 f.

<sup>19</sup> T. H. Breen, Stephen Innes, ›Myne Owne Ground‹. *Race and Freedom on Virginia's Eastern Shore, 1640-1676*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 1980, p. 97.

<sup>20</sup> Frank Shuffelton, Thomas Jefferson. *Race, Culture, and the Failure of Anthropological Method*, in: id. (ed.), *A Mixed Race. Ethnicity in Early America*, New York etc.: Oxford University Press 1993, pp. 257-277, here p. 258.

## 1.1 Jefferson and his Ancestors

Born into a colony whose social structure significantly resulted from racist struggles of the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, narratives of ›race‹ and identity were deeply embedded in Thomas Jefferson's family history. However, as Thomas Jefferson's relation to racism is generally abridged in most secondary sources, the respective experiences of his ancestors are almost completely missing in the literature. Like Dumas Malone, some biographers have argued that Jefferson »never spent much of his precious time on the remote subject of genealogy« to justify their disregard for the founder's heritage.<sup>21</sup> This assumption is contradictory to Jefferson's early efforts to acquire the coat of arms of his British family through a London agent in 1771. There surely is some irony in Jefferson's comment that he had »Sterne's word for it that a coat of arms may be purchased as cheap as any other coat«, but this can be interpreted with Alf Mapp as »the kind of deprecatory reference to genealogy still considered obligatory by many American gentleman as a preface to serious inquiry concerning their ancestors«. <sup>22</sup> Moreover, Jefferson is widely recognized as »America's most learned president, its best-read leader, [and] one of its most distinguished men of science«, and it can be assumed that the young Virginian showed a certain interest in his family's history and the conversations of the elders.<sup>23</sup>

From these conversations he might have learned that his great-grandfather of the same name, literature knows him as Thomas Jefferson I, bought a small parcel of land from William Byrd senior to establish the first small Jefferson plantation in Henrico County as early as 1682.<sup>24</sup> In addition to his real estate, Thomas Jefferson I might have also bought his slaves from William Byrd, who was among the wealthiest citizens of the colony and heavily involved in the African and ›Indian‹ slave trade.<sup>25</sup> Representing the diversity of seventeenth century slave labor, Byrd pur-

<sup>21</sup> Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, Vol. 1: *Jefferson the Virginian*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press 2005 [1948], p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> TJ to Thomas Adams, Feb. 20, 1771; Alf J. Mapp, *Thomas Jefferson. A Strange Case of Mistaken Identity*, Lanham etc.: Madison 1987, p. 12.

<sup>23</sup> Willard S. Randall, *Thomas Jefferson. A Life*, New York: Henry Holt 1993, p. 14.

<sup>24</sup> Malone, *Jefferson the Virginian*, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Pierre Marambaud, William Byrd I. A Young Virginia Planter in the 1670s, in: *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 81, 1973, 2, pp. 131-150, here p. 133. Documents from Henrico County prove Thomas Jefferson's residence in the area since 1677, the beginning of record. Although »not of the wealthiest planters [...], the Jeffersons] were people of respectable standing and comfortable estate«, *Letters and Papers, 1735-1829*, in: *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 23, 1915, 2, pp. 162-192, here p. 173. There was a ›Mr. Jefferson‹ in Jamestown as early as 1619, but there is no known connection to Thomas Jefferson I. The latter might as well descend from planter of the West Indies, who originated in Suffolk, cf. Mapp, *Thomas Jefferson*, p. 11.

chased and sold Native American captives from inter-tribal wars, but also traded in European indentured servants and was part owner of a slave ship for the transatlantic trade.<sup>26</sup> At the time of his death, Thomas Jefferson I had at least one indentured servant and several slaves, who were referred to as »negroes« in his will of 1698.<sup>27</sup> According to a note from Reverend Morgan Godwyn the »two words, Negro and Slave, [were] by custom grown Homogeneous and Convertible« as early as 1681.<sup>28</sup> However, this does not imply that in colonial Virginia at the turn of the eighteenth century the slave status was limited to a ›racially‹ defined group of Africans or African Americans. Up until the mid-eighteenth century, the word ›black‹ as the word ›negro‹ could include Native Americans. Even later, »persons having American ancestry, or the appearance of it, could be called negroes in Virginia«.<sup>29</sup>

Although around 1700 most unfree laborers in the Chesapeake region were ›black‹, planters still »preferred to employ English-speaking white servants« and also purchased ›Indian‹ field hands.<sup>30</sup> In seventeenth century Virginia, thus, Native Americans »became slaves alongside blacks« and, reduced to the same status, they exchanged and often cooperated with their African fellows.<sup>31</sup> Indentured servants, working under similar conditions, often also associated with the enslaved laborers, so that on Virginia's plantations »daily life meant frequent, casual, and unguarded exchanges among servants and laborers who were African, ›Indian‹, mulatto, or European«.<sup>32</sup> In 1705, consequently, the colony's slave code determined that »all Negro, Mulatto, and Indian Slaves [...] within this Dominion shall be held, taken and adjudged to be Real Estate«,<sup>33</sup> and elaborated the difference between free and unfree on the basis of religion and skin color. According to the law, those should be

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<sup>26</sup> Mary Tyler-McGraw, *At the Falls. Richmond, Virginia and Its People*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1994, pp. 32 f., 40.

<sup>27</sup> Susan Kern, *The Jeffersons at Shadwell, New Haven etc.*: Yale University Press 2010, p. 293n6. For the will of Thomas Jefferson I see *Records of Henrico County*, reprinted in *Notes and Queries*, in: *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 1, 1893, 2, pp. 199-212, here p. 208.

<sup>28</sup> Godwyn is cited in Goetz, *The Baptism of Early Virginia*, p. 1. The same quote can be found in Boulton, *The American Paradox*, p. 469.

<sup>29</sup> Jack D. Forbes, *Africans and Native Americans. The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Urbana: University of Illinois Press 1993 [1988], pp. 86 ff.

<sup>30</sup> Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves. The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800*, Chapel Hill etc.: University of North Carolina Press 1986, p. 40.

<sup>31</sup> Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint. Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry*, Chapel Hill etc.: University of North Carolina Press 1998, p. 479.

<sup>32</sup> Tyler-McGraw, *At the Falls*, p. 38.

<sup>33</sup> An Act declaring the Negro, Mulatto, and Indian Slaves within this Dominion to be Real Estate, in: *Acts of Assembly, Passed in the Colony of Virginia, From 1662, to 1715*, Vol. 1, London: John Baskett 1727, pp. 261-262, here p. 261.

slaves that were »imported [and] not Christian in their Native Country«. <sup>34</sup> Conversely, »Negroes, Mulattoes, or Indians, although Christians«, but also »Jews, Moors, Mahometans, or other Infidels« were not allowed to purchase Christian slaves, »except of their own complexion«. Differentiating religious from physical difference (›complexion‹), the first Virginian slave code bore witness to the rapidly changing structure of the slave population and illustrates how pre-›racial‹ modes of stigmatizing slaves according to religious attributions of unworthiness became entangled with notions of skin color and descent.

When Thomas Jefferson I established the slaveholding tradition of a Virginian planter dynasty, <sup>35</sup> his enslaved labor force was not necessarily defined by skin-color or African descent, even though ›racial‹ parameters of classifying humans were emerging. While the region witnessed the transformation »from a slave owning society to a [...] slave society«, Henrico County remained affected by the traditional enslavement of Native Americans. <sup>36</sup> At the same time, members of the Jefferson family began to occupy more important positions in the county's political structure. In 1718, Thomas Jefferson II, firstborn son of Thomas Jefferson I and grandfather of the later President, became the elected Sheriff of Henrico County, where not long ago »Virginia's Indian slave trade [had] centered«. <sup>37</sup> Until the early eighteenth century, the »system of Indian slavery [...] resembled [...] the Mediterranean enslavement of Europeans« and, thus, bore witness to the long process of establishing a ›racialized‹ form of plantation slavery in the American colonies. Still in 1730, »Anglo-Virginians easily lumped together Africans and Indians as associates of the devil« when Virginian legislature banned the testimony of »negroes, mulattos, and Indians« due to their alleged »base and corrupt natures«. <sup>38</sup> »Turn[ing] his eyes to the

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<sup>34</sup> An Act concerning Servants and Slaves, in: Acts of Assembly, pp. 305-314, here p. 305. For the following see *ibid.*, p. 307.

<sup>35</sup> Dumas Malone notes that Thomas Jefferson I was also mentioned as »one of ›ye surveyours of ye highways« in Henrico County records and was, thus, »establishing« another ›tradition in the family«, *id.*, *Jefferson the Virginian*, p. 7.

<sup>36</sup> Russell R. Menard, Making a ›Popular Slave Society‹ in Colonial British America, in: *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 43, 2013, 3, pp. 377-395, here p. 380.

<sup>37</sup> Owen Stanwood, Captives and Slaves. Indian Labor, Cultural Conversion, and the Plantation Revolution in Virginia, in: *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 114, 2006, 4, pp. 434-463, here p. 445; for the following see p. 439.

<sup>38</sup> Philip D. Morgan, Religious Diversity in Colonial Virginia. Red, Black, and White, in: Paul Rector, Richard E. Bond (eds.), *From Jamestown to Jefferson. The Evolution of Religious Freedom in Virginia*, Charlottesville etc.: University of Virginia Press 2011, pp. 74-107, here pp. 76, 99. Edmund Morgan emphasized that this double subordination of Native Americans and African Americans had a socially inclusive function already in their common enslavement, since it seemed »natural not only

virgin land west of tidewater« and maintaining the slaveholding tradition of his family, there is little evidence about the particular attitudes Thomas Jefferson II developed with regard to the ›racial‹ variety of the colony.<sup>39</sup> Taking into account his personal environment and sources about his contemporaries, it can safely be said that he and his peers dealt with respective questions on a regular basis.

As a ›gentleman justice‹, member of the colonial militia and owner of a racing mare, Thomas Jefferson II was »officially a gentleman«. <sup>40</sup> As such, he moved in the best circles and dined with Virginian greats like William Byrd II, son of the above-mentioned slave trader, founder of Richmond and one of wealthiest planters in the colony. Malone finds evidence for one of those meetings in Byrd's diary entry from October 21, 1711, but avoids speculations about the subjects of the assembled slaveholders' conversation.<sup>41</sup> However, just Byrd's entry for the respective date makes it seem very likely that not only »boiled beef«, but also issues of ›race‹ were on the table. Earlier that day, Byrd had been involved in the organization of a retaliation campaign against »Indians that had killed the people of Carolina«. Natives of the Tuscaroras were promised »40 shillings for every head they brought in of those guilty Indians and [...] the price of a slave for all they brought in alive«. Later at night, after he had returned to his plantation, he »asked a negro girl to kiss [him]«. <sup>42</sup>

Although the testimonies of William Byrd do not allow the direct conclusions about Thomas Jefferson's mind that Michael Knox Beran draws, his well-documented case suggests that the violent defense of the frontier and the daily evils of slavery were not alien to his peers.<sup>43</sup> In actual fact, it has been noted that »Byrd's

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for their founders but also for their fellow servants to lump them together in a lowest common denominator of racist hatred and contempt«, id., *American Slavery, American Freedom*, p. 330.

<sup>39</sup> Merrill D. Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation*, New York etc.: Oxford University Press 1970, p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> Malone, *Jefferson the Virginian*, p. 8.

<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Jon Meacham mentions that Thomas Jefferson's grandfather »once hosted Colonel William Byrd II, one of Virginia's greatest men, for a dinner of roastbeef and persico wine«, but also lacks critical comments, id., *Thomas Jefferson. The Art of Power*, New York: Random House 2012, p. 5.

<sup>42</sup> William Byrd, *The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1709-1712*, ed. By Louis B. Wright, Marion Tinling, Richmond: Dietz 1941, p. 425.

<sup>43</sup> Michael Knox Beran, *Jefferson's Demons. Portrait of a Restless Mind*, New York etc.: Free Press 2003, pp. 7 f. A more detailed study of accordance between William Byrd II and founding father Thomas Jefferson is provided by Kenneth Lockridge. In his comparison of the two's commonplace books, Lockridge finds both marked by misogyny and patriarchal rage, cf. id., *On the Sources of Patriarchal Rage. The Commonplace Books of William Byrd and Thomas Jefferson and the Gendering of Power in the Eighteenth Century*, New York etc.: New York University Press 1992; and id., *The Commonplace Book of a Colonial Gentleman in Crisis. An Essay*, in: Kevin Berland, Jan

way of life was not unusual in Virginia« and that a »typical day for Byrd [...] gives a sense of what life was like for the Virginia elite« in early 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>44</sup> On the meeting with Thomas Jefferson II, Byrd might also have talked about the night before, when he went out and »Jenny, an Indian girl, had got drunk and made us good sport«. <sup>45</sup> This could then have inspired a discussion about the general question of miscegenation, on which Byrd later claimed that a »sprightly lover is the most prevailing missionary that can be sent among these, or any other infidels«. Showing awareness of skin color differences, but contradicting later fears of contamination, Byrd would insist that »if a Moor may be washed white in three generations, surely an Indian might have been blanched in two«. <sup>46</sup> At a time when marriages between ›whites‹ and ›nonwhites‹ had long been illegal in Virginia, ›interracial‹ sex, especially if it occurred within slavery, was far from the taboo it became with the scientific racism of the nineteenth century. <sup>47</sup>

At the said dinner, Byrd could also have reported about the repeated disobedience of his slave Eugene and the measures he took to punish him. From 1709, when the man was »whipped for running away« and repeatedly had to »drink a pint of piss« for wetting the bed, to 1712, when Byrd »beat him severely« for falling asleep, the diary tells of continuous violence not only against this particular slave. <sup>48</sup>

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K. Gilliam, Kenneth A. Lockridge (eds.), *The Commonplace Book of William Byrd II of Westover*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2001, pp. 90-114, here p. 110.

<sup>44</sup> Edmund S. Morgan, *Virginians at Home. Family Life in the Eighteenth Century*, Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation 1952, p. 52. Meacham, *Thomas Jefferson*, p. 7. The ›typical day‹ Meacham chooses to illustrate the planters' way of life is, however, one on which Byrd only »threatens [his slaves] soundly but did not whip them«, although acts of physical punishments would not have been less ›typical‹.

<sup>45</sup> Richard Godbeer, *Eroticizing the Middle-Ground. Anglo-Indian Sexual Relations along the Eighteenth-Century Frontier*, in: Martha Hodes (ed.), *Sex, Love, Race. Crossing Boundaries in North American History*, New York etc.: New York University Press 1999, pp. 91-111, here p. 97. Godbeer states that it remained unclear ›how far the ›sport‹ went and to what extent Jenny was a willing participant«, *ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Citations from *ibid.*, p. 94. See also *id.*, *Sexual Revolution in Early America*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 2002, pp. 190-208; Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence. The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press 1973, pp. 213-222.

<sup>47</sup> Cf., among others, Louise Newman, *The Strange Career of Whiteness. Miscegenation, Assimilation, Abdication*, in: Leigh Boucher, Jane Carey, Katherine Ellinghaus (eds.), *Re-Orienting Whiteness*, New York etc.: Palgrave Macmillan 2009, pp. 31-43, here pp. 36 ff.

<sup>48</sup> Cited in David H. Fischer, *Albion's Seed. Four British Folkways in America*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 1989, pp. 401 f. Through distant members of his family, the name Byrd continued to be associated with racist Virginian politics up to the civil rights movement. From the 1920s, William Byrd's descendant Harry F. Byrd and his political allies formed the ›Byrd organization‹ (or, as critics referred to it, the ›Byrd machine‹) and dominated the region's Democratic Party for more than forty years. In 1956, Byrd organized »massive resistance« against educational reforms so that the »rest of the country will realize that racial integration is not going to be accepted in the South«. Cf. Jack Bass, Walter De Vries, *The Transformation of Southern Politics. Social Change and Political*

Sexual and other physical violence was experienced also by the ›white‹ servants of William Byrd II and ›black‹ slaves acted on the punishments up to forcefully attacking the master's wife. On another occasion, Byrd would even protect a female slave from punishment through his spouse, illustrating that »Jenny was clearly a part of their family and was affecting their marital relations«. With his multiple engagements in colonial expansion and slavery, however, Byrd exemplifies how colonial Virginian society was shaped by the emerging, transforming and constantly overlapping concepts of class, gender and ›race«. <sup>49</sup>

This was certainly also experienced by another influential family of Piedmont Virginia, the one of William Randolph,<sup>50</sup> the maternal great-grandfather of Thomas Jefferson, who came to Virginia around 1670. Descending from the British upper class and following his successful uncle to the colony, Randolph »occupied during the years of his residence in Virginia nearly every office of either prominence or financial worth in Henrico County«, including the position of Virginia's attorney general.<sup>51</sup> After taking over from his uncle as Henrico County court in 1674, William Randolph was a huge beneficiary of the redistribution of land that followed Bacon's rebellion in 1676 – an uprising during which lower-class Virginians (significantly supported by African American slaves) »learned their first lessons in racial hatred by putting down Indians«. <sup>52</sup> As the official overseer of the rebels' expropriation, he »got first pick of the confiscated properties«, and »purchased prime plantation land at modest prices from the estates of James Crews and rebel leader Nathaniel Bacon«. <sup>53</sup>

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Consequence Since 1945, New York, Basic Books 1976, pp. 339-368. Citation from Robert A. Pratt, *The Color of Their Skin. Education and Race in Richmond Virginia, 1954-89*, Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia 1992, p. 6.

<sup>49</sup> Mechal Sobel, *The World They Made Together. Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia*, Princeton etc.: Princeton University Press 1987, p. 148, for everyday life in eighteenth-century Virginian mansions see also pp. 127-153.

<sup>50</sup> The Randolph family was also closely connected to the Byrds. Particularly Isham Randolph, son of William and grandfather of Thomas Jefferson, spent much time on the plantation of William Byrd II and must have witnessed some of the atrocities documented in the planter's diaries. Thomas Randolph of Tuckahoe, a brother of Isham and founder of the plantation Thomas Jefferson spent his early childhood on, even served as a general overseer for William Byrd of Westover. See Malone, *Jefferson the Virginian*, p. 14; Jessie Thompson Krusen, *Tuckahoe Plantation*, in: *Winterthur Portfolio*, 11, 1976, pp. 103-122, here p. 103; Byrd, *The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover*, passim.

<sup>51</sup> William C. Torrence, *Henrico County, Virginia. Beginnings of Its Families, Part II*, in: *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 24, 1916, 3, pp. 202-210, here p. 209.

<sup>52</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, p. 328.

<sup>53</sup> Cynthia A. Kierner, *Scandal at Bizarre. Rumor and Reputation in Jefferson's America*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press 2004, p. 10.

Wealthy from »shipping, raising tobacco, and slave trading«, William Randolph was closely involved in the institutionalization of plantation slavery.<sup>54</sup> Evidently owning Native American slaves, his uncle's name is also mentioned among the early slaveholders, who purchased African slaves to belong to their heirs forever, even before Virginian laws codified lifelong bondage and the matrilineality of the slave status in 1662.<sup>55</sup> Sometimes referred to as »Adam and Eve of Virginia«, William and his wife Mary Isham had at least nine children, who married into the most prominent families of the colony and created a network that helped Thomas Jefferson in becoming the most distinguished member of this distinguished family.<sup>56</sup>

Isham Randolph, the maternal grandfather of Thomas Jefferson, was the third son of William Randolph and occupied many important posts related to the rising plantation economy of his colony. In Virginia he served as a member of a court in Goochland County, which in 1733 sentenced two slaves to death and one to »receive on her bare back twenty one lashes well laid on at the Comon whipping post«, while the same court discharged only the three slaves belonging to his brother William.<sup>57</sup> Having spent some years as a merchant and ship captain in England, predominantly in tobacco export but with likely contacts to the slave trade, Isham Randolph was sent as Virginia's special agent to speak to the House of Lords in 1732, when legislation in favor of Great British creditors was troubling the colonial planters. Although he could not stop the bill from being passed, he ensured that Virginia was perceived as the only colony that vehemently tried to »protect their real estate and slaves from seizure for any debts«. <sup>58</sup> A wealthy planter and landown-

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<sup>54</sup> Meacham, Thomas Jefferson, p. 6.

<sup>55</sup> For the Native American slave see, Stanwood, *Captives and Slaves*, p. 451. For Randolph's uncle's early purchase of an African woman see John H. Russell, *The Free Negro in Virginia, 1619-1865*, New York: Cosimo 2009 [1913], p. 35; *Some Colonial Virginia Records (Continued)*, in: *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 11, 1903, 1, pp. 57-68, here pp. 58 f.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Jefferson Randolph Anderson, *Tuckahoe and the Tuckahoe Randolphs*, in: *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 45, 1937, 1, pp. 55-86, p. 67; Malone, *Jefferson the Virginian*, p. 12. In 1782, Jefferson's correspondent Marquis de Chastellux noted that »[w]hen travelling in Virginia, you must be prepared to hear the name of Randolph frequently mentioned«, cited in Kierner, *Scandal at Bizarre*, p. 9, for another translation see, Mapp, *Thomas Jefferson*, p. 12.

<sup>57</sup> William L. Rose (ed.), *A Documentary History of Slavery in North America*, Athens: University of Georgia Press 1999 [1976], pp. 239 ff. After their execution, the court ordered that »the heads and quarters of Champion and Valentine [the two convicts] be set up in severall parts of the Country«, *ibid.* p. 240. His involvement in these cruel punishments makes Virginia Scharff believe that also against »his own slaves, Isham Randolph was a harsh master« and »ran his realm with a belief in the efficacy of terror«, *id.*, *The Women Jefferson Loved*, New York: Harper Collins 2010, pp. 11 (»harsh«), 13 (»terror«).

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Jacob M. Price, *The Excise Affair Revisited. The Administrative and Colonial Dimensions of a Parliamentary Crisis*, in: Stephen B. Baxter (ed.), *England's Rise to Greatness, 1660-1763*, Berke-

er himself, records prove that Isham's labor force was not limited to slaves, but divided between European servants and ›racialized‹ slaves, as is implied by his contract with John Newland, a »cordwainer and indented servant« who was to »be set free« after »four years« in which he had to »make two hundred and fifty pair of men's, women's, children, and negro shoes«. <sup>59</sup>

In Isham Randolph Thomas Jefferson had a family predecessor not only in plantation size, but also in a distinct fascination for botany and natural history. In 1738, five years before Thomas Jefferson's birth and a year before his parents' marriage, John Bartram visited Randolph on his Dungeness estate. <sup>60</sup> The famous Quaker naturalist, named the »greatest natural botanist in the world« by no less a figure than Carl Linnaeus, inspired Isham Randolph's »want of a penetrating genius in the curious beauties of nature« and on his visit to Randolph's plantation probably abstained from showing the dedicated opposition to slavery for which he was later praised in Crèvecoeur's ›Letters from an American Farmer‹. <sup>61</sup> More likely, Bartram might have shared with Randolph some of his early thoughts about Native Americans, whom he was to study for his later *Observations* and whom he made responsible for the early death of his father. However, it was not solely this alleged murder that explains »his ›failure‹ to appreciate the Indian« at least in the ›noble savage‹ fashion of his naturalist contemporaries, it was also his concept of civilization that made him »read lessons for man in the behavior of wasps and birds but not in the behavior of savages«. <sup>62</sup> Thomas Jefferson was born in the year following Isham Randolph's death and did not get the chance to discuss his naturalist observations

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ley etc.: University of California Press 1983, pp. 257-321, here pp. 277 ff., citation from p. 279; Miscellaneous Colonial Documents (Continued), in: The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 17, 1909, 3, pp. 263-278, here p. 264. On Isham Randolph's contact to the slave trade see Scharff, The Women Jefferson Loved, p. 5; Brodie, Thomas Jefferson, p. 44.

<sup>59</sup> Isham Randolph, Shoemaking in Goochland, in: The William and Mary Quarterly, 5, 1896, 2, p. 110.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Malone, Jefferson the Virginian, p. 15. Referring to Isham Randolph's interest in botany (and the land surveys of Peter Jefferson), Pamela Regis states that Thomas Jefferson was »born into a family interested in natural history«, id., Describing Early America. Bartram, Jefferson, Crèvecoeur, and the Influence of Natural History, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1999 [1992], p. 82. On the occasion of Bartram's visit in Dungeness, Peter Collinson, a London merchant who introduced Isham Randolph to the botanist, gave a vivid portrait of gentry lifestyle in colonial Virginia by stating that »these Virginians are a very gentle, well-dressed people, and look, perhaps, more at a man's outside than his inside«, cited in Sarah N. Randolph, The Domestic Life of Thomas Jefferson, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Charlottesville: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation 1947, p. 6.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Wolf Kindermann, Man Unknown to Himself. Kritische Reflexion der amerikanischen Aufklärung. Crèvecoeur, Benjamin Rush, Charles Brockden Brown, Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag 1993, pp. 38-41.

<sup>62</sup> David Scofield Wilson, In the Presence of Nature, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press 1978, p. 115, for further information on Bartram see pp. 89-122.

with his interested grandfather. Nevertheless, early scientific discourses about the nature and population of the American continent had made their way into family tradition and through the connection with the Jefferson branch became linked with their hands-on approach of surveying and opening the land.<sup>63</sup>

It was through his nephew William Randolph of Tuckahoe that Isham Randolph met a young planter and justice of peace in Goochland County, Peter Jefferson, who would marry his firstborn daughter Jane in October 1739.<sup>64</sup> Peter, whose elder brother Thomas had died on one of Isham Randolph's ships, was the most intimate friend of William Randolph and, building on the spadework of his ancestors, a distinguished member of the Virginian gentry.<sup>65</sup> A slaveholding and reputable tobacco planter with sizeable landholdings, Peter Jefferson had also made his way in the colony's politics and, despite his allegedly »quite neglected« education, anticipated his son's affiliation with science in his work as a land surveyor.<sup>66</sup> At the time of his death, Peter Jefferson held offices in church and militia, represented his county to the Virginia House of Burgesses and was »the first citizen« of the new-formed county of Albemarle.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, he owned two plantations worked by about sixty African or African-American slaves and, as a mill owner, he additionally employed hired workers and processed smaller farmer's produce, therewith »affect[ing] the agricultural ecology and economy of the region«.<sup>68</sup>

Early biographers of Thomas Jefferson have readily taken up his own narrative of being the frontier son of an uneducated self-made man, dramatically portraying the third president as a »man in whose veins mingled the two streams of blood which united have in all ages given to humanity its prophets and its priests and its kings, the plebeian red of Peter and the aristocratic blue of Jane; the progeny of

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<sup>63</sup> This resulted in the fact that, as Susan Kern notes, the »topics that most engaged the Jefferson children [...] were plants and books«, id., *The Jeffersons at Shadwell*, 220.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Malone, *Jefferson the Virginian*, p. 13.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Susan Kern, *The Material World of the Jeffersons at Shadwell*, in: *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 62, 2005, 2, pp. 213-242, here p. 214.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *Autobiography*, Jan. 6 - Jul. 29, 1821, in: *Founders Online*, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov>). If not indicated otherwise, the writings of Thomas Jefferson (TJ) will be cited according to this digitized edition of *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. by Julian P. Boyd et al., Princeton: Princeton University Press 1950-; and *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson. Retirement Series*, ed. by J. Jefferson Looney et al., Princeton: Princeton University Press 2004-.

<sup>67</sup> Malone, *Jefferson the Virginian*, p. 26. See also Kern, *The Jeffersons at Shadwell*, pp. 21 f.

<sup>68</sup> Kern, *The Jeffersons at Shadwell*, pp. 5, 9, 21 f. For the following see *ibid.*, p. 147, and, for more detailed information on the mill, pp. 151 ff.

manly force and womanly sweetness, of virile energy and feminine refinement«. <sup>69</sup> In actual fact, Peter Jefferson, although not born into quite the privileged position of the Randolphs, could rely on the social advancement of his ancestors and during his lifetime acquired the education and wealth to compile the modest library that for Thomas Jefferson built the »nucleus of his first collection«. <sup>70</sup> Among the forty or so volumes that Peter Jefferson owned and later bequeathed to Thomas was also a title that is named ›Bishop of Sodor and Man's Instructions for Indians‹ in his testament, but which was also known as *The Knowledge and Practice of Christianity Made Easy; or An Essay Towards and Instruction for the Indians* by bishop Thomas Wilson. <sup>71</sup> From Wilson's pamphlet designed »for propagating the Gospel amongst Indians and Negroes« the Jeffersons could derive some of the racist ideas that circulated European discourses in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. <sup>72</sup>

In the preface to a fictional dialogue between a Native American seeking god and a paternalistic missionary, Wilson introduces »Heathens in the darkest Corners of the Earth« who through conversion were to be saved from their »very brutish Passions«. Thus, religious instructions should be provided for the »Indians in the Neighbourhood of Georgia«, who are »capable of being civilized«, but also for the »dullest of Mankind« like the »very Hottentots«, »these ignorant, rude and unciviliz'd People«, the »Descendants of Ham and Canaan who, according to [...] ancient Prophecies, are become Slaves to Christians«. For »our Advantage [...] treated with so great Rigour in this World«, Wilson quotes the Lord Bishop of Gloucester, »we

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<sup>69</sup> William M. Thornton, ›Who Was Thomas Jefferson?‹ Address delivered before the Virginia State Bar Association, Aug. 12, 1909, Richmond: Richmond Press 1909, p. 10. See also Kern, *The Jeffersons at Shadwell*, pp. 2-5. In her studies, Kern provides archaeological evidence for the Jeffersons' elite status and therewith disproves traditional portrayals of Peter Jefferson as a representative of the »unlettered force« of the frontier, cf. Parton, *Life of Thomas Jefferson*, p. 3. For the persistent narrative of Thomas Jefferson's alleged dual heritage see Merrill D. Peterson, *The Jefferson Image in the American Mind*, pp. 248 f., 418 f. Still, Peter Jefferson is occasionally described as only a »moderately successful« and »self-reliant frontiersman«. See Ellis, *American Sphinx*, p. 26 (›moderately‹); Andrew Burstein, *The Inner Jefferson. Portrait of a Grieving Optimist*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press 1995, p. 12 (›self-reliant‹). Still in 2003, R.B. Bernstein assessed that his »early makeup [...] blended aristocrat and frontiersman«, id., *Thomas Jefferson*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 2003, p. 1.

<sup>70</sup> Malone, *Jefferson the Virginian*, p. 32.

<sup>71</sup> Scholars disagree on the exact number of books Jefferson inherited, cf. Burstein, *The Inner Jefferson*, p. 14; Kern, *The Jeffersons at Shadwell*, pp. 33 ff. On Wilson's book see Robert Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects. The Culture of Power in the South Carolina Low Country, 1740-1790*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1998, p. 129.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas Wilson, *The Knowledge and Practice of Christianity Made Easy or, an Essay Towards An Instruction for the Indians*, London: J. Osborn 1741, p. ii.

ought [...] to lay before them the Prospect of Rest and Happiness in another«. <sup>73</sup> Exemplifying the prevalence of religious arguments in eighteenth-century discourses of human difference, Wilson's pamphlet provides for more complex hierarchizations of ›cultivable‹ and inherently inferior branches of humankind incorporating parameters such as mental capabilities.

Although Thomas Jefferson in his later speculations about the inequality of human ›races‹ did not resort to religious concepts like the ›Curse of Ham‹, which had served as justification for the enslavement of dark-skinned Africans in medieval slave societies and was maintained by evangelical planters in the United States until the Civil War, <sup>74</sup> he must have been well aware of these traditional modes of discrimination. Moreover, the ›dullness‹, ›ignorance‹ and lack of ›civilization‹ that Wilson ascribes to Native American and African American ›heathens‹ are certainly reflected in Jefferson's ›suspicion‹ of ›blacks'‹ mental inferiority and Natives' cultural backwardness. Without applying the notion of ›race‹ to the human varieties he assessed, Wilson expressed a religious racism that clearly evoked some of the elements that soon became foundational for the emerging concept of ›race‹ – developed not least by a young reader he found in colonial Virginia.

Possibly based on some theoretical background, Peter Jefferson contributed to the practical exploitation of Africans in plantation slavery and indirectly prepared expulsion policies towards Native Americans, »whose landscape forever changed after it was mapped and claimed by Jefferson and his colleagues«. <sup>75</sup> Personally, Jefferson had already benefitted from earlier expansion policies, with his own plantation Shadwell located on land that was granted to the colonists by the Albany Treaty between the Iroquois Confederacy and Virginia in 1722. <sup>76</sup> As a land speculator and founding member of the Loyal Land Company, he actively participated in the further colonization of the Virginian frontier and benefitted from land sales but also from the returns for copper, timber and limestone. The company's search for Western lands and ultimately for the Northwest Passage to the Pacific Ocean must have been important issues in Peter Jefferson's social environment and most probably

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid, pp. ii (›Heathens‹, ›Passions‹), i (›Indians‹, ›capable‹), v (›dullest‹, ›Hottentots‹), xi (›ignorant‹), x (›Descendants‹, ›Slaves‹).

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham*; Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah's Curse. The Biblical Justification of American Slavery*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 2002.

<sup>75</sup> Kern, *The Jeffersons at Shadwell*, p. 149. For the following see *ibid.*, pp. 150, 159.

<sup>76</sup> Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians. The Tragic Fate of the First Americans*, Cambridge etc.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 1999, pp. 24 f.

»his son, young Thomas, was aware of the project too«, especially as three of his later guardians and his early teacher James Maury were also members of the Loyal Land Company.<sup>77</sup>

Whereas the male ancestors of Jefferson, although not discussed with regard to Virginian ›race‹ relations, regularly appear in the founder's biographies, there is a striking and uniform silence about the females, which probably echoes Jefferson's own ›reticence about the women of his family«. <sup>78</sup> Particularly about his mother Jane, who outlived her husband Peter by almost twenty years and witnessed her son's rise to national prominence, there is so little reference in Jefferson's writings that Merrill Peterson called her a ›zero quantity in his life«. <sup>79</sup> However, the material evidence from the Shadwell plantation and references by Jefferson's daughters indicate that she not only played an important part in the managing of household slaves and the establishment of distinctive consumption patterns, but also provides more general information about the gender roles in colonial Virginia.

Having grown up on her father Isham's plantation ›in a world of savage contradictions, where gayety and cruelty, fear and privilege sat uneasy side by side«, Jane Randolph represented the ambivalent culture of the Virginian tobacco gentry. <sup>80</sup> Literate and with refined tastes for sugar, tea and coffee, she was equally familiar with the social hierarchies of the plantation and supervised the guidance of fourteen free and enslaved ›children toward adulthood: slave children as servants and gentry children toward their roles of domination«. <sup>81</sup> Her role in the everyday operations of the plantation, which Thomas Jefferson's later wife similarly occupied during his times of absence, contrasted with his praise for American women's domesticity that ›denied [them] any role in politics or the management of the plantation«. <sup>82</sup> In fact,

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., pp. 30-33, citation from p. 32.

<sup>78</sup> This is how Dumas Malone explains Jefferson's scarce references to his mother, which for him make her a ›shadowy figure«, id., *Jefferson the Virginian*, pp. 37 f. With regard to Jefferson's mother, Harold I. Gullan examined that the silence about maternal influences was somewhat characteristic for Virginian elites of the time, making Jefferson's one of ›The Missing Mothers of Virginia« in the history of American presidents, id., *Faith of Our Mothers. The Stories of Presidential Mothers from Mary Washington to Barbara Bush, Grand Rapids etc.*: Eerdmans 2001, pp. 15-27.

<sup>79</sup> Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation*, p. 9. Among others, speculations about Jefferson's fundamental detachment from his mother are also contained in John Ferling, *Setting the World Ablaze. Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and the American Revolution*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 2000, p. 8.

<sup>80</sup> Scharff, *The Women Jefferson Loved*, p. 11.

<sup>81</sup> Kern, *The Jeffersons at Shadwell*, p. 57. For the consumption of tea, sugar etc., see *ibid.*, pp. 61 ff.

<sup>82</sup> Stephen E. Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage, Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West*, New York: Simon and Schuster 1996, p. 36. On Martha Wayles Jeffer-

Jane Randolph Jefferson was not only among the wealthiest females in the region, but also the principal overseer of the household slaves at Shadwell and, after her husband's death, responsible for the »preservation and perpetuation of her family's important social standing«.<sup>83</sup>

Beginning once more with Winthrop Jordan, there have been several psycho-historical attempts to evaluate the importance of Jefferson's mother for Jefferson's later attitudes towards women and sexuality, but also with regard to issues of »race«.<sup>84</sup> The misogynist excerpts in his commonplace book as well as his allegedly restrained sexuality are regularly explained with his troubled relationship to Jane Randolph Jefferson, described by one commentator as a »wealthy widow in control of her oldest son's resources but not of his youthful self-image or of his burning ambitions«.<sup>85</sup> Growing up in a »paternalistic society« in which »women were essentially breeders and housekeepers«, Jefferson supposedly suffered from reversal of traditional gender roles in the »matriarchy at Shadwell« after his father's death in 1757.<sup>86</sup> In fact, female domesticity remained for him an important trait of American culture and even served to compare various peoples. With regard to Jefferson's evaluation of women in Native American societies, Brian Steele points out that »gender [...] was more central to Jefferson's conception of American identity than we have hitherto supposed«.<sup>87</sup> As »it is civilization alone which replaces women in the enjoyment of their natural equality«, the »unjust drudgery« of Native American women was just typical for the cultural backwardness of their people and characteristic for »every barbarous people«.<sup>88</sup> For Jefferson, the »natural equality« of women only unfolded in submission to men. Consequently, he denied his mother's influence on his career and included a gender element in his ideas of »race« and nation.

In the first chapter of her famous volume on Thomas Jefferson's private life, which she devotes to the »semi-transparent shadows« that characterize the complex and supposedly impenetrable personality of the Virginian, Fawn Brodie complains

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son, Thomas Jefferson's wife, and her management of his plantation, see Jon Kukla, *Mr. Jefferson's Women*, New York: Knopf 2007, p. 74.

<sup>83</sup> Kern, *The Jeffersons at Shadwell*, p. 42. On her wealth, see *ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>84</sup> Jordan, *White Over Black*, pp. 461-469.

<sup>85</sup> Lockridge, *On the Sources of Patriarchal Rage*, p. 70.

<sup>86</sup> Jack McLaughlin, *Jefferson and Monticello. The Biography of a Builder*, New York: Henry Holt 1988, p. 47.

<sup>87</sup> Steele, *Thomas Jefferson and American Nationhood*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 2012, pp. 57 f.

<sup>88</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, in: *id.*, *Writings*, ed. by Merrill D. Peterson, New York: Library of America 1984, pp. 123-325, here pp. 185 f.

that »enormous amounts of research have gone into analyses of the intellectual sources of Jefferson’s revolutionary ideas«, but »no attention has been paid to the impact of his parents as energizing sources contributing to that rebellion«. <sup>89</sup> While this might be correct, as Jefferson in many ways followed in the footsteps of confident Virginian explorers such as his father and educated planters like the Randolphs, his ancestors also illustrate the »racial« scenery of plantation life in colonial Virginia and the structural conditions for Jefferson’s concepts of Native Americans and African Americans. From his birth and early childhood throughout his privileged education and in his early experiences as a lawyer, Jefferson played his part in the Virginian gentry and internalized established patterns of social exclusion that were to become increasingly challenged and reformulated only in the Revolution and its aftermaths.

## 1.2 Jefferson and his Early Life

Given the social background of slavery and expulsion, it seems almost cynical when a biographer finds that Thomas Jefferson »was born in one of the most beautiful parts of America in the season of its greatest beauty«. <sup>90</sup> His upbringing rather reveals the unintentional truth in Richard Beeman’s assessment that the »man who built Monticello was hardly one who wished to change the fundamental structure of the society that had been so kind to him and his forebears«. <sup>91</sup> In actual fact, this fundamental structure was not limited to the hierarchies of colonial government that he later attacked, but also included the internal inequalities of a violently expanding slave society. Whereas Jefferson got skeptical towards the former injustice during his college years in Williamsburg and ultimately became its most influential critic, he did not make the racist policies of expulsion and enslavement the subjects of his revolutionary efforts.

Born as the eldest son into his father’s frontier plantation in April 1743, Thomas Jefferson was socialized as in many ways distinguished from Native American visitors, the Virginian underclass and, most visibly, from the African American slave population at Shadwell. Early on, he saw slaves preparing his food, working in the fields and manufactories of his father and waiting on him in all kinds of everyday

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<sup>89</sup> Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson*, pp. 25f.

<sup>90</sup> Mapp, *Thomas Jefferson*, p. 10.

<sup>91</sup> Richard R. Beeman, *The American Revolution*, in: Merrill D. Peterson (ed.), *Thomas Jefferson. A Reference Biography*, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons 1986, pp. 25-46, here p. 26.

situations, thus learning about the »enforced differences between blacks and whites without being formally taught«. <sup>92</sup>

Despite his later concerns about the contamination of ›white‹ purity, Jefferson's plantation childhood included the most intimate contacts with ›black‹ slaves. Most likely, Jefferson was suckled by one of his father's domestic slaves, probably a woman called Sall, who bore a child in the year of his birth. <sup>93</sup> Sall and her fellow house slaves also accompanied the Jeffersons to Tuckahoe, the Randolph plantation Peter Jefferson managed after his friend William Randolph's death in 1745. This relocation of the family Thomas Jefferson later described as his earliest memory, with the telling role of a slave on horseback to whom he was handed up and »by whom he was carried on a pillow for a long distance«. <sup>94</sup> This episode together with Jefferson's deathbed lament about the position of his bolster that only his personal slave could understand vividly illustrates how he was »cushioned by slavery« throughout his entire life. <sup>95</sup>

His childhood experiences on the plantations at Shadwell and Tuckahoe in many ways inspired his later reasoning about slaves and slavery. Willard Randall, Henry Wiencek and others have noted that the critique he expressed in the *Notes on the State of Virginia* towards »inculcating the tyranny of slavery in the white child« was likely rooted in his memory of the everyday violence experienced by his father's slaves. <sup>96</sup> He himself was the child that, in his famous phrasing, watches the »parent storm [... and] puts on the same airs in the circle of smaller slaves«, and was hereby »nursed, educated, and daily exercised in tyranny«. <sup>97</sup> Additional evidence suggests that the young Jefferson witnessed the violent treatment of slaves and that his parents »treated and allowed their overseers to treat slaves according to what was commonly accepted among slaveholders«, including »whipping and collaring

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<sup>92</sup> Randall, Thomas Jefferson, p. 12.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Kern, *The Jeffersons at Shadwell*, pp. 49, 252.

<sup>94</sup> Randolph, *The Domestic Life of Thomas Jefferson*, p. 8; see also Malone, *Jefferson the Virginian*, p. 21

<sup>95</sup> Roger Wilkins, *Jefferson's Pillow. The Founding Fathers and the Dilemma of Black Patriotism*, Boston: Beacon Press 2001, p. 5. For the deathbed scene see Randolph, *The Domestic Life of Thomas Jefferson*, p. 369. The connection of the two episodes is also made in Bernstein, *Thomas Jefferson* (2003), p. 1.

<sup>96</sup> Randall, Thomas Jefferson, p. 12. Cf. also Henry Wiencek, *Master of the Mountain. Thomas Jefferson and His Slaves*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux 2012, p. 23. A similar interpretation is given in Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson*, p. 49.

<sup>97</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 288.

the people who worked under them.«<sup>98</sup> A runaway slave named Robin was announced by Peter Jefferson in 1751 and described as wearing an iron collar around his neck.<sup>99</sup>

Whereas these experiences are directly reflected in his later writings, other aspects of his childhood life contradicted his later assessment of African Americans' cultural deficiencies. In his reconstruction of Thomas Jefferson's early childhood experiences, Rhys Isaac conjectures about the influence of the »song, dance, and story« that represented the »imaginative universe of the numerous African-Americans whose labor provided the wealth and sustained the routines of the Jefferson and Randolph households«. Drawing on the example of Jefferson's brother Randolph, who later »used to come out among black people, play the fiddle and dance half the night«, suspicions about the young Jefferson being »at least dimly aware of spirit possession, of trance dances, and a whole distinctive set of ways of interpreting the world« remain speculative.<sup>100</sup> However, although he »den[ie]d the African part of his upbringing«, Jefferson witnessed an African American culture way beyond that »level of plain narration« he later regarded as the climax of »black« artistic expression.<sup>101</sup>

This contrast is strengthened by the close relationships Jefferson had with some of his slaves, for instance with his first personal slave Sawney and his long-time valet Jupiter. Other than his siblings, Thomas was not left with a slave roughly his age, but inherited by his father's will of 1757 the adult and trained Sawney to accompany the fourteen-year-old until his majority. As the most valuable slave in Peter Jefferson's inventory and his personal slave during many journeys through the colony, Sawney was destined to »help the young Jefferson learn to be a master«. <sup>102</sup> As one of the two so-called »mulattoes« Peter Jefferson left, he also bore witness to the presence of so-called miscegenation in Thomas Jefferson's familiar surroundings.<sup>103</sup> Sawney accompanied Thomas when he first left his parents' house to spend two

<sup>98</sup> Kern, *The Jeffersons at Shadwell*, p. 140.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. *The Virginia Gazette*, November 7, 1751, p. 3.

<sup>100</sup> Rhys Isaac, *The First Monticello*, in: Peter S. Onuf (ed.), *Jeffersonian Legacies*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia 1993, pp. 77-108, here p. 80. The quote about Randolph Jefferson is taken from Isaac Jefferson, *Memoirs of a Monticello Slave. As Dictated to Charles Campbell in the 1840's* by Isaac, one of Thomas Jefferson's Slaves, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press 1951, p. 51.

<sup>101</sup> Isaac, *The First Monticello*, p. 101; Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 266.

<sup>102</sup> Kern, *The Jeffersons at Shadwell*, p. 111.

<sup>103</sup> Lucia Stanton, »Those Who Labor for My Happiness«. *Slavery at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, Charlottesville etc.*: University of Virginia Press 2012, p. 9.

years at the plantation of his teacher, Reverend James Maury.<sup>104</sup> Throughout his teenage years, Thomas Jefferson remained Sawney's »ward as well as his master«, a bond that was only loosened when Thomas started to be served by a boy he had been familiar with for all his life.<sup>105</sup>

Jupiter's and Thomas Jefferson's lives were at the same time strikingly parallel and fundamentally different. As a »one year's child« with the master's heir, Jupiter's mother was most likely also breastfeeding young Thomas Jefferson. In early childhood, they played and went fishing together until in Jefferson's college days Jupiter became his companion's personal servant – a relationship that for Annette Gordon-Reed established Jefferson's »lifelong habit of associating with blacks in the most intimate circumstances«. <sup>106</sup> Even before Jefferson legally became Jupiter's master at the age of twenty-one (and the master of about thirty other slaves from the inheritance of his father), he accompanied him to school and was responsible for shaving and dressing the Virginian, for doing the shopping and for assisting him in all kind of situations.<sup>107</sup> Jupiter remained Jefferson's personal slave until 1774, when after his master's marriage he was replaced with a slave of Jefferson's wife's dowry.<sup>108</sup> At that time, Jefferson was already working on the site of Monticello and was planning a burial ground, including space for the »grave of a favorite and faithful servant«. <sup>109</sup> Remaining enslaved until his death in 1800 and »accompany[ing] Jefferson throughout most of the early ride into history«, Jupiter continued to occupy important positions in the plantation's social structure and Thomas Jefferson mourned about the decease of his lifelong companion in the ambivalent manner of the slaveholder: »I am sorry for him as well as sensible he leaves a void in my domestic administration which I cannot fill up«. <sup>110</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Randall, Thomas Jefferson, p. 21.

<sup>105</sup> Kern, *The Jeffersons at Shadwell*, p. 111.

<sup>106</sup> Annette Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello. An American Family*, New York etc. W. W. Norton 2008, p. 94. Isaac Jefferson refers to the condition of being a »one year's child« in *id.*, *Memoirs of a Monticello Slave*, p. 7. For the probable childhood companionship of Jupiter and Jefferson see, Stanton, »Those Who Labor for My Happiness«, pp. 107 f.; Wiencek, *Master of the Mountain*, pp. 32 f.

<sup>107</sup> Alf Mapp assesses for Jupiter that he was »as indispensable a factotum as Figaro«, *id.*, *Thomas Jefferson*, p. 53.

<sup>108</sup> Stanton, »Those Who Labor for My Happiness«, p. 108.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 58. See also Wiencek, *Master of the Mountain*, p. 22; Kern, *The Jeffersons at Shadwell*, p. 112.

<sup>110</sup> Ellis, *American Sphinx*, p. 24; Kern, *The Jeffersons at Shadwell*, p. 252; TJ to Thomas Mann Randolph, Feb. 4, 1800.

Slaves like Sawney, Jupiter and other domestic slaves were in many ways distinguished from the field hands working on the same plantation. Their accommodations in the home quarter at Shadwell were close to the master's house and their domestic work offered possibilities for earning some money and establishing networks beyond the plantation.<sup>111</sup> Punishments such as collaring and whipping can only be assessed for the slaves in the field quarters, where in 1770 a female slave belonging to Jefferson's brother Randolph was beaten to death by one of the overseers.<sup>112</sup> Other measures were applied to penalize disobedient slaves from the home quarter. When Sandy, a skilled shoe-maker, escaped the plantation, Thomas Jefferson announced the fugitive in the *Virginia Gazette* and sold him right after his return.<sup>113</sup> Even Jupiter, the slave Jefferson was closest with during his early life, was not allowed to carelessly contradict. Family tradition reports of an epic outburst by Thomas Jefferson with »tones and with a look which neither he nor the terrified bystanders ever forgot«, when Jupiter refused to carry out a certain task.<sup>114</sup> The domestic slaves, despite their privileged position, were always aware of their status and their position in plantation hierarchy, and Thomas Jefferson was raised to be the head of a family that included not only his relatives but also the slaves that worked the plantation and household.<sup>115</sup> Throughout his life, Thomas Jefferson embodied the paternalism of southern slavery, which included careful affection as well as penalization and subjugation and which constituted a bond between the omnipotent master and his disfranchised slaves.

Although he later also addressed Native Americans as his »children«, Thomas Jefferson's early contacts with aborigines were completely different from his experiences with the subordinate Africans and African Americans living on his family's estate. The manifold occupations of his father Peter Jefferson as surveyor, colonel of the militia and burgess made Shadwell a place of »cross-cultural contacts that suggest regular exchanges between colonists, slaves, and Indians«.<sup>116</sup> Thus, as Jef-

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<sup>111</sup> Cf. Kern, *The Jeffersons at Shadwell*, pp. 101 f.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 106 f.

<sup>114</sup> Randolph, *The Domestic Life of Thomas Jefferson*, p. 276; see also Meacham, *Thomas Jefferson*, p. 290.

<sup>115</sup> On Jefferson's referencing his slaves as part of his »family«, see Stanton, »Those Who Labor for My Happiness«, pp. 4-9.

<sup>116</sup> Susan Kern, *Where Did the Indians Sleep? An Archaeological and Ethnohistorical Study of Mid-Eighteenth Century Piedmont Virginia*, in: Maria Franklin, Garrett Fesler (eds.), *Historical Archaeology, Identity Formation, and the Interpretation of Ethnicity*, Williamsburg: Colonial Williams-

erson later remembered, the »great Ontasseté, the warrior and orator of the Cherokees [...] was always the guest of my father« and was most likely treated at least as good as the European American guests hosted by the Jeffersons at Shadwell. In fact, as regional records about intercultural exchanges suggest, the colonists used to recognize the hierarchies of Native American tribes and accordingly provided for accommodation and food. Occasionally, the Jeffersons might have had guests they »felt to be superior in status«, so that »Peter and Jane probably gave up their room, the best in the house, to the best guest«. <sup>117</sup>

Artifacts found in various parts of the Shadwell plantation show that the Jeffersons as well as their slaves owned items of Native American origin and displayed a considerable interest in aboriginal culture. In an area that had been inhabited by Monacans until the late seventeenth century and was frequently visited by ›Indian‹ travelers, these objects could have been collected nearby or brought to the settlers by Native American visitors. <sup>118</sup> For Susan Kern, however, Thomas Jefferson with his »lifelong passion for collecting and researching the artifacts of other cultures« is a »prime suspect for bringing home, and into the house, the artifacts of his native land's earlier inhabitants«. <sup>119</sup> In fact, Thomas Jefferson knew early on, where to find possible artifacts in close proximity to his father's plantation. As a child, Jefferson reported in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, he saw an ›Indian‹ group visiting a barrow near Shadwell and »staid about it some time, with expressions which were construed to be those of sorrow«. <sup>120</sup> It was in Monacan mounds and barrows like this, where archaeologists discovered shards and tools similar to those found at the Shadwell site. <sup>121</sup>

If the young Jefferson visited the gravesite to collect some of these objects and carried them home, cannot be safely said. However, it is well known that as an adult he came back to the barrow and showed little respect for this sacred place of an indigenous people. Looking for »such thing [...] as an Indian monument« for his description of Native Americans, Jefferson found no notable remain of »labor on a

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burg Foundation 1999, pp. 31-46, here p. 31. Similarly, Alf Mapp finds it »not surprising that Indians en route to the capital at Williamsburg paid their respects at Shadwell«, id., Thomas Jefferson, p. 17.

<sup>117</sup> Kern, *Where Did the Indians Sleep?*, p. 41.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>120</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, pp. 225 f.

<sup>121</sup> Kern, *Where Did the Indians Sleep?*, p. 35.

large scale« except for those barrows, of which he chose the most familiar to »open and examine it thoroughly«. <sup>122</sup> Without any »attempt to get permission from the kinfolk or descendants of the people buried in the mound«, Jefferson exhumed the bodies and carefully counted the bones he was finding. <sup>123</sup> Estimating »that in this barrow might have been a thousand skeletons« and assessing that the place was of »considerable notoriety among the Indians«, Jefferson finished his excavation with neither any »effort to rebury the bones [...], nor to restore the mound to its original appearance«. <sup>124</sup> Perhaps this later irreverence reflected lessons he had learned earlier in life, about Native Americans as deceasing peoples populating lands that ought to be colonized by the expanding settler society.

In 1757, when Peter Jefferson died, Thomas Jefferson became patronized by the five men his father appointed as executors of his will and guardians to his children. <sup>125</sup> Three of these were heavily involved in the land speculations of the Loyal Land Company, in which Thomas Jefferson, by the will of his father, had just become a shareholder. <sup>126</sup> Established in 1748, the Loyal Land Company was approved a grant of 800,000 acres west of the Blue Ridge Mountains, in a territory the colonies had bought from the Six Nations in the Treaty of Lancaster from 1744. <sup>127</sup> Led by Dr. Thomas Walker, a wealthy neighboring planter of the Jeffersons and one of Thomas Jefferson's guardians, the company explored the area and in 1750 mapped the Cumberland Gap, which »was known to a few white men« and later allowed a vast amount of settlers to cross the Appalachians and populate the region that was to become Kentucky. <sup>128</sup> Walker was Jefferson's »preceptor on the West and the Indians« and, together with the other guardians that were associated with the company, he ensured that »the West was in his thoughts from an early age« and as »nature writ large« maintained an »enduring fascination for him«. <sup>129</sup> However, the West remained not only an intellectual issue for Jefferson, but soon also inspired his economic interests. Although he has been claimed a »sworn non-

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<sup>122</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 223.

<sup>123</sup> Gordon M. Sayre, *Jefferson and Native Americans. Policy and Archive*, in: Frank Shuffelton (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Jefferson*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 2009, pp. 61-72, here p. 61. Cf. Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 224.

<sup>124</sup> Sayre, *Jefferson and Native Americans*, p. 62.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Kern, *The Jeffersons at Shadwell*, pp. 159-163.

<sup>126</sup> Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, pp. 33, 21.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 28 ff.

<sup>128</sup> Donald Jackson, *Thomas Jefferson and the Stony Mountains. Exploring the West from Monticello, Urbana etc.*: University of Illinois Press 1981, pp. 6 f.

<sup>129</sup> Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation*, p. 6.

speculator« who was »not appreciably involved in western speculation« and »did nothing« with the inherited share of the Loyal Company,<sup>130</sup> Jefferson invested in western territories in 1769 and therewith actively participated in the colonization of the American frontier.<sup>131</sup>

Jefferson's interest in the West was additionally fostered by Jefferson's early teacher James Maury, another dedicated member of the Loyal Land Company, with whom he lived and studied since 1758. Maury was one of the pioneers of Western expansion and as early as 1756 wrote about a project »in search of the river Missouri [...] in order to discover whether it had any communication with the Pacific Ocean«, a plan that anticipated the expedition of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark conducted during Thomas Jefferson's presidency almost fifty years later.<sup>132</sup> However, this early teacher was not only formative for the later president's explorer fantasies or his lifelong fascination with the classics, he probably also shaped some of the political opinions of the young planter, albeit unintentionally. As Jefferson later remembered, in between the lessons Maury frequently talked about colonial politics and especially railed against the Two-Penny Act by which Virginian authorities in 1758 limited the salary of clerics that was hitherto paid in tobacco and excessively increased in times of bad harvests and crop shortages.<sup>133</sup> This experience might have inspired Jefferson's wariness about colonial rule at an early age, since he might have realized from the conversations with his teacher that his class was paying for the motherland's clergy. Thus, before he was systematically introduced with the philosophical foundation of his opposition to monarchy, he knew about the economic consequences that the English reign had for his peers in Virginia.<sup>134</sup>

At the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, where Jefferson studied from 1760 to 1762, he met William Small, a professor from Edinburgh who intro-

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<sup>130</sup> Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation*, p. 44; Malone, *Jefferson the Virginian*, p. 252; Jackson, *Thomas Jefferson and the Stony Mountains*, 12.

<sup>131</sup> Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, pp. 36-40.

<sup>132</sup> James Maury to Moses Fontane, January 1756, cited in Jackson, *Thomas Jefferson and the Stony Mountains*, p. 8. Cf. Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, pp. 31 ff.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Michael Kranish, *Flight From Monticello. Thomas Jefferson at War*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 2010, p. 8. Later, in 1763, Maury as one of the plaintiffs against the changed legislation unsuccessfully opposed later revolutionary Patrick Henry who served as the lawyer of the opposing party, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 8 ff.

<sup>134</sup> However, as Dumas Malone notes, it was certainly not James Maury, as an Anglican reverend and »bitterly intolerant« man, who taught Jefferson his laicism and beliefs of religious equality, cf. Malone, *Jefferson the Virginian*, pp. 42-45, quotation from p. 44.

duced his student to the colonial elites and the Scottish Enlightenment and, according to Jefferson's own assessment, »fixed the destinies of [his] life«. <sup>135</sup> Small, who was »teaching practically everything« at the time Jefferson studied in the capital, was educated in Scotland in the heyday of its academia in the mid-eighteenth century and came to Virginia in 1758 to »challenge the Anglican clergy's vested power« in colonial education. <sup>136</sup> What he did not challenge but taught his students was the so-called Saxon myth, which proclaimed the »English Constitution and common law as essentially Anglo-Saxon legacies« and which Jefferson later used for constructing American liberalism as a logical consequence of the »American descent from Saxons by way of England«. <sup>137</sup> Moreover, soon after he took up his studies, Small »made [Jefferson] his daily companion« and brought him along to his regular meetings with Governor Francis Fauquier and George Wythe, who was to become Jefferson's legal mentor and »second father« later on. <sup>138</sup> As David Brion Davis notes, it was in this circle that Thomas Jefferson »acquired a deep and lifelong hatred of the institution that provided him with wealth, comfort, and power«. <sup>139</sup>

Francis Fauquier and George Wythe were slaveholders, but under the influence of Scottish moral philosophy increasingly developed critical attitudes towards the institution and belonged to the »many sensitive Virginians, [who] regarded Negro slavery with the deepest moral repugnance«. <sup>140</sup> Especially Fauquier, however, anticipated Jefferson's ambivalent position on the issue. Claiming the equality of »White, Red, or Black; Polished or Unpolished« because »Men are Men«, Fauquier publicly expressed his uneasiness with his slaveholding and in his will declared that his slaves »shall have liberty to choose their own Master and that Women and their children shall not be parted«. <sup>141</sup> However, other than George Wythe, Fauquier did

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<sup>135</sup> TJ, *Autobiography*, Jan. 6 - Jul. 29, 1821.

<sup>136</sup> Harold Hellenbrand, *The Unfinished Revolution. Education and Politics in the Thought of Thomas Jefferson*, Cranbury etc.: Associated University Press 1990, p. 26.

<sup>137</sup> Stanley R. Hauer, *Thomas Jefferson and the Anglo-Saxon Language*, in: *PMLA*, 98, 1983, 5, pp. 879-898, here p. 880 (»Constitution«); Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People*, New York: W.W. Norton 2010, p. 111 (»descent«).

<sup>138</sup> TJ, *Autobiography*, Jan. 6 - Jul. 29, 1821 (»companion«); TJ to John Tyler, Nov. 25, 1810 (»father«).

<sup>139</sup> David B. Davis, *Slavery in the Colonial Chesapeake, Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation* 1986, p. 34.

<sup>140</sup> David B. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823*, Ithaca etc.: Cornell University Press 1975, p. 169.

<sup>141</sup> Quotations in Terry L. Meyers, *Thinking About Slavery at the College of William and Mary*, in: *William and Mary Bill of Rights Journal*, 21, 2013, 6, pp. 1215-1257, here pp. 1233 f. See also Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty. A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 2009, p. 10.

not make any efforts to manumit his slaves and as lieutenant governor politically participated in the administration of the institution. Moreover, as former director of the South Sea Company and Fellow of the Royal Society, Fauquier had been involved in the economic exploitation of Africa and the Americas, and witnessed the pseudo-scientific classifications of these continents' inhabitants.<sup>142</sup>

George Wythe's efforts in favor of slave emancipation, by contrast, were so notable that they have been used as a counter-image to Jefferson's reluctant behavior on the issue. Especially Paul Finkelman highlights that the latter's »occasional mumblings about the evils of slavery pale in comparison to the eloquent attacks on the institution by Chancellor George Wythe« and brings up the question »how Jefferson, who studied under George Wythe, could have been so unable to act on his supposed opposition to slavery«. <sup>143</sup> In fact, Wythe manumitted some of his slaves in his lifetime and emancipated the rest of slaves through his will, where he additionally provided for their financial support.<sup>144</sup> However, his most cited action in alleged favor of general emancipation, his sentence in the court case *Wrights v. Hudgins* in 1805, according to Finkelman an attempt to »single-handedly [...] abolish slavery«, is no clear evidence of ›color-blind‹ abolitionism.<sup>145</sup> When he freed Jacky Wrights and her children from their former master Houlder Hudgins, Wythe argued that the enslaved woman was of pale complexion and ›Indian‹ descent, so that the enslavement of her ancestors had been unjust. Although he also referred to the general provision of the Virginia Bill of Rights saying that »all men are by nature equally

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<sup>142</sup> Cf. Malone, *Jefferson the Virginian*, p. 76. On the slave trade activities of the South Sea Company see Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery and the British Empire. From Africa to America*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 2007, p. 59; an account of early ›racial‹ science in eighteenth-century England can be found in Margaret Hunt, *Racism, Imperialism, and the Traveler's Gaze in Eighteenth-Century England*, in: *Journal of British Studies*, 32, 1993, 4, pp. 333-357. Moreover, Fauquier had experienced the European form of slavery during his life in England. Thus, he is featured in Hogarth's painting of the Wollaston family (1730), which also shows the family's ›black‹ servant in a typically exoticized make-over, cf. David Dabydeen, *Hogarth's Blacks. Images of Blacks in Eighteenth Century English Art*, Athens: University of Georgia Press 1987, pp. 84 f.

<sup>143</sup> Paul Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders. Race and Liberty in the Age of Jefferson*, Armonk: M.E. Sharpe 1996, p. 183; id., *Thomas Jefferson and Antislavery*, p. 212.

<sup>144</sup> Among the slaves he freed in the 1780's were Lydia Broadnax and her son Michael Brown. Historians speculate about Wythe's possible paternity of Brown, since both former slaves were later included in his will. According to the testament, Thomas Jefferson was supposed to take care of Brown's education, but Brown and Wythe both died after a poison attack by Wythe's nephew in 1806, who could not be convicted because Virginian courts did not accept the testimony of the surviving African American Lydia Broadnax. Cf. Julian P. Boyd, *The Murder of George Wythe*, in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 12, 1955, 4, pp. 513-542; Greg Carter, *The United States of the United Races. A Utopian History of Racial Mixing*, New York: New York University Press 2013, pp. 42 f.

<sup>145</sup> Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders*. p. 183.

free and independent« and, thus, ascribed the onus of proving a slave's status to the owner, Wythe's verdict was strongly based on the alleged ›racial‹ characteristics of the plaintiffs.<sup>146</sup> Nevertheless, even if Wythe's thoughts on ›race‹ remain debatable and his most notable activities concerning slavery occurred much later in his life, he was a critical influence on Jefferson's attitude towards slavery and inspired the much-cited anti-slavery activities Jefferson claimed for himself in his autobiography.<sup>147</sup>

During his time in Williamsburg, Jefferson was not only influenced by the eminent personalities he got to know, but also by the everyday life in a colonial town that was in many ways different from his experiences in the rural surroundings of Shadwell and Tuckahoe. As a small town compared to cities like Boston or New York, Williamsburg was the political rather than the economic center of Virginia.<sup>148</sup> As the location of the House of Burgesses, however, the capital was the »farthest most of the Virginian gentry ever travelled from their plantations« and was well known for its taverns and gambling houses.<sup>149</sup> With huge plantations surrounding the town, Williamsburg itself was characterized by domestic slavery and as a coastal meeting place of merchants and businessmen was the starting point for slave trade enterprises to Africa and the West Indies.<sup>150</sup> Moreover, as the site of the York County Court, allegedly insurgent or criminal slaves were convicted in Williams-

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<sup>146</sup> Cf. Alan Taylor, *The Internal Enemy. Slavery and War in Virginia*, New York: W. W. Norton 2013, p. 106; Joshua D. Rothman, *Notorious in the Neighborhood. Sex and Families Across the Color Line in Virginia, 1787-1861*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2003, pp. 220 ff.; H. Jefferson Powell, *A Community Built on Words. The Constitution in History and Politics*, Chicago etc.: Chicago University Press 2002, pp. 100-107.

<sup>147</sup> For a further reading of Wythe's ›racial‹ thought, see Melvin Patrick Ely, Richard and Judith Randolph, St. George Tucker, George Wythe, Syphax Brown, and Hercules White. *Racial Equality and the Snares of Prejudice*, in: Alfred F. Young, Gary B. Nash, Ray Raphael (eds.), *Revolutionary Founders. Rebels, Radicals, and Reformers in the Making of the Nation*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf 2011, pp. 323-336, esp. pp. 327 f., 331, 335 f.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. James H. Soltow, *The Role of Williamsburg in the Virginia Economy, 1750-1775*, in: *The William and Mary Quarterly* 15, 1958, 4, pp. 467-482, here pp. 467 f. It also was in Williamsburg where Jefferson sensed the first indications of an upcoming revolutionary spirit, as he experienced the corruptibility of colonial elites and listened to the early orations of Patrick Henry in the House of Burgesses, cf. Kranish, *Flight From Monticello*, pp. 19-27.

<sup>149</sup> Ronald L. Hatzenbuehler, ›I Tremble for My Country‹. Thomas Jefferson and the Virginia Gentry, Gainesville etc.: Florida University Press 2006, p. 32. Even Governor Francis Fauquier was infamous for his gaming and a French traveler reported that in 1765 the Williamsburg nightlife consisted of ›Carousing and Drinking In one Chamber and box and Dice in another, which Continues till morning«, cf. Malone, *Jefferson the Virginian*, pp. 77f.; *Journal of a French Traveller in the Colonies, 1765, I*, in: *The American Historical Review*, 26, 1921, 4, pp. 726-747, here p. 743.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. Thad W. Tate, *The Negro in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg*, Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation 1965, esp. pp. 79-92, 101-113. For evidence of Williamsburg slave trade activities see Soltow, *The Role of Williamsburg in the Virginia Economy, 1750-1775*, p. 471.

burg and some were hanged from the gallows during the time Jefferson spent in the capital.<sup>151</sup>

Nevertheless, from his arrival in Williamsburg Jefferson also had the opportunity to closely witness African Americans under circumstances he was not used from plantation slavery, as the town hosted one of the first schools for slaves and free ›black‹ children in North America, which was established in 1760 on the campus of College of William and Mary, the school that Jefferson started to attend in the very same year.<sup>152</sup> As a missionary enterprise, the Bray School, which was founded in Williamsburg on the recommendation of Benjamin Franklin, did not follow emancipatory goals but was dedicated to the »Conversion of the Negroes in the Plantations to Christianity«.<sup>153</sup> The religious orientation of the school possibly inspired Jefferson's later dismissal of African American cultural capacities, as he argued that »religion [...] has produced a Phillis Wheatley; but it could not produce a poet«.<sup>154</sup> With the controversial public discussions that accompanied the education of ›blacks‹ at a time when he was a frequent guest at the governor's table, Jefferson must have been aware that the Bray School spread literacy among the Williamsburg ›blacks‹ and ensured that slaves in the capital were notably better educated than those in rural Virginia.<sup>155</sup>

Beyond these ambivalent experiences with African Americans in Williamsburg, Jefferson's college years made him familiar with the cultural diversity of the colony. Among the Native Americans that regularly visited the capital was chief Ontasseté of the Cherokees, whom Jefferson's father had sometimes hosted at Shadwell. In 1762 Thomas Jefferson met the warrior in Williamsburg, just before he left with a

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<sup>151</sup> Cf. Kranish, *Flight From Monticello*, p. 18.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. E. Jennifer Monaghan, *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America*, Amherst etc.: University of Massachusetts Press 2005, pp. 264 f. On the location of the school see Terry L. Myers, Benjamin Franklin, the College of William and Mary, and the Williamsburg Bray School, in: *Anglican and Episcopal History*, 79, 2010, 4, pp. 368-393, here p. 392.

<sup>153</sup> Letter of John Waring to Benjamin Franklin, 1757, cited in Myers, Benjamin Franklin, the College of William and Mary, and the Williamsburg Bray School, p. 379.

<sup>154</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 267. For Jefferson's negative reception of Phillis Wheatley see also Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Trials of Phillis Wheatley. America's First Black Poet and Her Encounters with the Founding Fathers*, New York: Basic Civitas Books 2003.

<sup>155</sup> A brief account of the controversies surrounding the Bray School can be found in Myers, Benjamin Franklin, the College of William and Mary, and the Williamsburg Bray School, p. 381, who cites the school's trustee Robert Carter Nicholas' lament that »few of the inhabitants do join me in contributing towards supporting the School«. Consequently, the school was closed in 1774 after the death of schoolmistress Anne Wager, cf. *ibid.*, p. 370. Although the education of slaves was only outlawed in Virginia in 1831, the Williamsburg Bray School remained the last at least temporarily successful institution of its kind in the territory.

delegation to England, where Ontasseté met George II, was portrayed by Sir Joshua Reynolds and created some sensation in London. On the night before their departure, he held a farewell ceremony with his people in Williamsburg, which was attended by the nineteen-year-old Thomas Jefferson and which he vividly recollected in a letter of 1812.<sup>156</sup> As early as his college years, Jefferson thus developed his much-cited fascination for Native American culture, but he was also aware that the future of colonial expansion lay in their western territories.

In 1769, the year that Jefferson announced his fugitive slave Sandy and started his land speculations in the west, he successfully ran for the Virginian House of Burgesses in his home county of Albemarle and was elected to his first public office.<sup>157</sup> According to his own testimonies, he soon supported a bill concerning the voluntary manumission of slaves, which is frequently interpreted as an early evidence of Jefferson's antislavery commitment.<sup>158</sup> However, the proposal was neither his initiative nor radical in its attack of the institution, so that Jefferson rather »typified the Virginia political elite in his cautious approach to antislavery legislation«.<sup>159</sup> In fact, it was Jefferson's cousin Richard Bland who proposed a law that allowed planter's to privately release their slaves into freedom, a scheme that was »fully in accord with revolutionary-era notions of slaveowner's property rights«.<sup>160</sup> Still, Jefferson's support for the proposal placed him among the more progressive Burgesses, as the majority rejected the bill that was eventually passed in 1782.

As a young lawyer practicing in Albemarle and at the court of Augusta beyond the Blue Ridge Mountains, Thomas Jefferson was professionally involved in the frontier struggles for land and in disputes about the legal status of slaves and servants.<sup>161</sup> Most notable, and often cited as another example of Jefferson's supposed

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<sup>156</sup> Letter of Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, Jun. 11, 1812. Cf. Malone, *Jefferson the Virginian*, pp. 60 f. A romanticizing account of this episode can be found in Thom Hartmann, *What Would Jefferson Do? A Return to Democracy*, New York: Three Rivers Press 2004, pp. 24-28.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. Malone, *Jefferson the Virginian*, pp. 129 ff.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. Mapp, *Thomas Jefferson*, p. 53, who claims that »none of the Burgesses was more sensitive than Jefferson to the anomaly of their position as slave-owners contending for liberty as a God-given right«. Even Annette Gordon-Reed assesses that Jefferson »developed a reputation as an opponent of slavery« during his time in the House of Burgesses, *id.*, *Logic and Experience. Thomas Jefferson's Life in the Law*, in: Winthrop D. Jordan (ed.), *Slavery and the American South*, Jackson: University of Mississippi Press 2003, pp. 3-28, here pp. 12 f.

<sup>159</sup> Eva Sheppard Wolf, *Race and Liberty in the New Nation. Emancipation in Virginia from the Revolution to Nat Turner's Rebellion*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press 2006, p. 14.

<sup>160</sup> Finkelman *Slavery and the Founders*, p. 201.

<sup>161</sup> On Jefferson's early practice as a lawyer see Frank L. Dewey, *Thomas Jefferson, Lawyer*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia 1986, pp. 27-33. As Jefferson later recalled, Augusta Courthouse remained the most western place he ever visited himself, cf. Isaac, *First Monticello*, p. 81. For

antislavery involvement, is the case *Howell v. Netherland* of 1770 in which Jefferson represented Samuel Howell, who was held as an indentured servant on the ground of his mixed-race ancestry.<sup>162</sup> As the grandchild of a woman who was born from the illegitimate relationship of a ›white‹ woman and a ›black‹ man, Howell and his ancestors »had been trapped by laws passed in 1705 and 1723 to punish racial mixing«, and were forced into servitude until the age of thirty-one.<sup>163</sup> Arguing that this hereditary bondage was a »violation of the law of nature«, since »all men are born free«, Jefferson seemingly applied decided antislavery rhetoric, which however, as Dumas Malone noted, »carried no weight with a practical court in a slave-owning society«.<sup>164</sup> Following his reasoning, however, the case Jefferson made (and lost) was not solely about slavery nor was Jefferson's plea attacking the institution as such. Instead, Jefferson referred to the presumably light skin of his client and claimed that the continuity of his inherited servitude would »make servants of the children of white servants [...], which nobody will say is right«.<sup>165</sup> Thus, Paul Finkelman concludes that Jefferson talked »about race and status, not slavery«, and Clarence Walker interprets the Virginian's reasoning as evidence of his »belief in the whiteness of America«.<sup>166</sup> While this incident marks Jefferson's first explicit expression of a ›racialized‹ understanding of slavery, the defeated lawyer showed earnest sympathy for his client and gave money to the continuously indentured Howell – a gift that certainly facilitated his soon escape from Mr. Netherland's plantation.<sup>167</sup>

When Jefferson was working on the Howell case and cautiously addressed slavery as a young Burgess in Williamsburg, a fire destroyed his parental home and urged him to move the center of his own plantation from Shadwell to a mountain top close by, where the house he planned for his family had been under construc-

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Jefferson's involvement with land claims that were frequently linked to Native American titles, see Robert J. Miller, *Native America, Discovered and Conquered. Thomas Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, and Manifest Destiny*, 1<sup>st</sup> pb. ed., Lincoln etc.: University of Nebraska Press 2008 [2006], pp. 60 f.

<sup>162</sup> Dumas Malone, for instance, finds the »surest indication of his attitude [towards slavery] in his argument in *Howell v. Netherland*«, *Jefferson the Virginian*, p. 141n. 49.

<sup>163</sup> Gary Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution. The Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America*, New York etc.: Viking 2005, p. 115.

<sup>164</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *Argument in the case of Howell vs. Netherland*, in: *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. by Paul Leicester Ford, Vol. 1, New York etc.: G.P. Putnam's Sons 1904, pp. 470-481, here p. 474 (›all‹, ›law‹); Malone, *Jefferson the Virginian*, p. 122 (›weight‹). See also Kranish, *Flight From Monticello*, pp. 34 f.

<sup>165</sup> Jefferson, *Argument in the case of Howell vs. Netherland*, pp. 480 f.

<sup>166</sup> Finkelman *Slavery and the Founders*, p. 202; Walker, *Mongrel Nation*, p. 35.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello*, p. 100.

tion since 1768. Together with his mother and the domestic slaves, he moved to this »first Monticello« in February 1770, where they were soon to be joined by Martha Wayles, whom Jefferson married on New Year's Day 1772. During his courtship for Martha, Thomas frequently visited the estate of her father John Wayles, who was a wealthy lawyer, landowner and slave-trader. As a sales agent and debt collector for a slave trading company, Wayles was »looked down upon« even in Virginian slave society, but together with his partners profitably ensured the constant supply with »fine healthy slaves« from Africa.<sup>168</sup> When Annette Gordon-Reed states that Wayles »benefited enormously from every aspect of the institution of slavery«, she also refers to his private life, which he rather openly shared with his slave Elizabeth Hemings, who herself was the daughter of an English sea captain.<sup>169</sup> On the occasions of his visits on Wayles' plantation called »The Forest«, Jefferson, who »knew that race mixing between planters and their enslaved women occurred«, might have noticed the »bright-skinned young brothers and sisters« of his beloved.<sup>170</sup> Even if he did not notice the special relationship between Wayles and Hemings himself, he might have learned about it from his constant companion Jupiter, who also met his bride-to-be on the Wayles plantation and was surely informed about her master's liaison.<sup>171</sup>

When John Wayles died in 1773, his inheritance made Jefferson one of the wealthiest planters in Virginia and his stock of slaves the second largest in Albemarle County.<sup>172</sup> Among the inherited slaves were some that most probably had endured the Middle Passage just more than a year ago, but also members of the Hemings family, most notably Robert, who was to replace Jupiter as Jefferson's personal servant, and a one-year-old toddler named Sally, who would, some fifteen years later, accompany her master's daughter to France when Jefferson was serving as ambassador in Paris and become the object of his most intimate desire.<sup>173</sup> By the early 1770s, however, Jefferson was on the »path toward assured wealth, aristocrat-

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p. 68; Kranish, *Flight From Monticello*, pp. 37 f.

<sup>169</sup> Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello*, p. 69; cf. also Kukla, *Mr. Jefferson's Women*, p. 68.

<sup>170</sup> Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello*, p. 99.

<sup>171</sup> Cf. Stanton, »Those Who Labor for My Happiness«, p. 108.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. Gordon S. Wood, *The Ghosts of Monticello*, in: Jan Ellen Lewis, Peter S. Onuf (eds.), *Sally Hemings and Thomas Jefferson. History, Memory, and Civic Culture*, pp. 19-34, here p. 21. For an in-depth account of the Wayles inheritance, see Malone, *Jefferson the Virginian*, pp. 441-445.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. Stanton, »Those Who Labor for My Happiness«, pp. 107 (on Middle Passage), 169-180 (on the Hemings family).

ic standing, and extraordinary influence in the colony's affairs« not yet disturbed by rumors about private misbehavior.<sup>174</sup> In the following years, which for many commentators marked the »most creative period in the history of American political thought«, Jefferson laid the foundation for his international reputation both as a revolutionary mind and as a natural scientist.<sup>175</sup> With his *Declaration of Independence* and *Notes on the State of Virginia* published within less than a decade, the Virginian notable rose to global awareness and his opinions were much asked for in discourses of the time. Since public debates continued to revolve around questions of ›race‹, slavery and American identity, these issues remained of particular importance for Jefferson's reasoning.

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<sup>174</sup> Cf. Kranish, *Flight From Monticello*, p. 38.

<sup>175</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, Cambridge etc.: Harvard University Press 1967, p. 21. Similarly, Jon Kukla described the »decade that Jefferson shared with Martha« until the death of his wife in 1782 as »far and away the most creative period of his long and remarkable political career«, id., *Mr. Jefferson's Women*, p. 66.

## 2. *›Weaver of the National Tale‹* **Revolutionary America**

The decades of the 1770s and 1780s witnessed Thomas Jefferson's rise to international fame, shaped his political and scientific convictions, saw his most powerful writings and brought about the most pervasive shifts in his private life. In a timespan framed by the revolutions in the United States and France, to whose fundamental documents he significantly contributed, the planter aristocrat became the »most improbable hero of republicanism«, radically declaring that the »tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants«. <sup>176</sup> Simultaneously, as Enlightenment discourses triggered revolutions of political and scientific thought, Jefferson established his reputation as America's intellectual figurehead and the most learned of its founders. <sup>177</sup>

With regard to the American struggles for independence, Jon Meacham briefly captured the features that enabled Jefferson to become an iconic protagonist of the American founding: »It was a rich man's revolution, and Jefferson was a rich man. It was a philosophical revolution, and Jefferson was a philosophical man«. <sup>178</sup> In context of this study, it is tempting to add that »it was a racist revolution, and Jefferson was a racist man«. It would be misleading, however, to believe that his societal role as a wealthy slaveholder, his philosophical studies and his racism were separate factors that in combination produced Jefferson's complex contribution to American nation building.

Instead, the interplay of class and ›race‹ during the revolutionary period suggests that the social exclusion of Native Africans and African Americans was inextricably linked to the inclusion of religious minorities and marginalized status groups that were commonly constructed as the ›white‹ civilized people suitable to populate ›empire of liberty‹ Jefferson envisioned. In rationalizing the respective policies of assimilation and segregation, he could draw on the philosophical and scientific

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<sup>176</sup> Luigi Marco Bassani, *Liberty, State and Union. The Political Theory of Thomas Jefferson*, Macc: Mercer University Press 2010, p. 31 (›improbable‹); TJ to William Stephens Smith, Nov. 13, 1787 (›tree‹).

<sup>177</sup> An assessment that was most prominently expressed by John F. Kennedy's at a White House dinner for Nobel laureates, which he claimed to be the »most extraordinary collection of talent, of human knowledge, that has ever been gathered together at the White House, with the possible exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone«, cited in Beran, *Jefferson's Demons*, p. xviii.

<sup>178</sup> Meacham, *Thomas Jefferson*, p. 70.

spadework of European environmentalism and civilization theory. In order to assess Jefferson's idea of American identity and its racistly constructed others, it is thus not sufficient to read his *Declaration of Independence* or the *Notes on the State of Virginia*, but to locate these crucial texts within the social dislocations of the time that were not least dissolved with racism.

## 2.1 Jefferson and the American Revolution

Before Jefferson penned the two writings that essentially established the reputation of his political and scientific genius, he authored another »chief contribution to the patriotic cause«, which was published anonymously as *A Summary View of the Rights of British America* in 1774 and quickly disseminated in the American colonies and the British motherland.<sup>179</sup> Following the Boston Tea Party and the Virginian Burgesses' expression of solidarity with Massachusetts, the Assembly was dissolved by Royal Governor Lord Dunmore and temporarily replaced by a series of unofficial Virginia Conventions.<sup>180</sup> With his pamphlet prepared for the first of these meetings, Jefferson not only phrased an eloquent refusal of British imperial claims, drawing heavily on the metaphor of slavery to describe the conditions of colonized ›Americans‹.<sup>181</sup> He also declared the »abolition of domestic slavery [...] the great object of desire in those colonies«, which was only maintained through the monarch's »negative power« and despite Virginian efforts to »exclude all further importations from Africa«.<sup>182</sup>

In the very same text, Jefferson set the tone for an »Anglo-Saxonism [that] allowed white Americans to picture themselves as part of a [...] liberty-loving people, destined to expand across continents and oceans«.<sup>183</sup> In comparing the Saxon emigrants with the first British settlers of North America, Jefferson reasoned that Americans had cast off their obligations towards their home country by autonomously occupying another. In the following decades, this equation became an integral part of Jefferson's nationalism and contained the potential for restricting Amer-

<sup>179</sup> Cf. Malone, *Jefferson the Virginian*, pp. 180 ff.

<sup>180</sup> Cf. Kranish, *Flight From Monticello*, pp. 46-48.

<sup>181</sup> Cf. Peter A. Dorsey, *Common Bondage. Slavery as Metaphor in Revolutionary America*, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press 2009, pp. 113 f.

<sup>182</sup> TJ, *Draft of Instruction to the Virginia Delegates in the Continental Congress (MS Text of A Summary View, etc.)*, July 1774.

<sup>183</sup> Peter Thompson, *Aristotle and King Alfred in America*, in: Peter S. Onuf, Nicholas P. Cole, *Thomas Jefferson, the Classical World, and Early America*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press 2011, pp. 193-218, here p. 210.

ican national identity not only politically, against the supposedly Norman influence of British feudalism, but also culturally and ›racially‹. In fact, as various commentators have noted, his »fondness for the Saxon analogy was not a passing one« and »represented no abstract academic exercise for Jefferson«. <sup>184</sup> Instead, he based his early justification for American conquest and independence upon an Anglo-Saxonism that was to »become racialized in the conflict with waves of immigrants from Catholic Europe« in the 1820s and 30s, but already revealed its excluding potential during Jefferson's lifetime and before it was charged with the language of ›race‹. <sup>185</sup>

In the very same year of 1774, Thomas Jefferson started compiling another »pivotal document within the vast array of the written material that Jefferson produced« – the so-called Farm Book, in which he kept track of all kinds of information concerning his plantations. <sup>186</sup> Following the Garden Book that accounted for the varying seedtimes, weather conditions and resulting blooming periods in the devotedly tended gardens since 1766, this collection of tables and inventories accounted for the growth of his plantations and the increasing ›livestock‹, including nearly two-hundred slaves. <sup>187</sup> Besides births and deaths, it documented Jefferson's activities on slave markets, at which he »sold away any slaves who disappointed his expectations for obedience and work«. <sup>188</sup> Far more than a mere account book, however, the Farm Book also attempted to structure the social and private life of his slaves, as it provided for working schemes for the different age groups, and suggested housing concepts that facilitated the reproduction of his slave population through facilitating the initiation of marriages within the plantation. <sup>189</sup> Thus, at this time already, Jef-

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<sup>184</sup> Steele, *Thomas Jefferson and American Nationhood*, p. 33 (›fondness‹); Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny. The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism*, Cambridge etc.: Harvard University Press 1981, p. 21 (›abstract‹).

<sup>185</sup> Mattias Gardell, *Gods of the Blood, The Pagan Revival and White Separatism*, Durham: Duke University Press 2003, p. 35.

<sup>186</sup> Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello*, p. 15. Facsimiles are reprinted in *Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson's Farm Book. With Commentary and Relevant Extracts From Other Writings*, ed. by Edwin Morris Betts, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1953.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. Malone, *Jefferson the Virginian*, p. 163. For slaves as ›livestock‹ see Kenneth N. Addison, ›We Hold These Truths to be Self-evident‹. *An Interdisciplinary Analysis of the Roots of Racism and Slavery in America*, Lanham etc.: University Press of America 2009, p. 235.

<sup>188</sup> Taylor, *The Internal Enemy*, p. 57. For Jefferson selling slaves see also Cohen, *Thomas Jefferson and the Problem of Slavery*, pp. 517 f.

<sup>189</sup> Cf. Stephen B. Hodin, *The Mechanisms of Monticello. Saving Labor in Jefferson's America*, in: *Journal of the Early Republic*, 26, 2006, 3, pp. 377-418, here pp. 388 f.; Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and His Time, Vol. 3: Jefferson and the Ordeal of Liberty*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press 2005 [1962], p. 210. Recently, historian Henry Wiencek has caused some controversy by arguing that Jefferson developed a »4 percent formula«, as he was »making a 4 percent profit every year

erson oscillated between the moral and political struggles about slavery and the practical tasks of a planter, a constellation that still induces historians to call his position towards the institution contradictory or, at least, ambivalent. In fact, Jefferson remained strikingly consistent in both his utterances on slavery and in his private behavior towards the issue, representing what Robin Blackburn called a »planter abolitionism« that was driven by a racist vision for a homogeneous American society.<sup>190</sup>

While his *Summary View* was written for a Virginian audience, although it dealt with ›British America‹ as a whole, it was only at the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia that Jefferson »appeared unmistakably as an American«, so that henceforth »his story becomes an integral part of the history of the Republic«.<sup>191</sup> First in his drafts for the *Declaration on Taking up Arms* in the summer of 1775, which hailed the colonies as the »residence for civil and religious freedom« and their inhabitants' »attachment to liberty«,<sup>192</sup> and most prominently in his drafts for the *Declaration of Independence*, Jefferson theoretically backed the military actions of the newly formed Continental Army in the Revolutionary War. His drafting of the *Declaration of Independence*, however, did not only make him an »American hero«, but also »sustained the myth of the antislavery Jefferson«.<sup>193</sup> By including the final

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on the birth of black children«, and increasingly perceived slavery as an »investment strategy for the future« instead of a moral evil to be abolished. Additionally, Wiencek accuses Edwin Betts, the editor of the 1953 issue of *Thomas Jefferson's Farm Book*, of having censored a report by one of Jefferson's overseers about the whipping of young slaves in Monticello's nail factory, id., *Master of the Mountain*, pp. 8 (›formula‹, ›profit‹, ›investment‹), 118 f. (on Betts). In various commentaries, Jefferson scholars including Lucia Stanton and Annette Gordon-Reed have refused Wiencek's »breathtaking disrespect for the historical record and for the historians who preceded him«, and overall assessed that his »book fails as a work of scholarship«, Lucia Stanton, Letter to the editor: Wiencek misled readers on Jefferson's record, in: *The Hook*, Oct. 24, 2012,

<http://www.readthehook.com/108605/wiencek-misled-readers-jeffersons-record> (›breathtaking‹); Annette Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson Was Not a Monster. Debunking a major new biography of our third president*, in: *Slate*, Oct. 19, 2012,

[http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2012/10/henry\\_wiencek\\_s\\_the\\_master\\_of\\_the\\_mountain\\_thomas\\_jefferson\\_biography\\_debunked.single.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2012/10/henry_wiencek_s_the_master_of_the_mountain_thomas_jefferson_biography_debunked.single.html) (›scholarship‹). See also Jennifer Schuessler, *Some Scholars Reject Dark Portrait of Jefferson*, in: *The New York Times*, Nov. 26, 2012,

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/27/books/henry-wienceks-master-of-the-mountain-irks-historians.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>; Michael D. Hattem, *Jeffersongate. The Case of Henry Wiencek*, in: *The Junto*, Dec. 11, 2012, <http://earlyamericanists.com/2012/12/11/jeffersongate/>.

<sup>190</sup> For Jefferson's »planter abolitionism« see Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848*, London etc.: Verso 1988, pp. 126-128. Since he does not engage with the racist dimension of Jeffersonian thought, Blackburn finds that Jefferson's stance on slavery was evolving from revolutionary opposition to later restraint.

<sup>191</sup> Malone, *Jefferson the Virginian*, p. 201.

<sup>192</sup> TJ, I. *Jefferson's Composition Draft*, Jun. 26 - Jul. 6, 1775.

<sup>193</sup> Peterson, *The Jefferson Image in the American Mind*, p. 273 (›American hero‹); Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders*, p. 139 (›antislavery‹).

document and his original draft to his autobiography in the 1820s, he additionally made this text the »single most revealing case study in Jefferson's efforts to control his posthumous legacy«,<sup>194</sup> which, consequently, makes it a crucial document for an understanding of his political thought. As especially the *Declaration's* references to slavery and slave trade, which were not approved by the delegates, and its brief treatment of Native Americans as »merciless savages« will be part of later discussions, it will now be focused on the historical context of its development and on the models Jefferson followed.<sup>195</sup>

As Eva Sheppard Wolf demonstrates in her discussion of Mason's *Virginia Declaration of Rights* and the controversies it caused about the legitimacy of slavery, the institution was already »tied to a system of race« by 1776, which legally defined people of African descent as »lesser people with lesser rights«. <sup>196</sup> Thus, it was crucial for the slaveholding delegates of the Constitutional Convention to adapt Mason's initial draft of all men »born equally free« with two important changes. Firstly, they replaced every man's »birthright« with a more theoretical »natural right«, which, secondly, only unfolded »when they enter into a state of society«. <sup>197</sup> Especially with this latter amendment, the document, which was accepted only three weeks prior to the July 4<sup>th</sup> and significantly inspired the wording of Jefferson's *Declaration*, »excluded a large class of people and, without actually using the word white, racialized the rights Virginians declared to be the basis of their government«. <sup>198</sup> Explicitly »pointing out that enslaved Virginians were simply not members of the civil society« (and at least facilitating the exclusion of other groups also), the *Virginia Declaration of Rights* served as a role model for Jefferson's theoretical conciliation of universal values such as equality and liberty, on which American independence was mor-

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<sup>194</sup> Cogliano, Thomas Jefferson, p. 140.

<sup>195</sup> In February 1776, Thomas Paine in his *Common Sense* accused the King and the British Parliament to be »that barbarous and hellish power, which hath stirred up the Indians and Negroes to destroy us«, therewith anticipating Jefferson's respective claims in the *Declaration*, id., *Common Sense*, Philadelphia: W. and T. Bradford 1776, p. 57. Similar formulations can also be found in other writings of the pre-revolution era, cf. Dorsey, *Common Bondage*, pp. 138 f.

<sup>196</sup> Wolf, *Race and Liberty in the New Nation*, p. 2.

<sup>197</sup> John Dinan, *The Virginia State Constitution*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 2014, p. 4. Cf. Paul Finkelman (ed.), *Slavery and the Law*, Lanham etc.: Rowman and Littlefield 2002, p. 10.

<sup>198</sup> Wolf, *Race and Liberty in the New Nation*, p. 5.

ally founded, and the maintenance of slavery, which remained the backbone of southern economy.<sup>199</sup>

In his draft for the Virginia Constitution, Jefferson also anticipated his famous accusations of George III and outlined the ›racial‹ dimensions of the struggle for independence by accusing the British of »endeavoring to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers the merciless Indian savages« against the ›white‹ settlers and even »prompting our negroes to rise in arms among us«.<sup>200</sup> The latter, he additionally perceived as a fatal consequence of British colonial rule, as the King was responsible for the introduction of slavery in the first place. This claim corresponded to a contemporary notion of slavery as a »root metaphor of Western political philosophy, connoting everything that was evil about power relations«, which made critique of the institution a vital part of the liberal ›American Creed‹ that was established during the Revolution.<sup>201</sup>

It was in this context, that ›white‹ abolitionists and ›black‹ activists elaborated the first colonization schemes for emancipated slaves. Plans that Jefferson adopted and cautiously promoted »from the 1780s until his death [...] as the best solution to the problem of slavery«.<sup>202</sup> In 1773, following merely theoretical suggestions for resettling ›blacks‹ as missionaries in Africa dating from the beginning of the century, the Northern ministers Samuel Hopkins and Ezra Stiles started to actually instruct two volunteering former slaves for a mission in Africa. Later assuming that ›blacks‹ had to be »unhappy, while they live here among the whites«, Hopkins gradually expanded his missionary concept into a general plan for ending slavery and transporting all freed ›blacks‹ to Africa.<sup>203</sup> Although »Hopkins and Jefferson differed sharply

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<sup>199</sup> Michael A. McDonnell, *The Politics of War. Race, Class, and Conflict in Revolutionary Virginia*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2007, p. 242.

<sup>200</sup> TJ, I. First Draft by Jefferson, bef. Jun., 1776. Jefferson's draft, written in Philadelphia during his service in the Continental Congress, arrived at the convention on such a short notice that only few excerpts were included in the final document, cf. Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation*, p. 99.

<sup>201</sup> Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*, Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press 2009, p. 21 (›metaphor‹). For the ›American Creed‹ as the political philosophy of revolutionary America see esp. Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma. The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, 2 Vols., New Brunswick: Harper and Bros. 1944, Vol. 1, pp. 3 f., and *passim*.

<sup>202</sup> Christa Dierksheide, *Amelioration and Empire. Progress and Slavery in the Plantation Americas*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia 2014, p. 37. On African American contributions to the early debates about colonization see Janet Duitsman Cornelius, *Slave Missions and the Black Church in the Antebellum South*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press 1999, pp. 160 f.

<sup>203</sup> Quoted after John Wood Sweet, *Bodies Politic. Negotiating Race in the American North*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press 2003, p. 331. On Hopkins' colonization plans see also James Sidbury, *Becoming African in America. Race and Nation in the Early Black Atlantic*, Oxford etc.:

on many points of racial ideology«, as the cleric would not have approved the possibility of naturally different ›races‹, his spadework inspired Jefferson and his political allies to propose a plan for gradual emancipation in Virginia. Prepared between 1776 and 1779, the Virginian concept wanted to free all slaves in the territory, provide for their education and, eventually, »declare them a free and independent people« – albeit outside the national borders. In return, »an equal number of white inhabitants« was to be imported to close the gap in the American workforce and to »contribute to an all-white nation« Jefferson envisioned.<sup>204</sup>

In the years between the *Declaration of Independence* and his first term as governor in 1779, Jefferson was heading a committee to revise the Virginian laws, a time that Dumas Malone described as »his most creative period as a statesman«. Trying to live up to the rhetoric of his revolutionary writings, Jefferson perceived himself as a »political architect, looking to the future, not a short-range reformer« and wanted to become the »weaver of the national tale« in practice, not merely in theory.<sup>205</sup> In this light, his emancipation scheme, which was never formally proposed in parliament, was linked to the land reforms he had suggested earlier in his draft for the Virginian Constitution and continued to deal with in subsequent initiatives. While his eventually successful attacks on entails and primogeniture addressed only the most obvious remains of feudalism in the Old Dominion, his earlier constitutional proposition, which was not included in the final document, aimed for more fundamental social change, by granting »50 acres of land [...] to every person not owning nor having ever owned that quantity of lands«.<sup>206</sup>

Still, Jefferson was »never an advocate for economic equality« and did not propose a redistribution of property in this or later concepts. This being said, his plans were clearly dedicated to the advancement of smallholders, which he perceived as the »avatars of their [...] Anglo-Saxon ›ancestors‹ – holding their small parcels of land in full and free possession« and, equally important, representing the »solution

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Oxford University Press 2007, p. 78; Allan Yarema, *American Colonization Society. An Avenue to Freedom*, Lanham: University Press of America 2006, pp. 3 f.

<sup>204</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 264 (›declare‹, ›number‹); Carter, *The United States of the United Races*, p. 28 (›all-white‹). See also Wolf, *Race and Liberty in the New Nation*, p. 102.

<sup>205</sup> Malone, *Jefferson the Virginian*, p. 247 (›creative‹, ›architect‹); Steele, *Thomas Jefferson and American Nationhood*, p. 14 (›weaver‹). See also R. B. Bernstein, *Thomas Jefferson and Constitutionalism*, in: Francis D. Cogliano (ed.), *A Companion to Thomas Jefferson*, Malden etc.: Wiley-Blackwell 2012, pp. 419-438, esp. pp. 422 ff.

<sup>206</sup> TJ, I. *First Draft by Jefferson*, bef. Jun., 1776.

for disorder on the frontiers«. <sup>207</sup> Seemingly peaceful in his formal recognition of »Indian native« land possessions, which had to be purchased »on behalf of public« before it could be granted to yeoman farmers, Jefferson did not abandon his conviction that Anglo-Americans had legitimate claims to the Western lands. In fact, he only wanted to distribute the landholdings more widely and prevent further private purchases by agrarian barons, which he had justified in the *Summary View* in stating that »each individual of the society may appropriate to himself such lands as he finds vacant, and occupancy will give him title«. <sup>208</sup> As a side effect, his attempts to strengthen small-scale agriculture through the diffusion of property rights to lower class settlers also resulted in a »legislation that democratized slaveholding in Virginia«. <sup>209</sup> In the long run, these smallholders that owned only few slaves became the most devoted defenders of slavery, which illustrates not only the economic but also the social importance of the institution for the new nation. <sup>210</sup>

That African Americans were not the landowners Jefferson imagined became clear in the slave codes he revised for the Virginia House of Delegates. Not only did his proposed emancipation scheme demand the deportation of freed slaves, but his legislation on slavery generally aimed at the decrease of the free »black« population in Virginia and generally stands as an »ultimate denial of the benefit of law« for this part of the population. <sup>211</sup> Prohibiting the slave trade, i.e. the further importation of slaves, the lawmakers tried to limit the slave population and additionally outlawed free »blacks«, if they refused to leave the country. Thus, »negroes and mulattoes [...] shall be out of the protection of the laws« when they »come into this commonwealth on their own account« or »brought into this commonwealth and kept therein one whole year«. Equally outlawed were children of »any white woman [...] by a negro or mulatto« and former slaves, who were »emancipated [...] by last will and

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<sup>207</sup> Barry Shank, Jefferson, the Impossible, in: *American Quarterly*, 59, 2007, 2, 291-299, here p. 295 (»advocate«); John R. Van Atta, *Securing the West. Politics, Public Lands, and the Fate of the Old Republic, 1785-1850*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press 2014, pp. 26 f. (»avatars«, »disorder«).

<sup>208</sup> TJ, I. First Draft by Jefferson, bef. Jun., 1776 (»proprietors«); TJ, Draft of Instruction to the Virginia Delegates in the Continental Congress (MS Text of A Summary View, etc.), July 1774 (»vacant«). See also Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, p. 23.

<sup>209</sup> Dierksheide, *Amelioration and Empire*, p. 32.

<sup>210</sup> Fredrika Teute-Schmidt and Barbara Ripel Wilhelm have shown that »1,244 signatures on the [proslavery] petitions of 1784 and 1785 testified to a firm belief that emancipation, or even manumission, was not only inappropriate but inequitable and destructive to the welfare of society«, *ids.*, *Early Proslavery Petitions in Virginia*, in: *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 30, 1973, 1, pp. 133-146, here p. 137.

<sup>211</sup> David Thomas König, *Jefferson and the Law*, in: Francis D. Cogliano (ed.), *A Companion to Thomas Jefferson*, Malden etc.: Wiley-Blackwell 2012, pp. 349-363, here p. 362.

testament« and did not leave Virginia within the first year in liberty, while other forms of manumission were criminalized.<sup>212</sup>

All those measures, the dropped colonization scheme as well as the implemented penalties for free ›blacks‹ and land reforms can be interpreted as reactions to the American Revolutionary War, which – albeit not predominantly a ›racial‹ one – unleashed contemporary ›racial‹ conflicts.<sup>213</sup> Thomas Jefferson was not the first to »tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just«, as he elegantly described the constant threat of large-scale slave revolts in his *Notes* of 1785.<sup>214</sup> Especially Virginian revolutionaries had long been aware that slavery had produced a dangerous social pressure within their colony and in the summer of 1775 James Madison feared that they »shall fall like Achilles by the hand of one that knows that secret«. <sup>215</sup> Only a couple of months later, Virginia's Royal Governor Dunmore proved his knowledge about this weak spot, and reacted to the revolting troops of his colony by famously proclaiming freedom for »all indented servants, negroes, or others, [...] that are able and willing to bear arms« for the cause of the British Empire.<sup>216</sup> Although Dunmore was immediately joined by only some hundreds of African Americans, the notion sank in »among Africans that [...] it was their freedom that settlers wanted to block and that London was on their side«. In the following years, free ›blacks‹ in various colonies joined the Royal troops and in the southern states alone, slaves in the tens of thousands managed to defect to the British.<sup>217</sup> Storming the mansions of the former master class, slaves equipped themselves with the riches of the plantation owners, evoking parallels to the biblical Exodus.<sup>218</sup>

The revolutionary settlers reacted with brutal punishments of rebellious slaves and with the propagation of a »wishful legend: that the British lured away the slaves only to resell them in the West Indies, where most would suffer conditions far

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<sup>212</sup> TJ, 51. A Bill Concerning Slaves, Jun. 18, 1779. Cf. Cohen, Thomas Jefferson and the Problem of Slavery, pp. 508 f.

<sup>213</sup> This is profoundly shown in Gerald Horne, *The Counter-Revolution of 1776. Slave Resistance and the Origins of the United States of America*, New York etc.: New York University Press 2014. Horne provocatively challenges the notion of a ›Revolutionary War‹, as he perceives the American struggle for independence to be mainly a »counter-revolution of slavery«, *ibid.*, p. x.

<sup>214</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 289.

<sup>215</sup> Cited in Taylor, *The Internal Enemy*, p. 23. See also *ibid.*, pp. 23 ff.

<sup>216</sup> Quoted in McDonnell, *The Politics of War*, p. 134.

<sup>217</sup> Horne, *The Counter-Revolution of 1776*, pp. 221 f. Cf. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, p. 73. On the possible numbers of runaway slaves in the early revolution, see Sylvia Frey, *Between Slavery and Freedom. Virginia Blacks in the American Revolution*, in: *The Journal of Southern History*, 49, 1983, 3, pp. 375-398, here p. 376 f.

<sup>218</sup> This connection is made in David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage. The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 2006, pp. 150 f.

worse than in Virginia«. <sup>219</sup> Furthermore, Dunmore's so-called ›Ethiopian Regiment‹ enabled the revolutionary settlers to ›racialize‹ their propaganda, realizing that »using racist stereotypes to ignite racial fears helped garner support for the cause« of independence. Consequently, Paine, Jefferson and other revolutionary writers could hint at the British ruthlessness in collaborating with the »most barbarous of mankind«, and in popular songs, plays and folklore, Dunmore was ridiculed as an »African Hero«, while portraits of his ›black‹ soldiers anticipated elements of later minstrel stereotypes, extensively playing on the taboo of ›interracial‹ sex. <sup>220</sup>

Regarding their own armed forces, southern planters urged George Washington, the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, to ban African Americans from their military body, as »slaveholding colonists universally deplored the practice of arming blacks, whether slave or free«. <sup>221</sup> Initially, even before the formal organization of the Continental Army, especially free ›blacks‹ from New England had enlisted to fight against the British, so that in the first battles of the war, »black soldiers from the northern states served in twice the proportion of their numbers in the population«. Having started as the »last war with integrated troops until the Korean War nearly two centuries later«, the settler's military was so much dependent on African American soldiers that Washington could not uphold the general exclusion and soon after the prohibition readmitted free ›blacks‹ for service. <sup>222</sup> Even the ›taboo‹ of arming slaves was gradually circumvented, when, in the course of war, especially northern states with small percentages of slaves passed laws of integrating them into the armed forces and liberating them after war, a scheme that facilitated the gradual abolition of slavery in the North. <sup>223</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Taylor, *The Internal Enemy*, p. 23. Later during the war, however, a slave who had allegedly conspired with the British was reprieved by Governor Jefferson, as a minority of the judges had argued that »he could not be convicted of treason [...], because a slave is not a citizen«, cf. Kranish, *Flight From Monticello*, p. 255.

<sup>220</sup> Dorsey, *Common Bondage*, pp. 138 f. For more detailed references to a racist play called *The Fall of the British Tyranny*, see also Sweet, *Bodies Politic*, pp. 194 ff.; Patricia Bradley, *Slavery, Propaganda, and the American Revolution*, Jackson: University of Mississippi Press 1998, pp. 150 f.

<sup>221</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, p. 74.

<sup>222</sup> Gary B. Nash, *The Forgotten Fifth. African Americans in the Age of Revolution*, Cambridge etc.: Harvard University Press 2006, pp. 8 (›proportion‹), 10 (›Korean War‹).

<sup>223</sup> Cf. Marie-Jeanne Rossignol, *A ›Black Declaration of Independence? War, Republic, and Race in the United States of America, 1775-1787*, in: Pierre Serna, Antonio De Francesco, Judith A. Miller (eds.), *Republics at War. Revolutions, Conflicts and Geopolitics in Europe and the Atlantic World*, Houndmills etc.: Palgrave Macmillan 2013, pp. 107-130, pp. 117-120. More detailed accounts of individual ›black‹ soldiers in the Continental Army can be found in Sidney Kaplan, Emma Nogrady Kaplan, *The Black Presence in the Era of the American Revolution*, rev. ed., Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press 1989 [1973], esp. pp. 44-64.

When, in 1779, Thomas Jefferson was elected governor of Virginia and for the first time acquired executive power after serving in legislative positions for several years, ›black‹ soldiers and former slaves had long been fighting on both sides, but were also frequently exploited for hard labor, received no pay and were left with only vague promises of eventual liberation.<sup>224</sup> Overwhelmingly recruited from the »bottom of the social barrel« together with lower-class ›whites‹, free African Americans enlisted for social advancement as slaves did for their liberation.<sup>225</sup> In the Virginian forces slaves could not legally enlist or be armed, but sometimes served as substitutes for their masters and added to the five hundred free ›blacks‹ fighting in Jefferson's troops.<sup>226</sup> ›Blacks‹ of a completely different social standing constituted the regiment of the so-called Volunteer Chasseurs, which as one of three all-›black‹ formations stood under French command and consisted entirely of free Haitians, who were paid and comparably well treated, and in some cases were to become leaders of the Haitian Revolution about a decade later.<sup>227</sup> Other ›blacks‹ that fought for the Continental Army occasionally gained their freedom, while the British shipped African Americans to Canada, Jamaica, or even Africa in what became the »most significant act of emancipation in early American history« – one that possibly also affected some of the Jefferson's slaves.<sup>228</sup>

After his hesitant conduct of the militia facilitated the British invasion of Richmond, Jefferson was driven with his government to Charlottesville and resided at Monticello, when he had to face another attack of General Cornwallis' troops in summer 1781. Together with about seven thousand British soldiers, Cornwallis occupied Jefferson's plantation Elk Hill, henceforth giving commands from what he called »Jefferson's camp«. While Monticello was also invaded, but neither damaged nor plundered, Jefferson complained that Cornwallis' »rage[d] over my possessions« with a »spirit of total extermination«, destroying harvests, burning barns and

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<sup>224</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 114 f. According to a German eye-witness, serving in the British forces, slavery and exploitation of ›blacks‹ was to some degree maintained within the military, as »every soldier had his Negro, who carried his provisions and bundles«, quoted in Francis D. Cogliano, *Revolutionary America, 1763-1815. A Political History*, London etc.: Routledge 2000, p. 191. Additionally, slaves were increasingly employed in war manufactories, a practice that was authorized by war governor Jefferson, cf. Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation*, p. 188.

<sup>225</sup> Nash, *The Forgotten Fifth*, p. 11.

<sup>226</sup> Cf. Kranish, *Flight From Monticello*, p. 254.

<sup>227</sup> Cf. Kaplan, Kaplan, *The Black Presence*, pp. 68 f.; Larry Tise, *The American Counterrevolution. A Retreat from Liberty, 1783-1800*, Mechanicsburg: Stackpole 1998, pp. 120-125.

<sup>228</sup> Cf. Cassandra Pybus, *Jefferson's Faulty Math. The Question of Slave Defections in the American Revolution*, in: *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 62, 2005, 2, pp. 243-264, here p. 264.

killing the horses that were »too young for service«. Furthermore, Jefferson accused Cornwallis of taking thirty slaves, which were then subjected to »inevitable death from the small pox and putrid fever then raging in his camp«. <sup>229</sup> According to Jefferson's *Farm Book*, however, slaves were not only »carried off« by the British at Elk Hill, but also »joined [the] enemy« voluntarily from his other plantations at Shadwell and Cumberland. <sup>230</sup> Against this backdrop, it sounds cynical when the slaveholding Jefferson attacks Cornwallis for not »giv[ing] them freedom«, by which »he would have done right« – especially considering the fact that »many slaves [...] gained their freedom by escaping to British lines; none gained it by remaining on the Jefferson plantations«. <sup>231</sup>

In wartime Virginia, not only free ›blacks‹ were increasingly perceived as enemies of the American Revolution, but also Native Americans, whose lands had soon become main objects of warfare, <sup>232</sup> and who sometimes formed alliances with British soldiers, German mercenaries, free ›blacks‹ and runaway slaves. Thomas Jefferson was especially notable for stressing the importance of the Western front and even some of his compatriots were afraid that his »obsession with fighting Indians had left Virginia unprepared to take on the British«. <sup>233</sup> In fact, as early as 1776, Jefferson proposed to rigorously answer ›Indian‹ attacks, as »nothing will reduce those wretches so soon as pushing the war into the heart of their country«, and suggested not to stop »pursuing them while one of them remained on this side of the Mississippi«. <sup>234</sup> For Jefferson, the Revolutionary War was the »season for driving them off«, as the »contest with Britain is too serious and too great to permit any possibility of avocation from the Indians«. <sup>235</sup> From the outset of the conflict, »Virginia's new government abandoned London's policy of conciliating the Indians« and increasingly implemented policies of conquest and expulsion. <sup>236</sup> In the course

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<sup>229</sup> TJ to William Gordon, Jul. 16, 1788.

<sup>230</sup> Jefferson, *Thomas Jefferson's Farm Book*, p. 29.

<sup>231</sup> TJ to William Gordon, Jul. 16, 1788; Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders*, p. 142. See also Dorsey, *Common Bondage*, pp. 140 f.

<sup>232</sup> Thomas Jefferson himself, as a shareholder of land companies, had financial interests in the Western lands he conquered during the Revolutionary War, as had some of the other prominent revolutionaries including Washington, Henry and Franklin. Cf. Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, p. 49; Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, p. 169, 171 f.

<sup>233</sup> General Nathanael Greene, cited in Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation*, p. 219. See also Kranish, *Flight From Monticello*, p. 271; Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, p. 71.

<sup>234</sup> TJ to John Page, Aug. 5, 1776.

<sup>235</sup> TJ to Edmund Pendleton, Aug. 13, 1776.

<sup>236</sup> Woody Holton, *Forced Founders, Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia*, Chapel Hill etc.: The University of North Carolina Press 1999, p. 214.

of the war, Jefferson as the colony's governor »turned Virginia's part in the revolutionary struggle into mostly an Indian war«, including the »systematic plundering of Indian land«. <sup>237</sup>

Just a couple of months before Jefferson experienced Lord Cornwallis' looting of Elk Hill as part of the larger »horrors committed by the British army in the southern states of America« and soon after he defended the solitary confinement of a British »war criminal« for »setting the merciless savages upon innocent settlers«, Jefferson ordered a military strike against Cherokee towns, which resulted in the deaths of twenty-nine men, the capture of women and children and the destruction of a thousand houses, harvests and other stocks. <sup>238</sup> In his correspondence with George Rogers Clark, who commanded his military in the frontier regions, Jefferson elaborated on the conflict with Native Americans and integrated their conquest in a wider imperial narrative. Finding himself opposed to the »combination of British and Indian savages« and their »species of war«, he envisioned the fight against the hostile tribes to result either in »their extermination, or their removal beyond the lakes or Illinois river«, as the »same world will scarcely do for them and us«. In his desire to »add to the empire of liberty an extensive and fertile country«, in which he saw no place for »them«, Jefferson not only relied on military force, but developed a double-barreled strategy that also included attempts to »convert[...] dangerous enemies into valuable friends«. <sup>239</sup>

During his war against the Native Americans, Jefferson made not all tribes alike responsible for the »eternal hostilities«, which »proved them incapable of living on friendly terms with us«. <sup>240</sup> To strengthen Virginian relations with the »good Indians«, Jefferson built on their economic needs, trying to buy their allegiance with »clothing, liquor, and other scarce necessities«. <sup>241</sup> As he explained in a letter to John Rutledge, then Governor of South Carolina, Jefferson explained his state's policy towards the Cherokees as founded on their material hardships: » Their present dis-

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<sup>237</sup> Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, p. 49 (»struggle«); Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, p. 168 (»plundering«). On Jefferson's policies towards the acquisition of western territories during the Revolutionary War, see also Kaplan, *Thomas Jefferson*, pp. 20-24.

<sup>238</sup> TJ to William Gordon, Jul. 16, 1788 (horrors). Cf. Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, pp. 60, 66 ff.

<sup>239</sup> TJ to George Rogers Clark, Dec. 25, 1780 (»savages«, »species«, »empire«, »convert«); TJ to George Rogers Clark, Jan. 1, 1780 (»extermination«, »world«).

<sup>240</sup> TJ to George Washington, Feb. 10, 1780. A strategy that Merrill Peterson summarized as: »Divide and rule, aid the friendly in peace, exterminate the incorrigibles – this was Jefferson's Indian policy«, id., *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation*, p. 193.

<sup>241</sup> Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation*, p. 193.

tresses are so great that we have bought up every thing proper for them in our own country without regard to price«. Strategies like this, he perceived as part of a larger plan to increase the Native Americans' dependence on trade with the settlers. As soon as the Natives were »accustom[ed] to the use of European manufactures, they are as incapable of returning to their habits of skins and furs as we are, and find their wants the less tolerable as they are occasioned by a war the event of which is scarcely interesting to them«. <sup>242</sup> Additionally, Jefferson could build on the support of the few Native Americans, who were already assimilated in a way he intended for the whole of the ›Indian‹ population.

Particularly, he could rely on the support of Jean Baptiste Ducoigne, Christian son of a Frenchman and chief of the Kaskaskias, who »was a model of his Indian policy« in his ancestry as well as in his way of life and possibly inspired the benevolent assessment of Native American genius he expressed in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*. <sup>243</sup> Ducoigne, who had named his own son after Jefferson even before they first met, visited Jefferson at Charlottesville in 1781, offering him the pipe of peace and some Native American artworks that Jefferson eventually expanded to an impressive collection of ›Indian‹ artifacts. It was in correspondence with Ducoigne that Jefferson first reasoned about »what later became known as the civilization policy: the plan [...] to send teachers, missionaries, and capital goods into the villages of friendly Indian tribes to teach them white methods of agriculture and domestic husbandry«. Although, as Anthony Wallace analyzes, this marks a changing point in the Virginian's concept of the people he hitherto thought of as barbarous brutes, it seems too short-sighted to assess that »Jefferson's experience as a war governor was mellowing his perception of the Native Americans as enemies«. <sup>244</sup> In the revolutionary period, »native peoples such as the Kaskaskias remained a vital and strategically important presence in the hinterland« and Jefferson wished to intensify their assimilation in times of peace. For those remaining ›Indians‹ that did not want to cast off their customs, however, Jefferson »anticipated that the same historical drama would be enacted in the West that he and his forefathers had witnessed in

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<sup>242</sup> TJ to John Rutledge, Nov. 11, 1779.

<sup>243</sup> Cf. Kranish, *Flight From Monticello*, p. 272; Peter S. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire. The Language of American Nationhood*, Charlottesville etc.: University Press of Virginia 2000, p. 18.

<sup>244</sup> Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, p. 74.

Virginia«: the removal and extinction of Native Americans as a consequence of the supposedly inevitable progress of ›civilization‹.<sup>245</sup>

At the same time, wartime propaganda did not only spur ›racial‹ violence, but could also be applied to moderate cultural and religious differences. In fact, Woody Holton correctly notes that when »Anglo-Americans worried about unity among Indians and slaves, they worked to promote it among themselves«. <sup>246</sup> Confronted by the threat of ›general‹ conflicts along emerging ›racial‹ lines, Jefferson contributed to the inclusion of hitherto excluded groups into the Virginian society. In 1777, he drafted the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom in reaction to recruitment difficulties among a religiously heterogeneous population.<sup>247</sup> Since the mid-eighteenth century, dissenter settlements had been accepted in the colony of Virginia as a »buffer against hostile Indians« (thereby illustrating the social rank of the dissenters), but were constantly subjected to legal and fiscal discrimination.<sup>248</sup> During the war, Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists and other Evangelical minorities fought for their equality and made it the condition for their support. Similarly, Jefferson tried to include a »considerable number of foreigners« into the newborn state of Virginia, which were shipped to America by the British Crown and allied »foreign princes, who were in the habit of selling the blood of their people for money«. <sup>249</sup> Jefferson encouraged the Hessian mercenaries to desert the British troops, offering them land, religious freedom and civic rights. This decree of 1781 followed earlier policies of American revolutionaries to cause desertions among the Germans fighting for George III.<sup>250</sup>

Most importantly, however, the revolting gentlemen of Virginia had to deal with the »increasingly self-aware and assertive yeomanry«, which by the eve of the revolution had already articulated a »lower class anger directed not just at England but

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<sup>245</sup> Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire*, p. 19. Accordingly, Walter L. Hixson states that »Jefferson's ambivalence [with regard to Native Americans] was invariably paternal and quickly turned bellicose when the native ›children‹ stood in the path of settlement«, id., *American Settler Colonialism. A History*, New York etc.: Palgrave Macmillan 2013, p. 67.

<sup>246</sup> Holton, *Forced Founders*, p. 213.

<sup>247</sup> Cf. Kranish, *Flight From Monticello*, p. 132.

<sup>248</sup> John A. Ragosta, *Wellspring of Liberty. How Virginia's Religious Dissenters Helped Win the American Revolution and Secured Religious Liberty*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 2010, p. 20 (›buffer‹).

<sup>249</sup> TJ, *Proclamation Inviting Mercenary Troops in the British Service to Desert*, Feb. 2, 1781.

<sup>250</sup> Cf. Lyman H. Butterfield, *Psychological Warfare in 1776. The Jefferson-Franklin Plan to Cause Hessian Desertions*, in: *The Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 94, 1950, 3, pp. 233-241. See also Rodney Atwood, *The Hessians. Mercenaries from Hessen-Kassel in the American Revolution*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 1980, pp. 186 ff.

also at the gentry«. <sup>251</sup> From the outset of the Revolutionary War, elite plans of fighting the royal forces with an army of minutemen were brought to naught by Virginia's »more enduring conflict than the one against the British: the one between the governors and the governed, between the gentry and the ›lower‹ and ›middling sorts«. <sup>252</sup> Recruitment rates of small farmers remained poor throughout the war, so that at times the Virginian military leaders had to rely extensively on »convict servants purchased from their masters by recruiting officers«. <sup>253</sup> Against this backdrop, Virginian legislators decided to propose a scheme of gradual redistribution of wealth, and particularly of the social capital associated with the ownership of slaves. In 1780, during Jefferson's time as governor, a committee formed to revise the state's recruitment bills suggested that »each recruit ›shall moreover be entitled to and receive one able bodied healthy negroe Slave between the age of ten and forty years‹ at the time of his enlistment«. <sup>254</sup> With every twentieth slave taken from the planters owning more than twenty slaves, the committee accounted for the »class-based complaints of Virginia's lower ranks that the land- and slave-rich planters were the state's most culpable war dodgers« and would have removed about eight slaves from the plantations of Thomas Jefferson alone. <sup>255</sup>

While more traditional enlistment bounties such as Western lands more implicitly built on early American ›race‹ relations, this proposal not only encouraged yeoman farmers to voluntarily leave their estates, as slaves could do their work in their absence, but also ensured them of social (and ›racial‹) superiority – especially as Virginia with this bill decidedly opted against enlisting the seized slaves themselves. <sup>256</sup> Lost during the government's hasty evacuation after the invasion of Richmond in December 1780, the officially passed »act for recruiting this state's quota of troops to serve in the continental army«, which other than the first draft granted veterans a »healthy sound negro, between the ages of ten and thirty« at the end of the war, was never actually implemented in Virginia and remained widely

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<sup>251</sup> Marc Egnal, *A Mighty Empire, The Origins of the American Revolution*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1988, p. 312.

<sup>252</sup> Michael A. McDonnell, *Popular Mobilization and Political Culture in Revolutionary Virginia. The Failure of the Minutemen and the Revolution from Below*, in: *The Journal of American History*, 85, 1998, 3, pp. 946-981, here p. 947.

<sup>253</sup> McDonnell, *Politics of War*, p. 261.

<sup>254</sup> L. Scott Philyaw, *A Slave for Every Soldier. The Strange History of Virginia's Forgotten Recruitment Act of 1 January 1781*, in: *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 109, 2001, 4, pp. 367-386, here p. 369.

<sup>255</sup> Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, p. 342.

<sup>256</sup> Cf. Philyaw, *A Slave for Every Soldier*, pp. 377 f.; McDonnell, *Politics of War*, p. 392.

unknown among enlistees.<sup>257</sup> The effectiveness of similar measures, however, can be assessed with the example of South Carolina, where military leaders could build on the confiscation of loyalist properties and established an elaborate system of ›bounty slaves‹ that attracted volunteers even from other states like Virginia and North Carolina.<sup>258</sup>

It has to be further discussed, if the American Revolution led to the formation of the ›first apartheid state«, as Gerald Horne argues.<sup>259</sup> However, the abovementioned entanglements of discourses of national identity with the military and legal suppression of Native Americans and African Americans suggest that racism was at the heart of the American struggle for independence. Furthermore, the civic incorporation of religious minorities, smallholders and Hessian soldiers implies that this racism was not simply based on universally shared prejudices against visible others, but represented a means of integrating a heterogeneous and hierarchically divided population to the disadvantage of socially constructed outsiders. Thomas Jefferson in many ways contributed to this process of racist nation building and in the years after the revolution continued to elaborate on his justifications for ›white‹ expansion and the disenfranchisement of Native Americans and African Americans.

## 2.2 Jefferson and the Enlightenment

A busy reader throughout his life, Jefferson studied the ancient classics, the foundational texts of modern science and philosophy as well as popular novels and fiction. As he himself had ›improved his reading proficiency with Aesop's *Fables* and *Robinson Crusoe*«, Jefferson later assessed that it was these two text that proved especially successful in the education of Native Americans, being their ›first delight«. <sup>260</sup> In fact, especially Defoe's bestselling narrative about the appropriation and cultivation of ›vacant lands‹, the accumulation of property by the work of slaves and the Christian duty of submission and conversion had something to say about the foundations of the American republic.<sup>261</sup> However, it was especially the philosophical and scien-

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<sup>257</sup> Philyaw, *A Slave for Every Soldier*, pp. 379 f.

<sup>258</sup> Cf. Sylvia R. Frey, *Water from the Rock. Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age*, Princeton etc.: Princeton University Press 1993, p. 134.

<sup>259</sup> Horne, *The Counter-Revolution of 1776*, p. 4.

<sup>260</sup> Kevin J. Hayes, *The Road to Monticello, Oxford etc.*: Oxford University Press 2008, p. 17 (›proficiency‹); TJ to James Jay, Apr. 17, 1809 (›delight‹).

<sup>261</sup> Cf. Wulf D. Hund, *Crusoes Kreuzzug. Marginalie zum Krieg gegen den Teufel bei Daniel Defoe*, in: *Das Argument*, 310, 2014, pp.703-714; id., *Advertising White Supremacy. Capitalism, Colonial-*

tific reading of Jefferson that inspired his thoughts on human varieties and cultural differences.

Francis Bacon and John Locke, for example, whom Jefferson considered to be the »greatest men that have ever lived«, could not only shape Jefferson's philosophical conceptions, but also provided for valuable advice in mastering a slaveholding colony. Bacon, whose faculty of minds (memory, reason and imagination) formed the framework according to which Jefferson attempted to evaluate the mental capacities of ›blacks,«<sup>262</sup> was one of the masterminds of British colonialism, an early member of the Virginia Society and contributor to the first colonial charters of government.<sup>263</sup> In his utopian novel *New Atlantis*, Bacon advocates an »authoritarian [...] scientocracy« and expressed his belief that »scientific colonialism [...] would restore Man's lost dominion over Nature«, namely in the New World that was America.<sup>264</sup> Central to his colonial vision was the establishment of plantations, which for him were not »simply a type of agricultural enterprise, but a political institution deployed in organizing colonial social space«, which was legitimate »in a pure soil«, where cultivation and settlement was absent or consisted of »savages«, who could be brought to the plantations, so »that they may see a better condition than their own, and commend it when they return.«<sup>265</sup> While some one and a half centuries later this concept echoed in Jefferson's ideas of civilizing Native Americans, Bacon's idealist visions of slowly prospering and peacefully ›planted‹ yeoman colonies were already »sharply crossed by actual events, such as the Indian massacres of 1622 in Virginia« and by the development of chattel slavery, which in the

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ism and Commodity Racism, in: id., Michael Pickering, Anandi Ramamurthy (eds.), *Colonial Advertising and Commodity Racism*, Berlin etc.: Lit 2013, pp. 21-67, here pp.32 f. With regard to the antebellum United States, the story of Robinson and Friday has been interpreted as a »justification for the white paternalistic view of blacks as creatures who would regress into a primitiveness without the guidance and direction of whites«, so that the »Crusoe-Friday relationship reaffirmed the racial ideology that upheld slavery«, Shawn Thomson, *The Fortress of American Solitude. Robinson Crusoe and Antebellum Culture*, Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press 2009, pp. 100 (›paternalistic‹), 106 (›ideology‹).

<sup>262</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 266. Rendered into the corresponding disciplines history, philosophy and arts, this trinity also established the ordering system of Jefferson's library, cf. Hayes, *The Road to Monticello*, p. 10.

<sup>263</sup> Cf. Edward P. Cheyney, *Some English Conditions Surrounding the Settlement of Virginia*, in: *The American Historical Review*, 12, 1907, 3, pp. 507-528, here p. 517.

<sup>264</sup> Claire Jowitt, ›Books will speak plain?‹ Colonialism, Jewishness and politics in Bacon's *New Atlantis*, in: Bronwen Price (ed.), *New Atlantis. New Interdisciplinary Essays*, Manchester etc.: Manchester University Press 2002, pp. 129-155, here p. 133.

<sup>265</sup> Stephan Palmié, *Toward Sugar and Slavery*, in: id., Francisco A. Scarano (eds.), *The Caribbean. A History of the Region and Its Peoples*, Chicago etc.: University of Chicago Press 2011, pp. 131-147, here p. 132 (›enterprise‹); Francis Bacon, *Works*, Vol. I, London: Millar 1753, pp. 418 f. (›pure‹, ›savages‹, ›condition‹).

eyes of Theodore Allen qualifies Bacon as »slavocracy's most eminent ›theoretician«.<sup>266</sup> Long before his distant relative Nathaniel unleashed in Virginia what has been called the »first race war in North American History« in 1676,<sup>267</sup> Francis Bacon had contributed some theoretical background to the socio-economic order that yielded ›racial« conflicts for centuries to come.

Roughly at the time of Bacon's rebellion, John Locke was even more engaged in the meanwhile increased colonial ventures of his Empire and immensely profited from his investments in slave trading companies. Through his contribution to the administration of Carolina, Locke became »an architect of the new race-based slavery« and included to its constitution a paragraph that granted »every freemen of Carolina [...] absolute power and authority over his negro slaves«.<sup>268</sup> While Jefferson did not resort to Lockean thought in his writings on slavery or African Americans, his position towards the Natives and their lands was clearly inspired by his labor theory of property exemplified in the *Second Treatise's* famous claim that »in the beginning all the world was America«.<sup>269</sup> In his early writings, most prominently in the *Declaration of Independence*, Jefferson showed that he was familiar with the Lockean emphasis on the protection of private property, albeit his legislative efforts during the revolution for the just distribution of vacant lands illustrated a particular American interpretation of the concept. As Stanley Katz put it, »›property« to Jefferson meant ›land« and land according to the Lockean interpretation of man's divine mission had to be cultivated. Only labor – and be it the work of servants or slaves – entitled to property, an idea that is mirrored in Jefferson's praise of »those who la-

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<sup>266</sup> Charles Whitney, Merchants of Light. Science as Colonization in the New Atlantis, in: William Sessions (ed.), Francis Bacon's Legacy of Texts, New York: AMS Press 1990, pp. 255-268, here p. 262; Theodore W. Allen, The Invention of the White Race, Vol. II: The Origin of Racial Oppression in Anglo-America, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London etc.: Verso 2012 [1997], p. 282n57. See also *ibid.*, pp. 105 f.

<sup>267</sup> Walter Rucker, James Nathaniel Upton, Introduction, in: Walter Rucker, James Nathaniel Upton (eds.), Encyclopedia of American Race Riots, Westport: Greenwood 2007, pp. xlv-lxiii, here p. xlvi. The authors, however, paint a simplistic black-white picture of the uprising.

<sup>268</sup> Robert Bernasconi, Anika Maaaza Mann, The Contradictions of Racism. Locke, Slavery and the Two Treatises, in: Andrew Valls (ed.), Race and Racism in Modern Philosophy, Ithaca etc.: Cornell University Press 2005, pp. 89-107, here pp. 89-92. A more conservative approach towards Locke and racism, albeit with explicit references to his influence on Jefferson, can be found in William Uzgalis, ›An Inconsistency not to be Excused«. On Locke and Racism, in: Julie K. Ward, Tommy L. Lott (eds.), Philosophers on Race. Critical Essays, Oxford etc.: Blackwell 2002, pp. 81-100.

<sup>269</sup> John Locke, Two Treatises of Government, in: John Locke, Works, Vol. 2, London: John Churchill 1714, p pp. 99-227, here p. 172. A discussion of Locke's contribution to the expulsion policies toward Native Americans can be found in Kathy Squadrito, Locke and the Dispossession of the American Indian, in: Julie K. Ward, Tommy L. Lott (eds.), Philosophers on Race. Critical Essays, Oxford etc.: Blackwell 2002, pp. 101-124. For the Lockean influence on Jefferson's agrarianism, see for example David Jacobson, Place and Belonging in America, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press 2002, pp. 81 ff.

bor in the earth [as] the chosen people of God«. <sup>270</sup> Finding his claims to supposedly idle ›Indian‹ territories backed by one of his philosophical idols, his position was additionally supported by his lectures in the »social evolutionary theories mapped out by the [...] Scottish school on human civilization's progress«. <sup>271</sup>

Educated in the principles of the Scottish Enlightenment by his lecturer William Small, Jefferson would have agreed with his rival companion John Adams, who, equally studying with a Scotsman, proved the »usefulness of natural philosophy« with a comparison of the »state of all the Civilized nations of Europe [...] to many nations, in affrica, of as quick natural parts as Europeans, who live in a manner very little superior to the Brutes«. <sup>272</sup> Echoing the infamous footnote of David Hume, who just a couple of years earlier had proclaimed that »there never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white«, Adams not incidentally applied the relatively new language of civilization in his comparison of European and African peoples. At the time he and Jefferson were educated by enlightened Scots in the colonies, Scottish philosophers including Kames, Ferguson, Millar and Smith developed the so-called four stages theory, supposing the historical advancement of human societies from savagery to civilization. In actual fact, Jefferson's mentor William Small, whose brother was to become a founding member of the Royal Society of Edinburgh alongside Smith and Ferguson in 1783, was still studying in Scotland at the time when Adam Smith first referred to the stages theory in his lectures and when Sir Dalrymple and Lord Kames provided for the first published accounts of the theory. <sup>273</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Stanley N. Katz, Thomas Jefferson and the Right to Property in Revolutionary America, in: *Journal of Law and Economics*, 19, 1976, 3, pp. 467-488, here p. 473; Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 290. In a less religious intonation, Jefferson just a couple of years later confirmed to John Jay his belief that »cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens«, TJ to John Jay, Aug. 23, 1785.

<sup>271</sup> Robert A. Williams, Jr., Thomas Jefferson. Indigenous American Storyteller, in: James P. Ronda (ed.), *Thomas Jefferson and the Changing West. From Conquest to Conservation*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press 1997, pp. 43-74, here p. 45.

<sup>272</sup> Quoted in Keith S. Thomson, *Jefferson's Shadow. The Story of His Science*, New Haven etc.: Yale University Press 2012, p. 29.

<sup>273</sup> Ronald L. Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 1976, pp. 99 ff. At the same time, French philosophers developed similar models, but did not have a comparable bearing on the early political and philosophical thought of Thomas Jefferson. On Scottish philosophy and the emergence of biologicistic racism see Walter Demel, *Das ›aufgeklärte‹ Edinburgh – eine Hexenküche des Rassismus?*, in: Olaf Asbach (ed.), *Europa und die Moderne im langen 18. Jahrhundert*, Hannover: Wehrhahn 2014, pp. 271-291. Demel, however, applies a narrow definition of racism restricted to biologicistic ideas of human ›races‹ and therefore perceives above-mentioned theories of civilization as preceding racism.

Although it was late in his life that Thomas Jefferson explicitly had his imaginary »philosophic observer« travelling through the United States »from the savages of the Rocky Mountains« through the »gradual shades of improving man until he would reach his [...] most improved state in our seaport towns«, a journey »equivalent to a survey, in time, of the progress of man«,<sup>274</sup> the principles of Scottish philosophy were familiar with him from his days in college. As early as 1769, Jefferson ordered a copy of Ferguson's recently published *Essay on the History of Civil Society* – together with Locke's *Two Treatises* – for private studies, a book that significantly inspired his anthropological method by adding a »framework in which different cultures could be compared without having to make invidious distinctions«. <sup>275</sup> In the course of his own studies, however, Jefferson combined the theories of gradual progress with essentialist distinctions, so that Native Americans, for example, would always remain in the most backwards stages of humankind, unless they entirely amalgamate with the »white« settler society.

Beyond his philosophical studies and other readings, Jefferson was a multifaceted scientist in his own right and soon a member of the academic elite of the emerging nation. While serving in the Continental Congress in 1775, Jefferson became acquainted with Benjamin Franklin, Benjamin Rush and other leading scholars of the time and »was quickly recognized as a peer among this group«, in which »race« was undoubtedly a constant matter of discussion.<sup>276</sup> Before Jefferson became personally engaged in the debates about human varieties and the »racial« composition of America, his compatriots had already developed some of the arguments that were to be mirrored in the Virginian's later scientific writings.

As early as 1751, Benjamin Franklin had expressed his discomfort about the threats that Native Americans, African slaves and European immigrants posed to the allegedly homogeneous American colonies and draw extensively on skin color categories. His demands for increasing birthrates and support of marriages among the Anglo-American settlers, Franklin justified with a British responsibility that resulted from them being the »principle Body of White People on the Face of the Earth«, while »all Africa is black and tawny. Asia chiefly tawny. America [...] whol-

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<sup>274</sup> TJ to William Ludlow, Sep. 6, 1824. See also Neil McArthur, *Civil Society*, in: Aaron Garrett (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Eighteenth Century Philosophy*, Abingdon etc.: Routledge 2014, pp. 643-662, here pp. 648-650.

<sup>275</sup> Frank Shuffleton, *Thomas Jefferson. Race, Culture, and the Failure of Anthropological Method*, p. 262. For Jefferson's purchase of Ferguson's book, see Hayes, *The Road to Monticello*, p. 113.

<sup>276</sup> Thomson, *Jefferson's Shadow*, p. 36.

ly so. And in Europe, the Spaniards, Italians, French, Russians and Swedes, are generally of what we call a swarthy Complexion; as are the Germans also«. Together with the civilization of the continent »by clearing America of Woods«, Franklin perceived the maintenance of its population's ›whiteness‹ as the major task of the British colonialism in the New World, where they had »so fair an Opportunity, by excluding all Blacks and Tawneys, of increasing the lovely White and Red«. <sup>277</sup> It has to be noted, however, that unlike Jefferson during the struggle with the motherland, Franklin did not see the need for a more inclusive concept of ›whiteness‹ that held out opportunities to immigrants from various countries.

In 1773, just a couple of years before he met Jefferson in Philadelphia, Benjamin Rush had publicly condemned slavery as »foreign to the human mind«, assessed the mythical Curse of Ham as »too absurd to need a refutation« and claimed that Africans were »equal to the Europeans, when we allow for the diversity of temper and genius which is occasioned by climate«. <sup>278</sup> Later, however, Rush famously rejected polygenism with the theory that the Africans' blackness resulted from leprosy, a contagious disease, which justified his refusal of ›interracial‹ relationships. Although maintaining that the »claims of superiority of the whites over the blacks, on account of their color, are founded alike in ignorance and humanity«, Rush implied that a »healthy member of the human species was white« and postulated an aesthetic devaluation of African Americans, which also reverberated in the writings of Thomas Jefferson. <sup>279</sup>

Certainly aware of the present controversies within the emerging science of man, Jefferson not only shaped his reputation as a political writer and statesman during

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<sup>277</sup> Benjamin Franklin, *Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind* (1751), in: Ralph Ketcham (ed.), *The Political Thought of Benjamin Franklin*, Indianapolis: Hackett 2003, pp. 62-71, here p. 71. On the similarities between Franklin's and Jefferson's demands for a homogeneous population, see Duncan J. MacLeod, *Slavery, Race and the American Revolution*, London etc.: Cambridge University Press 1974, pp. 80 f.

<sup>278</sup> Benjamin Rush, *An Address to the British Settlements in America, upon Slave-Keeping* (1773), extracts are reprinted in Betty Wood, *Slavery in Colonial America, 1619-1776*, Lanham etc.: Rowman and Littlefield 2005, p. 119.

<sup>279</sup> Cited in Katy L. Chiles, *Transformable Race. Surprising Metamorphoses in the Literature of Early America*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 2014, p. 197; Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson*, New York: Henry Holt 1948, p. 92 (›healthy‹). It was also in his correspondence with Benjamin Rush that Jefferson expressed his belief that Jesus' »moral doctrines [...] were more pure and perfect [...] than those of the Jews«, with the latter's ethics being essentially »repulsive and anti-social«, an assessment that has been assessed as evidence for Jefferson's possible antisemitism and, thus, adds to the spectrum of racisms that can be discussed with respect to his thought, TJ, *Doctrines of Jesus, Compared with Others*, Apr. 21, 1803. See also Robert Michael, *A Concise History of American Antisemitism*, Lanham etc.: Rowman and Littlefield 2005, pp. 72-75.

the War of Independence, but also laid the foundation for his fame as one of the most notable American naturalists and philosophers of his time. Elected as a member of the American Philosophical Society in 1779, Jefferson had exercised scientific observations since his schooling in Williamsburg and on his admission to the scientific association was lauded for a series of meteorological records he had compiled for more than seven years.<sup>280</sup> Even earlier, Jefferson had started to experiment with vegetables and in the 1770s devoted parts of his land to the cultivation of newly imported plants such as grapes, oranges and olives. His carefully conducted attempts in the cultivation and crossing of plants not only illustrate his scientific aspirations, but also contained some implications for the ›racial‹ composition of the American people. On the one hand, the quest for the best plantation crops was always linked to the corresponding questions about the required conditions for slaves and planters, so that for his vision of an agricultural republic, Jefferson favored wheat over tobacco, as the latter was especially demanding for soils and workers. On the other hand, Jefferson quite possibly built on his knowledge about plants when he later elaborated on the ›cultivation‹ of ›blacks‹ and the effects of their mixture with ›whites‹.<sup>281</sup>

Science, although he praised its »tranquil pursuits«, was no end in itself for Jefferson, but »essential to the progress of the nation«.<sup>282</sup> His account of nature in particular, as Charles Miller has assessed, was a »form of nationalism«, as »nature was America for Jefferson«.<sup>283</sup> This became most obvious soon after he finished his service as Virginia's governor in 1781, when Jefferson commenced working on a questionnaire that was compiled by the French secretary in the United States Francois de Barbé-Marbois for representatives of all thirteen states.<sup>284</sup> Finishing a first draft in December of that year, Jefferson revised the manuscript, which was not initially

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<sup>280</sup> Gilbert Chinard, Jefferson and the American Philosophical Society, in: Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, 87, 1943, 3, pp. 263-276, here p. 265.

<sup>281</sup> Cf. Philip J. Pauly, Fruits and Plains. The Horticultural Transformation of America, Cambridge etc.: Harvard University Press 2007, pp. 23-32.

<sup>282</sup> TJ to Pierre Samuel Du Pont de Nemours, Mar. 2, 1809 (›tranquil‹); Thomson, Jefferson's Shadow, p. 3 (›progress‹).

<sup>283</sup> Miller, Charles A., Jefferson and Nature. An Interpretation, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press 1988, p. 3.

<sup>284</sup> Notably, Barbé-Marbois later became the French minister in the French administration who negotiated about the sale of the Louisiana territory with American delegates, so that he not only inspired Jefferson's influential rebuttal of the degeneracy of the new nation's environment, but also »was an essential instrument of its greatest spatial and economic enlargement, realized by Jefferson himself«, cf. Antonello Gerbi, The Dispute of the New World. The History of a Polemic, 1750-1900, rev. and enl. ed., transl. by Jeremy Moyle, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press 1973 (1955), p. 252n421.

meant for publication, numerous times until its Paris edition was first printed in 1785. In this process, Jefferson added to his elaborations a dedicated refusal of European speculations about the deficiency of the American environment, a case he strongly built on references to Native Americans.<sup>285</sup> Eventually, his *Notes on the State of Virginia* became the »most powerful polemic in defense of the North American territory« and featured prominently in the wider controversies about the New World – with his home state representing the whole of his continent, following William Byrd’s Lockean adaption that »in the beginning, all America was Virginia«. <sup>286</sup> Moreover, the »personal manifesto« that has been interpreted as »Jefferson’s own justification for the Declaration of Independence« was not only a »political weapon« against the supposed enemies abroad, but also aimed at the definition of the American society and the perils within.<sup>287</sup> These dangers for the early republic he perceived not least in the »racial« tensions that he tried to address in the naturalist fashion of the time.

As early as 1778, Jefferson had acquired a ten-volume set of Linnaeus’ works and by the time he wrote his *Notes* was »in step with modern European thinking and far ahead of most his American contemporaries« in the new field of natural history.<sup>288</sup> No longer did he want to leave the survey of his home continent to the distant scholars of France and Germany, but rather attempted to provide first-hand evidence presented according to the latest scientific standards. His enormous efforts, far beyond what the initial questionnaire demanded and what his first draft contained, were initiated by European rumors about the degenerating effects of the New World climate on its animals and inhabitants, represented not least by one of the preminent naturalists of the time, George-Louis Leclerc Comte de Buffon. Eventually, Jefferson not only »devoted the largest section of the only book he ever wrote [...] to systematically debunking Buffon’s degeneracy theory«, but with his

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<sup>285</sup> Cf. Douglas L. Wilson, *The Evolution of Jefferson’s »Notes on the State of Virginia«, in: The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 112, 2004, 2, pp. 98-133.*

<sup>286</sup> Gerbi, *The Dispute of the New World*, p. 252n421 (»powerful«), 253 (»Virginia«).

<sup>287</sup> Thomson, *Jefferson’s Shadow*, pp. 3 (»manifesto«), 10 (»weapon«); Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., Thomas Jefferson, in: Morton J. Frisch, Richard G. Stevens (eds.), *American Political Thought. The Philosophical Dimension of American Statesmanship*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers 2011 [1971], pp. 49-76, here p. 56.

<sup>288</sup> Thomson, *Jefferson’s Shadow*, p. 69.

book created a »microcosmic satellite to Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle* [...] maintain[ing] a running, intertextual dialogue« with the French scientist's book.<sup>289</sup>

Although the whole section about Virginia's native animals »constituted the meat of his defense against Buffon« and his suspicion of American deficiency, it seems that Jefferson was »taking special pride in defending American Indians against such pernicious claims«. <sup>290</sup> Introducing his assessment of the Native Americans' physical and mental constitution with a lengthy quotation about »le sauvage du nouveau monde« from the French original – the only one in the book –, he rigorously tried to refute every single claim Buffon had made about the Natives' physical inferiority. Generally arguing that »they are formed in mind as well as in body, on the same module with the ›Homo sapiens Europæus«, Jefferson suggested that the reason for possible varieties was »to be found, not in a difference of nature, but of circumstance«. At the beginning and in the end of his elaborations, however, Jefferson revealed what might well have been the main purpose of his efforts. From the outset, he wants to deal with the »man of America, whether aboriginal or transplanted« and concludes his chapter with an attack on Abbé Raynal's »application [of Buffon's theory] to the race of whites«. <sup>291</sup>

Not only his reference to the Linnaean classification of ›white‹ Europeans, which, in Jefferson's view, resembled the Native American without including him, but also through constant references to the three ›races‹ observable in America, Jefferson located his text within the contemporary discourse on human varieties. Explicitly he did »not mean to deny, that there are varieties in the race of man«, but at least in the American context they had not been sufficiently examined. Complaining that »though for a century and a half we have had under our eyes the races of black and of red man, they have never yet been viewed by us as subjects of natural history«, Jefferson wanted to establish his judgement on »what I have seen of man,

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<sup>289</sup> Lee Alan Dugatkin, *Mr. Jefferson and the Giant Moose. Natural History in Early America*, Chicago etc.: University of Chicago Press 2009, p. x (›largest‹); Helena Holgersson-Shorter, *Authority's Shadowy Double. Thomas Jefferson and the Architecture of Illegitimacy*, in: Alexandra Isfahani-Hammond (ed.), *The Masters and the Slaves. Plantation Relations and Mestizaje in American Imaginaries*, New York etc.: Palgrave Macmillan 2004, pp. 51-66, here pp. 52 f. (›microcosmic‹). See also McWhorter, *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America*, pp. 88-91. Possibly the ›dialogue‹ goes back even further, as Buffon »and his staff of scientists« might have been involved in creating the initial questionnaire that led to the *Notes*' first version, William Howard Adams, *The Paris Years of Thomas Jefferson*, New Haven etc.: Yale University Press 1997, p. 124.

<sup>290</sup> Thomson, *Jefferson's Shadow*, p. 65 (›meat‹); Dugatkin, *Mr. Jefferson and the Giant Moose*, p. x (›pride‹).

<sup>291</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, pp. 182 (›sauvage‹, ›transplanted‹), 186 (›circumstance‹), 187 (›module‹), 190 (›application‹).

white, red, and black«. <sup>292</sup> Therewith, in fact, the »first public spokesman to use the tricolor metaphor« for ›multiracial« America, Jefferson still arrived at contrary conclusions about the groups of humans he supposedly studied. <sup>293</sup>

In sharp contrast to his treatment of the Native Americans, Jefferson's assessment of African Americans comprises a list of their mental, physical and cultural shortcomings, which, in comparison to the faculties of those slaves of the »race of whites« that had lived under supposedly worse treatments in Roman antiquity, allegedly proved that »it is not their condition then, but nature, which has produced the distinction«. The seemingly contradictory evaluations of the two ›races« appear in different parts of the text and imply their respective function in Jefferson's broader construction of the American people. Whereas Native Americans (together with the ›transplanted« ›man of America«) are discussed within the naturalist section on minerals, plants and animals in Virginia, his negative assessment of African Americans is to be found in the political chapter on laws. In the latter passage, Jefferson uses the ›racial« identity of African Americans to justify the continuity of the moral evil of slavery, which he describes in ›racialized« terms when noting that »this blot in our country increases as fast, or faster, than the whites«. <sup>294</sup> Therewith Jefferson clearly distances himself from other Virginians at the time, which defended slavery on the basis of religious and social considerations. <sup>295</sup>

Clearly not including ›black« slaves into the category of the (›transplanted«) man of America, Jefferson invokes the »real distinctions which nature has made« as obstacles to their integration within the American nation. In his *Notes* he can thus powerfully advocate the abolition of slavery as undermining the morals of both masters and slaves, while his »suspicion« of the ›blacks'« natural inferiority stresses the necessity of the former slaves' colonization. While the African continent had produced a »race of men« that »had to be removed beyond the reach of mixture«, America was environmentally compatible with Europe. However, Native Americans needed cultivation to rise to the Anglo-American level of civilization, which Jefferson illustrates with the example of the Northern Europe tribes at the time of the Roman conquest: »Yet I may safely ask, How many good poets, how many able

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid., pp. 184 (›seen«), 189 (›deny«), 270 (›eyes«).

<sup>293</sup> Alden T. Vaughan, From White Man to Redskin. Changing Anglo-American Perceptions of the American Indian, in: *The American Historical Review*, 87, 1982, 4, pp. 917-953, here pp. 917.

<sup>294</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 214.

<sup>295</sup> Cf., for example, Teute Schmidt, Ripel Wilhelm, *Early Proslavery Petitions in Virginia*.

mathematicians, how many great inventors in arts or sciences, had Europe North of the Alps then produced?«. <sup>296</sup> Consequently, Jefferson's usage of the ›race‹ concept illustrates the initial flexibility of the notion, which could be used in a descriptive version, as in Jefferson's environmentalist account of Native Americans, and as an essentialist category, as in Jefferson's degradation of African Americans.

Whereas the naturalist part of his *Notes* was meant as a critique of contemporary European environmentalism, Jefferson's elaborations about ›blacks‹ in the political sections yielded criticism by some of his peers. <sup>297</sup> While, for example, Charles Thomson, the Philadelphian politician and creator of the Great Seal of the United States, was »much pleased with the dissertation on the difference between the Whites and blacks«, he still recommended »to leave it out« as »such an opinion might seem to justify slavery«. <sup>298</sup> Benjamin Banneker, a free ›black‹ mathematician, more directly addressed »those narrow prejudices which you have imbibed« and enclosed to his letter the manuscript of his almanac for Jefferson to study. <sup>299</sup> Jefferson's answer that »nobody wishes more than I do to see such proofs as you exhibit, that nature has given to our black brethren, talents equal to those of the other colors of men« was soon reprinted in the published almanac, and later confirmed in a similarly worded letter to Henri Grégoire. The French abolitionist of the *Société des Amis des Noirs* had sent Jefferson his *Enquiry Concerning the Intellectual and Moral Faculties, and Literature of Negroes*, in which he explicitly attacked Jefferson for »undervalue[ing] the talents of two negro writers« and »tell[ing] us, that no nation of

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<sup>296</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, pp. 189 (›Alps‹), 264 (›distinctions‹) 268 (›condition‹), 270 (›suspicion‹, ›mixture‹). For his famous condemnation of slavery, see *ibid.* pp. 288 f. In this assessment Jefferson echoed Adam Ferguson, who had claimed that the »inhabitants of Britain, at the time of the first Roman invasions, resembled, in many things, the present natives of North America: they were ignorant of agriculture; they painted their bodies; and used for cloathing, the skins of beasts«, *id.*, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, Dublin: Boulter Grierson 1767, p. 111.

<sup>297</sup> Still, accusations of racism against Jefferson overwhelmingly focus on these remarks about ›blacks‹. In the 1960s, for example, »to the thousands of spectators who saw Martin B. Duberman's play, ›In White America,‹ the actor cast as Jefferson had only to recite selected passages from *Notes on Virginia*, often in supercilious tone, to transform the father of democracy into the father of American racism«, David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823*, New York etc.: Cornell University Press 1975, p. 166.

<sup>298</sup> Charles Thomson, Commentary about Jefferson's draft on *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Mar./Apr. 1784, in Massachusetts Historical Society, [https://www.masshist.org/database/viewer.php?item\\_id=1813&br=1](https://www.masshist.org/database/viewer.php?item_id=1813&br=1), pp. 32 f. See also Wilson, *The Evolution of Jefferson's ›Notes‹*, p. 124.

<sup>299</sup> Benjamin Banneker to TJ, Aug. 19, 1791. See also Robert Stam, Ella Shohat, *Race in Translation. Culture Wars Around the Postcolonial Atlantic*, New York etc.: New York University Press 2012, pp. 15 f. For further African American critique of Jefferson's remarks about the inferiority of ›blacks‹, see James Sidbury, *Thomas Jefferson in Gabriel's Virginia*, in: James Horn, Jan Ellen Lewis, Peter Onuf (eds.), *The Revolution of 1800. Democracy, Race, and the New Republic*, Charlottesville etc.: University of Virginia Press 2002, pp. 199-219, here pp. 204 f.

[blacks] was ever civilized«. <sup>300</sup> Against these public qualifications of his harsh assessments, however, Jefferson complained to Joel Barlow that Gregoire's »credulity has made him gather up every story he could find of men of colour (without distinguishing whether black, or of what degree of mixture)«, and supposed that Banneker's studies relied on the help of his neighbor, because his letter had revealed a »mind of very common stature indeed«. <sup>301</sup>

The most relevant critique of the theory of human varieties Jefferson put forth in his *Notes* was provided by one of his compatriots. Samuel Stanhope Smith, then president of Princeton University, devoted considerable parts of his anthropological studies to a rejection of Jefferson's claims. Generally challenging the possibility to »draw the line precisely between the various races of men, or even to enumerate them with certainty«, Smith declared that particularly Jefferson's »remarks upon the genius of the African negro [...] have so little foundation in true philosophy that few observations will be necessary to refute them«. »Genius«, he goes on, »requires freedom« and is not sufficiently educated through the »society of their masters«, as Jefferson had implied. With respect to ›black‹ literary achievements that Jefferson had flatly denied, Smith asked »Mr. Jefferson, or any other man who is acquainted with American planters, how many of those masters could write poems equal to those of Phyllis Whately«. Opposed to Jefferson's biologicistic degradation of ›blacks‹, Smith backed Jefferson's defense of the Native Americans and extends his culturalistic arguments to African Americans, who he believed were »more ingenious, and capable of acquiring any new art, than those who have grown up to maturity in the savagism of Africa«. <sup>302</sup>

With his clearly voiced abolitionism and his despise for biologicistic essentialism in the science of man, however, a contemporary commentator has called Smith a »Jefferson without the hate and the sexual anxiety«. <sup>303</sup> Moreover, it is important to

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<sup>300</sup> TJ to Benjamin Banneker, Aug. 30, 1791; TJ to Henri Grégoire, Feb. 25, 1809; Cf. Henri Grégoire, *An Enquiry Concerning the Intellectual and Moral Faculties, and Literature of Negroes; Followed with an Account of the Life and Works of Fifteen Negroes and Mulattoes Distinguished in Science, Literature and the Arts*, tr. by D. B. Warden, Brooklyn: Thomas Kirk 1810, pp. 44 (›under-value‹), 131 (›nation‹). See also Thomson, *Jefferson's Shadow*, p. 132; Joe R. Feagin, *Systemic Racism. A Theory of Oppression*, New York etc.: Routledge 2006, p. 98.

<sup>301</sup> TJ to Joel Barlow, Oct. 8, 1809.

<sup>302</sup> Samuel Stanhope Smith, *An Essay on the Causes of the Variety of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species*, New Brunswick: J. Simpson and Co. 1810, pp. 194 (›ingenious‹), 240 (›line‹), 267 (›remarks‹), 268 (›Genius‹), 269 (›freedom‹, ›demand‹).

<sup>303</sup> Bruce Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind. American Race Theory in the Early Republic*, Cambridge etc.: Harvard University Press 2002, p. 70.

note that Jefferson's assessment of African American inferiority did neither go unchallenged nor expressed typical eighteenth-century attitudes about ›race‹. Instead, Jefferson phrased one important contribution to a lively and still very much undecided debate about human varieties. Despite his critics and although Jefferson »sought to limit circulation« because of his possibly irritating antislavery sections, *Notes* became »arguably the most frequently reprinted Southern book ever produced in the United States to that time«. With countless extracts appearing in various newspapers and magazines, it greatly contributed to the »reconstruction of Jefferson as a public person« and as »a chief agent in the intellectual construction of America«. <sup>304</sup> At the time his science rose to nationwide fame and his views on slavery and human ›races‹ were discussed among American intellectuals, Thomas Jefferson was not living in the United States, but was residing near the heart of the Enlightenment discourses, not only consolidating his reputation as the early republic's intellectual figurehead, but also his conviction of American exceptionalism. Just before his move to Paris, however, Jefferson had returned to the political stage, only »remain[ing] an incidental scientist and philosopher«. <sup>305</sup>

His political comeback, after he had felt »thoroughly cured of every principle of political ambition« and disappointed by attacks of his countrymen about his alleged failure as Virginia's governor, followed a phase of depression over the serious illness and eventual death of his wife Martha in September 1782. <sup>306</sup> During the following year Jefferson continued working on his *Notes*, but also accepted his earlier appointment as a delegate for the Paris negotiations for peace. In actual fact, Jefferson's change of mind came too late to contribute to the peace treaty that was signed in September 1783. Rather, he was once again elected as Virginian delegate to the

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<sup>304</sup> Dugatkin, Mr. Jefferson and the Giant Moose, p. x (›arguably‹); Frank Shuffleton, Binding Ties. Thomas Jefferson, Francis Hopkinson, and the Representation of the Notes on the State of Virginia, in: Mark L. Kamrath, Sharon M. Harris (eds.), *Periodical Literature in Eighteenth-Century America*, Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press 2005, pp. 255-276, here pp. 267 (›public‹), 268 (›chief‹). As Winthrop Jordan notes, it was especially »his remarks about Negroes [...] that] were more widely read [...] than any others until the mid-nineteenth century«, id., *White Over Black*, p. 429.

<sup>305</sup> Malone, *Jefferson the Virginian*, p. 389. His *Notes* had a considerable impact also in European sciences, so that for example Alexander Humboldt learned of the book during his studies in Hamburg, cf. Gerhard Casper, A Young Man from ›ultima Thule‹ Visits Jefferson. Alexander von Humboldt in Philadelphia and Washington, in: *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 155, 2011, 3, pp. 247-262, here pp. 248 ff.

<sup>306</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 395. Cf. also Jan E. Lewis, ›The Blessings of Domestic Society‹. Thomas Jefferson's Family and the Transformation of American Politics, in: Peter S. Onuf (ed.), *Jeffersonian Legacies*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia 1993, pp.109-146, here pp. 112 f.

Continental Congress and for a period of six months served one last time in legislative office, where he made another huge impact on the formation of the United States in shaping the vast Western territories that the British had ceded in the Peace of Paris. Parallel to his theoretical phrasing of American exceptionalism in the *Notes*, Jefferson was occupied with its political implementation in drafting the Northwest Ordinance.<sup>307</sup>

As a member of the respective congressional committee, Jefferson wrote his *Report on Government for Western Territory* suggesting that the new Western territories after they »have been purchased of the Indian Inhabitants« shall be organized in distinct states, in which »after the year 1800 [...] there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude«.<sup>308</sup> At the same time his »single most important antislavery act« and a concept for the supposedly »peaceful, orderly process of acquiring Indian land by government purchase«, Jefferson's plans met with a divided response and are still matter of controversy.<sup>309</sup> Whereas the antislavery provision was not included in the final document, but replaced with a clause prohibiting slavery only in those new states north of the Ohio that allowed the southern states »to deflect attention from the faster-growing backcountry south of the river«,<sup>310</sup> the Native Americans' claims to the territories were formally acknowledged in the final version. It has been noted that the »conditional antislavery« provision of the Northwestern Ordinance became possible »only when racism, climate, and other ›crass motives‹ converged«.<sup>311</sup> Similarly, its clauses regarding Native Americans revealed fateful consequences when »commissioners [...] used bribery and coercion to get Indian

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<sup>307</sup> Cf. Thomas Hallock, *Notes on the State of Virginia and the Jeffersonian West*, in: Frank Shuffelton (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Jefferson*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 2009, pp. 47-60.

<sup>308</sup> TJ, IV. Revised Report of the Committee, Mar. 22, 1784.

<sup>309</sup> Cohen, *Thomas Jefferson and the Problem of Slavery*, p. 510; Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, p. 162.

<sup>310</sup> Allen Carden, *Freedom's Delay. America's Struggle for Emancipation, 1776-1865*, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press 2014, p. 34. Although strongly expressing Jefferson's »free-soil doctrine« including the protection of »whites from the baneful effects of slavery«, it has been doubted that his initial proposal would have prevented the further spread of slavery, since »bondage would have been legal in the area for sixteen years; and it seems likely that, if the institution of slavery had been allowed to get a foothold in the territory, the prohibition would have been repealed«, Cohen, *Thomas Jefferson and the Problem of Slavery*, 511.

<sup>311</sup> John Craig Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom and Expansion in the Early American West*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press 2007, p. 4. Hammond draws on the work of William Freehling, who had earlier emphasized the ›conditional antislavery‹ policies of the founding fathers, cf. id., *The Founding Fathers, Conditional Antislavery, and the Nonradicalism of the American Revolution*, in: id. (ed.), *The Reintegration of American History. Slavery and the Civil War*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 1994, pp. 12-33.

approval of treaties ceding huge tracts of land to the United States« – a policy that mirrored the gap between the »apparent empathy within Jefferson’s colonial discourse« and his »personal investment in dispossessing native peoples on the Virginia borderlands«. <sup>312</sup>

Although his arrival in Paris was postponed to the summer of 1784, when the peace treaties had long been signed and his commission was only for negotiating commercial agreements, his desire for the »vaunted scene of Europe« remained unbroken. <sup>313</sup> When he boarded for the trip that first brought him to France via Portsmouth, Jefferson took with him an »uncommonly large panther skin« to support the arguments he was to present to European scientists in the *Notes* and revealed what he perceived as part of his mission overseas. <sup>314</sup> Finally succeeding Benjamin Franklin as American minister to France, Jefferson was to stay in Europe until the burst of the French Revolution. During that time, he not only became familiar with Comte de Buffon and the Encyclopédistes, but also intensified his contact to Marquis de Chastellux and established his citizenship in the transatlantic Republic of Letters. <sup>315</sup> In Europe, he confirmed his despite for large cities and the social differences they displayed, and likewise acquainted himself with the elegance of European handicrafts and architecture, and with the delicate tastes of the French cuisine, which his cook James Hemings took home to Monticello. <sup>316</sup> Most notably, however, Jefferson came to know Hemings’ sister Sally, with whom he was to have a sexual relationship for decades to come – which more than anything else casted shadows on Jefferson’s record as the egalitarian founder of American democracy.

It is often emphasized that the slaves Jefferson brought to Paris were »clearly free under French law« and that »it is virtually certain that Sally and James Hemings

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<sup>312</sup> Frederick D. Williams, Introduction, in: Frederick D. Williams (ed.), *Northwest Ordinance. Essays on Its Formulations, Provisions and Legacy*, East Lansing: Michigan State University Press 1988, pp. vii-xiv, here p. viii; Hixson, *American Settler Colonialism*, p. 67.

<sup>313</sup> TJ to Charles Bellini, Sep. 30, 1785.

<sup>314</sup> Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, Vol. 2: *Jefferson and the Rights of Man*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press 2005 [1951], p. 99.

<sup>315</sup> Cf. Hayes, *The Road to Monticello*, pp. 302 ff. See also Hannah Spahn, *Cosmopolitan Imperfections. Jefferson, Nationhood, and the Republic of Letters*, in: Hannah Spahn, Peter Nicolaisen (eds.), *Cosmopolitanism and Nationhood in the Age of Jefferson*, Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter 2013, pp. 113-135.

<sup>316</sup> Cf. Richard B. Bernstein, *Thomas Jefferson. The Revolution of Ideas*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 2004, pp. 84 f., 98 f.; Maurizio Valsania, *The Limits of Optimism. Thomas Jefferson’s Dualistic Enlightenment*, Charlottesville etc.: University of Virginia Press 2011, pp. 39 f.; Clarence Lusane, *The Black History of the White House*, San Francisco: City Lights Books 2011, pp. 83 f.

would have learned of their rights and opportunities«. <sup>317</sup> According to oral traditions, Sally Hemings, who possibly was pregnant on her return to Virginia in 1889 at the age of fifteen or sixteen, »seriously considered remaining in France«, because there she »received greater exposure to the possibilities of life as a free person than almost any plantation slave [...] would get in a lifetime«. <sup>318</sup> As explained in Madison Hemings' testimony, it was only Jefferson's promise of »extraordinary privileges«, including the liberation of »her children [...] at the age of twenty-one«, that convinced her to accompany him back to the United States. <sup>319</sup> The siblings might also have »realize[d] that, if they chose freedom in France, Jefferson had the power to take out his anger on their relatives at Monticello«. <sup>320</sup>

That said, there can be no doubt that Jefferson was well aware of his slaves' opportunities to liberty, as he most likely referred to his own example, when a Franco-American asked him for advice considering the importation of a nine-year-old slave from the United States:

» I have made enquiries on the subject of the negro boy you have brought, and find that the laws of France give him freedom if he claims it, and that it will be difficult, if not impossible, to interrupt the course of the law. Nevertheless I have known an instance where a person bringing in a slave, and saying nothing about it, has not been disturbed in his possession. I think it will be easier in your case to pursue the same plan, as the boy is so young that it is not probable he will think of claiming freedom«. <sup>321</sup>

On the question of slavery, this letter testifies, Jefferson did neither draw inspiration from the devoted French abolitionists he met in Paris and London, nor from his closest assistant William Short, who became actively engaged in the Société des Amis des Noirs and later urged his mentor to reconsider the question whether »blacks could enjoy citizenship in the United States«. <sup>322</sup>

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<sup>317</sup> Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders*, p. 218 (»clearly«), Stanton, »Those Who Labor for My Happiness«, p. 175 (»virtually«).

<sup>318</sup> Rothman, *Notorious in the Neighborhood*, p. 17.

<sup>319</sup> Quoted in Annette Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings. An American Controversy*, Charlottesville etc.: University Press of Virginia 1997, p. 246. See also Yoriko Ishida, *Modern and Postmodern narratives of Race, Gender, and Identity. The Descendants of Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*, New York: Peter Lang 2010, pp. 26 f.

<sup>320</sup> Edward Countryman, *Enjoy the Same Liberty. Black Americans and the Revolutionary Era*, Lanham etc: Rowman and Littlefield 2012, p. 70.

<sup>321</sup> TJ to Paul Bentalou, Aug. 25, 1786. See also Iain McLean, *The Paris Years of Thomas Jefferson*, in: Francis D. Cogliano (ed.), *A Companion to Thomas Jefferson*, Malden etc.: Wiley-Blackwell 2012, pp. 110-127, here p. 124. In this context, Annette Gordon-Reed stresses that Jefferson consciously violated the law to officially declare his importation of his slave James Hemings (and, later, Sally Hemings' arrival in France), cf. *id.*, *The Hemingses of Monticello*, p. 183.

<sup>322</sup> Carter, *The United States of the United Races*, p. 37.

It would be misleading to believe, however, that the country Jefferson and his slaves arrived in was something like an abolitionist utopia, which held out equality to emancipated slaves. In fact, slavery was not formally outlawed in France until the French Revolution and political movements were gaining ground that opposed slavery, but at the same time proclaimed the »ultimate goal of ridding France of blacks«, so that »by 1782 the notion of racial purity was firmly entrenched in the minds of even the staunchest defenders of freedom«.<sup>323</sup> Moreover, as »racism had gained the upper hand« at the time Jefferson was staying in France, it was by no means limited to biologicistic assumptions about the inferiority of foreign peoples, but essentially embraced notions of class difference, which had been associated with the French concept of ›race‹ since the sixteenth century.<sup>324</sup>

Abbé Sieyès, whom Jefferson later referred to as the »most logical head of the nation« and whose essay on the third estate he believed to have »electrified that country, as Paine's Common Sense did us«, built his argument for the advancement of the lower classes on the assumption that the Gauls, as the indigenous population of France, were unnaturally suppressed by a Franconian »race of conquerors«.<sup>325</sup> Against this backdrop, Sieyès envisioned the »utopia of a race republic«, which would not only free the commoners from the ›racial‹ oppression of aristocracy, but also replace their labor with the workforce of ›blacks‹ and new ›races‹ of apelike humanoids.<sup>326</sup> His reversal of the traditional distinction between the ›races‹ of noble and lower classes was thus combined with fashionable naturalistic fantasies about »black women's sexual compatibility with apes«, which Jefferson echoed in his *Notes*, and resulted in the plan for a homogenous society of ›citizens‹ living on the work of ›racialized‹ slaves by nature.<sup>327</sup>

Jefferson, »who played the part of scientific scout for America« and purchased great amounts of books during his time in Paris,<sup>328</sup> must have been aware of the

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<sup>323</sup> Sue Peabody, ›There Are No Slaves in France‹. The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 1996, pp. 134 f.

<sup>324</sup> William B. Cohen, The French Encounter with Africans. White Response to Blacks, 1530-1880, Bloomington etc.: Indiana University Press 1980, p. 95. See also *ibid.*, pp. 96 ff.

<sup>325</sup> Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, What is the Third Estate? (1789), in: *id.*, Political Writings, ed. and transl. by Michael Sonenscher, Indianapolis: Hackett 2003, p. 99.

<sup>326</sup> Wulf D. Hund, Racism in White Sociology. From Adam Smith to Max Weber, in: Wulf D. Hund, Alana Lentin (eds.), Racism and Sociology, Berlin etc.: Lit 2014, pp. 23-67, here p. 28.

<sup>327</sup> T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, Black Venus. Sexualized Savages, Primal Fears, and Primitive Narratives in French, Durham: Duke University Press 1999, p. 101.

<sup>328</sup> Quoted in Malone, Jefferson and the Rights of Man, p. 83. With the »nearly 200 books« that Jefferson acquired for James Madison, Malone argues, Jefferson »made a significant contribution to

»racial« language in French political discourses, while likewise witnessing the material world that yielded this rhetoric. In fact, as Dumas Malone noted, the »significance of Jefferson's last two years in France lay less in what he did than in what he saw«. <sup>329</sup> Unlike Malone implies, however, this experience was not limited to Jefferson's observation of the Ancien Régime's failure to realize the natural rights that its population demanded, but also included observations in the important port city of Bordeaux, back then the center of French colonial trade. With respect to a brief visit of Jefferson in the prospering trade city, Karen Fields has demonstrated the complexity of Jefferson's entanglements with the reality of France as a colonial power:

»His wine-seller acquaintances were, directly or indirectly, involved with colonial slavery, or were slave-traders outright. The wine they sold was both a commodity slaves were bought with in Africa and a commodity for sale in the colonies. Jefferson's trade diplomacy had precisely those colonies in view«.

Moreover, as the merchants he visited were to be the greatest profiteers of the upcoming revolution, it was essentially the »fortunes created [...] by the slave trade [that] gave to the bourgeoisie that pride which demanded liberty and so contributed to human emancipation«. <sup>330</sup> After in the struggle for American independence, the »loudest yelps for liberty« were voiced by the »drivers of negroes«, as Samuel Johnson had famously proclaimed, <sup>331</sup> it was the significant influence of prospering slave-traders that contributed to the French Revolution and its declaration of universal rights. For Jefferson, however, this bourgeois minority was less problematic for the cause of a liberal revolution than the precarious majority he described with abhorrence.

»Not for a moment«, Hannah Arendt noted with regard to Jefferson's confrontation with the prevalent poverty in Europe, »did it occur to him that people so »loaded with misery« [...] would be able to achieve what had been achieved in America«. <sup>332</sup> Particularly in Bordeaux Jefferson must have encountered not only the

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[...] the fateful period when the American Constitution was being framed and adopted« under the aegis of his friend and compatriot, *ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

<sup>330</sup> Karen E. Fields, Thomas Jefferson's Bordeaux in W.E.B. Du Bois's Pan-African View of the French Revolution, in: *The New Centennial Review*, 6, 2006, 3, pp. 129-147, here pp. 142 f.

<sup>331</sup> Samuel Johnson, *Taxation no Tyranny. An Answer to the Resolutions and Address of the American Congress*, London: T. Cadell 1775, p. 89.

<sup>332</sup> Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, New York: Viking Press 1963, p. 57. This »misery« of European populations, Jefferson thought, could only be reduced if American yeomen would cultivate the western parts of the American continent and produce quantities of food that would supply not only the New but also the Old World, cf. Dierksheide, *Amelioration and Empire*, p. 48.

»splendor of the mercantile classes«, but also a »poverty of the workers in Bordeaux's embryonic factories and the peasants in the vineyards«, which resulted in constant riots throughout the 1780s.<sup>333</sup> It might have affirmed his fear of ›racial‹ conflict in his native state that at the outbreak of the revolution this public unrest among the lower classes violently unleashed against ›black‹ servants. The demand for the latter's dismissal by ›white‹ coworkers bore witness to both the desperate situation of the protesters, »finding little that could distinguish them from men of color of equal or higher professional skills and wealth«, and the entrenchment of ›racial‹ prejudices in French society, which served to redirect the social pressure evoked by the unequal distribution of increasing trading profits and the offensive displays of wealth in metropolises like Bordeaux.<sup>334</sup> Meanwhile, the new bourgeois elites, including Jefferson, who arguably became the »secret author of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen« by providing a draft for Marquis de Lafayette,<sup>335</sup> could spare the issue of slavery until the bold proclamations of liberty inspired unrest overseas and the »extension of civil rights to free men of color and the freeing of slaves [...] were [...] the result of political and strategic exigencies«.<sup>336</sup>

Far beyond his involvement with the revolution, which confirmed Jefferson's belief in the upcoming ›republican millennium‹,<sup>337</sup> Jefferson's years in Paris already implied many of the engagements with questions of ›race‹ and identity that accompanied him through the rest of his political and private life. Regardless of whether »Sally Hemings' disturbing mulatto presence« influenced his geological writings on Europe as Fawn Brodie suggests, his relation to her undoubtedly has to be considered when analyzing his attitude on slavery and ›racial‹ mixing.<sup>338</sup> Apart from that, Jefferson became involved with Barbary piracy during his time in France, early on willing to take up arms against the North African corsairs to protect American trade

<sup>333</sup> Richard Munthe Brace, *The Problem of Bread and the French Revolution at Bordeaux*, in: *The American Historical Review*, 51, 1946, 4, pp. 649-667, here p. 650.

<sup>334</sup> Cohen, *The French Encounter with Africans*, p. 113. For the new rich in Bordeaux, see Fields, *Thomas Jefferson's Bordeaux* in W.E.B. Du Bois's *Pan-African View of the French Revolution*.

<sup>335</sup> McLean, *The Paris Years of Thomas Jefferson*, p. 124. See also *ibid.* 114-119; Malone, *Jefferson and the Rights of Man*, pp. 223 f.

<sup>336</sup> Cohen, *The French Encounter with Africans*, p. 113. As David Brion Davis notes with explicit regard to Jefferson's attachment with the French Enlightenment, Bordeaux exemplified the dialectics of natural rights philosophy and the persistence of slavery as the native city of Montesquieu was »a center of enlightenment culture [...], which] remained so united in support of the African slave trade«, *id.* *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, p. 165.

<sup>337</sup> Cf. Armin Mattes, ›Une et indivisible?‹ Thomas Jefferson and Destutt de Tracy on the Idea of the Nation, in: Hannah Spahn, Peter Nicolaisen (eds.), *Cosmopolitanism and Nationhood in the Age of Jefferson*, Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter 2013, pp. 41-73.

<sup>338</sup> Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson*, pp. 229 f.

and free their ›white‹ captives.<sup>339</sup> The plans he developed with John Ledyard, from whom he could gather first-hand accounts about Captain »Cook's deperiment towards the savages«, for an exploration of the American continent to some degree anticipated the voyage of Lewis and Clark.<sup>340</sup> Eventually, French discourses about the rising unrest in Saint-Domingue informed his later reluctance to support the independence of Haiti and inspired his fear of ›race‹ war within the United States. Consequently, when Jefferson returned home, he indeed »brought with him a strong commitment to a coherent worldview [...] that, ever afterward, shaped his vision of the world and his place in it«, albeit he also consolidated his conviction of who ought to have his place outside the American society.<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> Cf. Francis D. Cogliano, *Emperor of Liberty. Thomas Jefferson's Foreign Policy*, New Haven etc.: Yale University Press 2014, 42-75.

<sup>340</sup> TJ, *Autobiography*, Jan. 6 - Jul. 29, 1821. See also Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, p. 376. In fact, this was already Jefferson's second attempt »to sponsor a transcontinental expedition«, as he had tried to raise funds for an expedition before he moved to France in 1783, c.f. Alan Taylor, *Jefferson's Pacific. The Science of Distant Empire, 1768-1811*, in: Douglas Seefeldt, Jeffrey L. Hantman, Peter Onuf (eds.), *Across the Continent. Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, and the Making of America*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press 2005, pp. 16-44, here pp. 35 ff.

<sup>341</sup> Bernstein, *Thomas Jefferson* (2004), p. 99.

### 3. »Rising Tide of Racism« Early Republic

During Thomas Jefferson's time in Paris, the United States had gone through its first fundamental challenges, struggled about the constitution and, with Shays' Rebellion in rural New England, witnessed its first major uprising. Jefferson vigilantly observed the developments in his native state and remained a critical, though often delayed, commentator. Although clearly disapproving their »acts absolutely unjustifiable« and »motives [...] founded in ignorance«, Jefferson defended the protesting yeoman farmers of Massachusetts against »severities from their governments«, as a »little rebellion now and then is a good thing«. On the contrary, Jefferson complained that the constitutional »Convention has been too much impressed by the insurrection of Massachusetts: [...] setting up a kite to keep the hen-yard in order«. <sup>342</sup> Although Jefferson initially expressed his reservations towards the Constitution, which in his view lacked an overriding bill of rights to testify »what the people are entitled to against [...] government«, he could not anticipate that in the following decade he was to lead the Republican camp of the critics of the Constitution in a political schism of the Union »equivalent to that of the Civil War« that culminated in his election to presidency, marking the »revolution of 1800«. <sup>343</sup>

Opposing the Federalists' efforts to increase the responsibilities of a central government, Jefferson, serving as the first Secretary of State in Washington's administration, became part of a controversy that represented the more general clash between the republican »spirit of '76« and the allegedly aristocratic »spirit of '87«. <sup>344</sup> Additionally, he feared that the Federalists' focus on trade and commerce would drive the United States under British domination, whereas he suggested a strong alliance with revolutionary France, which he continuously defended against his

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<sup>342</sup> TJ to James Madison, Jan. 30, 1787 (»acts«, »severities«, »rebellion«); TJ to William Stephens Smith, Nov. 13, 1787 (»motives«, »ignorance«, »hen-yard«).

<sup>343</sup> TJ to James Madison, Dec. 20, 1787 (»entitled«); James Roger Sharp, *American Politics in the Early Republic. The New Nation in Crisis*, New Haven etc.: Yale University Press 1993, p. 1 (»equivalent«).

<sup>344</sup> The supposed chasm between the revolutionary and constitutional »spirits« in the founding of the United States has been repeatedly stressed by Joseph J. Ellis. Cf. id., *American Sphinx*, p. 277; *His Excellency. George Washington*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf 2004, p. 225; *American Creation. Triumphs and Tragedies at the Founding of the Republic*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf 2007, p. 89.

compatriots' indictments of terror and anarchy.<sup>345</sup> Oft-cited, Jefferson interpreted the French Revolution as crucial for the global spread of republican values and proclaimed that even if there were »but an Adam and Eve left in every country, and left free, it would be better than as it now is«. <sup>346</sup> Referring to this public approval of the French Revolution, his opponents characterized Jefferson as an advocate of its excesses, who would lead the United States into similar anarchy – an interpretation that was upheld by some of Jefferson's twentieth-century interpreters, who diagnose his »almost manic enthusiasm for the French Revolution«. <sup>347</sup>

Contrary to the Federalists around John Adams and Alexander Hamilton, who did not believe European aristocracies to be ready for democracy, Jefferson seemingly »insisted that all peoples had the right to govern themselves«. <sup>348</sup> In fact, however, neither during the republican crisis of the 1790s nor in his two terms as the third president of the United States was Jefferson fighting for the self-government of ›all peoples«. With regard to his foreign policies, this became especially obvious in his reluctance to support the Haitian Revolution, which he feared as possible inspiration for slave revolts in the United States. On the American continent, it was largely the Native Americans, whose allegedly anarchistic societies he deemed »inconsistent with any great degree of population«. <sup>349</sup> Adding Jefferson's political and private struggles with slavery, the exploration of the western continent through Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, and the war against the Barbary States, Jefferson's time in the early republic's executive provides plenty of links to issues of ›race«, nation and identity that have to be discussed with regard to racism.

### 3.1 Jefferson and Rebellious Slaves

Serving as minister in Paris, Jefferson saw the United States confronted with a »mortal threat« posed by the North African Barbary States, which increasingly focused on American vessels as they were no longer protected by the British Navy. <sup>350</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> In his early assessment of the Constitution, Jefferson told Madison that the American presidency will always be held either by a »Galloman or an Angloman«, TJ to James Madison, Dec. 20, 1787.

<sup>346</sup> TJ to William Short, Jan. 3, 1793.

<sup>347</sup> Conor Cruise O'Brien, *The Long Affair. Thomas Jefferson and the French Revolution, 1785-1800*, London etc.: Sinclair-Stevenson 1996, p. x.

<sup>348</sup> Bernstein, *Thomas Jefferson* (2003), p. 93.

<sup>349</sup> TJ to James Madison, Jan. 30, 1787.

<sup>350</sup> Cogliano, *Emperor of Liberty*, p. 45. For the following, see Robert J. Allison, *The Crescent Obscured. The United States and the Muslim World, 1776-1815*, Chicago etc.: The University of Chicago Press 1995, pp 3-34. Cultural representations of the ›Algerian spies« are examined in Timothy

In 1785, Ottoman Algiers had declared war on the new republic and in the very same year seized two ships, taking twenty-one sailors hostage. Fear of Algerian aggression quickly spread in the United States, with Virginia's Governor Patrick Henry suspecting three unfamiliar immigrants of espionage for the North African enemies, a case that resulted in the strangers' deportation from the United States and eventually in the Enemy Aliens Act, which generally enabled the government to ban citizens of hostile nations. Thomas Jefferson, who together with John Adams was commissioned to negotiate with the Barbary States on the release of the captive Americans, early on refused to pay the demanded tributes, but instead promoted the build-up of naval forces in the Mediterranean. The United States, following Jefferson's proposals, relied on the trade with manufacturing European countries, the ›piracy‹ of the Barbary States could not be accepted and American military activities could not »begin in a better cause nor against a weaker foe«. <sup>351</sup> However, until his first term as president, Jefferson's war propaganda remained unsuccessful, although it increasingly met with negative representations of the Muslim nations in the American public.

From the mid-1780s onwards, the conflict with the Barbary States was in various ways reflected in the early republic's popular culture, peaking whenever the corsairs seized another ship and its crew. <sup>352</sup> Building on a tradition dating from the mid-seventeenth century, so-called captivity narratives most effectively disseminated the fates of ›white‹ slaves in Africa and »emphasized the victimization of the Christian and the inhumanity of the non-Christian«. <sup>353</sup> Following the example of ›Indian‹ captivity narratives, which have long been interpreted as a »peculiar American genre indicative of an exceptional white creole identity«, <sup>354</sup> the fictional testimonies of

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Marr, *The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 2006, esp. pp. 26-45.

<sup>351</sup> TJ to Horatio Gates, Dec. 13, 1784. Similarly worded, Jefferson asked James Monroe whether the United States could »begin a naval power [...] on a more honorable occasion, or with a weaker foe«, TJ to James Monroe, Nov. 11, 1784.

<sup>352</sup> Cf. Robert Battistini, *Glimpses of the Other before Orientalism. The Muslim World in Early American Periodicals, 1785-1800*, in: *Early American Studies*, 8, 2010, 2, pp. 446-474. See also Thomas S. Kidd, *The Founders and Islam*, in: Daniel L. Dreisbach, Mark David Hall, *Faith and the Founders of the American Republic*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 2014, pp. 84-100.

<sup>353</sup> Paul Baepler, *The Barbary Captivity Narrative in American Culture*, *Early American Literature*, 39, 2004, 2, pp. 217-246, here p. 220.

<sup>354</sup> Joyce E. Chaplin, *Enslavement of Indians in Early America. Captivity without the Narrative*, in: Elizabeth Mancke, Carole Shammas (eds.), *The Creation of the British Atlantic World*, Baltimore etc.: John Hopkins University Press 2005, pp. 45-70, here p. 59. Meanwhile, however, scholars emphasize the European predecessors of the frontier fictions, which at least date from the Crusades, *ibid.*, p. 58.

American hostages transmitted complex images of »Arabs [...] as both masters and subalterns« and soothed the contemporary crisis of national identity by uniting Federalists and Republicans »in abhorring the pirates«. <sup>355</sup> Especially after 1793, when more ships were captured and a total of 120 Americans came under Algerian control, representations of the Barbary enemies as savage allies of the British king resembled the identity-establishing narratives of the Revolution, when the Crown allegedly build on the collaboration with African American slaves and Native Americans. However, these »African emissaries of England« were not portrayed as »blacks«, but as gruesome Arabs, whose brutality was rooted in religious and cultural difference. <sup>356</sup>

Thomas Jefferson was well aware of the complexity of ethnic or »racial« identity with regard to the North African societies. In his first year as Secretary of State, he proposed to use American naval forces to take hostages as possible exchanges and to minimize ransoms. However, he noted, »they have sometimes accepted off two Moors for a Christian, at others they have refused five or six for one«. To circumvent these instable exchange rates, Jefferson suggested focusing on »Turkish captives« instead, as they were »treated, in every instance as a superior order of beings«. <sup>357</sup> Critical of this social inequality within the enemy states, Jefferson also received first-hand reports from some of the captives informing him about their »state of slavery to the Barbarians«. Eventually, in Paul Finkelman's reading, he »went to war to protect whites from enslavement«, although this was hardly the only reason and despite the fact that there were African Americans among the captives. <sup>358</sup> While these policies already imply that Jefferson could subordinate his liberal and egalitarian principles to the commercial needs of the United States and the public opinion,

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<sup>355</sup> Jacob Rama Berman, *American Arabesque. Arabs, Islam, and the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Imaginary*, New York etc.: New York University Press 2012, p. 67 (»Arabs«); Jared Gardner, *Master Plots. Race and the Founding of an American Literature, 1787-1845*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press 1998, p. 32. On the role of captivity narratives in the early republic debates on national and »racial« identity, see also Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, »Slaves in Algiers«. *Race, Republican Genealogies, and the Global Stage*, *American Literary History*, 16, 2004, 3, pp. 307-436, esp. pp. 407-410.

<sup>356</sup> Marr, *Cultural Roots of American Islamicism*, p. 31 f.

<sup>357</sup> TJ, Report on American Captives in Algiers, Dec. 28, 1790.

<sup>358</sup> Enslaved Captain Isaac Stephens as quoted in Lawrence A. Peskin, *Captives and Countrymen. Barbary Slavery and the American Public, 1785-1816*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press 2009, p. 32, see also pp. 26-38; Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders*, p. 161. For the story of Robert Adams, an African American captive in the Barbary war, as subverting the common »white-black, civilized-uncivilized, and Christian-Muslim dichotomies that surface in the Barbary captivity accounts that were popular at the time«, see Melanie Fritsch, *Beyond Race and Nation. The African American Barbary Captivity Narrative of Robert Adams*, in: Maha Marouan, Merinda Simmons (eds.), *Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press 2013*, pp. 82-96, here p. 85.

which celebrated the »well chosen chief of the nation for his resolute action,<sup>359</sup> this became even more obvious in a conflict that long overshadowed the disputes with Tripoli and Algiers: the successful revolution of African slaves in the French Colony of St. Domingue.

In some respects the emerging republic in the West Indies evoked reactions that strikingly resembled the conflict with the Barbary States. At some point, Jefferson explicitly feared »another Algiers in the seas of the Americas«, since »much like the Barbary States in the Mediterranean, Louverture's Saint-Domingue had become a linchpin for American trade in the Caribbean«. <sup>360</sup> The alleged similarities of the Haitian developments to the threats posed by the Barbary States were popularized in a next wave of captivity narratives, which conveyed disturbing messages about the possible reversal of ›race‹ relations and »warned that the very expansion of white civilization was creating the condition for its destruction: that Europeans' dependence on a dark-skinned labor force rendered them vulnerable«. However, this fear was expressed in a »more overtly racist tone« in the course of the Haitian Revolution and, as in the conflict with Native American and Barbary corsairs, illustrated how »access to the printing press helped maintain a racial hierarchy even in situations where people of color held power over whites«. <sup>361</sup>

Despite these parallels and although it has been held that the conflict with the Barbary States had anticipated American diplomacy with Haiti in similarly evoking »national pride, racial biases, and religious hesitations«, <sup>362</sup> it was only the racist reactions towards the slave republic in the West Indies that were explicitly couched in ›racial‹ terms, whereas opposition towards Muslim North Africans was overwhelmingly phrased along religious and cultural lines. In fact, representations of the Barbary ›savages‹ were more closely related to images of Native Americans. It has been suggested that with regard to European colonists' experiences in North Africa, »it is not surprising that when encountering indigenous Americans they would draw their descriptions from a repository of images developed in Barbary«. Some hundreds

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<sup>359</sup> Quoted in Allison, *The Crescent Obscured*, p. 189.

<sup>360</sup> Jefferson as quoted in Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation*, p. 749 (›Algiers‹); Ronald Angelo Johnson, *Diplomacy in Black and White. John Adams, Toussaint Louverture, and Their Atlantic World Alliance*, Athens: University of Georgia Press 2014, p. 57 (›linchpin‹).

<sup>361</sup> Jeremy D. Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution. Captivity Narratives and Identity in the Saint-Domingue Insurrection*, in: *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 36, 2003, 4, pp. 511-533, here pp. 512 (›access‹), 526 (›warned‹, ›overtly‹).

<sup>362</sup> Johnson, *Diplomacy in Black and White*, p. 56.

years later, conversely, »American Barbary captivity writers ›rediscover‹ Africans and describe them in terms and images that were conceptually available, those of indigenous Americans«. <sup>363</sup> Thus, Thomas Jefferson was informed by his negotiator from Morocco that although »his Complexion is rather dark«, he had only »a small mixture of Negro blood in him«. <sup>364</sup>

On the contrary, Michael Zuckerman assessed that the post-revolutionary »abandonment of Revolutionary precepts« in the United States »nowhere [...] appear[ed] more poignantly than in the realm of race [...], than in the American response to the rising of people of color in St. Domingue«. <sup>365</sup> Whereas Thomas Jefferson particularly stressed the people's right to revolution that he so prominently declared in the *Declaration of Independence* and remained sympathetic to political rebels throughout his political career, he also became a symbol for the American boycott of the Haitian Revolution. Since Winthrop Jordan, the successful slave revolt in the former French colony of St. Domingue has been used to illustrate the supposed hypocrisy within Jefferson's attitudes towards ›race‹ and slavery. Although »utterly unable to condemn it« as he was »blandly receptive to revolution as a mechanism of change«, Jefferson »feared that Virginia would eventually see the same kind of murderous violence«. <sup>366</sup>

From the outbreak of the insurrections in Haiti, Jefferson expressed some sympathy for the cause of free people of color in Haiti, but cautioned against the »Haitian contagion« and the potential of ›black‹ demands for natural rights to fuel social and ›racial‹ conflicts in the United States as soon as general emancipation emerged as an ultimate goal of the revolution. <sup>367</sup> As early as 1792, when the »troubles in the French island continue[d] extreme«, Jefferson felt »reason to apprehend the negroes will perhaps never be entirely reduced«. <sup>368</sup> Thus, he agreed with the American eyewitness Nathaniel Cutting that it »will be most prudent for Government to enter

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<sup>363</sup> Baepler, *The Barbary Captivity Narrative in American Culture*, pp. 228 (›surprising‹), 229 (›rediscover‹).

<sup>364</sup> Thomas Barclay to the American Commissioners, Sep. 13, 1786.

<sup>365</sup> Michael Zuckerman, *The Power of Blackness. Thomas Jefferson and the Revolution in St. Domingue*, in: Michael Zuckerman (ed.), *Almost Chosen People. Oblique Biographies in the American Grain*, Berkeley etc.: University of California Press 1993, pp. 175-218, p. 175 f.

<sup>366</sup> Jordan, *White Over Black*, p. 434 (›utterly‹, ›blandly‹); Cohen, *Thomas Jefferson and the Problem of Slavery*, p. 520 (›feared‹).

<sup>367</sup> Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire*, p. 178 (›contagion‹); Robin Blackburn, *Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of the Democratic Revolution*, in: *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 63, 2006, 4, pp. 643-674, here pp. 655 ff. (on Jefferson's changing position towards the Haitian Revolution).

<sup>368</sup> TJ to David Humphreys, Apr. 9, 1792.

into a Treaty with them similar to that which the Government of Jamaica formerly made with the Maroon Negroes in that Island«. For Jefferson, recognizing the rights of the rebels before the »expence of protecting the plantations will exceed their Revenue« or »white« sovereignty and slavery were totally overthrown on the island, represented the last resort to prevent the ›race war‹ he feared for the American slave society in case of emancipation.<sup>369</sup>

Just one year later, after negotiations had failed and ›black‹ slaves increasingly joined the armed rebels, Jefferson became »daily more and more convinced that all the West India islands will remain in the hands of the people of colour, and a total expulsion of the whites sooner or later take place«. Witnessing the fate of planter refugees arriving in the American harbors with horror – »never was so deep a tragedy presented to the feelings of man« – Jefferson became increasingly concerned with the protection of his own society and fellow slaveholders. In his emphasis on the »high time [... to] foresee the bloody scenes which our children certainly, and possibly ourselves [...] have to wade through«, Ashli White and other interpreters have identified the starting point of the »efforts to avoid replication of the Haitian Revolution in the United States«, a process in which Jefferson and his allies »bolstered and rationalized American slavery and racism«.<sup>370</sup> Beyond the striking cynicism within Jefferson's assessment that the »greatest tragedy ever presented to the feelings of man was not the plight of slaves but of their owners when dispossessed of them«,<sup>371</sup> however, he did not advocate a decidedly proslavery position in the debates about Haiti. On the contrary, he included the former slaves' republic in his plans for eventual emancipation, while continuously stressing the necessity of ›racial‹ separateness.

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<sup>369</sup> Nathaniel Cutting to TJ, Mar. 1, 1792. In other letters, Cutting strikingly emphasizes the skin color dimension of the conflict and therewith outlines the threat to ›white supremacy‹ posed by the colored revolutionaries, cf. Cutting to TJ, and Apr. 13, 1792, Feb. 21, 1792. See also Tim Matthewson, *A Proslavery Foreign Policy. Haitian-American Relations during the Early Republic*, Westport etc.: Praeger 2003, pp. 37-55, and esp. pp. 37-41 (for Jefferson's position in the American discourse on the slave rebellion). For Cutting's role in the American reception of the Haitian Revolution, see Simon P. Newman, *American Political Culture and the French and Haitian Revolutions. Nathaniel Cutting and the Jeffersonian Republicans*, in: David P. Geggus (ed.), *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press 2001, pp. 72-89.

<sup>370</sup> TJ to James Monroe, Jul. 14, 1793 (›convinced‹, ›tragedy‹, ›foresee‹); Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution. Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press 2010, p. 2 (›efforts‹, ›bolstered‹).

<sup>371</sup> Garry Wills, ›Negro President‹. *Jefferson and the Slave Power*, New York: Houghton Mifflin 2003, p. 37.

As much as Jefferson wanted to isolate the Haitian republic, he did not aim at a restoration of slavery on that island. To some degree he even welcomed it when the »blacks [...] organised themselves under regular laws and government«, as the introduction of formal laws and government made the former Saint-Domingue the most »probable and practicable retreat« for emancipated slaves, possessing »a people of their own race and colour; climates congenial with their natural constitution; insulated from the other descriptions of men«. <sup>372</sup> Insofar, Haiti became part of Jefferson's utopian plans for abolition and colonization and he perceived it as the homogeneous society in which the »captive nation« of African American slaves could eventually fulfill its fate of becoming a »free and independent people«. <sup>373</sup> Most importantly, however, exchange between the »equally free« »races« had to be reduced to a minimum, which rendered necessary the American embargo policies towards the hitherto important trade partner. <sup>374</sup> Consequently, Jefferson's incorporation of Haiti within his colonization schemes can hardly be used as evidence against accusations of racism. Even if Jefferson is accepted as a reluctant and theoretical opponent of the institution of slavery, his plans for emancipation always explicitly relied on the integrity of »racial« groups. <sup>375</sup>

During his presidency, Jefferson maintained a complex position towards the Haitian revolution. Although he favored the republic's independence from France

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<sup>372</sup> TJ to James Monroe, Nov. 24, 1801. Initially, Jefferson correspondence with Monroe dealt with possible exiles for convict slaves that were involved in »conspiracy, insurgency, treason, rebellion« and comparable crimes. However, his suggestion is frequently interpreted as perspectively aiming at a suitable destination for the large-scale colonization of slaves, cf. McColley, *Slavery and Jeffersonian Virginia*, pp. 110 f.; Lacy K. Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil. The Slavery Question in the Old South*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 2009, p. 59.

<sup>373</sup> Quotes and interpretations in Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire*, pp. 157-161, for the following, see *ibid.*, pp. 178 ff.

<sup>374</sup> On the economic consequences of the Haitian Revolution, see Steven Topik, *An Explosion of Violence. How the Haitian Revolution Rearranged the Trade Patterns of the Western Hemisphere*, in: Lucia Coppolaro, Francine McKenzie (eds.), *A Global History of Trade and Conflict Since 1500*, London etc.: Palgrave Macmillan 2013, pp. 62-86.

<sup>375</sup> Mainly Arthur Scherr has in multiple publications argued that Jefferson's Haitian colonization plans can serve as counter evidence to suspicions of racism, see *id.*, *Thomas Jefferson's Haitian Policy. Myths and Realities*, Lanham etc.: Lexington 2011; and *id.*, *Light at the End of the Road. Thomas Jefferson's Endorsement of Free Haiti in his Final Years*, in: *Journal of Haitian Studies*, 15, 1/2, 2009, pp. 203-216. For a critical assessment of the book, see Malte Hinrichsen, (Rezension von) Arthur Scherr, *Thomas Jefferson's Haitian Policy*, in: *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* (online), 53, 2013, <http://www.fes.de/cgi-bin/afs.cgi?id=81434>.

However, unlike Michael Zuckerman suggests, Jefferson's disability »to imagine a multiracial society that would endure on a basis of equity« also was not the major force of his Haitian policies, cf. *id.*, *The Color of Counterrevolution. Thomas Jefferson and the Rebellion in San Domingo*, in: Loretta Valtz Mannucci (ed.), *The Languages of Revolution*, Milan: Milano Instituto di Studi Storici 1989, pp. 83-107, here p. 91. Rather, Jefferson wanted to keep the alleged »racial« homogeneity in each of the two societies intact by ensuring their complete segregation.

especially as soon as he had reason to expect Napoleon's increasing intervention on the American continent, he politically and economically sabotaged the new nation through his non-recognition.<sup>376</sup> Significantly motivated by Jefferson's own fear of large-scale slave rebellions in the United States, these policies were also demanded by Jefferson's fellow slaveholders, which only made his election possible in the first place.<sup>377</sup> One of the firmest opponents of Haitian independence he could consult within his own family, but he did not embrace the radicalism of his son-in-law John Wayles Eppes, who later declared that he would »pledge the treasury of the United States that the Negro government should be destroyed«. <sup>378</sup> Alarmed by the example of Gabriel's conspiracy in 1800, southern planters sought for the political support of the first president that had to rely on the »constitutional tragedy« of the three-fifth clause for slave representation in the Electoral College, which earned him the derisive nickname »Negro President«. <sup>379</sup>

In 1797, when Thomas Jefferson in light of the events in Saint Domingue wrote that »if something is not done, and done soon, we shall be murderers of our children«, he anticipated that the »revolutionary storm now sweeping the globe will be

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<sup>376</sup> Cf. Cogliano, *Emperor of Liberty*, pp. 188 ff.; Tim Matthewson, *Jefferson and the Nonrecognition of Haiti*, in: *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 140, 1, 1996, pp. 22-48. In fact, Jefferson's position towards Saint Domingue and later Haiti was always embedded in more complex foreign relations especially with the dominant European powers, which goes beyond the scope of this study. For a broader picture, see, among others, Gordon S. Brown, *Toussaint's Clause. The Founding Father and the Haitian Revolution*, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi 2005. Unlike Brown, who focuses on the economic and diplomatic contexts of U.S. – Haitian relations and wants to refrain from what he calls »psycho-political analysis about the role of racism« in the founders' attitudes towards the slave revolution, this study deals with the American discourse on Haiti, as with the other historical material, only insofar as it contributes to an understanding of Jeffersonian racism.

<sup>377</sup> See, for example, TJ to Rufus King, Jul. 13, 1802. Cf. also Sandra Rebok, *La Révolution de Haïti vue par deux personnages contemporains: Le scientifique prussien Alexander von Humboldt et l'homme d'état américain Thomas Jefferson*, in: *French Colonial History*, 10, 2009, pp. 75-95, here pp. 86 f. This »racialized« Republican opposition to the Haitian Revolution stood in marked contrast to former more supportive Federalist strategies towards the new nation. It seems overstated, however, to assess that John Quincy Adams' »diplomacy knew neither color nor servitude« and that the governance of his father John Adams was characterized »by the utter lack of racial animosity in his statecraft«, Douglas R. Egerton, *The Empire of Liberty Reconsidered*, in: James Horn, Jan Ellen Lewis, Peter Onuf (eds.), *The Revolution of 1800. Democracy, Race, and the New Republic*, Charlottesville etc.: University of Virginia Press 2002, pp. 309-330, here p. 314.

<sup>378</sup> Quoted in Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders*, p. 152.

<sup>379</sup> Jack N. Rakove, *The Political Presidency. Discovery and Invention*, in: James Horn, Jan Ellen Lewis, Peter Onuf (eds.), *The Revolution of 1800. Democracy, Race, and the New Republic*, Charlottesville etc.: University of Virginia Press 2002, pp. 30-58, here p. 31 (»tragedy«); George William Van Cleve, *A Slaveholders' Union. Slavery, Politics, and the Constitution in the Early American Republic*, Chicago etc.: University of Chicago Press 2010, pp. 139 ff. Garry Wills has further expanded the argument of Jefferson as dependent on the slave count in *id.*, »Negro President«.

upon us« and wipe out the tyranny of slavery in the United States.<sup>380</sup> In fact, it was only three years later that a slave conspiracy led by an enslaved blacksmith called Gabriel from Richmond nearly »changed not only the course of American race relations but also the course of American political history«. <sup>381</sup> As the rebellion was prevented, twenty-seven of its participants and confidants were executed and legislative efforts were made to prevent further insurrections for example by banning the education of slaves. Still, the conspirators' attempt to put an end to human bondage and possibly even to »build a society without slavery or racial discrimination« sheds light to the complex interrelations of ›race‹ and class in what has been called ›Gabriel's Virginia«. <sup>382</sup>

Corresponding to the hardening of ›racial‹ stereotypes among ›white‹ planter elites, African Americans in Virginia developed what can be called ›racial consciousness‹ only in late eighteenth century. <sup>383</sup> In the first century of African presence in Virginia, before slavery was increasingly associated with persons of African ancestry, even the term ›negro‹ was not limited to the diverse African peoples, but could also include Native Americans and all kinds of ›mixed‹ individuals. <sup>384</sup> Only when the slave population grew and large-scale plantations brought along veritable slave communities, the African American communities developed close kinship ties and were further welded together through collective religious practices. Emerging notions of a common bond were fostered by the revolutions in the United States, in which »racial identity offered a pathway to freedom« for example in Dunmore's ›Ethiopian Regiment‹, and Saint Domingue, which illustrated the »radical possibilities for revolutions in a slave society [... and] helped alter the ways that Black Vir-

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<sup>380</sup> TJ to St. George Tucker, Aug. 28 1797.

<sup>381</sup> Douglas R. Egerton, *Gabriel's Conspiracy and the Election of 1800*, in: *The Journal of Southern History*, 56, 2, 1990, pp. 191-214, here p. 191. In one of his seminal contributions to the field, Eugene Genovese has argued that it was the influence of the Haitian revolution that inspired slaves to attempt revolutions instead of rebellions, cf. *id.*, *From Rebellion to Revolution. Afro-American slave revolts in the Making of the Modern World*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press 1979.

<sup>382</sup> Sidbury, *Thomas Jefferson in Gabriel's Virginia*, pp. 201 f.

<sup>383</sup> This paragraph is particularly informed by his chapter on the ›Emergence of racial consciousness in eighteenth-century Virginia‹, in James Sidbury, *Ploughshares into Swords. Race, Rebellion, and Identity in Gabriel's Virginia, 1730-1810*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 1997, pp. 14-49.

<sup>384</sup> For the checkered history of ›racial‹ designations for Native Americans and African Americans, see Forbes, *Africans and Native Americans*, esp. pp. 65-92. For the parallel development of legal statutes in Virginia associating slavery with skin color, see A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr., *In the Matter of Color. Race and the American Legal Process, the Colonial Period*, New York etc.: Oxford University Press 1978, pp. 19-60.

ginians thought of themselves as a people«. <sup>385</sup> Thus, prior to Gabriel's conspiracy, the changing conditions of slavery in the American South along with the increasing ›racialization‹ of slavery had replaced traditional concepts of identity among African Americans with a unifying concept of ›race‹. <sup>386</sup> With first-hand information about the successful slave resistance in Saint Domingue, African American slaves became threatening to Virginia's established social order to a degree that »most contemporaries believed that it probably could have succeeded«, suggesting that »Jefferson's vision of a genocidal apocalypse was not the paranoid fantasy of a pathological racist, but a reasonable response to geopolitical realities«. <sup>387</sup>

During the process of adopting and reframing the ›racial‹ identity that had been constructed in legal and political discourses, the emerging ›black‹ communities consisted not only of African American slaves and were not isolated from other strata of the population. This was also obvious in the context of Gabriel's conspiracy, whose eponymous leader was so frequently hired out by his legal owner that he came in contact with free ›white‹ craftsmen on a regular basis and himself »enjoyed a rough form of freedom« that included opportunities to earn money and to sometimes hire his own time. <sup>388</sup> Consequently, Gabriel wanted to fight not only for liberation, but from his urban slave perspective also aimed at just wages and property rights. In fact, local merchants and businessmen were the principal enemies of the conspirators, not the rural planters represented by Jefferson and his Republicans.

Against the backdrop of the heated political campaigns surrounding the election of 1800, the insurgent slaves even perceived the overwhelmingly Republican arti-

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<sup>385</sup> Sidbury, *Ploughshares into Swords*, pp. 33 (›racial‹), 40 (›radical‹). At the same time, however, the presence of the »strange negroes« that had arrived in Virginia with the planter refugees in Virginia was not met with sympathy by enslaved Virginians, but often with hostility. Thus, an »Afro-Atlantic identity« than unified slaves in various society in their opposition against slavery emerged parallel to a »latent local Virginian identity«, which became apparent in the encounter with »cultural distinct refugees from the island«, *ibid.*, pp. 45 f.

<sup>386</sup> With regard to Jefferson, it should be added that he also attributed a ›national‹ identity to the African American population of the United States, although this had not much to do with the actual geographical background of individuals with African ancestry, cf. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire*, pp. 148-151.

<sup>387</sup> Egerton, *Gabriel's Conspiracy*, p. 191 (›contemporaries‹); Onuf, *The Mind of Thomas Jefferson*, p. 209 (›genocidal‹). Here, Onuf refers to the Revolutionary War, in which Jefferson accused the British to stir up ›racial‹ hatred within the United States. However, Jefferson's references to a war along ›racial‹ lines became more frequent in the course of the conflict in Saint Domingue. On the prospects of the insurgents against an insufficiently armed Virginian militia, see Michael A. Bellesiles, ›The Soil Will Be Soaked with Blood‹. Taking the Revolution of 1800 Seriously, in: James Horn, Jan Ellen Lewis, Peter Onuf (eds.), *The Revolution of 1800. Democracy, Race, and the New Republic*, Charlottesville etc.: University of Virginia Press 2002, pp. 59-86, here pp. 75 ff.

<sup>388</sup> Egerton, *Gabriel's Conspiracy*, p. 193. For the following see *ibid.*, pp. 194 ff.

sans as natural allies against the Federalist merchants. Although this idea was taken up by Federalist rhetoric and fostered the Republican's image as anti-slavery radicals, the rebels »failed to recognize that the Jeffersonian cry for liberty and equality was meant to apply to whites only« and that urban »labor solidarity that often cut across racial lines« stood in stark contrast with the situation in rural Virginia where »yeomen and planters were bound together by racial solidarity«. <sup>389</sup> It was inclement weather and individual defections that eventually blocked the attempted revolution, but the »racial« consciousness expressed by every conspirator's consent to »fight the white people for his freedom« was met by some »racialized« resistance on the part of »white« Virginians. Thus, the political divide seemed to be a fertile soil for the slaves' struggle for liberty, but it was especially in the interest of the rural Republicans to react to the revolution with the mass execution of insurgents, as »only a measure of terror could maintain slavery in Virginia«. <sup>390</sup>

Thomas Jefferson agreed with James Monroe after the first executions that »there has been hanging enough«, but doubted that the convict slaves »can ever be permitted to go at large among us«. <sup>391</sup> Rather, he and the Republican government of Virginia pursued a double strategy of »mak[ing] slavery safer and more secure through stricter laws« and conducting a »reexamination of the possibilities of colonizing free blacks outside the United States«. <sup>392</sup> These reactions were accompanied by the hardening of »racial« thought in Virginia, as exemplified in the development of the former abolitionist St. George Tucker, who, in reaction to Gabriel's conspiracy and »along with Jefferson, retreated from the revolutionary flirtation with universal human rights« and as a chief justice in a case on slavery ruled that only »white persons are and have ever been free in this country«. Therewith contributing to the »emerging pseudo-science of racial difference« and »redefin[ing] slavery in more purely racial terms«, Tucker implicitly also accounted for the fundamental ambiguity and arbitrariness of »racial« categories in stressing that it was the judge's task to identify the »characteristic marks« that »nature has stamp[ed] upon the African

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<sup>389</sup> Ibid., pp. 194 (»labor«), 201 (»failed«), 204 (»yeomen«).

<sup>390</sup> Taylor, *Internal Enemy*, pp. 95 (quote: »fight«), 97 (»terror«).

<sup>391</sup> TJ to James Monroe, Sep. 20, 1800. To some degree, Jefferson here anticipated his more famous comment on the Missouri question, that in slavery »we have the wolf by the ear, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go«, TJ to John Holmes, Apr. 22, 1820. On the debate about slave executions, see also Philip J. Schwarz, *Slave Laws in Virginia*, Athens: University of Georgia Press 1996, pp. 63-96, on Jefferson p. 91.

<sup>392</sup> Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil*, pp. 54 f.

and his descendants«. <sup>393</sup> Besides illustrating how early American »law serve[d] not only to reflect but to solidify social prejudice«, the example of Tucker shows how racist attitudes transformed when institutional slavery was challenged and increasingly resorted to essentialist biologicistic ideas of ›race«. <sup>394</sup>

That ›racial‹ considerations were at the center of these considerations is illustrated by the fact that the following legislative measures significantly addressed the free ›black‹ population of Virginia, although there was little evidence of its engagement in the conspiracy. <sup>395</sup> However, against the backdrop that Virginia's free ›black‹ population had rapidly increased after the post-revolutionary manumission acts, it was counterfactually perceived as the greater threat to social order than the enslaved African Americans. <sup>396</sup> In fact, the Virginian colonization scheme that Monroe introduced to Jefferson in 1802 considered »two descriptions of negroes« that were to be deported: firstly, »those who being slaves may commit certain enumerated crimes« and, secondly, »free negroes or mulattoes, including those who may hereafter be emancipated«. <sup>397</sup> Even on condition of immediate colonization, large scale emancipation was not explicitly demanded in the aftermath of Gabriel's conspiracy. On the contrary, the compromise on private manumission in 1806, which kept manumitted slaves from staying within Virginia, made clear that the policies aimed at the reduction of the existing free ›black‹ population. <sup>398</sup>

Dependent on the political support of the slaveholding states in the union, it has often been noted that Jefferson remained remarkably silent on slavery during his presidency. <sup>399</sup> However, he readily received Monroe's plans for colonizing at least convict slaves and actively sought for an appropriate location for the penal colony. Jefferson prompted negotiations with the British about settling those slaves in the colony of Sierra Leone, that were »guilty of what the society [...] obliges us to treat

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<sup>393</sup> Taylor, *Internal Enemy*, pp. 109 f.; Wolf, *Race and Liberty in the New Nation*, p. 151.

<sup>394</sup> Ian F. Haney López, *The Social Construction of Race. Some Observations on Illusion, Fabrication, and Choice*, in: *The Harvard Civil-Rights Liberties Law Review*, 29, 1994, 1, pp. 1-62, here p. 3.

<sup>395</sup> Cf. Sidbury, *Ploughshares into Swords*, pp. 130 f. For a further discussion of the »morbid fantasy« of the free ›blacks'‹ uprising in Virginia, see McColley, *Slavery and Jeffersonian Virginia*, pp. 106 f.

<sup>396</sup> Teute Schmidt, *Ripel Wilhelm, Early Proslavery Petitions in Virginia*, p. 136.

<sup>397</sup> James Monroe to TJ, Feb. 13, 1802. On the complexity of Jefferson's colonization schemes for the whole of the African American population and for insurgent slaves, see Dierksheide, *Amelioration and Empire*, p. 40 ff.

<sup>398</sup> Cf. Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil*, pp. 64 f.

<sup>399</sup> Most prominently, David Brion Davis assessed that the »most remarkable thing about Jefferson's stand on slavery is his immense silence«, id., *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, p. 179.

as crime, but which their feelings may represent in a far different shape«, and who were »well calculated to cooperate in the plan of civilization«. <sup>400</sup> The Sierra Leone Company, however, which had founded the colony in 1787 through the resettlement of African Americans that served the British in the Revolutionary War, did not allow for the immigration of further slaves from the Americas as it had before struggled with the integration of emancipated slaves from the United States. <sup>401</sup>

A »sincere and dedicated foe of the slave trade«, as even critical interpreters assess, Jefferson unsurprisingly supported the ban of further slave imports after the constitutional protection of the slave trade ended in 1808. However, his attack on »those violations of human rights, which have been so long continued on the unoffending inhabitants of Africa« did not aim at the liberation of the enslaved African Americans within the United States. <sup>402</sup> In fact, it did not even acknowledge for the American contribution to this unrighteous business, which, as Jefferson wanted to include in the *Declaration of Independence*, had been allegedly introduced in North America by the British colonizers and together with slavery itself represented »Old World problems«. <sup>403</sup> The stop of importation should rather contribute to the gradual decrease of African Americans in the United States and did not stop the institution from expansion. In fact, after the Louisiana Purchase, which became possible only because of Napoleon's defeat in Haiti, Jefferson welcomed the spread of slavery into the new territories as it supposedly reduced the social pressure in the slave societies of the South. <sup>404</sup> Later in his life, on the occasion of the Missouri crisis, Jefferson referred to this »diffusion« of slavery as a necessary condition to lower the proportion of slaves and to eventually overcome the institution by gradual emancipation and colonization. <sup>405</sup> A similar allegedly abolitionist argument was already part of Jefferson's draft for the Northwest Ordinance, which earned him the critique of

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<sup>400</sup> TJ to Rufus King, Jul. 13, 1802.

<sup>401</sup> Cf. Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil*, pp. 62 f. After his second term as president, Jefferson reported that »in no event should [the Sierra Leone Company] be willing to receive more of these people from the United States, as it was exactly that portion of their settlers which had gone from hence which by their idleness and turbulence had kept the settlement in constant danger of dissolution, which could not have been prevented but for the aid of the Maroon negroes from the West Indies, who were more industrious and orderly than the others«, TJ to John Lynch, Jan. 21, 1811.

<sup>402</sup> TJ to American Congress, Dec. 2, 1806.

<sup>403</sup> Dierksheide, *Amelioration and Empire*, p. 29. See also, among others, Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, p. 173.

<sup>404</sup> Cf. Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders*, pp. 150 f.; Dierksheide, *Amelioration and Empire*, p. 44 f. A closer look at Jefferson's policies of expansion will be provided in the following subchapter.

<sup>405</sup> Cf. Sidbury, *Thomas Jefferson in Gabriel's Virginia*, pp. 212 f.

antislavery contemporaries, who held that the introduction of slaves »into countries where none now exist [...] can never be forgiven«. <sup>406</sup>

Beyond his political reactions to the threat of slave revolts, the success of the Haitian Revolution and the experience of Gabriel's conspiracy cast doubt on Jefferson's more theoretical assessments of African Americans' mental inferiority. Organized by skilled, literate slaves, the latter plot »seared into the Southern mind the well-founded belief that exposure to books resulted in the creation of dissatisfied and dangerous Blacks«. <sup>407</sup> James T. Callender, a radical Republican ally of Jefferson in campaigns against Hamilton and Adams, also reported to Jefferson about the ringleader that he was a »fellow of courage and intellect above his rank in life«. However, when the mental faculties of the conspirators exceeded the level that Jefferson ascribed to them, they were, in Callender's words, able to elaborate the plan to »massacre all the whites, of all ages, and sexes; and all the ›blacks‹ who would not join them; [...] an idea truly worthy of an African Heart«. <sup>408</sup> Although Jefferson did not explicitly change his mind about the supposed natural deficiencies of African Americans, his reflections on the Haitian republic recognized that the »blacks are established into a sovereignty de facto, and have organised themselves under regular laws and government«, which suggests a degree of intellectual development beyond the ›suspicions‹ in the *Notes*. <sup>409</sup> Similarly, in regard of colonization, Jefferson was cautious to settle former slaves »with whatsoever power is least likely to become an enemy«, to prevent that opponents »use the knolege of these exiles in predatory expeditions against us«. <sup>410</sup>

At the same time that Jefferson struggled with the emergence of a ›black‹ republic on the American coast and slave insurrections on his doorstep, he was also reconsidering the nature of slavery on his own plantation. Here, he implemented strategies of a gradual amelioration, which illustrate that the political measures taken in reaction to the Haitian revolution and Gabriel's conspiracy did not necessarily bring about »a more regimented and severe life for the average slave«. <sup>411</sup> As Jefferson opposed the manumission schemes proposed and implemented by some of his

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<sup>406</sup> Timothy Pickering as quoted in Wills, ›Negro President‹, p. 22.

<sup>407</sup> Allen B. Ballard, *The Education of Black Folk. The Afro-American Struggle for Knowledge in White America*, New York: Harper and Row 1973, p. 14.

<sup>408</sup> James T. Callender to TJ, Sep. 13, 1800.

<sup>409</sup> TJ to James Monroe, Nov. 24, 1801.

<sup>410</sup> TJ to James Monroe, Jun. 3, 1802.

<sup>411</sup> McColley, *Slavery and Jeffersonian Virginia*, p. 113.

countrymen because, for him, »black Africans could only embrace liberty in their homeland, not in America«, Jefferson thought of other ways to temporarily arrange with the institution.<sup>412</sup>

After his retirement as Secretary of State, Jefferson was tired of the political fights about the course of the republic, returned to Monticello and wanted to »become the most industrious farmer in the world«, therewith stop to battle »against slavery itself and instead devot[ing] himself to improving the condition of slaves within the institution«.<sup>413</sup> As early as the 1790s, Jefferson had abandoned the labor-intensive growing of tobacco, switched to wheat and crop rotation and became a public advocate against traditional Virginian tobacco culture, which, for him, represented the colonial past of the new nation.<sup>414</sup> Since the cultivation of tobacco demanded five times the labor of wheat production, the crop shift enabled Jefferson to diversify the tasks of his slaves and to set up a variety of manufactures at Monticello. In the nailery and the textile factory located on Mulberry Row close to the main house, young slaves from the age of ten were providing for the main revenue of the plantation and were assessed according to their daily output. Although Jefferson wanted to reform the penal system at his plantation, using »incentives« and resorting to the whip only »in extremities«, his overseers used physical punishments even for the »small ones« and Jefferson did not release a »white« slave driver that was infamous for his usage of the whip.<sup>415</sup> Inspired by the »management of negroes on a rational and humane plan« that he had witnessed on plantations in Maryland, Jefferson once hired new overseers to implement his »agricultural and humanitarian experiment«, but soon returned to local personnel to keep the plantation »machine« running.<sup>416</sup> Furthermore, Jefferson rearranged the housing at Monticello, replacing

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<sup>412</sup> Dierksheide, *Amelioration and Empire*, p. 35.

<sup>413</sup> TJ to Eliza House Triest, Sep. 23, 1795 (»industrious«); Stanton, »Those Who Labor for My Happiness«, p. 72 (»slavery«).

<sup>414</sup> Cf. Stanton, »Those Who Labor for My Happiness«, pp. 143 f.; T.H. Breen, *Tobacco Culture. The Mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of the Revolution*, Princeton etc.: Princeton University Press 1985, pp. 205 ff. For the following, see especially Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello*, pp. 504-520; Stanton, »Those Who Labor for My Happiness«, 71-89; Dierksheide, *Amelioration and Empire*, pp. 48-56.

<sup>415</sup> TJ to Thomas Mann Randolph, Jan. 23, 1801 (»extremities«); Martha Jefferson Randolph and Thomas Mann Randolph to TJ, Jan. 31, 1801 (»small ones«). In the letter to Randolph, Jefferson also asked his son-in-law to »speak to Lilly«, the overseer, »as to the treatment of the nailers. It would destroy their value in my estimation to degrade them in their own eyes by the whip«.

<sup>416</sup> TJ to Thomas Mann Randolph, Feb. 18, 1793 (»management«); Stanton, »Those Who Labor for My Happiness«, p. 76 (»experiment«). Stanton also notes the strikingly »mechanist terms« in which Jefferson referred to his plantation and the slave labor force. As she demonstrates with reference to William Byrd II, Enlightenment planters frequently conceived of the plantation as a »machine«, a

multi-family barracks with single-family dwellings and planned to build new accommodations out of stone instead of wood.

After the American Revolution, strategies of amelioration were adopted by pro-slavery and antislavery planters to a degree that scholars have described the »last quarter of the eighteenth century [as] one of the most tolerant and relaxed eras for race relations in Virginia«.<sup>417</sup> Besides the factual dubiousness of this assessment in light of increasing slave insurrections following the events in Saint Domingue, this reading is misleading as it neglects the long-term effects of amelioration in perpetuating the institution. The turn towards more paternalistic forms of slavery, that became central for the southern states' slave society and romanticizing narratives about the Old South, only enabled the entrenchment of »biracial« social order and was instrumental to the growth of the slave population well into the nineteenth century.<sup>418</sup> While amelioration limited the fear of large-scale »racial« conflicts through further domestication of slavery, it also fostered »racial« stereotypes of docile and childlike African Americans, which in harmony with the »romantic racialism« of Northern abolitionism shaped »race« relations in the United States for more than a century to come.<sup>419</sup> Thus, Jefferson's attempted »humanization« of slavery was part of a nationwide process that on the one hand prevented disorder and insurrection

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nexus that other authors have interpreted as illustrating the connection of capitalism, slavery and racism, cf. Justin Roberts, *Slavery and the Enlightenment in the British Atlantic, 1750-1807*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 2013, pp. 32-35. With regard to southern slavery and »race«, see David Brown, Clive Webb, *Race in the American South. From Slavery to Civil Rights*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2007, pp. 132-135. Similarly, Fernand Braudel held that »Jamaica, like the other sugar islands, was a wealth-creating machine, a capitalist machine serving the rich«, id., *The Wheels of Commerce. Civilization and Capitalism, 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Century*, Berkeley etc.: University of California Press 1992 [1979].

<sup>417</sup> Teute Schmidt, Ripel Wilhelm, *Early Proslavery Petitions in Virginia*, p. 134. The authors here refer especially to Gerald W. Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion. Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia*, New York etc.: Oxford University Press 1972.

<sup>418</sup> With regard to the Missouri crisis, Peter Onuf outlines that Jefferson's engagement for »a milder, more paternalistic regime of labor discipline [...] pointed the way toward positive good, proslavery arguments of a later generation«. However, Jefferson did not fundamentally change his mind on the moral and social effects of slavery, but essentially built his argument on the belief that diffusion of slavery would »achieve a better balance between white and black populations« and therewith mitigate the unwelcome effects of »racial« heterogeneity, cf. id., *Thomas Jefferson's Christian Nation*, in: Robert Fatton, Jr., R. K. Ramazani, *Religion, State, and Society. Jefferson's Wall of Separation in Comparative Perspective*, New York etc.: Palgrave 2009, pp. 17-36, here p. 19. Similarly, Brian Steele finds »in Jefferson's various statements the seeds of the pro-slavery ideology that would enchant southern intellectuals shortly after Jefferson's death [...]: the critique of free wage labor, the assumption of racial hierarchy, and the hints of a paternalistic relationship between master and slave«, id., *Jefferson's Legacy. The Nation as Interpretative Community*, in: Francis D. Cogliano (ed.), *A Companion to Thomas Jefferson*, Malden etc.: Wiley-Blackwell 2012, pp. 526-550, here p. 534.

<sup>419</sup> George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, pp. 102-109.

and on the other sowed the seed for a redefined image of the African American slave in American culture. Not least, however, amelioration also followed economic imperatives, as, for example, the new housing concept implemented at Monticello was not only beneficial for the slave families that were allowed to share a dwelling, but also contributed to the reproduction of the slaves and therewith was part of the »plan for the ›increase‹ of his human property«. <sup>420</sup>

Whereas Jefferson's plantation management implied his belief in the potential development of African Americans, his maintained reluctance to manumit his bondsmen emphasized the limits of this possible progress. Eventually, his »goal of ›improving‹ enslaved men and women was done with an eye toward their eventual removal« and followed up on his legislative proposals to educate African Americans for their colonization. <sup>421</sup> Notably, Jefferson even upheld this position at a time when abolitionist contemporaries – including close friends – increasingly realized private manumissions. George Wythe, Jefferson's legal tutor and mentor, not only released his slaves during his lifetime and by will but also believed in their education as free citizens. In fact, it was Thomas Jefferson to whom he assigned the task of continuing the tuition of Michael Brown, a colored teenager that Wythe treated like a son, after his death. As Brown and Wythe were murdered, Jefferson did not get the chance to act on his friend's testament, but shortly after provided financial aid for Lydia Broadnax, the equally emancipated African American mother of Brown and possible mistress of Wythe. <sup>422</sup> This episode further illuminates Jefferson's complex attitudes towards and experiences with ›race‹ and slavery and puts special emphasis on the presence of numerous free ›blacks‹ in Virginia that »provided visible refutation of Thomas Jefferson's doubts about their capacities«. <sup>423</sup>

Jefferson's Monticello with its slave population of continuously more than one hundred individuals was exceptional in an area dominated by small-scale slaveholders, ›whites‹ without slaves and free ›blacks‹. Although predominantly located in the lower ranks of society, partially because of »their often visible darker complexion« but »more important, the local social coding of them as persons of color«, face-to-face interactions with other Virginians allowed African Americans to indi-

<sup>420</sup> Dierksheide, *Amelioration and Empire*, p. 53.

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>422</sup> Cf. Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello*, pp. 592-594. For further manumissions in Jefferson's personal environment, see Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders*, p. 136.

<sup>423</sup> Kirt von Daacke, *Freedom Has a Face. Race, Identity, and Community in Jefferson's Virginia, Charlottesville etc.*: University of Virginia Press 2012, p. 205.

vidually prosper in society and accumulate reputation and property, including property in slaves.<sup>424</sup> In fact, slaveholding presumably »reduce[d] the risks of living free and black in a slave society«, but at the same time illustrated the fluidity of »race« and class hierarchies in post-revolutionary Virginia.<sup>425</sup> This »sphere of interracial activity«, which is widely absent from Jefferson's writings on »race« relations but was certainly part of his everyday experiences, was also manifest in sexual relations between »black« and »white« Virginians, which were far from limited to the notorious exploitations of female slaves through their masters.<sup>426</sup> Before and during his own long-lasting relation with Sally Heming, in which Jefferson did not change his mind about the unpleasant social effects of »racial« mixture, Thomas Jefferson must have noticed the diverse forms and the prevalence of so-called miscegenation.

Following the DNA test of the late 1990s, most scholars, including the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, accept that Jefferson fathered the six recorded children of Sally Hemings.<sup>427</sup> This recognition marks a departure from centuries long controversies about the accuracy of the accusations that »Federalists whispered in the bitter campaign of 1800« and which gained public attention with a series of articles published in the *Richmond Recorder* by Jefferson's former Republican ally James Callender.<sup>428</sup> Referring to the »neighbourhood of Charlottesville«, the Scotsman that hitherto had publicly attacked the likes of John Adams and Alexander Hamilton reported in violent language about the »African stock whereupon [Jefferson] was to engraft his own descendants«. <sup>429</sup> Federalist papers, most notably the widely-read *Port-Folio*, readily adopted the allegations and also Callender's deroga-

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<sup>424</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>425</sup> Philip J. Schwarz, *Emancipators, Protectors, and Anomalies. Free Black Slaveholders in Virginia*, in: *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 95, 1987, 3, pp. 317-338, here p. 319.

<sup>426</sup> Evidence about »interracial« sexuality in antebellum Virginia is provided in Rothman, *Notorious in the Neighborhood*.

<sup>427</sup> The »post-DNA« debates about Jefferson and Hemings are examined in Ellis, *Jefferson*; Nicolaisen, *Thomas Jefferson, Sally Hemings, and the Question of Race*; Jack N. Rakove, *Thomas Jefferson in the Twenty-First Century*, in: Francis D. Cogliano (ed.), *A Companion to Thomas Jefferson*, Malden etc.: Wiley-Blackwell 2012, pp. 551-565, here pp. 553-558.

<sup>428</sup> Peterson, *The Jefferson Image in the American Mind*, p. 182. In his assessment, however, Peterson refers to the story as the »miscegenation legend« based »upon the flimsy basis of oral tradition, anecdote, and satire« and driven by the »Negroes' pathetic wish for a little pride«, *ibid.*, pp. 183-187. On the emergence of the initial rumor, see, among others, Robert M. S. McDonald, *Race, Sex, and Reputation. Thomas Jefferson and the Sally Hemings Story*, in: *Southern Cultures*, 4, 1998, 2, pp. 46-63. For James Callender, see Michael Durey, »With the Hammer of Truth«. *James Thomson Callender and America's Early National Heroes*, Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia 1990; Annette Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*, pp. 59-77.

<sup>429</sup> James T. Callender, *The President Again*, in: *The [Richmond] Recorder*, Sep. 1, 1802.

tory vocabulary.<sup>430</sup> After the initial hype, however, the campaign quickly lost its momentum and Callender clearly missed his aim to destroy Jefferson's political career, as the president was reelected in a landslide a year after Callender had died a miserable death in the James River. According to most recent assessments, it was not the later asserted implausibility, or even »moral impossibility«, of Jefferson's rumored affair that resulted in this limited political damage, but contemporary attitudes towards so-called miscegenation, which allowed for mixed-›race‹ children within plantation slavery.<sup>431</sup>

As Joshua Rothman has outlined, Callender might have been right about the knowing neighbors, as there was a wide-spread social-knowledge about sexual relations between masters and slaves in Virginian slavery.<sup>432</sup> In fact, he adds, Jefferson's discretion on the issue (in public *and* on his plantation) corresponded with unwritten rules of the Virginian slave society, in which »what a man chose to do with his slave property was for the most part his business«. As a result, Callender's publication of the rumor was perceived as more »distasteful« than Jefferson's alleged affair.<sup>433</sup>

In later historiography, it has often been noted that Jefferson's relationship with Hemings contradicted the reservation towards ›race‹ mixing he had expressed in the *Notes on the State of Virginia*.<sup>434</sup> Even Callender himself echoed Jefferson's claim that

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<sup>430</sup> For »The *Port Folio* Poems About Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings«, see the first chapter in Elise Lemire, ›Miscegenation‹. Making Race in America, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2002, pp. 11-34. Lemire also hints at the fact that Jefferson's political attitudes were constantly addressed in the campaign. Thus, the famous caricature showing Jefferson as a ›Philosophic Cock‹ chasing after a colored ›hen‹ not coincidentally used the rooster that represented France and, for Federalists of the time, also the evils of the French Revolution, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 16 f.

<sup>431</sup> Ellen Randolph Coolidge to Joseph Coolidge, reprinted in Gordon-Reed, Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings, pp. 258-260, here p. 259 (›morak‹). As Robert McDonald noted, the »story that [Callender] hoped would serve as a funeral dirge for the president's political career merely produced a sour note«, *id.*, Race, Sex, and Reputation, pp. 47 f.

<sup>432</sup> Cf. Rothman, Notorious in the Neighborhood, pp. 14-52. On Jefferson and Hemings, see also *id.*, James Callender and Social Knowledge of Interracial Sex in Antebellum Virginia, in: Jan Ellen Lewis, Peter S. Onuf (eds.), Sally Hemings and Thomas Jefferson. History, Memory, and Civic Culture, Charlottesville etc.: University of Virginia Press 1999, pp. 87-113; Hardly Sallygate. Thomas Jefferson, Sally Hemings, and the Sex Scandal That Wasn't, in: Paul Apostolidis, Juliet A. Williams (eds.), Public Affairs. Politics in the Age of Sex Scandals, Durham: Duke University Press 2004, pp. 101-133. Rothman's interpretations concerning the case of Jefferson and Hemings is contested in Steven Shepard, Phillip Honenberger, Allan Megill, A Case Study in Historical Epistemology. What Did the Neighbors Know about Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings?, in: Allan Megill, Historical Knowledge, Historical Error. A Contemporary Guide to Practice, Chicago etc.: The University of Chicago Press 2007, pp. 125-150.

<sup>433</sup> Rothman, James Callender and Social Knowledge, pp. 105 f.

<sup>434</sup> Annette Gordon-Reed has aptly outlined the contradictory argumentation of historians that »to blunt criticism of Jefferson on the matter of race, [...] have often presented him as a man ahead of his time on the question of slavery or have emphasized his kindness to his slaves. When dealing with

emancipated slaves had to be prevented from »staining the blood of the masters«.<sup>435</sup> Unlike Callender, however, Jefferson was dealing with sexual intercourse between free ›blacks‹ and ›whites‹ and did not address miscegenation within slavery. In his plantation world, Jefferson was clearly aware that ›race‹ mixing was ubiquitous, which is implied by his statement that the »improvement of blacks in body and mind, in the first instance of their mixture with whites, has been observed by every one«.<sup>436</sup> What appears as the ›improvement‹ of the bodies and minds of enslaved men and women, would for him be the ›staining of blood‹ of the free citizens. Precisely, it was slavery that established the ›racial‹ hierarchy between ›blacks‹ and ›whites‹ and it was the matrilineal inheritance of the slave status that enabled (and even economically rewarded) ›interracial‹ sex within the institution.

Against this backdrop, Jefferson's enslavement of the children he had with Sally Hemings and their eventual liberation not through formal deeds but through »effective but furtive manumissions« seems to be less contradictory than many biographers have suggested.<sup>437</sup> Undoubtedly, there remains some personal ambivalence when Jefferson expressed sympathy towards the liberated slaves Michael Brown and Lydia Broadnax and did not show similar sentiments (or only acknowledgement) for his secret family, raising the question of how he could contemplate »attending to the education of George Wythe's African American surrogate son, even as he had mixed-raced sons and a daughter of his own flesh«.<sup>438</sup> Similarly, the eventual liberation of his descendants (and of few close servants) contrasted his general opposition to the integration of free ›blacks‹ into the American society. This ostensible contradiction has been explained by referring to Jefferson as an »abstract racial theorist«, who »treated his slave relations according to their percentage of ›white‹ blood«.<sup>439</sup> Alternatively, Jefferson's exceptional treatments of some slaves can also hint at the fact that even his seemingly biologicistic conception of an African ›race‹ was flexible and culturalistic at its heart, incorporating the possibility of ›racial

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the Sally Hemings charge, some of those same historians and commentators wave his racism about like a cross in front of a vampire«, id., *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*, p. 133.

<sup>435</sup> James T. Callender, in: *The [Richmond] Recorder*, Sep. 29, 1802; Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 270.

<sup>436</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 267.

<sup>437</sup> Winthrop D. Jordan, *Hemings and Jefferson. Redux*, in: Jan Ellen Lewis, Peter S. Onuf (eds.), *Sally Hemings and Thomas Jefferson. History, Memory, and Civic Culture*, Charlottesville etc.: University of Virginia Press 1999, pp. 35-51, here p. 49.

<sup>438</sup> Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello*, p. 594.

<sup>439</sup> Douglas R. Egerton, *Thomas Jefferson and the Hemings Family. A Matter of Blood*, in: *Historian*, 59, 1997, 2, pp. 327-345, here p. 345.

amalgamation on a small scale and, thus, dissimilar from present-day assumptions of clear-cut ›racial‹ categories.

In any case, the ›taboo‹ of miscegenation that was later assumed by Jefferson's biographers and which shaped the reception of the Jefferson-Hemings relationship until the late twentieth century was not an invention of the early republic, but was established only when the institution of slavery eroded and lost its function to maintain established ›racial‹ hierarchies. More generally, Annette Gordon-Reed aptly notes that present day interpreters tend to see »slavery through the eyes of twentieth-century residential Jim-Crow« and also fail to notice the »eclectic nature of Monticello's residents« exemplified by Elizabeth Hemings' neighborhood, which included a Scottish gardener and a ›white‹ blacksmith from Philadelphia.<sup>440</sup> Jefferson himself, however, tended to conceive of the future of both his plantation and the society at large in strikingly homogeneous terms. Describing the ›blot‹ of slavery in ›racial‹ terms when many of his contemporaries still resorted to religious justifications for the institution, this emphasis on social and ›racial‹ homogeneity also framed his approach to the American West.

### 3.2 Jefferson and Westward Expansion

When visiting Monticello, Jefferson's guests and, to some degree, even present-day visitors get an idea not only about the founder's »domestic vision«, but also about his concept of the nation at large.<sup>441</sup> Right in the entrance foyer, Jefferson welcomed his visitors with an eclectic collection of artifacts that mirrored the broad interests of the polymath and resembled the exoticism of European cabinets of curiosities. Next to plentiful references to the young nation's history, including a reprint of the *Declaration of Independence*, an engraving of Trumbull's painting of its ceremonial signing, and portraits and statues of some of the founders, it were especially the objects of natural history that stroke the eye. Following the surveyor tradition of his father, the walls were covered with large maps of North America, Europe, Asia and Africa, created by London mapmaker Aaron Arrowsmith.<sup>442</sup> Jefferson acquired these

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<sup>440</sup> Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello*, p. 512.

<sup>441</sup> Duncan Faherty, *Remodeling the Nation. The Architecture of American Identity, 1776-1858*, Lebanon: University of New Hampshire Press 2007, p. 33. For the following see also Joyce Henri Robinson, *An American Cabinet of Curiosities. Thomas Jefferson's Indian Hall at Monticello*, in: *Winterthur Portfolio*, 30, 1995, 1, pp. 41-58.

<sup>442</sup> Cf. Susan Stein, *The Worlds of Thomas Jefferson at Monticello*, New York: H. N. Abrams 1993, p. 389.

maps during his presidency and used them in his Washington residence before they furnished Monticello.<sup>443</sup> While Asia, Europe and the American east were neatly separated by borders, Africa showed hints of political organization only on the Mediterranean Sea, the Arabian Gulf, and at the slave ports of the Gold Coast and Congo. Like major parts of Africa, the North American West lay wide open for the United States' expansion, although the map indicated the existence of various Native American tribes populating the territory. In the foyer of Monticello, however, these hints at Native American cultures were hardly needed, since the most notable artifacts were the numerous pieces of ›Indian‹ artwork which made Jefferson refer to the room as his ›Indian hall‹.<sup>444</sup>

Equivalent to the displayed pieces of Egyptian antiquity, which represented a deceased high culture from which »modern Egyptians had sadly declined«, the Native American artworks represented »tributes to cultures, the loss of which Jefferson mourned, but which were, in his conception of history, doomed to vanish before the progress of republican civilization«. <sup>445</sup> Constructed as a kind of walk-in installation for his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, the new founded nation was virtually situated in line with European progress of science and philosophy, personified by Jefferson's all-time greats Bacon, Newton and Locke, and within a continent of abundance, illustrated by the »curious productions of the New World's antique human inhabitants, shown along with extinct animals like the mastodon and Megalonyx Jeffersoni«. <sup>446</sup> This foray into natural history, anthropology and ethnography, however, was hardly a mere scientific project, but was inextricably linked to the opening of the American west and Jefferson's policies towards Native Americans. With many exhibits in his ›Indian hall‹ collected on Lewis and Clark's expeditions during Jefferson's presidency, the room was closely related to the imperial vision that became especially manifest in context of the Louisiana Purchase.

It has been noted that Jefferson was »born a geographer«, whose upbringing among surveyors and land speculators shaped his sustainable interest in the west

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<sup>443</sup> Especially the map of North America was explicitly purchased for the preparation of the Lewis and Clark expedition, cf. John Logan Allen, *Lewis and Clark and the Image of the American Northwest*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press 1975, pp. 130 ff.

<sup>444</sup> Cf. TJ to Charles Willson Peale, 6 Oct., 1805; TJ to Meriwether Lewis, 26 Oct., 1806.

<sup>445</sup> Caroline Winterer, *Thomas Jefferson and the Ancient World*, in: Francis D. Cogliano (ed.), *A Companion to Thomas Jefferson*, Malden etc.: Wiley-Blackwell 2012, pp. 380-396, here p. 388 (›sadly‹); Cogliano, *Thomas Jefferson*, pp. 108 f. (›tributes‹).

<sup>446</sup> Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, p. 105. For the following, see *ibid.*, pp. 106 f.,

and whose only major book was largely a geographical assessment of his native country.<sup>447</sup> In fact, Jefferson had already learned from his father and his peers about a legendary »garden of the world«, stretching beyond the Blue Ridge Mountains and called ›Louisiana‹ by the French. Following the British conquests during the Seven Years' War, the colonies witnessed a »new continentalist vision of Anglo-American grandeur«, which »was Anglo-American, not American, in origin.<sup>448</sup> After the independence, Jefferson transformed this imperial project, and his childhood fascination, into the »key to his vision for America as a nation of small farmers, with no ›landless poor‹.«<sup>449</sup> This being said, his vision of western expansion also comprised the social exclusion of certain groups, first and foremost of the new territories' original inhabitants.

As early as the Revolutionary War, Jefferson as Governor of Virginia had recognized the importance of obtaining lands in order to provide demanding settlers and a growing population with additional territories to cultivate. Moreover, as Walter LaFeber has noted, »Jefferson had reconciled this need for a large (indeed, ever larger) landed empire with his republican political theory.«<sup>450</sup> Building on the yeomen ideal he outlined in the *Notes*, Jefferson supposed that the »doctrine that small states alone are fitted to be republics will be exploded by experience« and possibly be replaced with the insight »that to obtain a just republic [...] it must be so extensive as that local egoisms may never reach it's greater part.«<sup>451</sup> With regard to the new republic, Jefferson was confident about the eventual spread of the Union and wanted to set the stage for its inevitable expansion with the scientific exploration of the continent – thereby illustrating that the »relationship between science and imperial politics remained as important as ever.«<sup>452</sup>

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<sup>447</sup> John Logan Allen, *Imagining the West. The View from Monticello*, in: James P. Ronda (ed.), *Thomas Jefferson and the Changing West*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press 1997, pp. 3-23, here p. 4, for the following, see p. 7.

<sup>448</sup> John M. Murrin, *The Jeffersonian Triumph and American Exceptionalism*, in: *Journal of the Early Republic*, 20, 2000, 1, pp. 1-25, pp. 6 f.

<sup>449</sup> Donald Jackson, *The West*, in: Merrill D. Peterson (ed.), *Thomas Jefferson. A Reference Biography*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons 1986, pp. 369-384, here p. 370.

<sup>450</sup> Walter LaFeber, *Thomas Jefferson and an American Foreign Policy*, in: Peter S. Onuf (ed.), *Jeffersonian Legacies*, University Press of Virginia 1993, pp. 370-391, here p. 373. Similarly, Francis Cogliano notes that »in his mind the republican vision [...] and the westward expansion went hand in hand. For the new American republic to succeed, he believed, it must expand«, id., *Emperor of Liberty*, p. 175.

<sup>451</sup> TJ to François D'Ivernois, Feb. 6, 1795.

<sup>452</sup> James D. Drake, *The Nation's Nature. How Continental Presumptions Gave Rise to the United States of America*, Charlottesville etc.: University of Virginia Press 2011, p. 231. Drake refers here to Jefferson's refutation of Buffon's degeneration theory, claiming with regard to Jefferson's parallel

Like his earlier efforts to organize expeditions into the American West,<sup>453</sup> his presidential plans for the exploration led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were developed before the United States had expanded its territory beyond the Mississippi.<sup>454</sup> In all cases, the explorers were instructed to examine the Native tribes' »history, connection with each other, languages, manners, state of society and of the arts and commerce among them«, as Jefferson wrote to André Michaux in 1793, when the American Philosophical Society raised money for the French botanist to explore the American West (and secretly prepare military actions against the Spanish colonial administration of the territory).<sup>455</sup> Even more specifically, Lewis and Clark were asked to »treat [the Natives] in the most friendly and conciliatory manner which their own conduct will admit« and to »make them acquainted with the position, extent, character, peaceable and commercial dispositions of the U.S.«.<sup>456</sup> With regard to the Native population in the West, it was especially the latter element of commerce that Jefferson wanted to foreground.

Throughout the course of his political career, Jefferson constantly advocated the gradual and ostensibly consensual incorporation of land and its native inhabitants, as the »question of citizenship was central to Jefferson's conception of a republican empire«.<sup>457</sup> Thus, he recommended after a western maneuver of George Rogers Clark in 1780 to »introduce our Laws and form of Government among the people of Illinois as far as their temper and disposition will admit«.<sup>458</sup> A decade later, the then secretary of state welcomed the opportunity for American citizens to settle the Spanish territory of Florida, as »it will be the means of delivering to us peaceably, what may otherwise have cost us a war«.<sup>459</sup> Consequently, when the expedition of

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occupation as Governor of Virginia, that he »sandwiched scientific pursuits [...] into a schedule filled with matters that affected the fate of the nation«. In his everyday practice, this account implies, Jefferson exemplified the entanglement of politics and science in the process of American nation building.

<sup>453</sup> See, for example, Jackson, *The West*, pp. 370 ff.

<sup>454</sup> Cf. Peter A. Appel, *The Louisiana Purchase and the Lewis and Clark Expedition. A Constitutional Moment?*, in: Kris Fresonke, Mark Spence (eds.), *Lewis and Clark. Legacies, Memories, and New Perspectives*, Berkeley etc.: University of California Press 2004, pp. 87-116, here pp. 98 f.

<sup>455</sup> TJ, *American Philosophical Society's Instructions to André Michaux*, Apr. 30, 1793. See also, Jackson, *The West*, pp. 371 f.

<sup>456</sup> TJ, IV. *Instructions for Meriwether Lewis*, Jun. 20, 1803.

<sup>457</sup> Cogliano, *Emperor of Liberty*, p. 179, for Cogliano's reading of the following quotes, see *ibid.*, pp. 176 ff.

<sup>458</sup> TJ to John Todd, Jan. 2, 1780.

<sup>459</sup> TJ to George Washington, Apr. 2, 1791. With regard to the Spanish colonies in America and the more general expansion of the United States, Jefferson wrote already in France that »Our confederacy must be viewed as the nest from which all America, North and South is to be peopled. We should take care too not to think it for the interest of that great continent to press too soon on the Spaniards.

Lewis and Clark encountered Native Americans after the Louisiana Territory was officially ceded to the United States, they »carefully informed the Indians that the French and Spanish had withdrawn [...] and that the ›great Chief of the Seventeen great nations of America‹ was now the one to whom they must turn«. <sup>460</sup> Collecting foreign insignia, besides ethnographic information such as vocabulary and material artifacts, the explorers ironically welcomed the Natives within the American dominion, brought symbols of friendship and supposedly superior civilization, and invited them to trade and education. However, as James Ronda resumes:

»for all its efforts at cooperation and friendship, the Corps of Discovery represented the forces of economic dependence and political dominion. Behind the clasped hands on the Jefferson Peace Medal were the harsh realities of invasion, conquest, and dispossession«. <sup>461</sup>

Against the fact that the hospitality and assistance of various Native American tribes significantly contributed to the explorers' successful crossing of the continent, Meriwether Lewis stylized himself as the »Enlightenment Prometheus who brings ›civilization‹ into darkness«, when he noted in his logbook that his crew was »about to penetrate a country [...], on which the foot of civilized man had never trodden«. <sup>462</sup> While writing this, however, the group was accompanied (and possibly guided) by Sacagawea, who served as an interpreter during the enterprise. The Shoshone woman had been captured during an intertribal war in childhood and was »bartered or gambled away by their Hidatsa master« with another young girl to Toussaint Charbonneau, a French Canadian who later became a member of the expedition. <sup>463</sup> With this transaction »better defin[ing] her status as ›slave‹ than ›as«

Those countries cannot be in better hands. My fear is that they are too feeble to hold them till our population can be sufficiently advanced to gain it from them peice by peice«, TJ to Archibald Stuart, Jan. 25 1786.

<sup>460</sup> Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father. The United States Government and the American Indians*, abr. ed., Lincoln etc.: University of Nebraska Press 1986 [1984], p. 25.

<sup>461</sup> James P. Ronda, ›A Darling Project of Mine‹. *The Appeal of the Lewis and Clark Story*, in: id. (ed.), *Voyages of Discovery. Essays on the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, Helena: Montana Historical Society Press 1998, pp. 327-335, here p. 334. On the ethnographic methods and inquiries of Lewis and Clark, who »never doubted the wisdom of judging Indians by white standards«, see id. *Lewis and Clark among the Indians*, bicentennial ed., Lincoln etc.: University of Nebraska Press 2002 [1984], pp. 113-132, quote p. 114.

<sup>462</sup> Hallock, *Notes on the State of Virginia and the Jeffersonian West*, p. 53. Among others, Peter Burke almost euphemistically notes that »descriptions of [Lewis and Clark's] achievement have not always done Justice to the role of indigenous informants such as Sacajawea [...] in orienting their expedition«, id., *A Social History of Knowledge, Vol. 2: From the Encyclopédie to Wikipedia*, Cambridge etc.: Polity Press 2012, p. 15.

<sup>463</sup> Dorothy Gray, *Women of the West*, Millbrae: Les Femmes 1976, p. 8, for further information on Sacagawea's biography, see *ibid.*, pp. 5-20.

wife«, her story illustrates the complex and violent history of ›race‹ and gender on the American frontier.<sup>464</sup>

Since »abstinence, at least from relations with racially darker women, is also a defining characteristic of the heroic type of which Lewis and Clark are ideals«, Thomas Slaughter finds the element of frontier sex hushed up by »historiographic racism and prudery«. <sup>465</sup> The case of Charbonneau, however, bears witness to the reality of the ›amalgamation‹ that for Jefferson was instrumental to eventually incorporate Native Americans into the settler society. As early as 1795, when the Canadian was working as a fur trader for the British North West Company, he was noted for being attacked by an »old Saultier woman [...] in the act of committing a Rape upon her Daughter«, which according to the European Canadian eyewitness was a »fate he highly deserved for his brutality«. <sup>466</sup> As William Clark repeatedly noted, Charbonneau acted violently also towards the indigenous ›wives‹ he had acquired when they were only between ten and thirteen years of age. Representing the »vices and virtues of the ordinary frontiersmen of the time«, the polygamist experienced »one advantage of traveling with a wife« when he, unlike many of the group, was spared from the »venereal disease picked up from the local trading girls«. <sup>467</sup> Following Thomas Jefferson's advice, Charbonneau and Sacagawea »mix[ed] [...] by marriage« and their son, who later became a Californian trapper, fur trader, gold digger and soldier in the Mexican-American war, certainly identified himself as one of those new Americans that Jefferson intended to »spread [...] over this great island«. <sup>468</sup> The hierarchical and violent constellation of this ›family‹, however, was anything but egalitarian or inclusive.

Whereas Sacagawea, albeit in stereotypical and romanticized fashion, became part of the public memory of the Lewis and Clark expedition as soon as the Indian Wars came to an end, another member of the crew was publicly acknowledged only

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<sup>464</sup> Thomas P. Slaughter, *Exploring Lewis and Clark. Reflections on Men and Wilderness*, New York: Knopf 2003, p. 104.

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>466</sup> Quoted from John MacDonell's journal in Susan M. Colby, *Sacagawea's Child. The Life and Times of Jean-Baptiste (Pomp) Charbonneau*, pb. ed., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press 2009 [2004], p. 34.

<sup>467</sup> Dennis R. Ottoson, Toussaint Charbonneau. A Most Durable Man, in: *South Dakota History*, 6, 1976, 2, pp. 152-185, here pp. 165 (›advantage‹, ›venereal‹), 185 (›vices‹).

<sup>468</sup> TJ to Hendrick Aupaumut, Dec. 21, 1808. For a brief biography of Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, see Charles G. Clarke, *The Men of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, Lincoln etc.: University of Nebraska Press 2002 [1970], pp. 148 f. For a more extensive account, see Colby, *Sacagawea's Child*.

in recent years.<sup>469</sup> York, William Clark's African American slave and childhood companion, was »distinguished as unique in the party both by his race and by his status«, appearing in the journals as ›black‹ and ›servant‹. Although there are hints for a »pattern of distance between York and the other men«, York experienced rights and participation that were inconceivable in the slave society he grew up in. Carrying firearms and »vot[ing] in the deliberations of the expedition«, York was most important to the company in »eas[ing] Indian relations«. <sup>470</sup> With irritation and »disgust born of their racism«, Clark and other ›white‹ explorers observed that native tribes especially valued his slave, offering him all kinds of hospitality and supposedly »deemed a black man more physically attractive than either of them«. This frontier reversal of power relations fundamentally »challenged Clark's mastery of York and [...] threatened the white race's potential mastery of the Indians as well«. <sup>471</sup> Constantly stressing his possession of York in his notes, Clark compensated for this challenge and completely restored his power, when he rejected York's request for freedom after the expedition had returned to St. Louis. <sup>472</sup>

Thomas Jefferson was firmly aware that the social and ›racial‹ hierarchies of the American settler nation would have to be gradually established in the new western territories. From his point of view, this process was even far from completed east of the Mississippi, which made expansion through the acquisition of Louisiana all the more important. Building on his earlier policies of expelling ›hostile tribes‹, Jefferson explicitly perceived the new land as a possible »means of tempting all our Indians on the East side of the Mississippi to remove to the West, and of condensing instead of scattering our population«. <sup>473</sup> In a letter to John Breckinridge, written shortly after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, Jefferson specified this policy, stating that the »best use we can make of the country for some time, will be to give estab-

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<sup>469</sup> For an examination of how Sacagawea appeared as the »Madonna of her race« in early twentieth century historiography and the ›racial‹ dimensions of her commemoration, see Wanda Pillow, *Searching for Sacajawea. Whitened Reproductions and Endarkened Representations*, in: *Hypatia*, 22, 2007, 2, pp. 1-19. Following some scholarly examinations of his role in the expedition, York, along with Sacagawea, was posthumously »present[ed] the title of Honorary Sergeant, Regular Army« by President Bill Clinton in 2001, cf. [http://clinton5.nara.gov/WH/new/html/Wed\\_Jan\\_17\\_101131\\_2001.html](http://clinton5.nara.gov/WH/new/html/Wed_Jan_17_101131_2001.html).

<sup>470</sup> Slaughter, *Exploring Lewis and Clark*, p. 117 (›distinguished‹, ›pattern‹); Appel, *The Louisiana Purchase and the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, p. 102 (›deliberations‹); Nathan R. Meyer, York, in: Junius P. Rodriguez (ed.), *The Louisiana Purchase. A Historical and Geographical Encyclopedia*, Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO 2002, p. 361 (›relations‹).

<sup>471</sup> Slaughter, *Exploring Lewis and Clark*, pp. 119 f.

<sup>472</sup> Cf. Appel, *The Louisiana Purchase and the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, pp. 102 f.

<sup>473</sup> TJ to Horatio Gates, Jul. 11, 1803.

lishments in it to the Indians on the East side of the Mississippi«, and that the cleared land should be taken as »means of filling up the Eastern side«. Only »when we shall be full on this side, we may lay off a range off States on the Western bank«, thus »advancing compactly as we multiply«. <sup>474</sup> Whereas the first part of this concept inspired assessments of Jefferson as the »architect of the removal policy of federal Indian affairs«, <sup>475</sup> it was his latter claim about the consolidation of the American population that was fundamental to his perspective on society, ›race‹ and identity in the early republic.

In 1801, Jefferson predicted to James Monroe that »our rapid multiplication will expand itself beyond those limits, and cover the whole Northern, if not the Southern continent with a people speaking the same language, governed in similar forms, and by similar laws«. In this territory populated by a culturally and politically defined ›people‹, he added, there would be no space for any »blot or mixture«. <sup>476</sup> With his republican project depending on a uniform citizenry, demographic policy was a crucial issue for Jefferson, and at least one »key to the program lay in Indian policy«. <sup>477</sup> With his »chosen country« offering »room enough for our descendants to the thousandth and thousandth generation«, Jefferson proclaimed in his inaugural addresses that this continent including the »opposite bank of the Mississippi should be settled by our own brethren and children«, rather than »by strangers of another family«. <sup>478</sup> Repeatedly addressing Native Americans as »my Children«, who ought to be educated in agriculture and husbandry, and thus following the dualistic strategies he had established already during the Revolutionary War, Jefferson ostensibly held out to the Natives the opportunity of becoming members of the American ›family‹. But eventually, as Peter Onuf notes, the »civilization of the natives proved to be an elusive goal«. <sup>479</sup>

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<sup>474</sup> TJ to John Breckinridge, Aug. 12, 1803.

<sup>475</sup> Miller, *Native America, Discovered and Conquered*, p. 90. Similarly, Christian Keller concludes that »it was indeed Thomas Jefferson who first decided that the Eastern Indian tribes would have to be removed across the Mississippi« and that »removal was a new policy created by Jefferson«, id., *Philanthropy Betrayed. Thomas Jefferson, the Louisiana Purchase, and the Origins of Federal Indian Removal Policy*, in: *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 144, 2000, 1, pp. 39-66, here p. 41. In fact, when Andrew Jackson later wanted the Choctaw Indians to resettle in the West, he addressed the offered lands as the »valuable objects which Mr. Jefferson promised you«, *ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>476</sup> TJ to James Monroe, Nov. 24, 1801.

<sup>477</sup> Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation*, p. 773.

<sup>478</sup> TJ, III. First Inaugural Address, Mar. 4, 1801 (›chosen‹, ›generation‹); Second Inaugural Address, Mar. 4, 1805 (›brethren‹, ›family‹).

<sup>479</sup> TJ to Indian Nations, Dec. 21, 1808; Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire*, p. 21.

Jefferson »was less enthusiastic in wanting to bring civilization« to Native Americans of the »trans-Mississippi West«, but instead emphasized trade and commerce when addressing these new tribes. Nevertheless, the »sense of ›Manifest Destiny,‹ of moralistic expansion« remained »plainly evident in Jefferson's Indian policy«. <sup>480</sup> After the Louisiana Purchase, the Native Americans had been »reduced within limits too narrow for the hunter's state«, so that »humanity enjoins us to teach them agriculture and the domestic arts; to encourage them to that industry which alone can enable them to maintain their place in existence«, he said in his second inaugural address in 1805. This ›existence‹, however, was threatened by the Natives' fundamental backwardness, who »inculcate a sanctimonious reverence for the customs of their ancestors; that whatsoever they did, must be done through all time«. <sup>481</sup> In a secret letter Jefferson demanded from Native Americans nothing less than the »termination of their history«, but from his point of view, as Peter Onuf put it, it was the »inexorable progress of civilization« that doomed ›Indian‹ culture and therewith »absolved Americans of agency and moral responsibility for the displacement of indigenous peoples«. <sup>482</sup>

Near the end of his life, Jefferson summarized this perspective on the inevitable course of human progress in a much-cited letter to William Ludlow:

»Let a philosophic observer commence a journey from the savages of the Rocky Mountains, eastwardly towards our sea-coast. These he would observe in the earliest stage of association living under no law but that of nature, subscribing and covering themselves with the flesh and skins of wild beasts. He would next find those on our frontiers in the pastoral state, raising domestic animals to supply the defects of hunting. Then succeed our own semi-barbarous citizens, the pioneers of the advance of civilization, and so in his progress he would meet the gradual shades of improving man until he would reach his, as yet, most improved state in our seaport towns. This, in fact, is equivalent to a survey, in time, of the progress of man from the infancy of creation to the present day«. <sup>483</sup>

Resembling his *Notes* and the display of Native American culture at Monticello, Jefferson's panorama of American civilization incorporates indigenous peoples only as representatives of the past, »as members of a dead generation that, according to his conception of generational sovereignty, had ›neither powers, nor rights‹ in the

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<sup>480</sup> Reginald Horsman, *Expansion and American Indian Policy, 1783-1812*, Norman etc.: University of Oklahoma Press 1992 [1967], pp. 108 (›Manifest Destiny‹), 114 (›enthusiastic‹).

<sup>481</sup> TJ, *Second Inaugural Address*, Mar. 4, 1805.

<sup>482</sup> TJ to William Henry Harrison, Feb. 27, 1803; Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire*, p. 49. See also, Miller, *Native America, Discovered and Conquered*, p. 94.

<sup>483</sup> TJ to William Ludlow, Sep. 6, 1824.

present and future«. <sup>484</sup> Like the four stages theory of Scottish Enlightenment and other contemporary European concepts of human progress, Jefferson's philosophy of civilization rested on the assumption of fundamental human differences. <sup>485</sup> In his »Americanization« of philosophical history«, Jefferson perceived Native American cultures and societies as inadaptably to »any great degree of population«, whereas his new republic could rely on Greco-Roman antiquity and Anglo-Saxon history as universally valid sources for the creation of a free and just political order. <sup>486</sup> For the ›philosophic observer‹ on his journey through America, the Louisiana Purchase, and the western expansion more generally, only represented the universal course of history. But as Jefferson knew very well, the progress of ›civilization‹ did not come without violence.

Early in his political career, Jefferson had declared that »our conduct towards the Indians should be founded [on] justice and fear«, but this ›justice‹ could include a ›racialized‹ »Jus gentium for America« granting the United States »a right of preemption of [Indian] lands« and a »right of regulating the commerce between them and the Whites«. <sup>487</sup> Therewith resting his policy on the Doctrine of Discovery, Jefferson opposed more aggressive conquest policies of some contemporary politicians and frontier settlers. For Jefferson, war against Native tribes was a last resort and he preferred to »retain them in peace by eternal bribes«, but military action remained a possible reaction towards those Natives' that refused to ›assimilate«. <sup>488</sup> Consequently, the ›philosophic observer‹ not coincidentally encounters the ›savages of the Rocky Mountains‹ in such an inhospitable surrounding. Only a couple of years earlier, Jefferson had written to John Adams, with respect to the tribes that

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<sup>484</sup> Hannah Spahn, Thomas Jefferson, Cosmopolitanism, and the Enlightenment, in: Francis D. Cogliano (ed.), *A Companion to Thomas Jefferson*, Malden etc.: Wiley-Blackwell 2012, pp. 364-379, here p. 374.

<sup>485</sup> On the racist implications of Enlightenment ideas of progress, see for example Wulf D. Hund, ›It must come from Europe«. *The Racisms of Immanuel Kant*, in: id., Christian Koller, Moshe Zimmermann (eds.), *Racisms Made in Germany*, Berlin etc.: Lit 2011, pp. 69-98, here pp. 75-78.

<sup>486</sup> Hannah Spahn, *Thomas Jefferson, Time, and History*, Charlottesville etc.: University of Virginia Press 2011, p. 172 (›Americanization‹); TJ to James Madison, Jan. 30, 1787 (›population‹). Elsewhere in her book, Spahn examines how »Jefferson invariably linked the topic of precolonial American remains to the theme of loss: the certain loss of the Indian societies themselves [...] and the probable loss of any precise information about them [...]. American antiquity, unlike its European counterpart, threatened to entirely ›disappear in time«, *ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>487</sup> TJ, *Notes of a Conversation with George Hammond*, Jun. 3, 1792. See also Prucha, *The Great Father*, pp. 21 f.

<sup>488</sup> TJ to Charles Carroll, Apr. 15 1791. See also, Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, pp. 163 ff.; Miller, *Native America, Discovered and Conquered*, pp. 59-76 (on TJ and Discovery).

happened to »relapse into barbarism and misery«, that »we shall be obliged to drive them, with the beasts of the forest into the Stony mountains«. <sup>489</sup>

During his presidency, Jefferson primarily »waged economic war against Indian tribes and peoples«, using trading posts among the Natives to encourage »especially their leading men, to run in debt« and to eventually »cede lands to rid themselves of debt«. Prior to the Indian Removal Act of 1830, this measure proved one of the most successful means to move Native tribes to western territories. <sup>490</sup> Additionally, the Jefferson administration and the secretary of war, who was concerned with the so-called ›Indian affairs‹, installed agents among certain indigenous peoples – officially »as instructors in the arts of first necessity«. <sup>491</sup> Disappointed from the success of earlier ›civilizing‹ missions, however, Jefferson now explicitly took two other »objects [...] principally in view: 1. The preservation of peace; 2. The obtaining lands«. <sup>492</sup> As time was running out for the Natives to assimilate and to merge into the American republic, Jefferson perceived their expulsion to the western bank of the Mississippi as the best way to ensure the consolidation of a homogenous society. <sup>493</sup> This policy not only sowed the seeds for later ethnic cleansings and destroyed the Natives' opportunities to trade and participation, but also rested on constructions of ›Indians‹ as fundamentally opposed and essentially inferior to ›whites‹. <sup>494</sup>

The Trade and Intercourse Acts of the 1790s stretched U.S. jurisdiction to the so-called ›Indian Country‹, codified the commercial intercourse between the United States and the indigenous nations and also underhandedly defined America's »citizen or white inhabitant« in opposition to even the »peaceable and friendly Indian«. <sup>495</sup> Reacting to ongoing massacres on the frontier inspired by »racist contempt

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<sup>489</sup> TJ to John Adams, Jun. 11, 1812.

<sup>490</sup> Robert J. Miller, Reservation ›Capitalism‹. Economic Development in Indian Country, Santa Barbara: Praeger 2012, p. 35 (›economic war‹), TJ, Memorandum for Henry Dearborn on Indian Policy, Dec. 29, 1802 (›especially‹, ›cede‹).

<sup>491</sup> TJ, Second Inaugural Address, Mar. 4, 1805.

<sup>492</sup> TJ to James Jackson, Feb. 16, 1803. See also Wallace, Jefferson and the Indians, p. 221.

<sup>493</sup> Cf., among others, Cogliano, Emperor of Liberty, p. 182; Horsman, Expansion and American Indian Policy, pp. 112 f. In Jefferson's rhetoric, as S. Charles Bolton notes, the »migration of eastern Indian tribes across the Mississippi would be good for whites and Native Americans, providing economic opportunity for the former and giving the latter time and space in which to develop their potential for what he thought of as civilization«, id., Jeffersonian Indian Removal and the Emergence of Arkansas Territory, in: The Arkansas Historical Quarterly, 62, 2003, 3, pp. 253-271, here p. 253.

<sup>494</sup> On the effects of trade on the settlers' relation to Native Americans, see for example Bernard W. Sheehan, Seeds of Extinction. Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian, New York: W.W. Norton 1974, pp. 218-227.

<sup>495</sup> An Act to Regulate Trade and Intercourse With the Indian Tribes (1790), in: Documents of United States Indian Policy, ed. by Francis Paul Prucha, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Lincoln etc.: University of Nebraska Press 2000 [1975], pp. 13-14. The nexus of citizenship and racism will be discussed in the subsequent

and murderous hatred of Indians in the white frontier communities«, Jefferson and the political elite allegedly wanted the Natives to be »covered with the aegis of the law against aggressors from ourselves«. <sup>496</sup> In the heterogeneous contact zone of the frontier regions, violent ›white‹ settlers were increasingly perceived as ›semi-barbarous‹, especially those that suffered from the social disparity between few wealthy landowners and poor subsistence farmers. <sup>497</sup> Even as indigenous tribes were constantly driven westwards, illegal settlers on Native American territory complained that federal law »gratifi[ed] a heathen nation Who have no better right to this land than we have ourselves« and who were »of no more use to government or society«. <sup>498</sup> As Jefferson anticipated, expansion served to be a release valve for social pressure in the early republic. Native Americans, regardless of their conduct towards ›white‹ settlers, fell victim to the underlying notions of progress and civilization, as they were confronted with utopian, arbitrary and virtually inaccessible demands of assimilation.

Against this backdrop, it does not come as a surprise, that Jefferson in his imperial vision located even the civilized Natives ›in the pastoral state‹ far in the West and close to the infancy of mankind. To be incorporated among ›our own citizens‹, they would have to be stripped of everything revealing their cultural background and identity. As Anthony Wallace has noted, the »Jeffersonian vision of the destiny of the Americas had no place for Indians as Indians«. <sup>499</sup> In fact, Jefferson's scientific interest and almost exoticist fascination with Native American culture to some degree even depended on their eventual extinction. Praising the Natives' absence of government and love of freedom, he quite possibly thought, as Peter Onuf suggests, that the »Indians best expressed their true nature – their fundamental equality with Europeans – by resisting and falling before the torrent of white migration, a great

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chapters. With regard to Native Americans, see, among others, Douglas Bradburn, *The Problem of Citizenship in the American Revolution*, in: *History Compass*, 8/9, 210, pp. 1093-1113, here p. 1099.

<sup>496</sup> Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, p. 193 (›racist‹); TJ, *Second Inaugural Address*, Mar. 4, 1805 (›aegis‹).

<sup>497</sup> The economic inequality in frontier regions is exemplarily discussed in Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion. Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 1986, pp. 69-71. With regard to resistance towards the federal government and taxation, Slaughter notes that »violence persisted in those townships where the percentage of property owners was lowest, where the gap between rich and poor was greatest, and the tensions between agrarian poverty and mercantile wealth was most visible«, *ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>498</sup> Cited in Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, p. 216.

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

natural force that cleared the way for civilization«. <sup>500</sup> In practice, however, Jefferson knew that frontier realities posed a barrier to the quick progress of this ›natural force‹, as long as the ›Choctaws [...] can bring 8000 warriors into the field‹, while ›our settlement could not bring 800 white men, to meet them, and would leave 800 black men in their fields uncontroled«. <sup>501</sup>

This private assessment contrasts Jefferson's official and comments on the dichotomous relation between ›white‹ civilization and Native American savagism and testifies that the social and ›racial‹ situation on the frontier was known to be fundamentally complex. Prior to the Louisiana Purchase, the French, Spanish and British settlements in the region had already established a ›distinct Mississippi Valley plantation complex‹, which was not as firmly established on a ›black‹-›white‹ dichotomy as its U.S. counterpart. <sup>502</sup> Although Louisianan planters ›tied their future‹, and their allegiance to the United States, ›to unimpeded access to slave labor‹ and therewith paved the way for the expansion of the ›mighty ›cotton kingdom‹ in the South and South West‹, the ›racial‹ hierarchy that had been established in U. S. slavery only gradually replaced the ›Caribbean three-caste society‹ in a ›new polyglot territory«. <sup>503</sup>

In contrast to earlier suggestions of gradually limiting slavery to the initial U.S. territories, Jefferson straight away envisioned Louisiana as slavery territory, especially as he initially intended to only purchase the ›slaveholder friendly tropics‹ in the south. <sup>504</sup> Article three of the Louisiana Purchase Treaty thus ruled that ›inhabitants of the ceded territory shall be incorporated in the Union of the United States and admitted [...] to the enjoyment of all the rights, advantages and immunities of citizens of the United States‹, not least including the ›rights to hold slaves‹ and the ›advantages of owner over slave‹ as Roger Kennedy translates the provision. <sup>505</sup>

<sup>500</sup> Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire*, p. 21.

<sup>501</sup> TJ to Thomas Mann Randolph, Mar. 12, 1802.

<sup>502</sup> John Craig Hammond, *Slavery, Settlement, and Empire. The Expansion and Growth of Slavery in the Interior of the North American Continent, 1770-1820*, in: *Journal of the Early Republic*, 32, 2012, 2, pp. 175-206, here p. 180.

<sup>503</sup> Id., *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion in the Early American West*, p. 33 (›future‹, ›unimpeded‹); Blackburn, *The American Crucible*, p. 142 (›cotton kingdom‹); Jon Kukla, *A Wilderness So Immense. The Louisiana Purchase and the Destiny of America*, New York: A.A. Knopf 2003, p. 323 (›Caribbean‹, ›polyglot‹).

<sup>504</sup> William W. Frehling, *The Louisiana Purchase and the Coming of the Civil War*, in: Sanford Levinson, Bartholomew H. Sparrow (eds.), *The Louisiana Purchase and American Expansion, 1803-1898*, Lanham etc.: Rowman and Littlefield 2005, pp. 69-82, here p. 69.

<sup>505</sup> Roger G. Kennedy, *Mr. Jefferson's Lost Cause. Land, Farmers, Slavery, and the Louisiana Purchase*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 2003, p. 188.

Although Jefferson did not author this treaty, »he did nothing to ban slavery in that vast territory«, but »instead abandoned his previous desire to restrict slavery from the West«. <sup>506</sup>

Following the development of the cotton gin in the 1790s, warm and humid Louisiana promised economic profits and increasing independence from the trade with British textile industry. Moreover, environmentalist politicians argued that the »lives of white people are shorter there [...] and the labor of slaves more necessary«, so that »slavery must be established in that country or it must be abandoned«. <sup>507</sup> Even before the purchase of the territory, Jefferson's son-in-law wanted to have a share in the cotton boom and »conceived a design of procuring land in the Mississippi territory and removing all my Slaves thither to establish a large cotton plantation«. <sup>508</sup> Although Jefferson knew that »cotton is the most profitable production of the U.S.« and himself »should be delighted to own a cotton estate in Georgia«, he stressed the social consequences of an expansion of slavery more than its economic benefits. <sup>509</sup> Without publicly advocating the spread of slavery during his presidency, the Louisiana legislation »implement[ed] his vision of diffusion«, which »would make [the slaves] individually happier and proportionally facilitate the accomplishment of their emancipation«. <sup>510</sup> Theoretically, the diffusion of a steady number of slaves over an increasing territory seemed to contribute to a »gradual disappearance of slavery«. <sup>511</sup> Practically, Jefferson's policies turned his »empire of liberty« into

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<sup>506</sup> Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders*, p. 215 (»nothing«); Douglas R. Egerton, *Race and Slavery in the Era of Jefferson*, in: Frank Shuffleton (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Jefferson*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 2008, pp. 73-82, p. 76. On the questionable prospects of Jefferson's »previous desire«, see Wills, »Negro President«, pp. 21-25. On Jefferson's chances to end slavery during the debates on the Louisiana Purchase, Robin Blackburn assesses that »if Jefferson had been waiting for an opportunity to weaken slavery then he could have given Presidential backing to« the Senate's decision »to exclude all new slaves from Louisiana«. Essentially, Blackburn concludes, »because he was President, because of his historic role and because he was Virginian, Jefferson was the only man who could have prevented« the expansion of slavery, *id.*, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, pp. 284 f.

<sup>507</sup> Senators Dayton (New Jersey) and Jackson (Georgia) as cited in Everett S. Brown, *The Senate Debate on the Breckinridge Bill for the Government of Louisiana, 1804*, in: *The American Historical Review*, 22, 1917, 2, pp. 340-364, here pp. 346 (»lives«), 349 (»established«). In the debate, these positions were met with anti-slavery arguments that frequently build on »racialized« fears of slave uprisings. Thus Senator Hillhouse (Connecticut) warned that the ceded »country is full of swamps – negroes can retire to them after they have slain their masters«, *ibid.*, p. 346. On the debate about the Breckenridge Bill and its context, see also Adam Rothman, *Slave Country. American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South*, Cambridge etc.: Harvard University Press 2005, pp. 27-30.

<sup>508</sup> Thomas Mann Randolph to TJ, Mar. 6, 1802.

<sup>509</sup> TJ to Thomas Mann Randolph, Mar. 12, 1802.

<sup>510</sup> Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion in the Early American West*, p. 36 (»vision«); TJ to John Holmes, Apr. 22, 1820 (»happier«).

<sup>511</sup> Spahn, *Thomas Jefferson, Time, and History*, p. 184.

an ›empire of slavery‹ with fatal consequences for slaves in the old and new territories.<sup>512</sup>

After the abolition of the slave trade, the westward expansion of slavery actually reduced the slave populations in states like Maryland and Virginia. As Jefferson anticipated, it lessened the social pressure of slavery and the ›chances for large-scale slave rebellion‹. As one of the political developments that ›most affected black Virginians‹, the increasing interstate slave trade to the rising cotton plantations in Florida and Louisiana proved to be an effective threat against defiant slaves, as it resulted in ›brutal disruptions of family and communal ties‹.<sup>513</sup> Consequently, Jefferson's Louisiana policies provided Virginian masters with additional instruments of power, which the founder himself applied to punish a slave that had been involved in a fight. Ordering his son-in-law to sell a man called Cary to ›negro purchasers from Georgia‹, Jefferson wanted the defiant slave in ›so distant an exile [...] as to cut him off completely from ever again being heard of‹, as if ›he were put out of the way by death‹.<sup>514</sup> The Louisiana Purchase testifies how Jefferson's political actions interacted with his personal slave-ownership and how both responded to the racist social relations of slavery and expansion.

In 1803, just after Louisiana was purchased and before he could draw on the results of the Lewis and Clark expedition, Jefferson compiled the available information in the so-called *Account of Louisiana*.<sup>515</sup> Identifying its inhabitants as ›chiefly the descendants of the French and Canadians‹, he moves on to neatly divide the

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<sup>512</sup> Similarly, David Brion Davis claims that Jefferson's ›vision included an expanding ›empire for liberty,‹ which by 1804, with the annexation of Louisiana, also meant an empire for slavery‹, id., Introduction, in: David Brion Davis, Steven Mintz (eds.), *The Boisterous Sea of Liberty. A Documentary History of America from Discovery through the Civil War*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 1998, pp. 1-27, here p. 11. For broader discussions of the concepts, see also, Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion in the Early American West*, pp. 169-172; Robert F. Bonner, *Empire of Liberty, Empire of Slavery. The Louisiana Territories and the Fate of American Bondage*, in: Peter Kastor (ed.), *The Louisiana Purchase in American History*, Washington: Congressional Quarterly Press 2002, pp. 129-138.

<sup>513</sup> Sidbury, *Thomas Jefferson in Gabriel's Virginia*, pp. 207 (›brutal‹), 210 (›chances‹), 211 (›black‹). For the following, see *ibid.*, pp. 209 f. On the consequences of the prohibition of slave importation, see also Wills, ›Negro President‹, pp. 121 f.

<sup>514</sup> Jefferson, *Thomas Jefferson's Farm Book*, p. 19.

<sup>515</sup> For a discussion of this text, see Renaud Contini, *Harmonizing the ›West‹. Jefferson's *Account of Louisiana* and American Identity*, in: Amy T. Hamilton, Tom J. Hillard (eds.), *Before the West Was West. Critical Essays on Pre-1800 Literature of the American Frontiers*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 2014, pp. 313-338. Additionally, Contini points out that Jefferson deliberately differentiates his treatment of European and Native American inhabitants of the region, as the former's ›Americanization‹ could ›remain predominantly administrative, at worst a political issue‹, whereas the latter demanded for a ›secular equivalent to the civilizing mission practiced most zealously in North America by Spanish Jesuit missionaries‹, *ibid.*, p. 331.

population in »free whites«, »free people of colour« and »slaves«, with the latter designation used synonymously with »blacks«. <sup>516</sup> For these designations, Jefferson could draw on the French legislation of the Code Noir, which in 1724 had legally established the connection between skin color and slavery in colonial Louisiana. However, colonial laws were not strictly enforced and despite explicit prohibitions, »Indian and black women lived with Frenchmen as mistresses or common law wives«. <sup>517</sup> Even after American authorities introduced new color coded legislation in the Western territories, »white officials were never able to construct an impervious barrier between white citizens and nonwhite aliens«, so that »whites as well as nonwhites ignored the new racial structure that came in the wake of the Louisiana Purchase«. <sup>518</sup> This fluidity still persisted in the 1850s, when the »majority of the planters in the sugar-producing parishes of Louisiana were Creole«, predominantly of French, but also of Native American and African descent. <sup>519</sup>

In fact, members of the Creek, who had allied with the Spanish in early eighteenth century and were also considered ›civilized‹ by the Washington and Jefferson administrations, had established some of the first slave plantations in the Louisiana territory. For their former Spanish allies, Native Americans had »served as slave catchers for a century«, adopting the emerging ›racial‹ categories of ›red‹, ›black‹ and ›white‹ and »acted as agents of racial segregation«. <sup>520</sup> While ›civilized‹ and assimilated ›Indians‹ could at least temporarily be uplifted within American ›racial‹ hierarchy, Louisiana also accommodated »successful free men of color«, who »commonly owned slaves themselves«. Although these, frequently ›mulatto‹, slaveholders were not allowed to »advocate[e] social equality between whites and free men of color«,

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<sup>516</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *An Account of Louisiana, being an abstract of documents, in the offices of the Departments of State, and of the Treasury*, Washington: Duane 1803, <https://archive.org/details/accountoflouisia00unit>, pp. 16 (›French‹), 19 (›whites‹, ›people of colour‹, ›slaves‹), 20 (›blacks‹).

<sup>517</sup> Daniel H. Usner, *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Community. The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783*, Chapel Hill etc.: The University of North Carolina Press 1992, p. 50. Particularly after the French and Indian War, African Americans in the Louisiana Territory also profited from the Spanish custom of *coartación*, which enabled slaves to buy their freedom, cf. Julie Winch, *Between Slavery and Freedom. Free People of Color in America from Settlement to the Civil War*, Lanham etc.: Rowman and Littlefield 2014, p. 18.

<sup>518</sup> Peter J. Kastor, *The Nation's Crucible. The Louisiana Purchase and the Creation of America*, New Haven etc.: Yale University Press 2004, p. 218.

<sup>519</sup> James Oakes, *The Ruling Race. A History of American Slaveholders*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1982, p. 44.

<sup>520</sup> Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things. Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 1999, pp. 117 f.

they were part of a multicultural colonial society, that was nowhere more apparent than in the region's urban center.<sup>521</sup>

In New Orleans, which in Jefferson's eyes was the most important part of the Louisiana Purchase as it opened the Mississippi for America's transatlantic trade, free ›blacks‹ constituted more than a quarter of the free population around 1800.<sup>522</sup> Influenced by Spanish colonial rule – and later by immigration of free gens de couleur from revolutionary St. Domingue –, the city most vividly illustrated the »contrast between the Caribbean three-caste society and the American black-white, slave-free dichotomy«, which locally contributed to a »recognition in the laws of a racial distinction between ›Negroes‹ and ›people of color‹«. <sup>523</sup> Initially, the Americans arriving in New Orleans had to deal with the question whether the »free quadroon mulatto and black people« should »be entitled to the rights of citizens or not«, because these were used to »enjoy their rights in common with other subjects« and were almost inextricably interwoven with the ›white‹ population through »New Orleans's version of racial exogamy«. <sup>524</sup>

As Jon Kukla has suggested, the American delegation on its arrival in the port city was especially »shocked by the sight of free colored militiamen helping to raise the Stars and Stripes over New Orleans«. <sup>525</sup> The issue of armed African Americans was so important for the new authorities that President Jefferson had to decide that the »militia of Colour shall be confirmed in their posts and treated favorably, till a better settled state of things shall permit us to let them neglect themselves«. <sup>526</sup> Seemingly aware of the complex ›race‹ relations in the new territories, Jefferson once

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<sup>521</sup> Kukla, *A Wilderness So Immense*, p. 152.

<sup>522</sup> Cf. Kimberly S. Hanger, *Bounded Lives, Bounded Places. Free Black Society in Colonial New Orleans. 1769-1803*, Durham etc.: Duke University Press 1997, p. 18. In the year before the Louisiana Purchase, Jefferson outlined the importance of the city, writing to Robert Livingston that »there is on the globe one single spot, the possessor of which is our natural and habitual enemy. It is New Orleans, through which the produce of three eighths of our territory must pass to market«, TJ to Robert R. Livingston, Apr. 18, 1802.

<sup>523</sup> Kukla, *A Wilderness So Immense*, p. 323 (›contrast‹); Kenneth R. Aslakson, *Making Race in the Courtroom. The Legal Construction of Three Races in Early New Orleans*, New York etc.: New York University Press 2014, p. 2 (›recognition‹). Among others, Lawrence N. Powell argues that it was mainly the »Spanish manumission policy« that »triggered the explosive growth of New Orleans's libres« and that »very little of the demographic growth can be attributed to natural increase, and practically none to immigration from the Caribbean«, id., *The Accidental City. Improving New Orleans*, Cambridge etc.: Harvard University Press 2012, p. 279.

<sup>524</sup> New Orleans merchant Benjamin Morgan as quoted in Kukla, *A Wilderness So Immense*, p. 324 (›quadroon‹, ›citizens‹, ›common‹); Powell, *Accidental City*, p. 290 (›exogamy‹).

<sup>525</sup> Kukla, *A Wilderness So Immense*, p. 322.

<sup>526</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *The Anas, 1791-1806* in: *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. by Paul Leicester Ford, Vol. 1, New York etc.: G.P. Putnam's Sons 1904, pp. 163-430, here p. 381.

more favored the gradual establishment of a new social order. Against this advice, however, »white New Orleanians quickly moved to disband the city's prestigious armed free black militia units, to limit manumission procedures, and to keep libres out of the territory and state«. Accompanied by a »rising tide of racism«, as Kimberly Hanger called it, the United States arrived in the Southwest with essentialist ideas of skin color categories and anxieties of ›race‹ war.<sup>527</sup>

Long after his retirement, Jefferson was still concerned about the ›racial‹ threats to the Union and frequently corresponded about the West and its importance for the success of the American experiment. While he became ever more disappointed with the success of Native American assimilation and explained to Alexander Humboldt, that the United States were eventually »oblige[d] [...] to pursue them to extermination, or drive them to new seats beyond our reach«, he also articulated some of his most-cited statements on the issue of slavery.<sup>528</sup> Particularly the Missouri question, which aroused political debates about the future of the Union and the role of slavery in the Louisiana Territory, ostensibly occurred to Jefferson like a »fire bell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror«. <sup>529</sup> Once again advancing his diffusion argument, Jefferson opposed the divisive character of the Missouri Compromise and favored the gradual spread of the institution throughout the Union, which he hoped would soon include Cuba and Texas, regions destined for labor-intensive sugar plantations.<sup>530</sup> Eloquently confirming his earlier convictions that within slavery »we have the wolf by the ear« and that more generally the »two races cannot live in the same government«, utopian plans of colonization remained for him the only alternative policy towards Africans Americans and only two years before his death Jefferson laid out his most detailed plan to »wipe« slavery from »legislation [...] and from the remembrance of man«. <sup>531</sup>

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<sup>527</sup> Hanger, *Bounded Lives*, p. 164.

<sup>528</sup> TJ to Alexander von Humboldt, Dec. 6, 1813.

<sup>529</sup> TJ to John Holmes, Apr. 22, 1820. Against the »standard interpretation [...] that the Missouri controversy caught Jefferson completely by surprise, filled him with anxiety, and left him despondent about the republic's fate«, Stuart Leibiger holds that Jefferson »may have been wielding the alarm intentionally to help settle a controversy before it grew more severe«. Consequently, Leibiger goes on, »[h]is solution to the slavery question amounted to scaring the rest of the country into putting the Union before all else, and hoping that time would eventually solve the problem«, id., *Thomas Jefferson and the Missouri Crisis. An Alternative Interpretation*, in: *Journal of the Early Republic*, 17, 1997, 1, pp. 121-130, here pp. 122 (›standard‹), 128 f. (›wielding‹), 130 (›solution‹).

<sup>530</sup> Cf. TJ to James Monroe, May 14, 1820; Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, p. 271.

<sup>531</sup> TJ to John Holmes, Apr. 22, 1820 (›wolf‹); TJ, *Autobiography*, Jan. 6 - Jul. 29, 1821 (›races‹); TJ to Jared Sparks, Feb. 4, 1824 (›wipe‹, ›legislation‹).

Since »Jefferson became increasingly convinced that antislavery agitation was a cynical pretext for northern neo-Federalists to reduce the southern states to provincial subjection«, his rediscovered abstract opposition to slavery »served primarily as a test of comity and good faith among the members of the union«. <sup>532</sup> It was the »knell of the Union«, Jefferson heard in the Missouri crisis and it was his fear for national solidarity and social stability that made him reconsider the »cession of that kind of property, for it is so misnamed«. <sup>533</sup> Regarding his own »property« in human beings, Jefferson stayed reluctant towards manumission and private initiatives of deportation. In his last will of 1826, Jefferson freed only five of his slaves, accepting that these »had to make a terrible choice between freedom on the one hand and home and family on the other«. <sup>534</sup> While it is anything but »doubtless« that Jefferson would have freed more slaves »if his estate had not been so encumbered with debt by the time he died«, the liabilities evidently forced his descendants to sell »130 valuable negroes« in what was one of the biggest slave auctions of the time in Virginia and the »final catastrophe« for many African Americans at Monticello. <sup>535</sup> After Jefferson himself had already »sold ninety-four slaves between 1784 and 1794 to clear the inherited Wayles debt as well as his own«, enslaved men and women again paid the price for the founder living beyond his means. <sup>536</sup> Beyond the debts Jefferson bequeathed to his family, his legacy left the United States struggling with social and »racial« claims that resonate down to the present day.

Especially with respect to the American expansion into the West, it has been noted that Jefferson's »»Empire for liberty« was for whites only« and that a »racial« understanding of »whiteness« was fundamental to both Jeffersonian policies of removal and concomitant fears of »racial« degradation. <sup>537</sup> At the same time, as Peter Kastor argues, the political struggles to incorporate French, Spanish and Creole settlers within the new American nation resulted in an »impenetrable wall that ex-

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<sup>532</sup> Onuf, *The Mind of Thomas Jefferson*, p. 214.

<sup>533</sup> TJ to John Holmes, Apr. 22, 1820.

<sup>534</sup> Schwarz, *Slave Laws in Virginia*, p. 57.

<sup>535</sup> Norman K. Risjord, *Jefferson's America, 1760-1815*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Lanham etc.: Rowman and Littlefield 2010 [1991], p. 184; Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello*, p. 655 (»valuable«, »catastrophe«). With reference to Lucia Stanton's research, Gordon-Reed points out that the »prices of some slaves were kept low to enable family members to purchase them, which is what occurred in several instances«, *ibid.*, p. 656.

<sup>536</sup> Schwarz, *Slave Laws in Virginia*, p. 43. With regard to Jefferson's claimed reluctance to sell slaves, Paul Finkelman assesses that Jefferson regularly »overcame his professed »scruples about selling negroes but for delinquency or on their own request«, selling scores of slaves in order to make ends meet«, *id.*, *Slavery and the Founders*, p. 195.

<sup>537</sup> Murrin, *Jeffersonian Triumph*, p. 4.

cluded nonwhites« and »provided an equally strong inclusion of whites« – thereby making »white Louisianians [...] the first people of non-British European ancestry to assert that whiteness trumped any other form of difference«. <sup>538</sup> Jefferson's policies of westward expansion illustrate that this notion of ›whiteness‹ itself contained various ›forms of difference‹, constructed in opposition to supposed cultural and natural antipodes. Alongside the respectively complex elements of slavery, empire and science in Jeffersonian thought, this racist interplay of social exclusion and inclusion will be analyzed in the following chapters.

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<sup>538</sup> Kastor, *The Nation's Crucible*, p. 83. Francis Cogliano aptly has paraphrased Kastor's interpretation by stating that »citizenship for white Louisianans – Europeans, Creoles and Anglo-American migrants – came at the expense of the territory's non-white residents, especially the free African population that had enjoyed a degree of autonomy under French and Spanish rule unique in North America«, id., *Thomas Jefferson*, p. 245.



### III.

## The Scope of Jeffersonian Racism

Given that most of the above-discussed historical contexts are familiar and undisputed in the historiography of Thomas Jefferson and the American founding, it seems just consequent that there are plenty of references to racism in Jefferson studies. In fact, with the possible exception of Andrew Jackson, no president in the history of the United States has provoked more allegations of racism than Thomas Jefferson. Contemporary interpreters write of his »undeniable« and »deep-rooted racism«, of his »mostly unchecked racism« or his »foray into a proto-scientific racism«, they stress his »racist opinions« expressed with »racist vocabulary« in his »racist writings« and seem to agree that the founder was »deeply and profoundly racist«. <sup>1</sup> Even the more cautious assessments still find that the Virginian made a »racist case« against miscegenation in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, which more generally represents a »renowned example of Jefferson's racism«. <sup>2</sup> Some scholars prefer to speak of »racialism« and his »racialist views of African Americans« or put his »particularist ›racism« in inverted commas, but most concur that he »anticipated the essentialist racism of the nineteenth century« and »set the pattern for modern American racism«. <sup>3</sup> If these statements sound harsh in their evaluation of Jefferson's attitude towards ›race‹, they are mild compared to the more radical appraisals, which

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<sup>1</sup> Ari Helo, *Thomas Jefferson's Ethics and the Politics of Human Progress. The Morality of a Slaveholder*, New York etc.: Cambridge University Press 2014, pp. 178 (›undeniable‹), 90 (›deep-rooted‹); Brian Steele, *Thomas Jefferson and American Nationhood*, p. 92 (›unchecked‹); Rakove, *Our Jefferson*, p. 222 (›foray‹); Cogliano, *Thomas Jefferson*, p. 204 (›opinions‹); Burstein, *Jefferson's Secrets*, p. 120 (›vocabulary‹); Annette Gordon-Reed, ›The Memories of a Few Negroes‹. *Rescuing America's Future at Monticello*, in Lewis, Onuf (eds.), *Sally Hemings & Thomas Jefferson*, pp. 236-252, here p. 245 (›writings‹); id., *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*, p. 134 (›deeply‹).

<sup>2</sup> Bernstein, *Thomas Jefferson* (2003), p. 197 (›case‹); Maurizio Valsania, *Nature's Man. Thomas Jefferson's Philosophical Anthropology*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press 2013, p. 81 (›example‹).

<sup>3</sup> Saillant, *The American Enlightenment in Africa*, p. 262 (›racialism‹); Egerton, *Race and Slavery in the Era of Jefferson*, p. 78 (›views‹); Spahn, *Thomas Jefferson, Time, and History*, pp. 222 (›particularist‹), 219 (›anticipated‹); Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire*, p. 160 (›pattern‹).

characterize Jefferson as a »fervent believer in white supremacy« who »wore racism like a suit of armor«, as a »self-indulgent and negrophobic Virginia planter« or simply as a »racist, and a particularly aggressive and vindictive one at that«. <sup>4</sup>

This compilation, which is anything but complete, implies a scholarly consensus about the founder's racism, which could actually raise doubts about what another study has to add to the existing interpretations. <sup>5</sup> In fact, James Sidbury notes that it »often seems that we know as much as can be known about Jefferson the master, Jefferson the racial theorist, and Jefferson the moralist«. <sup>6</sup> The above-mentioned statements, however, fall short in two important and interrelated ways. On the one hand, they are constricted to the rather trivial question of whether Jefferson can be assessed as a racist or not. On the other hand, this shortened inquiry results from a striking absence of theoretical reflections on the concept of racism. Consequently, racism appears in large parts of early American studies as a mere catchphrase, just loosely based on popular but ahistorical and abridged definitions of racism. With the latter's confinement to essentialist ideas of ›race‹, Jefferson's remarks about the »physical distinctions proving a difference of race« between ›whites‹ and ›blacks‹ can immediately be identified as racist. The emphasis on biologicistic prejudice, however, denies racism as a social relation that only (re-)produces the category of ›race‹. It likewise neglects its social function in justifying the exclusion of racially discriminated others while providing for the symbolic inclusion of marginalized groups within the dominant population. The conceptual dominance of ›race‹ within parts of racism studies – as addressed in the introduction – facilitates analytical shortcomings in Jefferson studies that can be traced back to the emergence of ›race‹ critical scholarship and which prevail down to the present day.

Two decades after the path-breaking but rather affirmative assessment of Jefferson's ›racial‹ thought by Daniel Boorstin, who interpreted the founder's »extreme

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Lind, *The Next American Nation. The New Nationalism and the Fourth American Revolution*, New York: Free Press 1995, p. 46 (›fervent‹); Wiencek, *Master of the Mountain*, p. 260 (›armor‹); Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders*, p. 160 (›self-indulgent‹); Conor Cruise O'Brien, *Thomas Jefferson*, p. 68 (›aggressive‹).

<sup>5</sup> Let alone the more general questions, Maurizio Valsania discusses with regard to the »widespread lament, that new books on Thomas Jefferson keep appearing with disturbing regularity. How is it possible, one might ask, after two centuries of scholarship? Is there something new to discover? Are not historians relegated to chewing leftovers?«, id., *Nature's Man*, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Sidbury, *Thomas Jefferson in Gabriel's Virginia*, p. 200. As his formulation implies, Sidbury does not agree with this claim and in his article especially deals with the lives of ›black‹ and enslaved Virginians, which he finds to be generally underrepresented in studies of ›race‹ relations in the early republic.

environmentalism« as intended to »defend the Indian and the Negro against charges of inferiority«,<sup>7</sup> Winthrop Jordan prominently included Jefferson in his seminal study of anti-black prejudice in the history of the United States. Building on essentialist notions of ›racial‹ identities, Jordan focused on Jefferson as a »principal author on race« and analyzed especially »Jefferson's energetic facility with the pen [...] to glimpse some of the inward springs of feeling which supported certain attitudes towards Negroes«. Invaluable in his contribution to a critical assessment of Jefferson's thought on slavery and the equality of ›blacks‹, the limited focus of Jordan's inquiry into ›American attitudes toward the Negro‹ also anticipated the restrictions of subsequent Jefferson studies. Claiming that Jefferson displayed a great »unwillingness to admit the fact« that »Indians did not look like Americans«, Jordan ignored genocidal rhetoric and imperial policies, but took Jefferson's word for the Native American's fair opportunity of assimilation. Setting the tone for many shortened analyses to come, he concluded that »confronted by three races America [Jefferson] determinedly turned three into two by transforming the Indian into a degraded yet basically noble brand of white man«.<sup>8</sup>

Echoing Jordan, various scholars have assessed that for Jefferson »Indians and whites were essentially one people, and the differences between them were superficial, the effects of environment rather than of biology«.<sup>9</sup> Contrary to his »comments on Africans and their descendants [as] founded upon his labor needs«, it is claimed that his acceptance of Native Americans as naturally equal served other political purposes.<sup>10</sup> »Jefferson's idealization of the American Indian as an emigrant European« appears as »a part of this racial ideology« only insofar as it stressed the naturalist degradation of African Americans, and even critical interpreters of Jefferson's Indian policies perceive the »divisions there were between white and Indian« as

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<sup>7</sup> Boorstin, *The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson*, p. 98.

<sup>8</sup> Jordan, *White Over Black*, pp. 429 (›facility‹), 477 (›unwillingness‹, ›look‹, ›three races‹), 488 (›principal‹). As indicated in the introduction and throughout the study, Jordan's assessment of the one-sidedness of Jefferson's racism sowed the seeds for most references to Jefferson's ›racial‹ ideas in the past five decades, culminating in problematic assertions like Jack McLaughlin's statement that »in contrast to his attitudes toward black African slaves, whom [Jefferson] thought to be genetically inferior to whites, he romanticized Indians as Rousseauistic noble savages«, id., *Jefferson and Monticello*, p. 357.

<sup>9</sup> John C. Miller, *The Wolf By the Ears. Thomas Jefferson and Slavery*, New York: Free Press 1977, p. 65.

<sup>10</sup> Egerton, *Race and Slavery in the Era of Jefferson*, p. 73.

»not racial«, since »Jeffersonian environmentalism excluded racism«. <sup>11</sup> Consequently, Racism is widely discussed as a black-white phenomenon, as a »dualistic conflict [...] in the American head and heart«. <sup>12</sup> In fact, Thomas Jefferson's relation to slavery and emancipation are as important for the analysis of his racism as are his remarks on African Americans. This being said, his elaborations on ›blacks‹ do not embrace the whole range of Jeffersonian racism, as not least his attitudes and actions towards Native Americans illustrate.

In many historical studies, the scope of the founder's racism is reduced not only with regard to the targets of discrimination, but also in terms of its social mechanisms and the underlying notions of identity. Occasionally equated with »Southern [...] race hatred« or »white supremacy«, racism is widely understood as »racial prejudice« based on a »concept of inherent, biological inferiority«. <sup>13</sup> This understanding of racism excludes culturalistic hierarchizations of humankind and denies the fact that even the discrimination of African American slaves was only gradually established on seemingly scientific, naturalistic arguments during Jefferson's lifetime and with his significant support. Ahistorically assuming principles of hypodescent in the eighteenth century and neglecting the »racist and genocidal language that Jeffersonian thought draws on in constructing its narrative of Indian tribalism as an obstacle to national destiny«, <sup>14</sup> Jefferson's racism is thus interpreted as limited to anti-black prejudice. This despite the fact, that many scholars have a hard time deciding »whether his mode of including [Native Americans] into his new American nation was ultimately preferable to his most important exclusion from this category: that of African Americans«. <sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Boulton, *The American Paradox*, p. 483 (›idealization‹); Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction*, p. 43n48 (›environmentalism‹).

<sup>12</sup> Rakove, *Our Jefferson*, p. 227.

<sup>13</sup> Burstein, *Jefferson's Secrets*, p. 123 (›hatred‹, ›white‹), Boulton, *American Paradox*, p. 468 (›prejudice‹, ›concept‹).

<sup>14</sup> Robert A. Williams, Jr., *Thomas Jefferson*, p. 54.

<sup>15</sup> Spahn, *Thomas Jefferson, Cosmopolitanism, and the Enlightenment*, p. 375. Similarly, other scholars have discussed the genocidal quality of Jefferson Native American policies, showing that the »differences of the Indians – their willed preference to retain their native ways – eliminated them from the grand human destiny that the American nation had come to embody«, outlining that »autonomous American Indians resisting white domination were to be ruthlessly destroyed when they opposed frontier expansion«, and concluding that Jefferson's Native American policies aimed at a »process now known as ›ethnic cleansing‹«. Cf. Joyce Appleby, *Without Resolution. The Jeffersonian Tension in American Nationalism*, in: Joyce Appleby (ed.), *A Restless Past. History and the American Public*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield 2005, pp. 19-39, here p. 34 (›difference‹); Grinde, *Thomas Jefferson's Dualistic Perceptions of Native Americans*, p. 197 (›autonomous‹); Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, p. 20 (›cleansing‹).

Seemingly aware of the problem, Annette Gordon-Reed addresses the Jefferson scholars' »seriously flawed« understanding of the »nature of racism« with regard to his affair with Sally Hemings. In distinguishing two types of racists, one that is »not naturally hateful but [...] captured by the customs, thinking, and mores of the society« and another in which the »customs and mores of society combine with the basic meanness of their personality«, however, she cleaves to psychological and almost transhistorical theories of racism. Moreover, by characterizing Jefferson as a »racist of the first sort«, she seems to agree with the argument that the founder only became a racist by chance and opportunity, therewith neglecting his weighty contributions to and complex involvements with American racism. Despite her reputable attempt to correct »mistaken views of racism« in Jeffersonian studies, Gordon-Reed also maintains a shortened concept of the phenomenon, dealing only with »white people who are racist« and dealing exclusively with the category of color that »became an expression of a person's essence« in the social conditions of slavery.<sup>16</sup> In consequence, her treatment of racism exemplifies how even the most nuanced analyses of Jefferson's thought suffer from two interrelated theoretical reductions of racism: first, its limitation to seemingly biologicistic categories such as skin color, second, and accordingly, its confinement to the black-white dichotomy of the U.S. slave society.

Quite obviously, these two shortcomings in Jefferson studies are commonly rooted in a deficient and outdated definition of racism as necessarily based on the biologicistic discrimination of ›races‹. This connection is reflected in frequent but superficial references to Thomas Jefferson in racism studies. Even earlier than Winthrop Jordan, Thomas Gossett included Jefferson in his study of racial ideas in the United States and its colonial antecedents. With his remarks on African Americans' inferior mental capabilities, Gossett noted, »Jefferson was very near a much more explosive issue than the question of Negro equality«, since to think of them as a »distinct race« was then associated with atheism and blasphemy.<sup>17</sup> Presenting Jefferson as a pioneer of ›racial‹ thought with regard to his assessment of African American's natural facilities has since become commonplace in the historiography of racism. Thus, Pierre van den Berghe has introduced him as »continuously wa-

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<sup>16</sup> Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*, pp. 134 (›flawed‹, ›nature‹), 137 (›hateful‹, ›white‹), 138 (›meanness‹, ›first sort‹), 141 (›mistaken‹); id., *The Hemingses of Monticello*, p. 42 (›essence‹).

<sup>17</sup> Thomas F. Gossett, *Race*, p. 44 (›explosive‹, ›atheism‹).

ver[ing] between racist and social ›explanations‹ of group differences«, although he claimed that racism only »came of age in the third or fourth decade of the nineteenth century«, so that Jefferson did not live to see it.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, the early George Fredrickson used his example to prove the existence of »racial prejudice« in the eighteenth century, even though »racism [...] would remain in an embryonic stage until almost the middle of the nineteenth century«.<sup>19</sup> Stephen Gould also presented Jefferson as one of late eighteenth-century's semi-racist »soft-liners [which] held various attitudes about the nature of black disadvantage« and »disagreed about the biological or cultural roots of black inferiority«.<sup>20</sup> For Michael Banton, Jefferson remains a representative of Enlightenment natural history, including a »scientific belief that [...] allowed for the possibility that Negroes might be unable ever to equal whites«, but distinct from later »racial typology« that was linked to the »main increase of racial consciousness [...] in the latter part of the nineteenth century«.<sup>21</sup>

Still, most contemporary scholars of racism only take note of Jefferson's most obvious racist quotes from the *Notes on the State of Virginia* and contrast these with his alleged plea for Native American equality and the eloquent critique of slavery given in the same volume. In Richard Perry's overview, for example, the Virginian appears as »one of the most complicated and perplexing figures among the founders«, who had to »tinker with the idea of ›equality‹«, so that it »essentially meant ›equality among white males‹. That this meaning would also exclude Native Americans, however, is not discussed in this context. Rather, it is claimed that Jefferson could ground his assessment of Indian »vitality and strength« on »far more personal contacts with Native Americans than most other writers engaged in this debate«.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Pierre L. van den Berghe, *Race and Racism. A Comparative Perspective*, New York etc.: John Wiley & Sons 1967, pp. 15 f.

<sup>19</sup> Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, pp. 31 f.

<sup>21</sup> Michael Banton, *Racial Theories*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 1987, pp. 14 (›scientific‹), ix (›typology‹), 12 (›increase‹).

<sup>22</sup> Richard J. Perry, ›Race‹ and Racism, pp. 133 (›complicated‹), 134 (›tinker‹, ›essentially‹), 132 (›vitality‹, ›personal‹). The same simplistic contrast is also put forth by David Brown and Clive Webb, who assume that »Jefferson was one of the first prominent figures to declare openly that blacks were racially inferior to whites«, whereas his »positive view of the Indian capacity to assimilate« stood in »marked contrast« to his racist assessment of African Americans. With his speculations about ›racial differences, Jefferson »provided a telling indication of the direction in which southern thinking on black-white relation was heading« beyond Enlightenment environmentalism, therewith anticipating scientific racism and representing the »proto-racist« attitudes of his polygenistic contemporaries. Brown and Webb, thus, perceive Jefferson as racist only insofar his statements and actions correspond to their definition of racism as the »organised system of oppression of one so-called inferior racial group to the benefit of a superior group built into the institutional structure of society«. Manifested in chattel slavery and outspoken prejudices about natural difference, Jefferson's racism to-

If his first-hand-experiences could count as a criterion for the credibility of Jefferson's observations, however, it has to be asked why his extensive contacts with African American slaves at Monticello are not invoked accordingly.

Equally restricted to the black-white dichotomy, Kwame Anthony Appiah in his investigation of Jefferson's racism seems to challenge the merely scientific character of the founder's remarks about African American inferiority. Thus, he claims with regard to Jefferson's political vision for the American republic that the Virginian's concept of ›race‹ was »invoked to explain cultural and social phenomena, in this case, the alleged political impossibility of a citizenship shared between white and black races«. In the following, however, Appiah examines the well-known passages about physical deficiencies of blacks with the »attendant aesthetic consequences« to conclude that »for Jefferson the political significance of race begins and ends with color«. Consequently, Appiah concludes, Jefferson's idea of ›race‹ was not only directed at the social and political order of the United States, but was »also grounded in the physical and the psychological natures of the different races; it is [...] a biological concept«. Although Appiah takes into account the political significance of Jefferson's racism, who allegedly answered the »socio-political question« of citizenship with »theories about skin color«, he fails to discuss whether his biologicistic degradation of blacks was triggered by the need of their political exclusion, or vice versa.<sup>23</sup> Besides this omission, Appiah also avoids to ask how Jefferson's rejection of Native American ›savagism‹ fitted into his idea of ›racial‹ citizenship.

The limitations of these latter accounts of Jefferson's racism to its black-white (and biologicistic) dimensions are particularly surprising in light of older attempts to come to terms with his complex relation towards Native Americans and African Americans. As early as the late 1970s, Ronald Takaki, within his larger project on American ›racial‹ thought in the nineteenth century, provided an examination of how the process of nation building »compelled Jefferson and his fellow Americans to resolve the question of race in relation to the Indian as well as the black«. Identi-

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wards African Americans clearly fits their definition. However, policies of expulsion, land seizure and forced assimilation against Native Americans are not integrated in this concept of ›racial‹ oppression, even though Jefferson himself addresses both Indians and ›blacks‹ as ›racial groups«. Cf. *ids.*, *Race in the American South*, pp. 76 (›prominent‹, ›indication‹), 93 (›positive‹, ›contrast‹), 74 (›proto-racist‹), 7 (›oppression‹).

<sup>23</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Race, Culture, Identity. Misunderstood Connections*, in: Kwame Anthony Appiah, Amy Gutmann, *Color Conscious. The Political Morality of Race*, Princeton etc.: Princeton University Press 1996, pp. 30-105, here pp. 43 (›invoked‹), 44 (›aesthetic‹), 46 (›significance‹), 49 (›biological‹), 48 (›socio-political‹, ›theories‹).

ifying Jefferson's republicanism, which »required a homogenous population«, as the root cause of his excluding social concepts, Takaki explained the founder's allegedly paradoxical views on slavery with his demand of black colonization that in regard of »racial differences [...] was a way to preserve white beauty and ›loveliness««. Since Jefferson blamed nature for the supposed differences of African Americans, the moral evil of slavery was better maintained than to release them at the risk of America's »people to be ›stained‹ and become a nation of mulattoes«. <sup>24</sup>

Takaki, however, has not contented himself with the discussion of the infamous biologicistic remarks on blacks, but hinted at the fact that »studies of Jefferson [...] often completely overlook the Indian, almost as if he did not exist in America or in Jefferson's life and mind« (a fact that did not significantly change in the past three decades). To contrast this blind spot, Takaki demonstrated that although Jefferson »thought the Indian, unlike the black, could be educated and allowed to live among whites«, he left no doubt that »Indians as Indians could not be tolerated in the republican civilization the American Revolution had created«. Despite their potential for intelligence, the Native Americans were »identified with nature, the West, and the past« and a savage way of life, so that they either had to be »civilized and assimilated, or [...] removed and possibly exterminated«. Indeed, the possibility of integration and even intermarriage with whites could only be offered because of the »different sociology and material conditions of red/white vis-à-vis black/white relations«. Whereas African Americans were already subordinated parts of the American society, constantly increased in numbers and with their »close physical and cultural contacts with whites« a permanent danger for white integrity, Native Americans »were not viewed as a threat to white racial purity« and with their declining populations symbolized the »vanishing American«. <sup>25</sup>

Native Americans and African Americans thus constituted two separate problems for Jefferson's republicanism. For Takaki's Jefferson, however, »both blacks and Indians [...] were under the domination of the body or instinctual life [... and] both lacked the self-control and rational command Jefferson believed were essential qualities republicans and civilized men must have«. The existing »differences in racial attitudes« resulted from the fact that »Jefferson and American economy had

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<sup>24</sup> Ronald Takaki, *Iron Cages*, pp. 55 (›compelled‹), 39 (›required‹), 47 (differences‹), 50 (›mulattoes‹).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 55 (›studies‹, ›exterminated‹), 58 (›unlike‹), 63 (›tolerated‹), 57 (›past‹), 59 (›sociology‹, ›physical‹, ›purity‹, ›vanishing‹).

located them in different places«. The black slave could not be freed within white society, since the economy was built upon his bondage and had irreversibly shaped the black-white opposition. The Native American, on the contrary, had to be removed from the vacant lands he peopled and »for whites to obtain western lands the Indians must be led to agriculture, manufactures, and thus to civilization«. <sup>26</sup> Offering a differentiated treatment of Jefferson's attitudes towards Native Americans and African Americans, Takaki does not ask what his findings say about the concept of ›race‹ or the characteristics of racism. In actual fact, he does not apply the latter term in context of his Jefferson readings. However, Takaki illustrates that the notion of ›race‹ as philosophically elaborated and politically utilized by Thomas Jefferson was not as simplistically biologicistic as many other scholars suggest.

Building on the material presented above, the following chapters will in some ways expand Takaki's analysis. Rather than backdating ›racial‹ categories of the nineteenth centuries, the examination will give more weight to the structural conditions that only enabled the emergence of scientific notions of ›race‹ in the first place. Contrary to wide-spread assessments, slavery in colonial Virginia did not fundamentally rely on what would count as a ›racial‹ idea of the innate natural inferiority of Africans. In a complex process that was fueled by the American Revolution, religious and culturalistic conceptions of difference were linked to skin color prejudices and resulted in rigid classifications of humankind, which were socially and legally stabilized through the color line. Whereas Thomas Jefferson's ancestors and their wealthy contemporaries could built on a labor force that consisted of European, Native American and African American workers, albeit in different contractual relationships to the planters, Jefferson in his *Notes* explicitly rationalized ›black‹ slavery, despite the phenotypical whitening of slaves not only at Monticello. ›Race‹, thus, emerged in the American discourse on slavery only during Jefferson's lifetime and complemented more traditional justifications for the racist dehumanization of enslaved others. Jefferson's involvement with the everyday practices of slavery and with its social and political implications will be the subject of the next chapter.

As Takaki rightly states, early American economy and its masterminds allotted different roles to Native Americans and African Americans. This allowed Jefferson to forcefully condemn the erstwhile enslavement of aborigines, in which his forefa-

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp. 64 (›both‹, ›differences‹, ›economy‹), 61 (›obtain‹).

thers participated, and to emphasize their potential natural equality with Europeans. In their alleged cultural backwardness representing the ›infant days‹ of humankind, Native Americans were still not part of the homogenous American people Jefferson envisioned, unless they merged in the ›white settler society without a trace of their origin. Moreover, Jefferson's expansionist vision of the ›Empire of Liberty‹ relied on the acquisition and colonization of the indigenous peoples' lands, which could be taken by contract or conquest, in case they resisted the inevitable march of civilization. Constructing Native Americans as the cultural antipodes and at the same time mythical ancestors of the new American citizen constituted a racist precondition for the imperial policies of American nation-building. Together with colonization schemes for African Americans and the universal claim for ›white‹ supremacy, this process will be scrutinized in a second analytical chapter.

Finally, the racist logics revealed in Jefferson's respective positions on slavery and empire will be linked to the contemporary scientific discourses on human varieties and ›race‹. Looking more closely at Jefferson's ›suspicion‹ of ›black‹ inferiority, it will be examined how these biologicistic speculations were related to more traditional patterns of discrimination and why they gradually replaced religious and cultural justifications for slavery not only in Jeffersonian writings of the time. Furthermore, Jefferson's conception of savage ›Indians‹ will be analyzed against the backdrop of early anthropological models of civilization and progress, which served as second corner stone in the constitution of ›racial‹ categories in Enlightenment thought. This final examination is primarily concerned with the complex discursive construction of ›racial‹ difference along cultural and biologicistic parameters, as a process closely interrelated with the racist social relations identified in the previous chapters.

In light of the outlined divergence between contemporary racism studies and Jefferson studies, a comprehensive study of Jefferson's racism is long overdue. Moreover, it is important also because public discourses on ›race‹ and racism constantly refer to the founder's example and reinterpret his respective stance. Rethinking the nexus of Jefferson, ›race‹ and racism is thus not only a contribution to the history of ideas and the historical sociology of racism. Significantly, it also addresses the fundamental ambivalences at the heart of liberal societies.

#### 4. ›Race, Class, and Legal Status‹

##### Jefferson and Slavery

The relation between racism, often understood as ›race prejudice‹, and slavery is much discussed in the historiographical, political and sociological literature, with one analytic focal point precisely in Virginia of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>27</sup> In fact, the question whether racism preceded slavery or vice versa has been the chicken-and-egg dilemma of transatlantic history since, in 1944, Eric Williams forcefully claimed that »slavery was not born of racism: rather racism was the consequence of slavery«. Applying the notion of ›race‹ to the sixteenth century, Williams assessed that »unfree labor in the New World was brown, white, black, and yellow« and that the »first instance of slave trading and slave labor [...] involved, racially, not the Negro but the Indian«. Only after indigenous slaves proved unfit for large-scale enslavement, and supplies with English servants and convicts receded in late seventeenth century, the colonists »turned to Africa« and gradually established the institution of chattel slavery in the emerging plantation societies of North America. Linking the rise of »Negro slavery [...] not with the color of the laborer, but the cheapness of labor«, Williams influentially challenged the prevalent interpretation of continuous and ›racially‹ justified African enslavement since the early settlements.<sup>28</sup>

In the course of historiography, Williams' materialistic approach was backed by further studies, one of which suggested that initially the »status of Negroes was that of servants; and so they were identified and treated down to the 1660's«. <sup>29</sup> These economic interpretations were significantly expanded by Edmund Morgan, who emphasized the social effects of racism in unifying an imagined ›white‹ society against the ›racial‹ outsiders both on the borders of the empire and within chattel slavery.<sup>30</sup> In his seminal commitment to the socioeconomic camp in the ›origins debate‹, Theodore Allen theoretically elaborated on this idea of a slavery-related ›invention of the white race‹ and perceived the emerging ›racial‹ hierarchy as a »rul-

<sup>27</sup> An overview that informed the following paragraph is Vaughan, *The Origins Debate*. Cf. also, Addison, ›We Hold These Truths to be Self-evident‹, pp. 158-226; Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, pp. 48-76.

<sup>28</sup> Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, pp. 7 (›racism‹, ›racially‹), 16 (›Africa‹), 19 (›Negro slavery‹).

<sup>29</sup> Oscar Handlin, Mary F. Handlin, *Origins of the Southern Labor System*, in: *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 7, 1950, 2, pp. 199-222, here p. 202.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, esp. pp. 316-337.

ing class social control formation« that mirrored the British oppression (on religious and ›racial« grounds) of the Irish.<sup>31</sup> Eventually, Steve Martinot has added perspectives of contemporary racism analysis to the study of ›race« and slavery in Virginia, holding that ›rather than preserve a class hierarchy, racialization was a means of defining it«, thereby establishing a system of white supremacy that was facilitated by institutionalized slavery and later biologized by ›racial« science.<sup>32</sup>

Early on, this strain of argument that more or less explains American racism as a consequence of slavery and the wider relations of production was contrasted with positions that Allen summarized as the ›psycho-cultural argument«. <sup>33</sup> Other than nineteenth century historians, who also believed that the ›negro race, from the first, was regarded with disgust« when the ›Æthiopian and Caucasian races« encountered each other in the New World, these later scholars did not overtly approve stereotypical images of the ›physical constitution« of Africans or the civilizing effects of slavery.<sup>34</sup> However, Winthrop Jordan and Carl Degler, as the main early proponents of the anti-Williams stance, were similarly convinced that the British perception of ›difference [...] was the indispensable key to the degradation« of African slaves and contemplated the possibility that the ›Negro was actually never treated as an equal of the white man, servant or free«. <sup>35</sup> In the following, countless studies have tried to trace back the ›racial« discrimination of Africans to various times and places.

Beyond the prevailing controversies, it is commonly accepted that slavery became more and more associated with dark skin color from the late seventeenth century onwards, and that differences in complexion were increasingly couched in a language of ›race« in the second half of the eighteenth century. When the term ›negro« was used synonymously with ›slave«, regardless of the labeled person being of African or, for example, Native American background, this manifested a first step

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<sup>31</sup> Theodore W. Allen, Summary of the Argument of ›The Invention of the White Race«, in: *Cultural Logic*, 1, 1998, 2, <http://clogic.eserver.org/1-2/allen.html>.

<sup>32</sup> Steve Martinot, *The Rule of Racialization. Class, Identity, Governance*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press 2003, p. 69.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race, Vol. I: Racial Oppression and Social Control*, 2nd ed., London etc.: Verso 2012 [1994], pp. 4-14.

<sup>34</sup> George Bancroft, *History of the United States, from the Discovery of the American Continent to the Present Time*, Vol. 1, Boston etc.: Charles Bowen et al. 1834-74, p. 177 (›negro race«, ›Æthiopian«); id., Vol. 3, p. 407 (›physical constitution«).

<sup>35</sup> Jordan, *White Over Black*, p. 91 (›difference«); Carl N. Degler, *Slavery and the Genesis of American Race Prejudice*, in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 2, 1959, 1, pp. 49-66, here p. 51 (›treated«).

in the symbolic ›blackening‹ of the institution. Paradoxically, in the United States this ›blackening‹ proceeded at the same time as the slave population became visibly lighter, bearing witness to the ubiquity of ›interracial‹ sex and the decreasing importance of slave imports. As outlined in the introduction, however, the idea of naturally distinct and differently ›colored‹ ›races‹ is no necessary precondition of racism. Rather, racism is constituted by the more general construction, stigmatization and exclusion of groups that conversely serves to symbolically include other marginalized individuals into a supposedly heterogeneous in-group. This construction of difference often builds on the essentialist dehumanization of the racistly excluded, which can be based on a variety of grounds in different social contexts. Corresponding social practices have been a feature of slavery from antiquity to its most recent forms and coalesced with explicit ›racial‹ theories only in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

With regard to the origins debate, Barbara Fields has criticized the simplistic and ahistorical representation of »slavery in the United States as primarily a system of race relations«, while »no one dreams of analysing the struggle of the English against the Irish as a problem in race relations«. The ideology of ›race‹, she explains, only emerged in the conflict of natural rights and slavery, when »those holding liberty to be inalienable and holding Afro-Americans as slaves were bound to end by holding race to be a self-evident truth«. While Fields certainly has a point in stressing the historical peculiarity of ›racial‹ thought and rightly claims that earlier modes of discrimination such as the »rationale that the English developed for suppressing the ›barbarous‹ Irish later served nearly word for word as a rationale for suppressing Africans and indigenous American Indians«, she is wrong about the latter's neglect in racism studies.<sup>36</sup> In fact, Theodore Allen quite precisely treated the ›struggle of the English against the Irish as a problem in race relations‹ and arrived at some important insights not primarily into the concept of ›race‹, but into the nature of racism.

Defining the »hallmark of racial oppression« as the reduction of »all members of the oppressed group to one undifferentiated social status, a status beneath that of any member of any social class within the colonizing population«, Allen demonstrates that the British conquest and domination of Ireland functioned as a system

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<sup>36</sup> Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America*, in: *New Left Review*, 181, 1990, pp. 95-118, here pp. 99 (›primarily‹, ›dreams‹, ›rationale‹), 101 (liberty).

of »racial oppression« and was the role model for later colonial racisms. Parallel in their cultural and legal manifestations, Allen interprets the »racial oppression« of Irish, Africans and Native Americans as results from the respective colonizers' »efforts to establish social control«. Where the ruling classes did not encounter a »developed and well-defined hierarchical system of classes« as an »available social handle to serve their rule«, they relied on the absolute, »racial« degradation of the colonized subjects and only gradually established other forms of social order. In the course of his argument, Allen widely applies the terms »race« and »racial«, for example in context of »xenophobia« and »religio-racism« against the Irish, and therewith obscures the significance of the »racial« racism emerging in the eighteenth century. Theoretically, however, Allen deserves credit for treating »»race« as a sociogenic rather than a phylogenic category« and for expanding the study of racism to various contexts of dehumanizing subordination.<sup>37</sup> Against this backdrop, the nexus of Jeffersonian thought, slavery and racism has to be studied with regard to the diverse racist logics of dehumanization, which resulted in the collective and individual stigmatization of slaves as members of an allegedly inferior »race«.

David Livingstone Smith, in this context, opens his book with a quote penned by Thomas Jefferson, »with thirty-five words [that] are often quoted reverently«: »We hold these truths to be self-evident [...]«. Smith, however, does not want to join in with the applause for the »principle that all men (that is, all human beings) have certain basic rights just because they are human«, but aims at the »vexing question« contained in Jefferson's claim: »the question of who, exactly, should be counted as human«. <sup>38</sup> For Jefferson and his contemporaries, he argues, this question was of crucial importance, as it demanded the dehumanization of »blacks« to deny their natural and civil rights, and to maintain their subordinate status within the American slave society.<sup>39</sup> As noted elsewhere, it was the »racist culture [that] dehumanized Africans, turning them into property that could be bought and sold at will«. <sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*, Vol. I, pp. 32 (»hallmark«, »all« »oppression«), 69 (»efforts«, »developed«, »available«), 48 (»xenophobia«, »religio-racism«), 28 (»sociogenic«).

<sup>38</sup> David Livingstone Smith, *Less than Human. Why We Demean, Enslave, and Exterminate Others*, New York: St. Martin's Press 2011, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> Likewise, Smith holds that »European colonists dehumanized Native Americans«, but the racist practices involved in the colonization of the New World will be discussed elsewhere in this study, *ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> William M. Dugger, *Four Modes of Inequality*, in: *id.* (ed.), *Inequality. Radical Institutional Views on Race, Gender, Class, and Nation*, Westport etc.: Greenwood Press 1996, pp. 20-38, here p. 26.

Dehumanization and related concepts are often applied to the study of slavery and its various practices of subordination. In ancient as in colonial slave societies, scholars find the institution characterized by the »dehumanizing device of addressing male slaves of any age as ›boy‹, the use of branding and head-shaving as modes of humiliation, the comic inventiveness in naming slaves« and other strategies of manifesting the social hierarchy through physical marking.<sup>41</sup> In fact, Audrey Smedley holds that the »essential quality of slavery everywhere has been that an individual is defined legally as a thing« and is denied personhood through the »social and human relationships« engendered by the institution.<sup>42</sup> Whereas the distinctions between masters and slaves were created through social practices such as naming and stigmatizing, a »different phenotype of physical appearance made the dehumanization of enslavement much easier«, even »long before the eighteenth-century invention of ›race‹ as a way of classifying humankind«.<sup>43</sup>

Despite these continuities in the dehumanizing social practices of enslavement and the assessed linkage between dehumanization and racism, scholars still widely disagree about the relationship between slavery and racism. Illustrating the dilemmas of a ›race‹-centered understanding of racism, some studies argue that »racism is older than trans-Atlantic expansion« since »slavery based on skin color is ancient«, while others hold that »unlike in ancient slavery, which was not based on race, modern racist theories undergirded the trans-Atlantic slave trade«.<sup>44</sup> Although opposed in their assumptions, both positions depart from the common premise that racism has to be associated with a phenotypical concept of ›race‹, which in fact obscures the structural conditions, philosophical justifications and social consequences of ancient and modern slavery.

Many studies have shown that »Greeks were aware of differences in skin color« and that »color was obviously uppermost in the minds of the Greeks and Ro-

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<sup>41</sup> Philip D. Morgan, *Origins of American Slavery*, in: *OAH Magazine of History*, 19, 2005, 4, pp. 51-56, here p. 51.

<sup>42</sup> Audrey Smedley, *Race in North America. Origin and Evolution of a Worldview*, Boulder etc.: Westview Press 1993, pp. 118 f.

<sup>43</sup> Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, p. 53.

<sup>44</sup> Victor Villanueva, *Toward a Political Economy of Rhetoric*, in: Laura Gray-Rosendale, Steven Rosendale (eds.), *Radical Relevance. Toward a Scholarship of the Whole Left*, Albany: State University of New York 2005, pp. 57-65, here p. 60 (›racism‹, ›skin color‹); Bernadette J. Brooten, *Introduction*, in: id. (ed.), *Beyond Slavery. Overcoming Its Religious and Sexual Legacies*, New York etc.: Palgrave Macmillan 2010, pp. 1-29, here p. 6 (›theories‹).

mans«. <sup>45</sup> That said, scholars overwhelmingly conclude that »these differences did not have the same connotation they have in modern society, so that in the reading of Moses Finley »skin color added a further dimension, but racism does not require that stigma«. <sup>46</sup> Even though there was »no clear association of darkness of skin color in antiquity with enslavement«, ancient concepts of ›natural slaves‹ are frequently discussed within the framework of racism theory. <sup>47</sup> Especially Aristotle's idea about »nature's intention [...] to erect a physical difference between the body of the free man and that of the slave« is a much-cited evidence for ancient racism. This concept, however, does not support the thesis that racism has to be established on perceivable physical differences, but in fact suggests the impossibility of this connection. As the »contrary of nature's intention [...] often happens«, resulting in »slaves who have the bodies of free men«, it is for man to identify the »inferior class [that] ought to be the slaves of the superior«, although »it is not as easy to see the beauty of the soul as it is to see that of the body«. <sup>48</sup> Although ancient philosophy theoretically assumed a »link between natural slaves and bodily traits«, Aristotle's justification for slavery had to rely on the slaves' subordinate souls and virtue. <sup>49</sup> Not less essentialist than later ideas of ›race‹, Aristotle's concept of natural slavery, as his related elaborations on barbarians, represents a prime example of racism without ›races‹ and not coincidentally happened to justify modern conquest and slavery long before these were rationalized with hierarchizations of ›races‹. <sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Carter A. Wilson, *Racism. From Slavery to Advanced Capitalism*, Thousand Oaks: Sage 1996, p. 38 (›aware‹); Frank M. Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity. Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience*, Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 1970, p. 2 (›uppermost‹).

<sup>46</sup> Wilson, *Racism*, p. 38 (›differences‹); Moses I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, New York: Viking Press 1980, p. 307 (›dimension‹).

<sup>47</sup> Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, *Race and Racism. An Introduction*, Lanham etc.: AltaMira Press 2006, p. 92.

<sup>48</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, Vol. I, in: *Aristotle's Politics and Economics*, ed. and transl. by Edward Walford, London: Henry G. Bohn 1853, p. 13. See also Ingomar Weiler, *Inverted Kalokagathia*, in: Thomas Wiedemann, Jane Gardner (eds.), *Representing the Body of the Slave*, London etc.: Frank Cass 2002, pp. 11-28, pp. 16 f. For critical discussions of this passage, see Jasper Neel, *Aristotle's Voice. Rhetoric, Theory and Writing in America*, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press 1994, pp. 16-26; Adriel M. Trott, *Aristotle on the Nature of Community*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 2014, pp. 178-187. Notably, Benjamin Isaac omits Aristotle's crucial remark about nature's failure to create distinct bodies, but simply assesses »nature's intention« as a »proto-racist« theory, id., *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, p. 505. A similar omission can be found in Colette Guillaumin, *Racism, Sexism, Power and Ideology*, London etc.: Routledge 1995, p. 212. Cf. Wulf D. Hund, *Negative Vergesellschaftung. Dimensionen der Rassismusanalyse*, Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot 2006, pp. 19 f.

<sup>49</sup> Julie K. Ward, *Ethnos in the Politics. Aristotle and Race*, in: Julie K. Ward, Tommy L. Lott (eds.), *Philosophers on Race. Critical Essay*, Oxford etc.: Blackwell 2002, pp. 14-37, here p. 25.

<sup>50</sup> On Aristotle's racism, see also Hund, *Negative Vergesellschaftung*, pp. 19-22. For the Renaissance of Aristotelian concepts in the age of discovery, see for example Timothy J. Reiss, *Descartes's Si-*

The essentialized dichotomy between slavish barbarians and cultivated Hellenes is an early and persistent example for racist societalization, but in the course of history more of these binary divisions of humankind emerged in various contexts and established racist logics that to some extent found their way into Enlightenment ›racial‹ classifications.<sup>51</sup> During the Middle Ages, Christian Europeans developed essentialist ideas of religious identity, conceiving of themselves as ›chosen‹ and constructing Jews and Muslims as condemned and devilish incarnations of evil. Religious (or ›demonological‹) racism produced not only cross-class alliances against the supposed foes, but also racist practices like spatial segregation and sartorial markers, which characterized racist exclusion for centuries to come. As soon as the European slave trade turned to Africa, religious systems of differentiation increasingly also included Africans, who, as descendants of Noah's son Ham, were allegedly fated to eternal serfdom for the sins of their ancestor and bore their dark complexion as a punishment.<sup>52</sup> Thomas Jefferson was well aware of this dimension of religious racism, not only because it remained an important argument in American proslavery thought, but also because he read about it in a missionaries' manual he inherited from his father.

Before different skin colors became essentialist markers of difference, however, the age of conquest witnessed discourses about savagism and purity, which later inspired two important strains in American (and Jeffersonian) ›racial‹ thought. In their famous dispute about the enslavement of Native Americans, Bartholomé de Las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda followed Aristotelian notions of barbarism and cultivation and transferred the idea of ›natural slaves‹ to America. At the same time, the encounter with indigenous Americans inspired thinkers like Montaigne to reassess the concept of barbarism, as »every one gives the title of barbarism to every thing that is not in use in his own country«. Whereas barbarians were perceived as naturally and irrevocably uncultured, Montaigne and Las Casas believed Native Americans to be ›improvable‹ through the blessings of baptism and the »form and fashion of art and human invention«. <sup>53</sup> In consequence, as the violent example of

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lence on Slavery and Race, in: Andrew Valls (ed.), *Race and Racism in Modern Philosophy*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press 2005, pp. 16-42, here pp. 22-30.

<sup>51</sup> The following systematic draws on a framework of racist constructions proposed in Wulf D. Hund, *Rassismus*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2007, pp. 34-81.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, pp. 63 f.

<sup>53</sup> Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Works*, ed. by William Hazlitt, London: John Templeman 1842, p. 89. For the debate between Las Casas and Sepúlveda in context of the emerging stereotype

North American expulsion exemplifies, the difference between civilized and savages proved to be almost as absolute as the contrast between cultivated and barbarians.

Whereas the so-called savages were not to be enslaved, impurity as another marker of difference was early on involved in American constructions of African slaves as less-than-human. Emerging during the Spanish Reconquista, the racist logic of contamination initially enabled not only the discrimination and banishment of religious groups as Jews and Muslims, but also the persecution of converted Christians on the basis of their allegedly impure blood. Reminiscent of later ›racialized‹ notions of blood and lineage, and therefore frequently recognized as racism even in the narrow ›racial‹ sense, the Spanish idea of pure blood stemmed from metaphysical and theological concepts of moral depravity and the original sin.<sup>54</sup> In the colonial context, notions of purity were gradually linked to skin color and ›racial‹ mixture, which then informed Anglo-American discourses on slavery and blackness.<sup>55</sup> In North America, Steve Martinot argues, the colonists »conceptualized a purity condition for themselves«, which »was already in place culturally« before miscegenation laws were formally established and facilitated the ›racialization‹ of slavery.<sup>56</sup>

Without theoretical reflections about his assessment, George Fredrickson at one point calls it a »cultural racism« that initially emerged in the American colonies.<sup>57</sup> In fact, African slaves as well as aborigines were initially discriminated on the basis of traditional cultural parameters such as ancient distinctions between cultivated and barbarian, religious differentiations between believers and heathens, and metaphysical notions of purity. Although the European colonizers imported negative associations with dark complexions, »it took a considerable time for antiblack rac-

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of the ›savage‹ Native American, see Robert A. Williams. *Savage Anxieties. The Invention of Western Civilization*, New York etc.: Palgrave Macmillan 2012, pp. 186 f.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Hering Torres, *Rassismus in der Vormoderne*, pp. 260 f. For references to the Spanish doctrine of the purity of blood in racism studies, see, for example, Smedley, *Race in North America*, pp. 65-70; Fredrickson, *Racism*, pp. 32-35.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions. Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico*, Stanford: Stanford University Press 2008. On the contrary, Matthew Restall argues that the »old Iberian notion of *limpieza de sangre* was not extended to explain black-coloring as being blood-related; the idea did circulate in late colonial times, but it was never the dominant explanation«, id., *The Black Middle. Africans, Mayas, and Spaniards in Colonial Yucatan*, Stanford: Stanford University Press 2009, p. 92.

<sup>56</sup> Martinot, *The Rule of Racialization*, p. 32.

<sup>57</sup> Fredrickson, *The Arrogance of Race*, p. 5.

ism to crystallize into a fully elaborated ideology«. <sup>58</sup> Only by the mid-nineteenth century, slavery in the American South was backed by scientific and social theories based firmly on concepts of ›race‹. While scientists like Samuel Morton and Josiah Nott provided proslavery politicians with biologist arguments for ›black‹ inferiority, religious justifications persisted and pro-slavery thinkers like George Fitzhugh culturally rationalized slavery as warranting social stability, since »whites would find themselves elevated by the existence of negroes amongst us«. <sup>59</sup> As the previous chapters have shown, precursors of these ideas were prevalent also in Jefferson's thought, but still not consolidated in rigid ›racial‹ theories. <sup>60</sup>

Given its historical background, »it is arguable whether the components of race ideology could have been created without slavery«. <sup>61</sup> However, as we have seen, this does not mean that slavery was not earlier associated with non-›racial‹ racism and its dehumanizing patterns of subordination. In his seminal work on slavery, Orlando Patterson declares that the »absence of an articulated doctrine of racial superiority does not necessarily imply behavioral tolerance in the relations between peoples of somatically different groups«. <sup>62</sup> In fact, Patterson's theory of social death allows for the examination of racism in slavery far beyond notions of real or ascribed identities as in ›somatically different groups‹. Read together with the extensions by Theodore Allen and others, the concept of social death provides for another conceptual framework to identify the racist and dehumanizing dimensions of slavery and how these were experienced, reflected and justified by Thomas Jefferson.

Building on the spadework of Claude Meillassoux, who first understood slavery to be reproduced through the de-socialization, de-civilization and de-

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<sup>58</sup> Fredrickson, *Racism*, p. 30.

<sup>59</sup> George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South, Or the Failure of Free Society*, Richmond: Morris 1854, p. 147. See also Hund, *Racism in White Sociology*, p. 40. For Morton, Nott and antebellum racism, see, among others, Larry Arnhart, *Darwinian Natural Right. The Biological Ethics of Human Nature*, Albany: State University of New York Press 1998, pp. 202 f.

<sup>60</sup> For a broad overview of scientific discourses on slavery, linking Jefferson with later ›race‹ sciences, see Mason I. Lowance, Jr., *A House Divided. The Antebellum Slavery Debates in America, 1776-1865*, Princeton etc.: Princeton University Press 2003, pp. 249-326.

<sup>61</sup> Smedley, *Race in North America*, p. 113. The debate about slavery and racism in the American (and Virginian) context is discussed in chapter 4.2 of this study.

<sup>62</sup> Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death. A Comparative Study*, Cambridge etc.: Harvard University Press 1982, p. 420.

personalization of the enslaved individuals,<sup>63</sup> Patterson assessed that social death was frequently manifested through representations of the »slave as the captured enemy and internalized outsider« closely linked to ascribed religious or »racial« differences.<sup>64</sup> In the course of his argument, he especially focuses on the »final cultural dilemma posed by the problem of slavery«: how social interaction was possible when slaves were socially dead. Based on »two contradictory principles, marginality and integration«, Patterson argues, slavery institutionalized this interaction in the person of the master, »who in a godlike manner mediated between the socially dead and the socially alive«. In fact, this position of the master was vital for the stability of the institution because the »slave came to obey him not only out of fear, but out of the basic need to exist as a quasi-person«. Therewith established as a »relation of personal domination«, slaves were neither »assimilated to the status of outcasts« nor »feared because it was felt that they were polluting«. In fact, Patterson concludes, »any notion of ritual avoidance and spatial segregation would entail a lessening of the bond«, so that master-slave interaction, even in the most intimate ways, did not interfere with the power structures of slavery, but only confirmed that the »slave's only life was through and for his master«.<sup>65</sup>

While this last claim of Patterson to some degree obscures the variety of possible actions that enslaved individuals and collectives could choose to affect their master's plans in their own interest or to otherwise improve their lot, it rightly hints at the totality of oppression in a firmly established system of slavery. That this oppression is accompanied by various ascriptions of inferiority becomes obvious in Patterson's broad definition of the »racial factor to mean the assumption of innate differences based on real or imagined physical or other characteristics«. Patterson assumes »race« to be an almost transhistorical phenomenon of connecting slavish nature with bodily characteristics, but at the same time has to account for the virtual impossibility of telling slaves from masters on the sole basis of phenotypical features

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<sup>63</sup> Patterson refers to Meillassoux' older work on *L'Esclavage en Afrique précoloniale*, but his concept of social death is most intensively discussed in Claude Meillassoux, *The Anthropology of Slavery. The Womb of Iron and Gold*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1991 [1986], pp. 99-115.

<sup>64</sup> Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, p. 41. Patterson distinguished intrusive and extrusive forms of social death, with the former directed at the »foreigner, enemy and infidel«, who as an »intruder in this social space [...] must remain an alien« and whose enslavement typically resulted from war. The extrusive conception of social death, on the contrary, aimed at a social »insider who had fallen« and characterized penal slavery for example in Russia and imperial China, *ibid.*, pp. 38-45.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 45 (»final«), 46 (»contradictory«, »godlike«, »obey«), 50 (»domination«, »assimilated«, »feared«, »avoidance«, »life«).

even in ›racialized‹ American slave societies.<sup>66</sup> The omnipresent constructions of what Patterson calls ›religious‹, ›racial‹ or ›ethnic‹ differences in all kinds of historical slave societies hints at the interdependencies of racism and social death.

In the adaption of Theodore Allen, this nexus is expanded and social death is perceived as the inevitable consequence not of slavery, but of the ›racial‹ oppression that comes along with conquest. »Although not all are to be made slaves of the colonizing power«, he states, »the object is social death for the subjugated group as a whole, whether individually and in groups they are forcibly torn from their home country to serve abroad among strangers, or they are made strangers in their own native land«. <sup>67</sup> As consequences of war and expansion, slavery and racism (rather than ›racial‹ oppression as Allen has it) impose absolute domination on the defeated and subject even those who remain free to social exclusion and stigmatization.

Consequently, the social death of slavery results from racist constructions of difference which can follow a variety of racist logics. Operating with essentialist ›racial‹ categories, but acknowledging for their diverse ingredients from discourses on civilization, religion and purity, James Oakes noted that initially »Europeans marked their difference from blacks by associating Africans with savagery, heathenism, and sexual promiscuity«. Against this backdrop, the »racist defense of slavery emerged from the interaction of such hostile predispositions with the dehumanizing effects of plantation discipline and slaveholding capitalism«. <sup>68</sup> Racism with regard to slavery can thus be studied as a twofold phenomenon, manifested on the micro level through the everyday practices of mastering the enslaved, and on the macro level in the political and cultural discourses on the institution of slavery and its legitimacy. Thomas Jefferson was heavily involved in both processes, with his actions as a planter-politician and his writings as a slaveholding liberalist less contradictory than frequently assessed, but illustrating the complexity of Enlightenment racism.

#### 4.1 Racism and the Slave Plantation

Although racism is frequently mentioned as one of Jefferson's motives to withhold his public support from the cause of abolitionism, his private involvement with the inherent racism of slavery has rarely been subjected to systematic analysis. On the

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 176. For his elaborations on the ›racial factor‹ of slavery, see pp. 176-179; for the problems of ›racial‹ identification, p. 61.

<sup>67</sup> Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*, Vol. I, p. 35.

<sup>68</sup> Oakes, *The Ruling Race*, p. 30.

contrary, his treatment of slaves, his self-conception as a master, his relationship with Sally Hemings and occasionally even his few manumissions are referred to as counterpoints to the blatant prejudices presented in the *Notes on the State of Virginia*. With regard to slavery, studies on Thomas Jefferson traditionally invoked that he was a »would-be emancipatorist trapped by an unjust inherited system which he sought to ameliorate by acting as a benevolent master«. <sup>69</sup> Respective narratives are still reproduced in popular and academic writings on the founder, constantly building on his reputation as an »exemplary master« and a »compassionate slaveholder who was not abusive but treated his slaves well«. <sup>70</sup>

This image goes back to Jefferson himself, who hoped to place his slaves »on the comfortable footing of the laborers of other countries« and perceived as his main obligation to »watch for the happiness of those who labor for mine«. <sup>71</sup> Respective narratives were upheld by friends, descendants and early biographers who reported that »his negroes are nourished, clothed, and treated as well as white servants could be«, supposed privileges they repaid with love and admiration, illustrated by Jefferson's return from France when Monticello's slaves were »crowding around [him] and kissing his hands and feet«. <sup>72</sup> This paternal – even godlike – position of Jefferson towards his slaves is further manifested in the testimonies of the enslaved persons' descendants, who in »their principal stories focus [...] on the symbiotic relationship between their ancestors and the master of Monticello«. <sup>73</sup> To some degree,

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<sup>69</sup> Cogliano, Thomas Jefferson, p. 213.

<sup>70</sup> Miller, *The Wolf by the Ears*, p. 104 (»exemplary«), James O. Horton, Lois E. Horton, *Slavery and Public History. The Tough Stuff of American Memory*, New York etc.: New Press 2006, p. 145 (»compassionate«). The latter phrase does not represent the Hortons' assessment of Jefferson as a slaveholder, but rather is a line of argument they analyze and criticize.

<sup>71</sup> TJ to Samuel Biddle, Dec. 12, 1792 (»footings«); TJ to Angelica Schuyler Church, Nov. 27, 1793 (»happiness«). Especially with regard to the latter quote combined with Jefferson's record in selling and buying slaves, Cassandra Pybus describes the »moral agility that allowed Jefferson to treat people as so much excess merchandise, while simultaneously constructing a self-image as the humane and benevolent patriarch« as »truly awesome«, id., *Jefferson and Slavery*, in: Francis D. Cogliano (ed.), *A Companion to Thomas Jefferson*, Malden etc.: Wiley-Blackwell 2012, pp. 271-283, here p. 272.

<sup>72</sup> Duke de la Rochefoucauld Liancourt, *Travels Through the United States of North America, the Country of the Iroquois, and Upper Canada, in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797*, Vol. 3, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London: T. Gillet 1800, p. 157 (»nourished«); Randolph, *The Domestic Life of Thomas Jefferson*, p. 152 (»crowding«). The latter quote is from Martha Jefferson's recollection of Jefferson's arrival in Monticello and continues: »It seemed impossible to satisfy their anxiety to touch and kiss the very earth which bore him. These were the first ebullitions of joy for his return, after a long absence, which they would of course feel; but perhaps it is not out of place here to add that they were at all times very devoted in their attachment to him«, *ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Stanton, »Those Who Labor For My Happiness«, p. 59. On Jefferson's godlike status, see John Miller's claim: »Had Jefferson been a god he could hardly have received more adulation«, id., *The Wolf by the Ears*, p. 106.

this ›positive‹ image proved especially persistent in the public reception of the Jefferson-Hemings controversy. In 1954, *Ebony* reported about the »proud Negro descendants of America's third President [that] have made the long and improbable journey from the white marbled splendor of Monticello to the ›Negro ghetto‹«, and still, after the DNA evidence for Jefferson paternity of Sally Hemings' children, many members of the ›black‹ branch of Jefferson's family willingly join the commemoration of their famous ancestor.<sup>74</sup>

At a closer look, however, Jefferson's everyday treatment of slaves, his self-image as a master and not least his decades long relationship with Sally Hemings reveal that there was no clear-cut distinction in his thought between private sympathy for the enslaved members of his ›family‹ and public fears of ›racial‹ conflict. Rather it has to be studied, how his personal involvement with plantation slavery influenced his political and philosophical positions on the subject, and vice versa. Other than psycho-historical assessments of Jefferson's »psychological dexterity« and the »network of interior defenses [that] also helped sustain his paternalistic self-image«,<sup>75</sup> this approach assumes an inherent flexibility of racism, so that ›paternalism‹ and even individual affection within the institution of slavery do not have to be interpreted as weakening the established power relations or contradicting one's general commitment to the underlying social hierarchy. Rather, it will be examined how life on Jefferson's plantation was shaped by the structural discrimination and essentialist dehumanization of the enslaved and whether these patterns of domination were interrelated with the gradual ›racialization‹ of slaves.

Undoubtedly, Jefferson had long-standing personal relationships with some of his slaves and trusted some of them so much that he had them working with explosives or carrying his money and important documents.<sup>76</sup> Throughout his childhood and for the first part of his adult life, Jupiter Evans served as Jefferson's valet, being »privy to the most intimate details of [...] his master's life«. <sup>77</sup> Jupiter was born in the very same year as Jefferson and his mother most likely suckled both her own and

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<sup>74</sup> Duchess Harris, Bruce Braum, *Jefferson's Legacies. Racial Intimacies and American Identity*, in: Bruce Baum, Duchess Harris (eds.), *Racially Writing the Republic. Racists, Race Rebels, and Transformations of American Identity*, Durham: Duke University Press 2009, pp. 44-63, here p. 53.

<sup>75</sup> Ellis, *American Sphinx*, p. 177.

<sup>76</sup> On the personal servant Jupiter Evans working with gunpowder, carrying money and drafts for Jefferson's *Summary View*, see Stanton, ›Those Who Labor for My Happiness‹, pp. 108 f.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello*, p. 125.

her master's child.<sup>78</sup> The use of slaves as wet nurses was a common practice among elite women in the colonies, who »feared for their own health from the demands of nursing«. A female slave like Jupiter's mother, by contrast, was demanded to sometimes »deny maternal care to her own children in order to see to the Jeffersons to whom she was assigned« and most likely had to fulfill this duty also when she was suffering from »sore nipples, fatigue, or breast infections«. <sup>79</sup> When Thomas Jefferson himself entrusted his slave Ursula Granger with the nursing of his firstborn daughter Martha, it was only the master's child that survived infancy, while Granger's son died at only one year of age.<sup>80</sup>

In the entangled histories of slavery and racism, breastfeeding has often been a matter of controversy. In the second century A.D., the Roman philosopher Favorinus combined sexism and racism in his much-cited plea for maternal nursing. Attacking Roman women for their alleged laziness and vanity, he especially warned against the »substandard milk of a ›barbarian‹ wet nurse«, who would corrupt the baby with her »ugliness, wantonness, drunkenness, or dishonesty«. <sup>81</sup> Building on ancient concepts of inheritance, Favorinus believed »that a slavish nature is hereditary« through the milk of a nurse that is »either a slave or of servile origin«. <sup>82</sup> Similar notions of contamination through alien milk (and blood) are persistent in various ›racial‹ and non-›racial‹ contexts of discrimination. In medieval times, legal texts prohibited Christian parents to employ Jewish nurses, and vice versa. <sup>83</sup> When the Spanish ideas of the *limpieza de sangre* served to persecute Jews, Muslims and converted Christians after the Reconquista, these included »fears of the contagion of Judaism to infants through breast milk«. <sup>84</sup> Elements of these racist reservations also

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<sup>78</sup> Cf. Kern, *The Jeffersons at Shadwell*, p. 49.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello*, p. 130.

<sup>81</sup> Lynn Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians. Illuminating Ancient Ways of Life*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic 2009, p. 146. Cohick discusses Favorinus as exemplary for the »rampant racism permeating Roman writers«, while at the same time revealing that »breast-feeding is not entirely (or perhaps even primarily) about the mother, but rather about the father's control over his children«, *ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, p. 192. On Favorinus' and other ancient writers' attitudes on nursing, see also Keith R. Bradley, *Wet-Nursing at Rome. A Study in Social Relations*, in: Beryl Rawson (ed.), *The Family in Ancient Rome*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1986, pp. 201-229.

<sup>83</sup> For the example of Cologne, see Leonard Ennen, *Geschichte der Stadt Köln*, 3. Bd., Köln etc.: Schwann 1869, p. 314.

<sup>84</sup> Francois Soyer, *Popularizing Anti-Semitism in Early Modern Spain and its Empire. Francisco de Torrejoncillo and the Centinela contra Judios (1674)*, Leiden: Brill 2014, p. 36. See also Hering Torres, *Rassismus in der Vormoderne*, pp. 235 ff.

made their way particularly to Spanish and French America, where some writers held that »children could be contaminated through cross-racial breastfeeding«.<sup>85</sup>

In the British colonies, the effects of enslaved nurses were also matters of discussion and early on associated with skin color connotations. In a conversation between a British noblewoman and Eliza Lucas Pickney, a planter's wife from South Carolina, in 1753, »Princess Augusta was surprized at the suckling blacks; the Princess stroakd [Pickney's daughter's] cheek, said it made no alteration in the complexion and paid her the compliment of being very fair and pretty«.<sup>86</sup> Some commentators like Edward Long in his notorious *History of Jamaica* more aggressively complained about the Creole ladies' »shameful and savage custom« of using a »Negroe or Mulatto wet nurse, without [...] considering the influence which the milk may have with respect to the disposition, as well as health, of their little ones«.<sup>87</sup> Still in the mid-nineteenth century, at the heyday of scientific racism, observers reported that »racial« prejudice »does not prevent Southern women from hanging their infants at the breasts of negresses«, while »in Northern cities [...] cross-race wet nursing was not the norm«.<sup>88</sup> In fact, many slave societies knew breastfeeding as a common task of domestic slaves, while the same practice was imagined as a transgression in other contexts of racist discrimination.<sup>89</sup>

The physical contacts and close proximity between domestic slaves and their masters were in many ways »contradicting stereotyped white images of ›dirty blacks««. Both property and tool of the master, the slave's body was not symbolically stigmatized as impure, but could rather be physically marked by collars, brandings and scars. Within slavery, the »subordination [...] extended even to alienation from one's own body, as in the case of being forced or pressured to breast-feed

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<sup>85</sup> Jennifer M. Spear, *Race, Sex, and Social Order in Early New Orleans*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 2009, p. 75.

<sup>86</sup> Cited in Paula A. Treckel, *Breastfeeding and Maternal Sexuality in Colonial America*, in: *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 20, 1989, 1, pp. 25-51, here p. 49.

<sup>87</sup> Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica. Or, General Survey of the Antient and Modern State of that Island [...]*, Vol. 2, London: Lowndes 1774, p. 276.

<sup>88</sup> Frances Anne Kemble's *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation* (1863) as cited in V. Lynn Kennedy, *Born Southern. Childbirth, Motherhood, and Social Networks in the Old South*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press 2010, p. 103 (›prevent‹); Julie Miller, *Abandoned. Foundlings in Nineteenth-Century New York City, New York etc.: New York University Press* 2008, p. 65 (›Northern‹).

<sup>89</sup> Accordingly it was often »English visitors in the American colonies [who] expressed shock and horror that plantation owners commonly allowed their children to suckle at the breasts of African slaves«, Edith Frampton, *Writing in ›White Ink‹. Reconfiguring the Body of the Wet Nurse*, in: Dominic Janes (ed.), *Back to the Future of the Body*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars 2007, pp. 126-139, here p. 126.

white infants«. <sup>90</sup> According to earlier scientific accounts of Native American and African American women, their alleged ability to recover from births and breastfeed many children could also be interpreted as a qualification for the strenuous life on the plantations. <sup>91</sup> Thomas Jefferson similarly thought that ›blacks‹ »require less sleep« and »after hard labor through the day, will be induced by the slightest amusement to sit up until midnight«. <sup>92</sup> On the issues of maternal care, he recommended to his daughter the work of Scottish physician John Gregory, who perceived the refusal of breastfeeding as »open violence to nature« and allowed only for nurses »whose constitution both of body and of mind resembles the mother's as nearly as possible«. <sup>93</sup> There is no evidence however – and his practice at Monticello makes it seem unlikely – that Jefferson had any reservations concerning the ›racial‹ implications of wet nursing. Rather, his position echoes his »emphasis on the healing power of nature« and reflects the more general »shift in breast-feeding discussions that occurred between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries«. <sup>94</sup>

Sall, the mother of Jupiter and the woman who suckled Thomas Jefferson, regularly delivered her children in close proximity to Jane Randolph Jefferson, so that »Peter Jefferson's bequests of slaves to his children reflected a relationship formed at the breast of the woman who nursed them«. <sup>95</sup> Being attended by the elder slave Sawney initially after his father's death, Jefferson soon made his ›one year's child‹ Jupiter his personal servant and referred to him as his ›boy« in a letter of 1764. <sup>96</sup> Throughout his life, Jupiter fulfilled a variety of functions for the man he grew up with, ranging from the everyday tasks of the valet to the work of a stonecutter. He shaped some of Monticello's iconic columns, took care of Jefferson's horses as the steward of his stable and was eventually selected as the »safeguard of the house« during Jefferson's absence from Charlottesville. In all of these occupations, Jupiter,

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<sup>90</sup> Feagin, *Systemic Racism*, p. 132.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Cristina Malcolmson, *Studies of Skin Color in the Early Royal Society*. Boyle, Cavendish, Swift, Burlington: Ashgate 2013, pp. 153 f.

<sup>92</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 265.

<sup>93</sup> John Gregory, *A Comparative View of the Faculties of Man with those of the Animal World*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed., London: Dodsley 1777, pp. 33 (›violence‹), 42 f. (›constitution‹). Jefferson attached an earlier edition of this book to a letter to Mary Jefferson, Feb. 16, 1791.

<sup>94</sup> Jeanne E. Abrams, *Revolutionary Medicine. The Founding Fathers and Mothers in Sickness and in Health*, New York etc.: New York University Press 2013, p. 204 (›emphasis‹); Nora Doyle, ›The Highest Pleasure of Which Woman's Nature Is Capable‹. Breast-Feeding and the Sentimental Maternal Ideal in America, 1750-1860, in: *The Journal of American History*, 97, 2011, 4, pp. 958-973, here 958 (›shift‹).

<sup>95</sup> Kern, *The Jeffersons at Shadwell*, p. 49.

<sup>96</sup> TJ to William Fleming, Mar. 20, 1764.

»by uniting industry and honesty with loyalty and trustworthiness, epitomized the ideal slave of Jefferson's and other southern slaveholders' expectations«. <sup>97</sup>

However, despite the ties between Jefferson and Jupiter were among the closest and longest-lasting at Monticello, there was no doubt about Jupiter's subordinate status as »Jefferson never permitted his ›people‹ to forget who was master and who was slave«. <sup>98</sup> Even with his childhood companion, Jefferson was aware of the absolute nature of his power and did not accept the slightest hint of disobedience. When Jupiter once refused to hand over one of Jefferson's carriage horses to a young slave to ride, the master reacted with a »look and [...] tone never before or afterwards witnessed at Monticello« – bearing witness to the fact that »Jupiter had dared for a moment to cross an invisible line, stepping outside his subordinate station to challenge entrenched patterns of authority«. <sup>99</sup> On another occasion, a mule had escaped from the stable Jupiter was responsible for and Jefferson wanted to let the slave collect the animal »as a punishment for his carelessness«. <sup>100</sup> No matter how delicate his occupations were – as Henry Wiencek wrote, »Jupiter could have blown up Monticello« when he was quarrying limestone for the house construction –, Jupiter was always subjected to the will and caprice of his master. <sup>101</sup>

In a further confirmation of these power relations, Jupiter lost his position as valet when Jefferson got married and inherited the literate and light-skinned Hemingses, some of whom were half siblings of his new wife Martha. It cannot safely be said how Jupiter thought of the fact of being replaced by the twelve-year-old Robert Hemings after he had spent the first thirty-one year of his life in close proximity to his master. <sup>102</sup> In any case, Jupiter remained a faithful and especially a valuable servant for Jefferson, who hired him out to a local mason soon after he was trained as a

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<sup>97</sup> Stanton, ›Those Who Labor for My Happiness‹, p. 110. For Jupiter's various occupations, see *ibid.*, pp. 107-112. Jefferson referred to Jupiter as ›safeguard‹ in his Memorandum to Richard Richardson, ca. Dec. 21, 1799.

<sup>98</sup> Miller, *The Wolf by the Ears*, p. 105.

<sup>99</sup> Henry Stephens Randall, *The Life of Thomas Jefferson*, Vol. 3, New York: Derby & Jackson 1858, p. 510 (›look‹); Stanton, ›Those Who Labor for My Happiness‹, p. 112 (›dared‹).

<sup>100</sup> TJ to Thomas Mann Randolph, Feb. 12, 1795. This episode is also discussed in Stanton, ›Those Who Labor for My Happiness‹, p. 112.

<sup>101</sup> Wiencek, *Master of the Mountain*, p. 33. Also with other domestic servants, Jefferson's trust was by no means unconditional. This can be exemplified with the example of Martin Hemings' introduction as Monticello's new butler, when »Jefferson devised a very petty (though probably not unheard of) way of testing Heming's loyalty« in marking his bottles of rum to »try the fidelity of Martin«, Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello*, 123; Thomas Jefferson, *Jefferson's Memorandum Books. Accounts, with Legal Records and Miscellany, 1767-1826*, ed. by James A. Bear, Jr., Lucia C., Stanton, Princeton etc.: Princeton University Press 1997, p. 371.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello*, pp. 124 f.

stonecutter. Unlike more privileged slaves, Jupiter was earning money for his owner rather than for himself, although it is known that he had at least small amounts of money at his disposal.<sup>103</sup> Eventually, the ambivalent relationship between Jupiter and Jefferson, as the more general hypocrisy of slavery, was reflected in the master's reaction to the death of his childhood companion. Here, sympathy for the deceased came along with his post-mortem dehumanization in a remark about the economic loss for the plantation, as the slave left »a void in my domestic administration«.<sup>104</sup>

As early as 1771, Jefferson probably thought of the eventual death of his »boy«, when he drew up plans for the first Monticello and its burial ground included the grave of a »favorite and faithful servant«, on which he wanted to erect a stone pyramid inscribed with lines from a poem by William Shenstone, which he had lately copied to his commonplace book.<sup>105</sup> In the work of Shenstone, an edition of which Jefferson bought in 1765 and whose *Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening* greatly influenced Jefferson's landscape gardening, the author introduces his *Elegy XX* by stating that the narrator »compares his humble fortune with the distress of others, and his subjection to Delia with the miserable servitude of an African slave«.<sup>106</sup> Although, the »speaker at once utilizes and satirizes the poem's premise about the nature of enslavement«, parts of it were reproduced in abolitionist pamphlets and newspapers.<sup>107</sup> From these passages, in which the experience of enslavement is told

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<sup>103</sup> Cf. Stanton, »Those Who Labor for My Happiness«, pp. 108 f.

<sup>104</sup> TJ to Thomas Mann Randolph, Feb. 4, 1800. The death of Jupiter also shed light on the presence of African culture in the plantation society, as Jefferson's daughter made a »black doctor« responsible for the slave's passing and thought this healer's »murders sufficiently manifest to come under the cognizance of law«, Martha Jefferson Randolph to TJ, Jan. 30, 1800.

<sup>105</sup> Jefferson, Jefferson's Memorandum Books, pp. 246 f.

<sup>106</sup> William Shenstone, *Elegy XX*, in: id., *The Poetical Works of William Shenstone. With the Life of the Author and a Description of the Leasowes*, London: C. Cooke 1750, pp. 82-84, here p. 82. On Jefferson's acquisition of Shenstone's works, see Hayes, *The Road to Monticello*, p. 87. Elsewhere in his book, Hayes describes Jefferson's visit to Leasowes, William Shenstone former estate in Shropshire, *ibid.*, pp. 318 f. For Shenstone's influence on Jefferson's gardening, see also Frederick Doveton Nichols, Ralph E. Griswold, *Thomas Jefferson, Landscape Architect*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press 1978, pp. 80 f.

<sup>107</sup> Philip Gould, *Barbaric Traffic. Commerce and Antislavery in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Atlantic World*, Cambridge etc.: Harvard University Press 2003, p. 69. For an exemplary reproduction of the poem in early British abolitionism, see Granville Sharp, *The Just Limitation of Slavery in the Laws of God. Compared with the Unbounded Claims of the African Traders and British American Slaveholders*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 2013 [1776], pp. 39-41. Brief comments on the poem's position in eighteenth-century literary abolitionism can be found in James G. Basker (ed.), *Amazing Grace. An Anthology of Poems About Slavery, 1660-1810*, New Haven etc.: Yale University Press 2002, p. 92. Without noticing its relation to Shenstone's *Elegy XX*, Basker also quotes an anonymous poem called *To the Dealers of Slaves*, which »on the eve of the Revolution« »appeared in

in the voice of a »poor native [from]the Libyan shores«, Jefferson took his ›Inscription for an African Slave«, portraying death as the last and only hope of the enslaved:

»Shores there are, bless'd shores for us remain,  
And favor'd isles with golden fruitage crown'd,  
Where tufted flow'rets paint the verdant plain,  
Where ev'ry breeze shall med'cine ev'ry wound.

There the stern tyrant that embitters life,  
Shall vainly suppliant, spread his asking hand;  
There shall we view the billows' raging strife,  
Aid the kind breast, and waft this boat to land«. <sup>108</sup>

Although Jefferson did not include the more indicting passages, in which the imaginary slave accuses the »savage race« that »ravish'd [him] from my native strand«, it seems cynical to quote the (satirized) lament against the ›stern tyrant«, when at the same time he ›embitter[ed] life« for some fifty slaves in his property.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, when the later proponent of generational sovereignty, who would famously claim »that the earth belongs in usufruct to the living«,<sup>110</sup> located his slaves' salvation in death, it also implied some fundamental assumptions about their right to pursue happiness and property. Although it could be argued that manumission laws were only established in Virginia after the revolution and thus after Jefferson recorded the grave inscription for a ›faithful servant«, the poem can still hardly be interpreted as ›indicat[ing] that by this time Jefferson's sympathy for the Negro had been firmly established«. <sup>111</sup> As early as 1769, when the enslaved shoemaker Sandy escaped Jefferson's plantation to »be free and live by his trade in the kind of independence that Jefferson came to symbolize«, the young master announced the fugitive in the Virginia Gazette and offered a reward of forty shillings for his return.<sup>112</sup> As the two fugitive slaves Jefferson recaptured during the revolution, Sandy was sold as a punishment for his flight (– in his case to the father of Isham and Lilburn Lewis, Jeffer-

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colonial newspapers from Rhode Island to Virginia« and which is entirely composed of excerpts from Shenstone's poem, *ibid.*, pp. 225 f.

<sup>108</sup> Shedstone, *Elegy XX*, pp. 83 f.; as quoted in Jefferson, *Jefferson's Memorandum Books*, p. 247.

<sup>109</sup> Shedstone, *Elegy XX*, p. 83; before Jefferson acquired 135 slaves from his father-in-law in 1774, Jefferson possessed 52 slaves, see Stanton, ›Those Who Labor for My Happiness«, p. 4.

<sup>110</sup> TJ to James Madison, Sep. 6, 1789.

<sup>111</sup> Frederick M. Binder, *The Color Problem in Early National America as Viewed by John Adams, Jefferson and Jackson*, Paris etc.: Mouton 1968, p. 51. Still in 2002, the Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society suggested to commemorate the Monticello slaves »with the inscription Jefferson chose originally for the slaves«, *Possible Slave Memorial Plaques*, in: *The Jefferson Journal*, 1, 2002, 1, p. 13.

<sup>112</sup> Isaac, *The First Monticello*, p. 89.

son's nephews, who later reached nationwide prominence for the ferocious murder of one of their slaves).<sup>113</sup>

Despite his much-cited »scruples, about selling negroes«, Jefferson sold slaves primarily to serve his debts – he sold ninety-four between 1784 and 1794 –, but also in reaction to flight and rebelliousness.<sup>114</sup> As with the occasional whippings he ordered, Jefferson perceived these sales as corrective measures, which were designed, as Lucia Stanton writes, »for the benefit of their witnesses«. <sup>115</sup> When a young man working in Jefferson's nail shop attacked and severely injured one of his coworkers, Jefferson decided to »make an example of him in terrorem to others, in order to maintain the police so rigorously necessary among the nailboys«. Selling him to the inhospitable south »as if he were put out of the way by death« in this case was more important to him than economic considerations, as he wanted to »regard price but little in comparison with so distant an exile of him as to cut him off completely from ever again being heard of«. <sup>116</sup> In plantation slavery, »selling and keeping operated as alternating currents in a system of discipline« and constantly reassured the enslaved of the totality of their subordination. <sup>117</sup> Physical punishments served as an additional means of dehumanizing slaves and keeping the plantation ›machine‹ running. Although Jefferson emphasized that he wanted his »labourers [...] well treated« and whippings only »in extremities«, he knowingly employed brutal overseers and in some cases decided himself to have a slave »severely flogged in the presence of his old companions«. <sup>118</sup>

As has been observed by Orlando Patterson and others, the master-slave relation is constantly reproduced through the »violent act of transforming free man into

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<sup>113</sup> See *ibid.* For the cruelty of the Lewis brothers, see Marion B. Lucas, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky. From Slavery to Segregation, 1760-1891*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Frankfort: Kentucky Historical Society 2003 [1992], pp. 47 f. The »cutting up of a slave« was prominently included in *The American Anti-Slavery Almanac for 1840*, New York etc.: The American Anti-Slavery Society 1840, pp. 19 f.

<sup>114</sup> TJ to John Wayles Eppes, Jun. 30, 1820. On Jefferson's slave sales, see for example Schwarz, *Slave Laws in Virginia*, p. 43. Alan Taylor adds that »Jefferson maintained his workforce at about 200 slaves from 1784 to 1796 by selling (or giving to relatives) 161 slaves«, *id.*, *The Internal Enemy*, p. 57.

<sup>115</sup> Stanton, ›Those Who Labor for My Happiness‹, p. 15.

<sup>116</sup> TJ to Thomas Mann Randolph, Jun. 8, 1803. See also Stanton, ›Those Who Labor for My Happiness‹, pp. 15 f.

<sup>117</sup> Taylor, *The Internal Enemy*, p. 57.

<sup>118</sup> TJ to Thomas Mann Randolph, Apr. 19, 1792 (›labourers‹); TJ to Thomas Mann Randolph, Jan. 23, 1801 (›extremities‹); TJ to Reuben Perry, Apr. 16, 1812 (›flogged‹). On Jefferson's infamous overseers, see Stanton, ›Those Who Labor for My Happiness‹, p. 15. For a further discussion of »Jefferson's efforts to control his human property«, see Schwarz, *Slave Laws in Virginia*, pp. 43 ff.

slave«. <sup>119</sup> Historically, subtle or explicit violence have also served to perpetuate plantation slavery as an »institutionalized state of war«, in which resistance and rebellion had to be suppressed by threat and domination. <sup>120</sup> For enlightened masters like Jefferson, who claimed the natural right of ›all men‹ to life and liberty, this resulted in a moral conflict, which has often been solved through the naturalization of the slaves' identities and the respective transcendence of this social relation. In one of his famous letters about the possible abolition of slavery, Jefferson states that »to abandon persons whose habits have been formed in slavery is like abandoning children«. Drawing on the example of Virginian Quakers, who had »seated their slaves on their lands as tenants«, Jefferson complained that the »landlord was obliged to plan their crops for them«, but also »was obliged to watch them daily and almost constantly to make them work, and even to whip them«. <sup>121</sup>

In this letter written from France, Jefferson's assessments come across as general observations of human nature with no specification of the slaves' nature. On the alleged problem that said former slaves »chose to steal from their neighbors rather than work«, he writes that a »man's moral sense must be unusually strong, if slavery does not make him a thief«. His proposal to react on the »discouraging result of these experiments«, however, revealed his underlying assumptions about the slaves' identity, which he believed to be an obstacle to liberty. On his return to America, Jefferson wanted to »import as many Germans as I have grown slaves«. Provided with farms, the groups should »intermingle« and »their children [...] be brought up [...] in habits of property and foresight«. If at all, Jefferson seemed to believe, only the intermixing with Europeans would enable the African American slaves' descendants to »become good citizens«. <sup>122</sup>

It has been speculated that this exceptional, and in any case merely theoretical, departure from his general preference for colonization was inspired by his Paris contacts to abolitionists, his correspondent Edward Bancroft, who was also critical of slavery, or his new relationship with Sally Hemings. <sup>123</sup> In fact, as Ari Helo notes, it is »far from evident that Jefferson thought of even every German peasant [...]

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<sup>119</sup> Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, p. 3.

<sup>120</sup> Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire*, p. 185.

<sup>121</sup> TJ to Edward Bancroft, Jan. 26, 1789.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Thomson, *Jefferson's Shadow*, pp. 128 f.

worthy of American citizenship«. <sup>124</sup> What becomes evident, however, is Jefferson's naturalization of slaves as incapable of integration and his belief in the ›cultivation‹ of people, albeit confined by their potential for civilization. Some years earlier, Jefferson had already declared in his *Notes* that he »supposed the blackman, in his present state« to be not equal with ›whites‹ and Native Americans, but called it »hazardous to affirm that, equally cultivated for a few generations, he would not become so«. <sup>125</sup> Consequently, the schemes Jefferson actually implemented to ameliorate slavery at Monticello attempted to improve the individual slaves, but at the same time established ›loyalty, or trustworthiness« as the »gauge for a slave's domestication or inclusion within the plantation household«. <sup>126</sup> Jefferson thus perceived his new housing patterns, the training of slaves in different trades and the introduction of incentives as measures of ›cultivation‹, which had to be thankfully received by Monticello's enslaved population. The whip and auction block, however, remained available punishments for those slaves that did not perceive his plantation as »that society where all is peace and harmony«. <sup>127</sup>

Against this backdrop, Christa Dierksheide has assessed that Jefferson more generally »drew a line between his idealized enslaved domestics and ›foreign‹ and rebellious slaves«. <sup>128</sup> Whereas the former to him represented that »›natural‹ connection between benevolent patriarchs and their enslaved ›children‹«, the latter »resisted being gathered into the affections of his ›family‹« and had to be expelled. With his two sided construction of the slave personality as either loyal and ›cultivable‹ or resistant and rebellious, Jefferson represents a general tendency of slave stereotyping that is captured in George Fredrickson famous characterization of the »dual black image« in the United States as the »sharp and recurring contrast between ›the good Negro‹ in his place and the vicious black out of it«. <sup>129</sup> Historically, respective discourses did not necessarily come along with ›racial thought‹, but were only firmly ›racialized‹ in Jefferson's lifetime.

Following Stanley Elkins' attempt to trace the ›Sambo‹ stereotype back to existing slave personalities in the U. S., leading slavery historians engaged in controver-

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<sup>124</sup> Helo, *Thomas Jefferson's Ethics and the Politics of Human Progress*, p. 154.

<sup>125</sup> TJ to Chastellux, Jun. 7, 1785. For Jefferson's concept of cultivation, see Pauly, *Fruits and Plains*, pp. 31 f.

<sup>126</sup> Dierksheide, *Amelioration and Empire*, p. 53. For the following, see *ibid.*, pp. 50 ff.

<sup>127</sup> TJ to Martha Jefferson Randolph, Feb. 5, 1801.

<sup>128</sup> Dierksheide, *Amelioration and Empire*, p. 53.

<sup>129</sup> Fredrickson, *The Arrogance of Race*, p. 215.

sies on the cultural impact of slavery in the Americas, regional prevalent slave stereotypes and ›real‹ equivalents of these prejudiced images.<sup>130</sup> In the course of this discussion, Orlando Patterson described the concept of ›Sambo‹ as an ideology, underlying institutional slavery since ancient Greece, stating that this »stereotype is, in fact, an ideological imperative of all systems of slavery, from the most primitive to the most advanced«. <sup>131</sup> Similarly, Eugene Genovese came to the conclusion that the »Sambo personality has been neither more nor less than the slavish personality«, so that »wherever slavery has existed Sambo has also«, and David B. Davis noted that even »the white slaves of antiquity and the Middle Ages were often described in terms that fit the later stereotype of the negro«. <sup>132</sup>

Long since, stereotyping has been recognized as an important mechanism in the establishment and perpetuation of social hierarchy. Similarly, othering as described for example by Stuart Hall describes the process by which fundamental difference can be conceived and constructed along a variety of parameters. <sup>133</sup> If this difference marks the constructed other as extra-social outsider in opposition to a presumably homogenous entity, this process can be understood as racist in the context of this study. Within the so defined out-groups (and in-groups respectively), the otherness is condensed to a multiplicity of stereotypes, which may seem contradictory, but share the common emphasis on the alleged difference of the others. In context of more recent manifestations of anti-black racism, in which the racist othering is conceived along the ›natural‹ parameter of skin color, Michael Pickering has exemplarily described how »›black‹ acts as a packaging term, as for instance in relation to sport and music (where it is given positive value) or crime and violence (where the image is wholly negative)«. <sup>134</sup> Although racist stereotypes were frequently popularized and became especially powerful only when de jure subjugation was challenged

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<sup>130</sup> Cf. Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery. A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*, Chicago etc.: University of Chicago Press 1968, pp. 81-139. For the ensuing discourse see Ann J. Lane (ed.), *The Debate Over Slavery. Stanley Elkins and His Critics*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press 1971. See a translation, interpretation and history of the slave name ›Sambo‹ in Joseph Boskin, *Sambo. The Rise and Demise of an American Jester*, New York etc.: Oxford University Press 1986, pp. 17-41.

<sup>131</sup> Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, p. 96.

<sup>132</sup> Eugene D. Genovese, *Rebelliousness and Docility in the Negro Slave. A Critique of the Elkins Thesis*, in: Ann J. Lane (ed.), *The Debate Over Slavery. Stanley Elkins and His Critics*, Urbana: The University of Illinois Press 1971, pp. 43-74, here p. 49; Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, p. 59.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Stuart Hall, *The Spectacle of the ›Other‹*, in: Stuart Hall (ed.), *Representation. Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, London etc.: Sage 1997, pp. 223-290.

<sup>134</sup> Michael Pickering, *Racial Stereotypes*, in: Gary Taylor, Steve Spencer (eds.), *Social Identities. Multidisciplinary Approaches*, Abingdon etc.: Routledge 2004, pp. 91-106, here p. 92.

and abandoned, they emerged from the periods of slavery and colonization, and as »important historical phenomena [...] reveal a great deal about those who hold them«. <sup>135</sup>

Ironically, it was one of Thomas Jefferson's slaves who for Joseph Boskin stands at the beginning of the American ›Sambo‹ stereotype and marks »by far the clearest expression of the name in comical form« until it became a common feature of racist minstrelsy in the nineteenth century. <sup>136</sup> As Isaac Jefferson later reported to an interviewer, it was after he and some fellow slaves had been seized by the British in 1781 that an officer »give Isaac name Sambo, all the time feedin' him. Put a cocked hat on his head and a red coat on him and all laughed«. <sup>137</sup> In fact, Isaac did not experience this demeaning treatment with Thomas Jefferson, whom he described as »very kind to servants«. <sup>138</sup> Nevertheless his master continuously belittled his slaves as ›children‹ and influentially phrased characterizations of African Americans, which mirrored traditional conceptions of ›natural slaves‹ and contributed to the American stereotype of the docile ›black‹. <sup>139</sup> Through his child metaphor, Jefferson not only stressed the social death of necessarily patronized adults, but also applied what was in many contexts a »variant on the animal metaphor – remembering that animals can be petted, cuddled, and endearing, or made to perform tricks as well as much of the labor and energy humans needed for millennia of time«. <sup>140</sup>

Conceiving of his slaves as ›children‹, who were ›domesticated‹ and to some degree ›civilized‹ by their integration into his plantation ›family‹, Jefferson could also imagine Monticello as an alternative model of slavery, contrasting the fundamentally corrupting nature of the institution. Moreover, as Jefferson believed Africans and African Americans to be essentially different from other ›races‹ of men, their subjection to slavery seemed to him generally less problematic than other forms of enslavement. While he criticized the »inhuman practice [...] of making slaves of the Indians« and »claim[ed] that the institution of slavery was more humane in modern

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<sup>135</sup> Fredrickson, *The Arrogance of Race*, p. 207.

<sup>136</sup> Boskin, *Sambo*, p. 36.

<sup>137</sup> Jefferson, *Memoirs of a Monticello Slave*, p. 10.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>139</sup> On Jefferson and the infantilization of slaves, see for example Anna Mae Duane, *Suffering Childhood, in Early America. Violence, Race, and the Making of the Child Victim*, Athens: University of Georgia Press 2010, p. 12. For a postmodern reading of Jefferson »conceiv[ing] the black body as cognitively and emotionally childlike«, see Dana Luciano, *Arranging Grief. Sacred Time and the Body in Nineteenth-Century America*, New York etc.: New York University Press 2007, pp. 48 f.

<sup>140</sup> Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, p. 52.

than in ancient times« (when talented ›whites‹ had been enslaved), Jefferson characterized the ›blacks‹ as if »they were in need of a benevolent paterfamilias«. <sup>141</sup> In his eyes, especially their alleged »want of forethought« and their proneness to express more »sensation than reflection« disqualified ›blacks‹ from liberation. <sup>142</sup> If not as ›natural slaves‹ in the Aristotelian sense, Jefferson represented Africans as a degraded branch of humankind that for its own good was best kept in paternalistic slavery until abolition and expatriation became possible. <sup>143</sup> Thus, Jefferson's concept of the childlike slave was manifest in his utopian plans for colonization, which could morally justify the separation of slave families to educate children for their life in exile liberty only on the assumption that, »infantilized by slavery, slave parents were incapable of raising their children to live free«. <sup>144</sup>

Racist justifications of slavery consequently stressed two social benefits of the institution: Firstly, it prevented ›blacks‹ from relapsing into barbarism, as »what the American planter assumed to be a childlike, submissive, docile slave could suddenly turn into a ›savage««. Secondly, it provided for the guidance of a people that was unable to take care of itself. <sup>145</sup> As the former element was strengthened with regard to slave rebellions and free ›blacks‹, and will be discussed in the following chapter, the second argument loomed large not only in Jefferson's rhetoric, but seemed to guide his treatment of slaves and his efforts of amelioration.

Quite precisely, Jefferson outlined his self-understanding as a slaveholder in a letter to Edward Coles, who asked for Jefferson's support of »some plan for the gradual emancipation of slavery«. <sup>146</sup> After expressing his theoretical sympathy with the cause, coupled with the hope »that the younger generation [...] proved their love of liberty beyond their own share of it«, Jefferson declared how the individual master should treat his slaves »until more can be done for them«. Instead of manumitting the »whole at once«, it was preferable to »endeavor, with those whom fortune has thrown on our hands, to feed and clothe them well, protect them from ill

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<sup>141</sup> Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, pp. 186 f. (›inhuman‹); Spahn, Thomas Jefferson, Time, and History, pp. 252n18 (›institution‹), 219 (›need‹).

<sup>142</sup> Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, p. 265. See also Feagin, Systemic Racism, pp. 98 f.

<sup>143</sup> Similarly, but with a psycho-historical tone, Douglas Egerton states that »in an effort to assuage his embattled conscience, Jefferson tried to convince himself that, tragic as slavery was, it was preferable to releasing his childlike black wards into a harsh world for which they were ill prepared«, id., Race and Slavery in the Era of Jefferson, p. 77.

<sup>144</sup> Onuf, Jefferson's Empire, p. 175.

<sup>145</sup> Valsania, Nature's Man, p. 80.

<sup>146</sup> Edward Coles to TJ, Jul., 31, 1814.

usage, require such reasonable labor only as is performed voluntarily by freemen, and be led by no repugnancies to abdicate them, and our duties to them«. Talking from his »experience of the subject«, Jefferson assessed that enslaved »men, probably of any color, but of this color we know, brought up from their infancy without necessity for thought or forecast, are by their habits rendered as incapable as children of taking care of themselves« and would be »pests in society by their idleness, and the depredations to which this leads them«. <sup>147</sup>

Additionally stressing the alleged naturalness of ›black‹ difference by warning against the »amalgamation with the other color«, Jefferson perceived the master in the unfortunate responsibility to look after the childlike people ›in his hands‹ and to improve their lot as far as possible. <sup>148</sup> His slaves, by contrast, could even appear as profiteers of this ameliorated paternalistic form of slavery, being materially provided for and protected from the complexity of the free market society. While Jefferson theoretically favored the abolition of slavery, predominantly for the sake of ›white‹ morals, he thus employed a line of argument that later became foundational also in the defense of the institution. When proslavery propaganda of the mid-nineteenth century asserted that »southern slaveholders treated their slaves more humanely than capitalists treated their free workers«, it echoed Jefferson's claim that slaves »better fed in these states, warmer clothed, and labor less than the journeymen or day laborers of England« and evoked his reservations against the »mobs of great cities«, which he feared more than the ›domesticated‹ labor force of rural plantations. <sup>149</sup>

When later proslavery arguments romanticized slavery as a familial bond between patriarch and servants, Corey Robin rightly observes that it »was propaganda and self-delusion, of course, but in one respect it was not: the nearness of master to slave did make for an exceptionally personal mode of rule«. <sup>150</sup> In fact, this was true also in Jefferson's lifetime, as his planter lifestyle brought along a »lifelong habit of associating with blacks in the most intimate circumstances« and to some degree

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<sup>147</sup> TJ to Edward Coles, Aug. 24, 1814.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Eugene D. Genovese, *Slavery in White and Black. Class and Race in the Southern Slaveholders' New World Order*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 2008, p. 72 (›southern‹); TJ to Thomas Cooper, Sep. 10, 1814 (›better‹); Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 291 (›mobs‹).

<sup>150</sup> Corey Robin, *The Reactionary Mind. Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 2011, p. 11.

provided for the »African part of his upbringing«. <sup>151</sup> Neither the acquaintance with slave culture nor his personal familiarity with ›blacks‹, however, made Jefferson change his mind about African Americans' fundamental incapability to participate in the American republic.

In his *Notes* Jefferson describes the situation of slaves as preferable to their conditions in Africa:

»many have been so situated, that they might have availed themselves of the conversation of their masters; many have been brought up to the handicraft arts, and from that circumstance have always been associated with the whites. Some have been liberally educated, and all have lived in countries where the arts and sciences are cultivated to a considerable degree, and have had before their eyes samples of the best works from abroad«. <sup>152</sup>

For this assessment Jefferson certainly drew on the example of his own plantations and implicitly expressed his disappointment about the slaves' inability to culturally benefit from his shining example. According to his testimony, the Virginian never encountered »a black [who] had uttered a thought above the level of plain narration« and missed »even an elementary trait of painting or sculpture« among his slaves. With the single exception of music, in which »they are more generally gifted than the whites«, Jefferson believed ›black‹ cultural expressions to display a striking lack of genius, which placed even the artist in the »first place of his own colour [...] when we compare him with the writers of the race among whom he lived, [...] at the bottom of the column«. <sup>153</sup>

Against Samuel Stanhope Smith's reasonable doubts about »how many [...] masters could have written poems equal to those of Phillis Wheatly«, Jefferson denied the existence of creativity among ›blacks‹, although he must have witnessed manifestations of African American cultural abilities throughout his life. Susan Kern's archaeological research at Shadwell suggests that the Jeffersons' slaves during leisure time »did handiwork in their living quarters«, including »quilt making, jewelry making, or otherwise altering the materials they were given to make something of their own«. <sup>154</sup> On various plantations, »individual Africans and their descendants made pottery styled on generalized mental images drawn from their homelands«,

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<sup>151</sup> Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello*, p. 94 (›lifelong‹); Isaac, *The First Monticello*, p. 101 (›African‹).

<sup>152</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 266.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 266 (›uttered‹, ›elementary‹, ›gifted‹), 267 (›first‹).

<sup>154</sup> Kern, *The Jeffersons at Shadwell*, p. 103.

thus bearing witness to the import of African knowledge to the American colonies.<sup>155</sup> Slaves were trained in a variety of skills, with some of them proving so talented that they exceeded free craftsmen and were hired out by their masters.<sup>156</sup> Some of the most refined woodwork at Monticello and in Jefferson's carriage were made by John Hemings, a »master carpenter« who was especially valuable to Jefferson as he could »repair every thing of wood as well or perhaps better than any body there«.<sup>157</sup> When Hemings mourned about the loss of a richly decorated writing desk, Jefferson compared that »Virgil could not have been more afflicted had his Aeneid fallen a prey to the flames«.<sup>158</sup> Even the carved stone heads Jefferson prominently displayed in the »Indian Hall« at Monticello were quite possibly from African or African American origin. Jefferson, however, believed them to be further evidence of Native American artisanship and did not notice their potential to refute his theses on »black« culture.<sup>159</sup>

With respect to plantation artisans, but applicable to other skilled or privileged slaves, Philip Morgan described how the enslaved individual was »brought into regular and recurrent contact with the world of masters«, but »was yet not part it [...] – resourceful when on his own, often experiencing difficulties when answering whites«.<sup>160</sup> Reduced to slave status, even craftsmen or artists could be perceived by Jefferson as mere executive organs, dehumanized and »as much inferior to the rest of mankind as the mule is to the horse, and made to carry burthens«.<sup>161</sup> Although skilled slaves were most likely to earn money, which enabled some to eventually buy their freedom, the free »artisan class [...] did not see the slave population as

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<sup>155</sup> Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, p. 235. Aside from cultural expressions, slaves were also known to bring agricultural expertise, so that the »introduction of rice as a North American plantation staple was accompanied by targeted purchases of slaves from African ethnic groups familiar with rice cultivation«, M. A. Tolmacheva, *East and West. Africa in the Transmission of Knowledge from East to West*, in: Helaine Selin (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine in Non-Western Cultures*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Berlin etc.: Springer 2008, pp. 709-712, here p. 711. Most likely, Jefferson was well aware of this nexus, as he gathered information about African rice and its potential »to take place of the wet rice in the Southern states«, TJ to Samuel Vaughan, Jr., Nov. 27, 1790. See also Judith A. Carney, *Black Rice. The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas*, Cambridge etc.: Harvard University Press 2001, pp. 147-150.

<sup>156</sup> For the skills and working conditions of slave artisans, see Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, p. 346-353.

<sup>157</sup> Christopher B. Booker, »I Will Wear No Chain!« *A Social History of African American Males*, Westport: Praeger 2000, p. 9 (»master«); TJ to Francis Eppes, Feb. 17, 1825.

<sup>158</sup> TJ to Ellen Wayles Randolph Coolidge, Nov. 14, 1825.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. Stein, *The Worlds of Thomas Jefferson at Monticello*, p. 410.

<sup>160</sup> Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, p. 353.

<sup>161</sup> Thus, »Jefferson's opinion in regard to the mental qualities of the Negro race« is recollected in Augustus John Foster, *Jeffersonian America. Notes on the United States of America, Collected in the Years 1805-6-7 and 11-12*, San Marino: Huntington Library 1954, p. 149.

competitors, but in many cases as a vital part of its labor force«. <sup>162</sup> Only when free ›blacks‹ were entering the job market and the institution was increasingly challenged, claims of a ›white‹ ›racial‹ identity became a formative element in the American labor movement. <sup>163</sup> How the institutionalized racism of slavery domesticated some aggressive racist sentiments becomes even more obvious in light of ›interracial‹ sexuality and Thomas Jefferson's relationship with Sally Hemings – with its long and checkered history in historiography and popular culture.

»Perhaps no early American interracial sexual relationship has gained more attention than that of Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings« notes the introduction to a special edition on *Sexuality in Early America*, stressing the complexity of studying the »relationship of sex to power in the past«. <sup>164</sup> Especially after the DNA test of the late 1990s removed most doubts about Thomas Jefferson's paternity of Sally Hemings' children, public commentators and scholars from various disciplines have examined the Jefferson-Hemings relationship and the subsequent controversies for multiple purposes. <sup>165</sup> Political scientists ask how in the case of Hemings and Jefferson »narrations of the past connect to legitimations of the present«, scholars of communication studies inquire the story to trace Jefferson's »public memory [...] in the cultural meaning of his enigmatic psyche«, sociologists of knowledge look for the »strategic interplay between professional historians and outsiders« in the affair's reception history, and literary scientists scrutinize adaptations of the relationship to

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<sup>162</sup> Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, p. 254.

<sup>163</sup> With regard to the formation of nineteenth-century racist labor movements, this has been demonstrated in David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness. Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, rev. ed., London etc.: Verso 1999 [1991]. See also Wulf D. Hund, Jeremy Krikler, David Roediger (eds.), *Wages of Whiteness and Racist Symbolic Capital*, Berlin etc.: Lit 2010.

<sup>164</sup> Sharon Block, Kathleen M. Brown, *Clio in Search of Eros. Redefining Sexualities in Early America*, in: *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 60, 2003, 1, pp. 5-12, here p. 11.

<sup>165</sup> Cf. Eugene A. Foster, M. A. Jobling, P. G. Taylor, P. Donnelly, P. de Knijff, Rene Mieremet, T. Zerjal, C. Tyler Smith, *Jefferson Fathered Slave's Last Child*, in: *Nature*, 396, 1998, pp. 27-28. Although the geneticists »cannot completely rule out other explanations« for the genetic relatedness of male-line Jeffersons and Sally Hemings' descendants, the »absence of historical evidence« renders them unlikely, *ibid.* In fact, in combination with Annette Gordon-Reed's and other's historical reassessments of the evidence suggesting Jefferson's paternity, the »DNA study had destroyed the arguments made by Jefferson's defenders for nearly two centuries« and led to a »new consensus [...] that accepted the Jefferson-Hemings relationship as a fact«, Cogliano, *Thomas Jefferson*, pp. 178 f. The present study departs from this knowledge and deals with the contexts and reception of the affair, rather than reexamining its historical evidence. Profound evaluations of the latter can be found in Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*, esp. pp. 210-223; Fraser D. Neiman, *Coincidence or Causal Connection? The Relationship between Thomas Jefferson's Visits to Monticello and Sally Hemings's Conceptions*, in: *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 57, 2000, 1, pp. 198-210. For assessments of the post-DNA debate on Jefferson and Sally Hemings, see Nicolaisen, *Thomas Jefferson, Sally Hemings, and the Question of Race*; Mia Bay, *In Search of Sally Hemings, in the Post-DNA Era*, in: *Reviews in American History*, 34, 2006, 4, pp. 407-426.

reveal the »narratives of origins, authenticity, and legitimacy that underpin discourses of miscegenation«.<sup>166</sup> As Jefferson is frequently referred to as an embodiment of American values, his much-debated liaison with Sally Hemings increasingly takes on a »symbolic function as a national unifier«, as it includes a female slave of African-American descent into a more or less ambivalent narrative of the American founding.<sup>167</sup>

Even prior to the DNA evidence, Peter Onuf and Jan Ellen Lewis anticipated what some commentators would make of their founding fathers sex scandal: the recognition of his sexual relationship with an enslaved woman »may lead to another American synecdoche, in which Jefferson and his plantation world stand for a multiracial America in which reconciliation is achieved by interracial sex«. They knew that the »desire to make Jefferson stand for the nation may be too strong for historians to check«.<sup>168</sup> In fact, at the very same time one historian commented that if Jefferson »respected, even loved, a black woman slave, and created a real but underground family with her, then it is only further proof that intimacy between black and white, and the possibility of decency between black and white, existed even in conditions of brutal racial oppression, and so may exist in the bettered but still troubled conditions in which we now live«.<sup>169</sup> Additionally, newspaper articles and TV productions accounted for the symbolic power of an American founder having a »racially« separated family that represented the inner conflict of a nation divided by the color line – therewith implying that the Hemings descendants' recognition as members of the Jefferson family would help to also overcome the »racial« divide on a national scale.<sup>170</sup> In this regard, one commentator explicitly predicted the »end of

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<sup>166</sup> Fred Lee, *Reconsidering the Jefferson-Hemings Relationship*. *Nationalist Historiography without Nationalist Heroes, Racial Sexuality without Racial Significance*, in: *Political Research Quarterly*, 66, 2013, 3, pp. 500-515, here p. 502 (»narrations«); Bradford Vivian, *Jefferson's Other*, in: *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 88, 2002, 3, pp. 284-302, here p. 285 (»public«); Owen Whooley, *Objectivity and its Discontents. Knowledge Advocacy in the Sally Hemings Controversy*, in: *Social Forces*, 86, 2008, 4, pp. 1367-1389, here p. 1367 (»strategic«); Sara Clarke Kaplan, *Our Founding (M)Other. Erotic Love and Social Death in Sally Hemings and the President's Daughter*, in: *Callaloo*, 32, 2009, 3, pp. 773-791, here p. 774 (»narratives«).

<sup>167</sup> Walker, *Mongrel Nation*, p. 29.

<sup>168</sup> Jan Lewis, Peter S. Onuf, *American Synecdoche. Thomas Jefferson as Image, Icon, Character and Self*, in: *The American Historical Review*, 103, 1998, 1, pp. 125-136, here p. 136.

<sup>169</sup> Sean Wilentz, *Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Jefferson*, in: *The New Republic*, 216, Mar. 10, 1997, pp. 32-42, here p. 40. More recently, Onuf, Ellis and Wilentz were affirmatively quoted by Todd Estes, who holds that »these thoughts are all the more compelling and resonant in the United States in the age of Barack Obama«, id., *What We Think About When We Think About Jefferson*, p. 45.

<sup>170</sup> On the »possessive investment« of Hemings' descendants to receive their share of »Jeffersonian whiteness«, see Harris, Braum, *Jefferson's Legacies*, pp. 45 (»possessive«), 59 (»whiteness«).

racism«, if Americans accepted that »we may all be cousins« and another added with reference to Jefferson's example that »black Americans and white Americans are connected down to the bones«. <sup>171</sup>

In the end of a long debate in which deniers and advocates of the affair had similar »difficulty reconciling Jefferson's stated racial attitudes with the possibility that he engaged in a sexual relationship with an African American slave«, <sup>172</sup> the »racial divide seems to be subsequently »reconciled« through the idea of Jefferson's supposedly »interracial« »family«. Beyond the bitter »irony in the fact that an image once used to mitigate the effects of »the peculiar institution« is now employed to evoke the idea of one national family«, as Jefferson's paternalist concept of a plantation »family« did not revoke the fundamental differentiation between slaves and masters, the »wish to see a founding couple in Hemings and Jefferson does not speak to an improved historical understanding of the relationship between the two«. <sup>173</sup> On the contrary, as the denial of »interracial« sexuality, its romanticizing obfuscates the fundamentally dehumanizing logics of racist slavery.

It remains puzzling for modern-day commentators that Jefferson »never publicly avowed any relationship with Hemings« or acknowledged his children with her, while at the same time »he never failed to include her and the children in his plantation inventory, along with their market value«. <sup>174</sup> The affair seems to be the ultimate proof of his fundamental hypocrisy, as it stood in marked contrast to what he said »about the demoralizing implications of mixed-race relationships for Virginia's master class«. <sup>175</sup> As his general treatment of slaves, however, the intimacy with Sally Hemings was anything but exceptional in plantation society. In fact, the widely unsuccessful attempts to damage Jefferson's reputation by revealing his »interracial« relationship and the later tendencies to ahistorically declare it a taboo or major scandal bear witness to the flexible intersections of »race« and status.

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<sup>171</sup> Quoted in Nicolaisen, Thomas Jefferson, Sally Hemings, and the Question of Race, p. 107.

<sup>172</sup> Cogliano, Thomas Jefferson, p. 189.

<sup>173</sup> Nicolaisen, Thomas Jefferson, Sally Hemings, and the Question of Race, p. 108 (»irony«); Mia Bay, Love, Sex, Slavery, and Sally Hemings, in: Bernadette J. Brooten (ed.), Beyond Slavery. Overcoming Its Religious and Sexual Legacies, New York etc.: Palgrave Macmillan 2010 pp. 191-212, here p. 192 (»wish«).

<sup>174</sup> Bernstein, Thomas Jefferson (2004), p. 135 (»publicly«); David Brion Davis, Slavery, Sex, and Dehumanization, in: Gwyn Campbell, Elizabeth Elbourne (eds.), Sex, Power, and Slavery, Athens: Ohio University Press 2014, pp. 34-60, here p. 35 (»failed«).

<sup>175</sup> Onuf, The Mind of Thomas Jefferson, p. 213.

As the daughter of his father-in-law and a ›mulatto‹ slave, described as »mighty near white‹ and in a later census classified as ›white‹,<sup>176</sup> Sally Hemings herself was living evidence of the ›interracial‹ mixture on Virginian plantations – and hardly the only one in Jefferson’s close environment. For his elaborations on ›blacks‹ and ›racial‹ mixture, he could assume that the »improvement of the blacks in body and mind, in the first instance of their mixture with the whites, has been observed by every one« and foreign visitors to Monticello noticed the fair skin of its slaves, a fact that was probably unsurprising for Jefferson’s fellow countrymen.<sup>177</sup> In the eyes of most of his slaveholding compatriots, »Jefferson acted with propriety in his liaison with Sally Hemings«, as »standing sexual affairs between white men and African American women were nearly always open secrets« and acceptable as long as they could rely on »a cultural code of public silence«.<sup>178</sup> Even James Callender, a Scottish reporter and embittered former ally of Jefferson, noted that »there is not an individual in the neighborhood of Charlottesville who does not believe the story and not a few who know it«.<sup>179</sup> However, according to Joshua Rothman’s research, the »editor fundamentally misread the sentiments of white Virginians toward sexual affairs between masters and enslaved women«.<sup>180</sup> Although his revelations had some impact in the Federalist north, where the suspicion of ›interracial‹ fornication blended with perceptions of President Jefferson as politically unreliable, Callender’s contempt for ›racial‹ mixture did not meet with general approval in the slaveholding South and the revelations, which he believed »would have rendered his election impossible«, »had almost no impact upon Jefferson’s political fortunes«.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Jefferson, *Memoirs of a Monticello Slave*, p. 10. On Sally Hemings’ classification as ›white‹ in the 1830 census, see Catherine Kerrison, *Sally Hemings*, in Francis D. Cogliano (ed.), *A Companion to Thomas Jefferson*, Malden etc.: Wiley-Blackwell 2012, pp. 284-300, here pp. 296 f. On the example of the Hemings family in the wider context of ›racial‹ passing, see Randall Kennedy, *Interracial Intimacies. Sex, Marriage, Identity, and Adoption*, New York: Pantheon Books 2003, pp. 290-292.

<sup>177</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 267. For the visitors of Monticello, see Rothman, *James Callender and Social Knowledge of Interracial Sex in Antebellum Virginia*, p. 87.

<sup>178</sup> Rothman, *James Callender and Social Knowledge of Interracial Sex in Antebellum Virginia*, pp. 90 (›acted‹), 96 (›cultural‹).

<sup>179</sup> James Callender, *The President, Again*, in: *The Recorder*, Sep. 9, 1802.

<sup>180</sup> Rothman, *James Callender and Social Knowledge of Interracial Sex in Antebellum Virginia*, p. 90. In response to Callender’s remark about the knowing neighborhood of Charlottesville and Rothman’s assessment of ›social knowledge of interracial sex‹, some scholars have challenged the assumption that »Thomas Jefferson’s alleged relationship was common knowledge in the neighborhood of Monticello prior to September 1802 [...] as arrant speculation«, Shepard, Honenberger, Megill, *A Case Study in Historical Epistemology*, p. 150.

<sup>181</sup> Callender, *The President, Again* (›rendered‹); Rothman, *James Callender and Social Knowledge of Interracial Sex in Antebellum Virginia*, p. 89 (›impact‹). On Federalist reactions to the affair, see Lemire, ›Miscegenation‹, pp. 11-34.

Conforming to the social standards of his class and society, Jefferson was certainly exceptional in his public and repeated condemnation of ›racial‹ mixture, warning against the African Americans' »amalgamation with the other colour« because it »produces a degradation to which no lover of his country, no lover of excellence in the human character can innocently consent«. <sup>182</sup> James Callender himself implied the founder's hypocrisy on the issue, in citing Jefferson's claim for a moral duty to keep blacks from »staining the blood of the masters«. <sup>183</sup> In later assessments, this despite of ›blacks‹ has frequently been invoked as contradicting the alleged relationship, and especially those historians that have »presented him as a man ahead of his time on the question of slavery or have emphasized his kindness to his slaves« asserted that he »was too racist to have touched a black woman, even one who by all accounts looked white«. Annette Gordon-Reed, who has pointedly addressed this irony, is certainly right in assessing that the »notion that a racist white man will not engage in a sexual relationship [...] with a black woman is [...] quaint«. <sup>184</sup> Moreover, Jefferson left no doubt about the precondition of disagreeable amalgamation: Only »when freed«, Jefferson wrote in the *Notes*, the former slave »is to be removed beyond the reach of mixture«. <sup>185</sup>

Within slavery, and as long as constricted to a »white man – black woman phenomenon«, ›interracial‹ sex was too ubiquitous to be considered a threat to the social order or the Union at large. <sup>186</sup> On the contrary, especially where slaves constituted a large part of the population, the »sex act itself served as a ritualistic re-enactment of the daily pattern of social dominance«. <sup>187</sup> In the American South, these practices were commonly accompanied by the ›racializing‹ of the slaves' sexuality, constructing African American females as especially passionate and males as sexually aggressive – stereotypes that were reflected in Jefferson's *Notes*, where he observes that »love seems with them to be more an eager desire, than a tender deli-

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<sup>182</sup> TJ to Edward Coles, Aug. 25, 1814.

<sup>183</sup> Callender, in: *The [Richmond] Recorder*, Sep. 29, 1802; Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 270

<sup>184</sup> Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*, pp. 133 f.

<sup>185</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 270.

<sup>186</sup> More generally, Orlando Patterson knows »of no slaveholding society in which a master, when so inclined, could not exact sexual services from his female slaves«, id., *Slavery and Social Death*, p. 173.

<sup>187</sup> Jordan, *White Over Black*, p. 141.

cate mixture of sentiment and desire«. <sup>188</sup> While the stereotype of the lascivious ›black‹ woman was connected to deeply-entrenched sexist attitudes of European males and possibly offered the ›best possible justification for their own passions«, the alleged threat of black male sexuality inspired (explicitly gendered) bans of ›interracial‹ intercourse. <sup>189</sup> Although the Virginian legislation of sex, marriage and slavery accounted for ›racial‹ identities already by the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, however, it was significantly more flexible in the antebellum than in the postbellum period. As ›slavery had its own mechanisms for legal control«, it was only after the abolition that ›Virginians elaborated other mechanisms to preserve the racial hierarchy of the slave era«. <sup>190</sup> In early America, sexual contacts between masters and slaves not mainly violated the law, but more importantly displayed a ›gap between moral scruples and actual practice«. As a matter of principle, planters would not confess to their ›shadow families«, but rather ›blame lower-class white males for fathering mulatto children«. <sup>191</sup> In plantation society, it was not only the construction of ›race‹ that distinguished master and slave, but also class and social status that created this dual opposition, with ›white‹ underclasses somewhere in-between.

As the example of the Hemings family illustrates, the fundamental discrimination involved in sexual relationships between master and slave does not preclude the enslaved women's agency and still allowed for diverse constellations. When Thomas Jefferson served as American Minister to France, Sally Hemings' sister Mary was hired to Charlottesville merchant Thomas Bell and bore him two children. After Jefferson's return, Bell bought Mary Hemings and the infants to live with her in an open relationship. Although he never formally released his immediate family, Mary and the children were considered de-facto free by the Charlottesville community, which was not considered an ›outrageous violation of racial

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<sup>188</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 265. For the stereotyping of ›black‹ sexuality, see Jordan, *White Over Black*, esp. pp. 144-154. In this context, Diane Miller Sommerville has demonstrated that Jordan and others have ahistorically overemphasized Southern anxieties of ›black‹ rapists, cf. id., *The Rape Myth in the Old South Reconsidered*, in: *The Journal of Southern History*, 61, 1995, 3, pp. 481-518.

<sup>189</sup> Jordan, *White Over Black*, p. 151. For early Virginian legislation, which for example ›punished only black men for interracial rape«, see A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr., Barbara K. Kopytoff, *Racial Purity and Interracial Sex in the Law of Colonial and Antebellum Virginia*, in: Werner Sollors, *Interracialism. Black-White Intermarriage in American History, Literature, and Law*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 2000, pp. 81-140, here p. 82.

<sup>190</sup> Higginbotham, Jr., Kopytoff, *Racial Purity and Interracial Sex in the Law of Colonial and Antebellum Virginia*, p. 82.

<sup>191</sup> Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, p. 201. Also in other American slave societies, ›it was rare for female slaves to be openly accepted as concubines«, Blackburn, *The American Crucible*, p. 360.

hierarchy«, but due to complexion and slave biographies they still remained »at the lower rungs of the social hierarchy«. <sup>192</sup> Although the Hemingses' experiences are not representative for sexual relationships in plantation slavery, they exemplify the complex intersections of ›racial‹, social and gender status, which frequently disappeared in later accounts of so-called ›miscegenation‹.

With regard to the Jefferson-Hemings controversy, ›interracial‹ sexually was ahistorically simplified in two closely related ways. Firstly, from his early biographers to the Jefferson establishment of the mid-twentieth century, the ›racial‹ identity of Sally Hemings was perceived as eliminating any possibility of the affair, because Jefferson with his moral (or ›racial‹) convictions would never have crossed the color line. <sup>193</sup> Having emerged at the heyday of hypodescent theories and upheld throughout the era of ›one-drop-rule‹ and segregation, this reading reveals more about contemporary ›racial‹ attitudes than about those in early America, when in »gentlemen's houses [...] the virtue of unfortunate slaves [was] assailed with impunity«. <sup>194</sup> In fact, with the reification of ›race‹ in the course of the nineteenth century, this category increasingly overshadowed the social mechanisms of slavery, in which the legalized subordination of enslaved women and their children prevented against the alleged social dangers of ›racial‹ amalgamation.

The second explanation that is frequently given for Jefferson's alleged hypocrisy in context of his relationship with Sally Hemings and his slaveholding in general, is that the founder held a clear preference for light-skinned slaves, or even a »sympathy for mulattoes whom he considered especially victimized by the system«. <sup>195</sup> In fact, it has been argued that Jefferson »treated his slave relations according to their

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<sup>192</sup> Von Daacke, *Freedom Has a Face*, p. 174. For the context, see pp. 173-177.

<sup>193</sup> The »it's unthinkable« defense of Jefferson« especially in the pre-DNA debates on Jefferson and Hemings is analyzed in Clarence Walker, *Mongrel Nation*, pp. 68-74.

<sup>194</sup> [Richmond] *Examiner*, Sep. 25, 1802. On the contemporary nexus of ›race‹, polygenism and slavery, see, among others, Roy Martinez, *On Race and Racism in America. Confessions in Philosophy*, State College: Pennsylvania State University Press 2010, pp. 69-74; Edward Beasley, *The Victorian Reinvention of Race, New Racisms and the Problem of Grouping in the Human Sciences*, New York etc.: Routledge 2010, pp. 13 f.

<sup>195</sup> William G. Hyland, Jr., *Martha Jefferson. An Intimate Life With Thomas Jefferson*, Lanham etc.: Rowman & Littlefield 2015, p. 107. A third pattern of argument is addressed by Fred Lee, who outlined that the »opposed sides in the debate shared much common ground« in the »nationalist deracialization of Jefferson's desire«. Using the examples of Fawn Brodie, an early and especially uncritical advocate of Jefferson's affair with Sally Hemings, and Joseph Ellis, one of its late deniers, Lee illustrates how interpreters »judge and ultimately pardon Jefferson for owning slaves on the basis of psychology« and therewith provide for a color-blind reading of the affair, *id.*, *Reconsidering the Jefferson-Hemings Relationship*, p. 502.

percentage of ›white‹ blood«, thus representing an »abstract racial theorist«. <sup>196</sup> These readings draw especially on the privileges that light-skinned families like the Hemingses enjoyed, but also on some of Jefferson's remarks about skin color and slavery. Explicitly addressing the nexus of slavery and emerging concepts of ›race‹, both assessments try to link Jefferson's everyday contacts with slaves to his more general attitudes on the social and scientific meaning of human difference. While the legal and social implications of ›race‹ and slavery will be more closely analyzed in the following chapter, some thoughts have to be spent on how ›racial‹ considerations possibly shaped Jefferson's slaveholding and on the ways in which »Monticello and southern plantations of its ilk [... were] confounding the categories of race, class, and legal status«. <sup>197</sup>

Even prior to the Declaration of Independence, as Douglas Egerton has it, the hierarchy at Jefferson's Monticello was well established: »Just below himself on the social pyramid sat his wife, Martha, and his daughter, Patsy. Then came sixteen free white overseers and craftsmen, their wives and children, and eighty-three slaves«. <sup>198</sup> In another article dealing with Jefferson's enslaved relatives of the Hemings family, Egerton assumes that Jefferson's slave population was further divided according to the »static, racialist view of blacks« that Jefferson »applied [...] to his black kinsmen«. The scientific conviction of ›black‹ inferiority, which according to Egerton contradicted »Enlightenment ideas of progress«, led him to believe that only sufficiently ›whitened‹ slaves qualified for a life in freedom. Drawing on calculations, in which Jefferson demonstrated that a certain number of mixtures was »clearing the issue of negro blood«, Egerton perceives »Jefferson's treatment of the six octoroon children born to Sally Hemings« as additional evidence for his »precise racialist distinctions«. <sup>199</sup> It is hardly proven, however, that Jefferson held the »principle [...] to allow such of his slaves as were sufficiently white to pass for white men, to withdraw quietly from the plantation«, as his granddaughter reported. <sup>200</sup> It

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<sup>196</sup> Egerton, *Thomas Jefferson and the Hemings Family*, p. 345.

<sup>197</sup> Hodin, *The Mechanisms of Monticello*, p. 385.

<sup>198</sup> Douglas R. Egerton, *Death or Liberty. African Americans and Revolutionary America*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 2009, p. 42.

<sup>199</sup> Egerton, *Thomas Jefferson and the Hemings Family*, pp. 338 (›static‹, ›progress‹), 340 (›kinsmen‹), 342 (›octoroon‹), 344 (›precise‹); TJ to Francis C. Gray, Mar. 4, 1815 (›clearing‹).

<sup>200</sup> Ellen Randolph Coolidge to Joseph Coolidge, reprinted in Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*, pp. 258-260, here p. 258.

is known, on the contrary, that slaves of darker complexion could also obtain privileged positions in Jefferson's plantation.

Although Jefferson let two of his more light-skinned slaves escape the plantation, had another two purchase their freedom and freed five by his will, there was no general manumission of those slaves he deemed ›white‹ enough to pass.<sup>201</sup> As the more or less voluntarily freed slaves were all members of the Hemings family, while numerous mixed-›race‹ slaves remained enslaved (as did most of the Hemingses), it seems more likely that Jefferson's ›feelings about the meaning of blood and family were never totally overridden by his feelings about blood and race‹, but this did not equal the recognition of his relatives.<sup>202</sup> ›Race‹, in this exceptional case, was not an absolute and unchangeable disqualifier for liberty, although the social and ›racial‹ stamps of slavery were not easily cast off and would significantly restrict the freed slaves' prospects. Against this backdrop, Annette Gordon-Reed states that it was ›class, along with race and status [that] governed the way Jefferson viewed his children‹. If Jefferson wanted to ›make them [...] free white citizens‹, it was not as ›junior versions of the public Thomas Jefferson‹, but in any modest occupation that would ›get them out of that status and [...] into a different race‹.<sup>203</sup>

The exceptional manumissions of some members of the Hemings family, however, only proves the rule that slavery on Jefferson's plantations and the social death it brought along was principally inescapable, regardless of skill or skin-color. Although, as in Jefferson's case, plantation hierarchies frequently ›privileged the light-skinned children of enslaved women and White slaveowners‹ and implicitly facilitated a persistent culture of colorism, which was characterized by the more general ›privileging of light-skinned African Americans over darker-skinned African Americans‹, it would be misleading to assume that American slavery has always and uniformly been based on the ›dehumanization of Africans on the basis of race‹ (with ›race‹ as a naturalistic concept of collective identities structuring not only the master-slave relation, but in its gradations also the social order within the

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<sup>201</sup> On Jefferson's manumissions, see Stanton, ›Those Who Labor for My Happiness‹, pp. 179-195; or, more critical but less precise, Paul Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders*, pp. 152-157.

<sup>202</sup> Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello*, p. 286. As Lucia Stanton emphasizes, the special treatment of Sally Hemings' children also bears witness to her ›strength and agency‹ and her influence on Jefferson, cf. Stanton, ›Those Who Labor for My Happiness‹, p. 179.

<sup>203</sup> Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello*, p. 599.

enslaved population).<sup>204</sup> Similarly, the ›race‹-centered »Rule of Hypodescent« was not actually »developed to ensure that there would be a surplus of people, who, by being defined as black, could be ›legally‹ enslaved« – as in early American slave codes it was the slave rather than the ›racial‹ status that was matrilineally inherited.<sup>205</sup> At least internally, the institution of slavery with its established logics of disenfranchisement and dehumanization had no need for ›racial‹ categories to distinguish masters and servants. In the course of the eighteenth century, ›race‹ emerged as an additional parameter to define the slaves' ›nature‹, but did not do away with the complex social relations within the plantation.<sup>206</sup>

This complexity can be exemplified with the relationship between the equally free and ›white‹ craftsmen and overseers at Monticello, who were »jockeying for position within the power structure of the plantation«.<sup>207</sup> In November 1804, Jefferson was just being re-elected to presidency, James Oldham informed his employer about the »moast savage treatment which I receiv'd from Gabriel Lilley and John Perry«. Oldham, a joiner working for Jefferson between 1801 and 1808, was complaining about two overseers who violently exercised their control not only over the enslaved workforce on Jefferson's plantations. In his lament about the overseers' cruel regime, Oldham even associated with mistreated slaves, when he informed the absent master about the »barbarity that he made use of with little Jimmy«, James Hemings, whom Lilly »whipd [...] three times in one day« so that the »boy was raly not able to raise his hand to his head«. <sup>208</sup> In the very next year, when Hemings escaped the plantation and the slave driver's brutality, Oldham supported the fugitive

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<sup>204</sup> Beverly Daniel Tatum, ›Why Are All the Black kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?‹ And Other Conversations About Race, New York: Basic Books 1997, p. 44 (›privileged‹); Margaret L. Hunter, Race, Gender, and the Politics of Skin Tone, New York etc.: Routledge 2005, p. 18 (›privileging‹); Dorothy E. Roberts, Killing the Black Body. Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty, New York: Pantheon Books 1997, p. 23 (›dehumanization‹). For a contemporary account of the continuing issue of colorism, see Margaret L. Hunter, The Persistent Problem of Colorism. Skin Tone, Status, and Inequality, in: *Sociology Compass*, 1, 2007, 1, pp. 237-254.

<sup>205</sup> Hunter, Race, Gender, and the Politics of Skin Tone, p. 18.

<sup>206</sup> Archaeological plantation studies have long recognized »these sites [as] occupied by inhabitants who differed in race, economic standing, and social status«, John Solomon Otto, Cannon's Point Plantation, 1794-1860. Living Conditions and Status Patterns in the Old South, Orlando: Academic Press 1984, p. 2.

<sup>207</sup> Barbara J. Heath, ›Your Humble Servant‹. Free Artisans in the Monticello Community, in: Theresa A. Singleton, ›I, Too, Am America‹. Archaeological Studies of African-American Life, Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia 1999, pp. 193-217, here p. 201.

<sup>208</sup> James Oldham to TJ, Nov. 26, 1804. For some context on this example for the »closeness of whites and blacks during slavery«, see Gordon-Reed, The Hemingses of Monticello, pp. 576-579, here p. 577.

and asked Jefferson not to place him »under the direction of Lilley« again.<sup>209</sup> The »diverse and sometimes divisive community« Jefferson had created at Monticello was thus not strictly structured by ascribed ›racial‹ identities. Especially during his long absences, free and enslaved workers engaged in complex struggles for social status, suggesting an »economic rather than racial definition of internal hierarchies« on Jefferson's plantation.<sup>210</sup>

Corresponding to the power struggles between Monticello's free workers, the slave population was also divided in multiple complex ways. Enslaved individuals were privileged or discriminated through their occupation, the training they received, or even by the name they were given.<sup>211</sup> Although a phenotypical »proximity to whiteness« probably offered opportunities to advancements within the plantation hierarchy,<sup>212</sup> a fair complexion was not uniformly advantageous and key roles were not necessarily assigned to light-skinned slaves. Dark-skinned George Granger, for example, served three years as an overseer for a large part of Jefferson's lands and therewith »became responsible for Jefferson's principal source of income«. Exceptional also in his payment and rations of food and clothing, Granger certainly occupied a distinguished position on the plantation and possibly benefitted from a »special arrangement« with Jefferson.<sup>213</sup> Even a privileged slave as him, however, was not safe from the masters' reservations about his industriousness. Thus, Thomas Mann Randolph reported to the absent Jefferson that »George [...] is not careless in general tho' he procrastinates too much«.<sup>214</sup>

What present day interpreters understand as ›race‹ was not the only and not even the crucial parameter that defined ones' role within the social system of the slave plantation. Just like Jefferson legally inherited his position as a master, his slaves passed down their subordinate status from generation to generation. As in other

<sup>209</sup> James Oldham to TJ, Jul. 16, 1805. In this case, Jefferson wanted to »excuse the follies of a boy«, but Hemings did not »act [...] agreeable to his promis« and never returned to Monticello, TJ to James Oldham, Jul. 20, 1805 (›follies‹); James Oldham to TJ, Jul. 23, 1805 (›agreeable‹).

<sup>210</sup> Heath, ›Your Humble Servant‹, pp. 195 (›diverse‹), 193 (›economic‹).

<sup>211</sup> On the importance of naming patterns in Jefferson's Virginia, see Philip D. Morgan, *Interracial Sex in the Chesapeake and the British Atlantic World, c. 1700-1820*, in: Jan Ellen Lewis, Peter S. Onuf (eds.), *Sally Hemings & Thomas Jefferson. History, Memory, and Civic Culture*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press 1999, pp. 52-84, here p. 66.

<sup>212</sup> Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello*, p. 122. Here, Annette Gordon-Reed examines how for the females of the Hemings family their fair skin and their femininity served as opportunities for social advancement: »We cannot simply assume that the Hemingses, living in a world that values whiteness – whites' culture, hair, skin color, and facial features – regarded their status as slaves as vastly more meaningful than the reality that they were also part white«, *ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>213</sup> Stanton, ›Those Who Labor for My Happiness‹, pp. 120-123.

<sup>214</sup> Thomas Mann Randolph to TJ, Apr. 29, 1798.

historical slave societies the latter were »subjected to certain common stereotypes«, claiming a somewhat ›natural‹ but not necessarily ›racial‹ hierarchy between inferior slaves and their superior masters. Although North American slavery was early on established on the trade with West African slave ports, modern ›racial‹ categories only emerged in the course of the eighteenth century and rationalized traditional images of slaves as representing ›black‹ nature. While the long established internal power structures of slavery did not have to rely on the ›racial‹ distinctions they yielded, the political and cultural discourses about the legitimacy of the institution were increasingly drawing on the new ›racial‹ rhetoric of the time. In this context, Thomas Jefferson emerged as one of the key figures to translate the institutionalized everyday racism of slavery into the language of ›race‹.

#### 4.2 Racism and American Slavery

»Societal racism«, as George Fredrickson has it, »did not require an ideology to sustain it so long as it was taken for granted«. Only in the »revolutionary era«, he continues, »there was a challenge of sorts« directed especially at the institution of slavery, which came along with the formulation of explicit racist ideologies – on the sides of both proslavery and abolitionist thinkers.<sup>215</sup> Implicitly, some scholars have exemplified this ›racial‹ turn with Thomas Jefferson and his attitude on slavery. In the contrast between the »piecemeal measures that he had suggested in his notes and as a young British American jurist« and »his postrevolutionary and unswerving commitment to slaves as a separate nation and slavery as a tyrannical Old World system«, Jefferson appears once more as the embodiment of American discourses on ›race‹ and slavery.<sup>216</sup> Whereas the previous chapter looked especially at the everyday mechanisms of slavery that had established the ›societal racism‹ before it was couched in ›racial‹ terms, the following will examine the nexus of slavery, ›race‹ and racism in the wider political discourse, dealing particularly with Jefferson's ideological impetus to an ambivalent critique of slavery.

In multiple ways, Jefferson's attitudes on slavery were shaped in close connection to the changing political landscape of colonial America. It was not least in the colonies' struggle against imperial rule that »slavery [... became] the root metaphor of Western political philosophy, connoting everything that was evil about power

<sup>215</sup> Fredrickson, *The Arrogance of Race*, p. 202.

<sup>216</sup> Dierksheide, *Amelioration and Empire*, p. 34.

relations«. <sup>217</sup> Early on, Jefferson drew on this symbolism when in 1774 he found British Americans the »slaves, not of one, but of 160,000 tyrants« – the British electorate. <sup>218</sup> Throughout his political career, Jefferson applied the slave metaphor in political contexts such as imperial rule, public service or Barbary piracy – constantly addressing the injustice of absolute domination. At the same time, Jefferson failed to politically act on the »wrongs we have committed on a foreign people«, but rather benefitted from the maintenance of the institution. <sup>219</sup> Against this backdrop, post-revolutionary attacks on the institution of chattel slavery were firmly embedded in the discourses of civic and natural rights and confronted slaveholding revolutionaries like Jefferson with the fundamental dilemma of American independence. <sup>220</sup>

In the history of natural rights thinking, slavery has long been a focal point of philosophical controversy and maintains a sore spot in many liberal theories. In fact, as one commentator put it, »eighteenth-century American colonists were hardly alone in their hypocrisy«, but were »in the company of their seventeenth-century philosophical forebears, among the greatest of whom was John Locke«. <sup>221</sup> Especially the father of classical liberalism and mentor of the founding fathers, who famously characterized slavery as a »vile and miserable [...] estate of man« in the opening paragraphs of his magnum opus, is frequently invoked for his implicit justification of African American slavery and his explicit protection of the institution in his legislative proposals for the colony of Carolina. <sup>222</sup> Exemplifying the theoretical dilemma between natural law and slavery that found its practical manifestation in the American Revolution, the discussion of Locke's attitude on slavery and the scholarly controversies about his possible racism provide a useful background for the analysis of Jefferson's take on natural rights and their limitations.

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<sup>217</sup> Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*, p. 21. As Peter Dorsey argues, the »slave metaphor was used so frequently and in so many contexts in the revolutionary era that it became a ritualistic and normative part of Whig rhetoric and thus something like a dead metaphor«, id., *Common Bondage*, p. 43.

<sup>218</sup> TJ, *Draft of Instruction to the Virginia Delegates in the Continental Congress (MS Text of A Summary View, etc.)*, July 1774.

<sup>219</sup> TJ to Thomas Cooper, Sep. 10, 1814. On Jefferson as a political profiteer of slavery, see Wills, »Negro President«.

<sup>220</sup> Cf. Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, p. 232.

<sup>221</sup> James Farr, »So Vile and Miserable an Estate«. *The Problem of Slavery in Locke's Political Thought*, in: *Political Theory*, 14, 1986, 2, pp. 263-289, here p. 263.

<sup>222</sup> Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, p. 102 (»vile«). Cf. Bernasconi, Mann, *The Contradictions of Racism*.

In Locke's theoretical framework, slavery emerges as a just institution only when an individual violates the natural rights of another and »by his fault, forfeited his own life, by some act that deserves death«, so that »he, to whom he has forfeited it, may [...] delay to take it, and make use of him to his service«. Individually based on the rejection of natural law, by which the »offender declares himself to live by another rule than that of reason and common equity« and relapses into the status of any »wild beast or noxious brute«, Locke translated this condition to the »state of war continued«. <sup>223</sup> Jefferson later picked up on this Lockean trope in his notion of the »captive nation« of African slaves in North America and many later interpreters perceived Locke's elaborations as directly linked to his involvement with colonial slavery. <sup>224</sup> However, although Locke's characterization of the fundamental rightlessness of slaves and the institution's inherent violence is applicable to various forms of slavery, he knew from rich experience that the enslaved African Americans in the colonies were by no means »captives, taken in a just and lawful war«, but rather »slaves bought with money«. <sup>225</sup>

In a reassessment of his earlier work on Locke and slavery, James Farr resorts to Jefferson's paraphrase of the Lockean »madman« to conclude that both philosophers met the definition: »with respect to slavery, Locke as well as Jefferson had a ›kink in his head‹ and ›neither reason nor fact‹ can untangle the contradiction of his conduct and writings«. Contrasting his intimate knowledge about the realities of colonial slavery (»Locke knew virtually everything«) with the narrow constraints of ›just‹ slavery in his theoretical work, Farr settles for the assessment that Locke »not only held a ›strange doctrine« but »was strangely indifferent to contradiction on so grave a matter and, worse to the lives and liberties of the persons made slaves in the new world«. <sup>226</sup> This analytical surrender to some degree results from a deficient understanding of racism and the rejection of recent research into Locke's attitude on human varieties. Characterized by the persistent controversies about the concepts of

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<sup>223</sup> Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, pp. 161 (›offender‹), 165 (›fault‹, ›delay‹), 207 (›beast‹, ›war‹).

<sup>224</sup> Cf. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire*, p. 149. On the differences between Locke's and Jefferson's moral assessment of slavery, see *id.*, *The Mind of Thomas Jefferson*, pp. 241 ff.

<sup>225</sup> Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, pp. 207 (›captives‹), 147 (›bought‹). In a comment on Farr's assessment and with reference to his own earlier work on the subject, Seymour Drescher hints at Locke's failure to address the »tension between slavery as a condition of war continued and as a condition of sale concluded«, *id.*, *On James Farr's ›So Vile and Miserable an Estate‹*, in: *Political Theory*, 16, 1988, 3, pp. 502-503, here p. 503.

<sup>226</sup> James Farr, *Locke, Natural Law, and New World Slavery*, in: *Political Theory*, 36, 2008, 4, pp. 495-522, here pp. 495 (›madman‹, ›slavery‹), 504 (›virtually‹), 516 (›doctrine‹, ›indifferent‹).

›race‹ and racism, Farr’s decades-long struggle with charges of racism strikingly resembles the respective debates within Jefferson studies.

In the 1980s, when James Farr initially dealt with allegations of Locke’s racism, he based his discussion on a twofold definition of racism in a weak (›bigotry or racial prejudice‹) and in a strong sense (›entail[ing] both an empirical theory that explains black racial inferiority and a moral theory that justifies enslavement because of racial inferiority‹). Rejecting the latter for the lack of explicit evidence in Locke’s writings, Farr is diffident also about the former ›mild‹ definition and holds that even if Locke was racially biased, ›weak racism or bigotry of this kind need not and does not undermine the Lockean premise that all humans – even savages – are born free and equal‹. ›For these reasons‹, Farr concludes ›that Locke, qua theorist at least, was no racist‹.<sup>227</sup> Reconsidering the issue more than twenty years later, Farr gives more weight to the increasing ›charges of racism‹ and finds the ›question of Locke’s racism [...] neither unimportant [...] nor decisively answered‹. Still, however, Farr cannot trace in Locke’s writings any ›component of racial doctrine or theory to justify, normatively, why racial inferiors deserved their bondage‹, and is left with the just-war theory as its only vindication, ›however far afield it proved from the realities of the new world‹.<sup>228</sup>

Beyond this narrow definition of ›philosophical racism‹ as the ›empirical‹ theory of ›racial‹ hierarchy combined with consequential normative implications, other scholars have emphasized how Locke has contributed to the legal conditions of colonial rule and contributed to the rationalization of the resulting inequalities through the essentialization of ›whiteness‹ as a condition for full humanness. Treating Locke as ›one of the principal architects of a racialized form of slavery‹, since he advocated the ›reconciliation of Christianity with the enslavement of baptized Africans‹ in his administrative and constitutional writings, Bernasconi and Mann resort to the ›just war‹ theory as Locke’s only justification for slavery, also in the colonial context: ›The fact that it is not a good argument for the purpose does not establish that the argument was not intended for that purpose [...]. Racists often use

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<sup>227</sup> Farr, ›So Vile and Miserable an Estate‹, pp. 277 (›bigotry‹), 278 (›empirical‹, ›weak‹), 281 (›reasons‹, ›qua theorist‹).

<sup>228</sup> Farr, Locke, Natural Law, and New World Slavery, pp. 508 (›charges‹), 509 (›question‹), 510 (›component‹, ›afield‹).

bad arguments: it is the only kind they have«. <sup>229</sup> Charles Mills is more reluctant to accept this theoretical inconsistency in Locke's work and suggests to resolve it »by the supposition that Locke saw blacks as not fully human and thus as subject to a different set of normative rules«. <sup>230</sup> Epistemologically, this claim is supported by Gary Taylor, who reads Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* as promoting an essentialized idea of ›whiteness‹, culminating in the assessment that for Locke »it is as certain that man is white as it is certain that man is rational or that man is an animal«. <sup>231</sup> With Jennifer Welchman, this equation can be attributed to colonial realities, which at the time of Locke's writing had factually established a fundamental division of mankind: »Once slavery exists it is no longer the case that human beings subsequently born are all ›Creatures of the same species and rank‹«, but rather »members of one species but two ranks, right-bearing human persons and non-right-bearing human property«. <sup>232</sup> Consequently, even though Locke's theory of natural rights did not provide for explicit justifications of colonial slavery, his thought exemplified the ambivalence of liberalism vis-à-vis colonial power structures and laid the philosophical foundations for establishing liberal values in a slaveholding society.

As with Thomas Jefferson and the founders' generation, the alleged hypocrisy of Locke's liberal thought was early on addressed by abolitionist commentators. The American Revolution and its aftermaths, however, provided Jefferson and his contemporaries with the unique opportunity to politically act out their ideas of natural law and to reveal the extent of its ›racial‹ constraints. <sup>233</sup> With regard to slavery, the colonial discourses on political and chattel slavery became increasingly distinguished in the course of the political events leading to American independence. While Jefferson unsuccessfully applied natural rights arguments in pre-revolutionary efforts to challenge individual enslavements, his rhetoric shifted towards a perception of African slavery as an Old World evil, which could not be

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<sup>229</sup> Bernasconi, Mann, *The Contradictions of Racism*, pp. 90 (›principal‹), 94 (›reconciliation‹), 101 (›fact‹).

<sup>230</sup> Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract*, Ithaca etc.: Cornell University Press 1997, p. 68.

<sup>231</sup> Taylor, *Buying Whiteness*, p. 317.

<sup>232</sup> Jennifer Welchman, *Locke on Slavery and Inalienable Rights*, in: *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 25, 1995, 1, pp. 67-81, here p. 80.

<sup>233</sup> This refers to William Wiecek's notion of the ›implicit racial exceptions‹, which were allegedly contradictory to the ›all-men-are-born-free-and-equal phrase of the Declaration of Independence‹, id., *Somerset. Lord Mansfield and the Legitimacy of Slavery in the Anglo-American World*, in: *The University of Chicago Law Review*, 42, 1974, 1, pp. 86-146, here p. 98.

overcome by immediate abolition.<sup>234</sup> Concomitantly, the institution was increasingly based on the ascription of ›racial‹ differences, manifesting a naturalistic objection to the concept of natural rights.

Jefferson first applied natural law when he represented the fugitive indentured servant Samuel Howell in a law suit against his master. The grandson of a ›white‹ woman and an African American, Howell was held in servitude on the basis of the 1705 slave code, which imposed thirty-one years of bondage on the illegitimate »bastard child, by a negro, or mulatto« and a further act of 1723, which extended the bondage to the children of the ›mixed-race‹ servant. Jefferson denied that this ruling applied to his client, as it does not »extend [...] to the grandchildren«, which in that case regain the liberty they possess by natural law. In his argument, Jefferson mentions »either compact, or capture in war« as legitimate grounds for slavery and clearly understands temporal servitude as a limited contractual exception from natural law. The status of his client thus clearly differed from that of Jefferson's slaves, who as slaves in the captive sense »follow the condition of the mother« with »person and labor [...] being the property of the master«. Based on laws established to »prevent the abominable mixture of white men or women with negroes or mulattoes«, Jefferson repeatedly hints at the skin color dimension, stating that the prosecutors reading of the laws »would make servants of the children of white servants or apprentices, which nobody will say is right«. Although perpetual bondage is thus implicitly limited to ›nonwhites‹, Jefferson perceives natural freedom as not generally affected by skin color:

»The conclusion I draw from this, is, that since the temporary service of a white woman does not take from her the appellation of a freewoman [...] and her children under this very clause are free [...], neither does the temporary servitude of a mulatto exclude her from the same appellation, and her children also shall be free under this clause, as the children of a free woman. So that the meaning of this clause is, that children shall be slaves, where slavery was the condition of the mother; and free, where freedom either immediate or remote, was her condition: excepting only the instance of the mulatto bastard, which this act makes a servant, though the mother was free«.<sup>235</sup>

Despite his claim that »under the law of nature [...] we are all born free«, Jefferson's plea recognizes hereditary slavery as a consequence of war and on the basis of

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<sup>234</sup> Cf., amongst others, Dierksheide, *Amelioration and Empire*, pp. 29-36.

<sup>235</sup> Jefferson, *Argument in the case of Howell vs. Netherland*, pp. 477 f.

the masters' property rights.<sup>236</sup> In the case of African slavery in the American colonies, however, Jefferson was well aware that ›just war‹ was not the rightful source of bondage. On the contrary, as he accused George III in his draft for the Declaration of Independence, the emperor »has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating it's most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere«. <sup>237</sup> As captives from an ›unjust war‹, African slaves were violated in their natural rights and unlawfully subjected to the »perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submissions on the other«. <sup>238</sup>

After the revolution, Jefferson theoretically upheld his moral aversion to slavery and on many occasions, albeit most often privately, addressed the evil of slavery, seemingly aware of the ethical dilemma of the liberal society of slaveholders. In a much-cited passage from the *Notes*, he argues that the institution of slavery was not to be justified on the basis of natural or divine law and expects the moral authority to be on the side of the suppressed:

»Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep for ever: that [...] a revolution of the wheel of fortune, an exchange of situation, is among possible events: that it may become probable by supernatural interference! The Almighty has no attribute which can take side with us in such a contest«. <sup>239</sup>

Jefferson expressed similar sentiments throughout his life and only three months prior to his death still claimed that »on the question of the lawfulness of slavery, [...] I certainly retain my earlier opinions«. <sup>240</sup> Consistent in his condemnation of slavery in principle, Jefferson also sustained his opposition against immediate abolition and the integration of free ›blacks‹, an attitude he based on the firm support of property rights and the supposed inherent differences of African Americans.

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<sup>236</sup> Ibid., p. 480. Just one year earlier, Jefferson chased his runaway slave Sandy with a reward and a newspaper advert, bearing witness to his conviction in the legitimate ownership of the enslaved individuals on his plantations.

<sup>237</sup> TJ, Autobiography, Jan. 6 - Jul. 29, 1821.

<sup>238</sup> Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, p. 288.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., p. 289.

<sup>240</sup> TJ to Edward Everett, Apr. 8, 1826. In this Jefferson objected to Everett's position on slavery and particularly to his claims that the »great relation of servitude, in some form or other, with greater or less departures from the theoretic equality of man, is inseparable from our nature« and that »domestic slavery [...] is not [...] to be set down as an immoral and irreligious relation«, Speech of the Hon. Edward Everett, in the House of Representatives of the United States, March 9, 1826, [...], Boston: Dutton and Wentworth 1826, p. 16.

Given his fundamental objections against the legitimacy of slavery, Jefferson had an ambiguous relationship to »that kind of property, for it is so misnamed«. <sup>241</sup> With regard to his fellow slaveholders, Jefferson was well aware that »masters were guilty« and that their slaves' »degraded condition, both bodily and mental, [...] was very much the work of themselves and their fathers«. <sup>242</sup> Possibly drawing on the example of his own family history, Jefferson knew about the daily routines of enslavement, the physical and structural violence involved in the institution and how these practices were passed down from generation to generation. In context of the American Independence, however, Jefferson perceived social stability and the protection even of illegitimate private property as overriding principles, limiting the initial application of natural law to the free population of the former colonies.

Early on, Jefferson and fellow revolutionaries perceived slavery as a social time bomb and slaves as possible allies of the British »foes in our bowels«. <sup>243</sup> Already his initial attack on George III for maintaining slavery in the colonies concludes with a telling plot twist. After unlawfully enslaving and selling Africans to American plantations, the king

»is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty of which he has deprived them, and murdering the people upon whom he also obtruded them; thus paying off former crimes committed against the liberties of one people, with crimes which he urges them to commit against the lives of another«. <sup>244</sup>

Alarmed by Dunmore's Proclamation and countless rumors about British conspiracies, especially Southern planters were afraid of large-scale slave rebellions. Even prior to »British ›encouragement««, slave resistance had constantly threatened the legitimacy of the institution in colonial America and »challenged the notion that slaves were content with their lot«. <sup>245</sup> In the revolutionary era, slaves were quick in assuming the natural rights rhetoric of their revolutionary masters and thus lent weight to the abolitionist cause. While the colonists initially reacted with intensified

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<sup>241</sup> TJ to John Holmes, Apr. 22, 1820.

<sup>242</sup> Onuf, *The Mind of Thomas Jefferson*, p. 226 (›guilty‹); TJ to Edward Coles, Aug. 25, 1814 (›degraded‹).

<sup>243</sup> TJ to the First Magistrate of Each County, Jan. 20, 1781.

<sup>244</sup> TJ, III. Jefferson's ›Original Rough Draught‹ of the Declaration of Independence, Jun. 11-Jul. 4, 1776. Similar accusations were not uncommon in revolutionary America, cf. James V. Lynch, *The Limits of Revolutionary Radicalism. Tom Paine and Slavery*, in: *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 123, 1999, 3, pp. 177-199, here p. 183.

<sup>245</sup> Woody Holton, ›Rebel against Rebel‹. Enslaved Virginians and the Coming of the American Revolution, in: *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 105, 1997, 2, pp. 157-192, here p. 168 (›British‹); Wolf, *Race and Liberty in the New Nation*, p. 15 (›challenged‹).

slave patrols and capital punishments, Dunmore's proclamation also contributed »to unify the Virginians in opposition to [...] their two greatest fears: parliamentary ›enslavement,‹ and the possibility of insurrection by the slaves that were everywhere around them.«.<sup>246</sup>

As the social conflict between the status groups of masters and slaves was fought against the backdrop of natural rights discourses, the statuses themselves were increasingly naturalized. Consequently, Jefferson aimed at the inclusion of hitherto marginalized groups such as lower classes, immigrants and religious dissenters in an attempt to homogenize ›white‹ American society, while at the same providing naturalistic justifications for the persistent exclusion of African American slaves (and, in a different way, Native Americans, but this will be discussed in the following chapters). In a war that had the potential to unleash unrest between various social classes, an increasingly ideological ›societal racism‹ served as a means to consolidate a »deeply divided and carefully defined hierarchical society« through the exclusion of ›racialized‹ outsiders.<sup>247</sup> Albeit ›race‹ and ›racial‹ difference emerged in revolutionary discourses not as a normative justification for the enslavement of Africans, it was significant as the crucial argument against abolition.

Contrary to earlier assessments, neither eighteenth century Virginia nor colonial America at large were fully unified as ›white‹ societies in support of ›racial‹ slavery. Only in the course of the revolution, a ›racialized‹ slavery became a precondition for »Virginia to nourish representative government in a plantation society [...] to speak a political language that magnified the rights of freemen, and [...] that brought Virginians into the same commonwealth political tradition with New Englanders.«.<sup>248</sup> Although, early on, colonial elites »accorded racial privileges to non-slave-holding whites as a way of enlisting their social support«, admitting them to elections and militias and providing affordable access to land-ownership, these measures were neither based on established notion of ›races‹ nor sufficiently ensured poor ›whites‹ support of the elitist cause in the 1770s.<sup>249</sup> Following the strug-

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<sup>246</sup> Mark Lawrence McPhail, *The Rhetoric of Racism Revisited. Reparations or Separation?*, Lanham etc.: Rowman & Littlefield 2002, p. 42.

<sup>247</sup> McDonnell, *The Politics of War*, p. 10.

<sup>248</sup> Edmund S. Morgan, *Slavery and Freedom. The American Paradox*, in: *The Journal of American History*, 59, 1972, 1, pp. 5-29, here p. 29.

<sup>249</sup> Blackburn, *The American Crucible*, p. 234. For an assessment of how the »[i]nitial mobilization for war exposed preexisting tensions and divisions among white Virginians«, see Michael A. McDonnell, *Class War? Class Struggles during the American Revolution in Virginia*, in: *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 63, 2006, 2, pp. 305-344, here p. 316.

gles to unify the Southerners for the allegedly common cause, the planter aristocracy had to consider truly revolutionary measures: In order to support recruitment, the assemblies in Virginia and South Carolina decided to compromise the natural right of property and arranged a redistribution of slaves through enlistment bounties.<sup>250</sup>

The resolution about slave bounties was only one of many political measures during and after the revolution that aimed at socially and economically integrating a variety of groups from the margins of colonial society. In the same vein, Jefferson's efforts to entitle »every person of full age« to at least fifty acres of land, his attempts to alienate Hessian mercenaries from their British commanders, and not least his commitment to religious liberty answered the purpose of mitigating social disparities.<sup>251</sup> Limited efforts toward social and even economic equality among the free population were important steps in the establishment of the independent republic, whose architects soon »worried that the propertyless might use their newfound sovereignty to threaten the property of the best citizens«.<sup>252</sup> In this context, a commercial but agrarian society consisting of independent and land-owning citizens seemed to Jefferson the best precaution against the development of mass poverty in industrialized urban communities.<sup>253</sup> At the sight of the social upheavals connected to precarious wage labor, many perceived the maintenance of slavery as the lesser evil, as it symbolically uplifted the lower ranks of the free population. To some degree, as Alex Gourevitch aptly summarized, the »freedom of some presupposed the enslavement of others«.<sup>254</sup>

The paradoxical role of slavery as both a social stabilizer and a social threat persistently appears in Jefferson's theoretical and practical approaches to the issue. Both tropes, however, are unfolded by Jefferson not merely in the Enlightenment language of natural rights, but also against the backdrop of Enlightenment speculations about human varieties. Only in combining natural history and natural law could Jefferson develop a consistent theoretical framework, in which slavery was to be condemned for moral reasons, but in which it could not be abandoned unless the

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<sup>250</sup> Cf. Philyaw, *A Slave for Every Soldier*.

<sup>251</sup> TJ, I. First Draft by Jefferson, bef. Jun., 1776. See also Butterfield, *Psychological Warfare in 1776*; Ragosta, *Fighting for Freedom*.

<sup>252</sup> Alex Gourevitch, *From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth. Labor and Republican Liberty in the Nineteenth Century*, New York etc.: Cambridge University Press 2015, p. 34.

<sup>253</sup> Cf, among others, TJ to John Jay, Aug. 23, 1785.

<sup>254</sup> Gourevitch, *From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth*, p. 36.

post-slavery separation of masters and slaves was guaranteed. Based on »two distinct conceptions of nature that derived from two different sciences«, Jefferson recommended »to establish political regimes that recognize natural rights and that employ race as a fundamental criterion for defining the make-up of political communities«. <sup>255</sup> This ostensible contrast between racism and natural law appeared nowhere more clearly than in Jefferson's lifelong struggle with the institution of slavery.

As quoted above, Jefferson deemed inconceivable that ›whites‹ should be subjected to hereditary slavery. Additionally, in his favorable account of the natural capacities of Native Americans in the *Notes*, Jefferson laments that an »inhuman practice once prevailed in this country of making slaves of the Indians«. <sup>256</sup> With African Americans, however, slavery was still illegitimate and a violation of natural law, but the »real distinctions which nature has made« inhibited their liberation. As a »foreign people«, »whose color has condemned them [...] to a subjection to the will of others«, Jefferson also perceived Africans as naturally prone to enslavement, »require[ing] less sleep« and with their limited mental capacities suffering less from the condition of bondage. <sup>257</sup> Jefferson articulated his assessment of ›black‹ inferiority in the modern language of ›race‹ and with his biologicistic vocabulary contributed to the scientification of racism. At the same time, the stereotypical image he drew of the African American slave mirrored pre-›racial‹ ideas of human difference, which in the century prior to the revolution had facilitated the establishment of African slavery in the American colonies.

Corresponding to individual acts of dehumanization in the everyday practices of slavery, slaves were collectively »seen to carry the marks of childlike and animalistic inferiority« in various historical contexts. <sup>258</sup> In the course of transatlantic slavery the slavish personality was eventually inscribed into the skin color of the enslaved, so that Jefferson could characterize African American slaves as wearing an »immovable veil of black« at a time when, in fact, »there were numbers of slaves who were [...] lighter than many European masters«. <sup>259</sup> In colonial America, however, dark skin was not uniformly associated with African American slaves, but could be as-

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<sup>255</sup> James W. Ceaser, *Natural Rights and Scientific Racism*, in: Thomas S. Engeman (ed.), *Thomas Jefferson and the Politics of Nature*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 2000, pp. 165-189, here pp. 166 f.

<sup>256</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, pp. 186 f.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 264 (›real‹), 265 (›sleep‹); TJ to Thomas Cooper, Sep. 10. 1814 (›foreign‹, ›color‹).

<sup>258</sup> Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, p. 53.

<sup>259</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, pp. 264 f.; Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, p. 61.

cribed to all kinds of peoples. By the mid-eighteenth-century, Benjamin Franklin viewed not only Africa as »black or tawny« and Asia as »chiefly tawny«, but also the »Spaniards, Italians, French, Russians and Swedes [...] of what we call a swarthy complexion«. <sup>260</sup> Against this backdrop, anti-slavery writers understood that skin color was a »rather weak basis of ranked differences in interracial societies« and predicted that »if negroes are to be slaves on Account of colour, the next step will be to enslave every mulatto [...], then all the Portuguese, next the French, then the brown complexioned English, [...] till there be only one free man left, which will be the man of the palest complexion«. <sup>261</sup>

This wide-spread denial of the »reality of significant or essential difference between black and white«, at least as a normative justification for slavery, was possibly equivalent to a »rejection of ›race‹«, but in any case did not indicate the pre-revolutionary absence of racist exclusion in context of slavery. <sup>262</sup> Since the establishment of European colonies in the Americas, the exploitation of native and imported laborers was constantly linked to discourses about their natural and inherent difference. With »strenuous racism and imperialist apologetics« Spanish clerics justified the early enslavement of Amerindians, resorting to Aristotelian notions of barbarism and ›slaves by nature‹. <sup>263</sup> When this practice was complemented and eventually replaced by the importation of slaves from Africa, Iberian and later British slaveholders applied religious frameworks of difference that had been established during the centuries of Islamic enslavement of sub-Saharan Africans. As their mythological progenitor Ham was subjected to his brothers, Africans were believed to be destined servants of Muslims and Christians – a fact that was supported by their heathen condition and physical difference. <sup>264</sup> Religious explanations for the inherent (and phenotypical) difference of Africans prevailed throughout the history of American slavery and on the eve of the revolution proslavery writers assumed that »God formed them in common with oxen, dogs etc., for the benefit of the white people alone«. <sup>265</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Franklin, *Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind*, p. 71.

<sup>261</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, 1772, as cited in Jordan, *White Over Black*, p. 255.

<sup>262</sup> Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave*, pp. 96 (›reality‹), 98 (›rejection‹).

<sup>263</sup> Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery. From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800*, London etc.: Verso 1997, p. 151.

<sup>264</sup> Cf. Sweet, *The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought*, esp. pp. 148 f.

<sup>265</sup> Anonymous writer as cited in Wolf, *Race and Liberty in the New Nation*, p. 17.

When, after the revolution, »American colonials had greater reason to emphasize the physical differences between themselves and Negroes in order to confirm the validity of their social order«, Jefferson and his contemporaries essentialized (and effectively ›racialized‹) skin color categories and charged the notion of blackness with a quasi-religious idea of depravity.<sup>266</sup> Although Jefferson not explicitly joined in with contemporary polygenism, he made use of its scientific equivalent when he considered »to degrade a whole race of men from the rank in the scale of beings which their Creator may perhaps have given them«.<sup>267</sup> Through this assessment, which resulted from his observations of the alleged physical and mental deficiencies of ›blacks‹, Jefferson turned around the more traditional ascriptions of metaphysical innate differences, trying to give them scientific validity with empiricist methods.

Jefferson's emphasis on skin color and recent frameworks of ›racial‹ classification signaled a further step in the ›racialization‹ of slavery. Around 1800, southern judges approved the »presumption of every black person being a slave« and eventually linked phenotype with legal status.<sup>268</sup> At the same time, however, the owners of ›mixed-race‹ and supposedly Indian slaves had to prove the legitimacy of enslavement, »a benefit withheld from anyone deemed by appearance to be ›black«.<sup>269</sup> In line with Jefferson's ›triracial‹ metaphor for the American population, Native Americans were increasingly defined as ›persons of color‹, but had to be protected against a form of enslavement that was now widely limited to the descendants of Africans.<sup>270</sup>

This transition to ›racial‹ definitions of slavery can be illustrated with the example of Jefferson's Virginian compatriot St. George Tucker, who still in 1796 developed a proposal of gradual emancipation, which even allowed for the integration of free ›blacks‹, albeit as precarious tenants lacking civil rights, within the American society.<sup>271</sup> Assessing that any »state of slavery is [irreconcilable] to the principles of democracy« unless the slaves are »first degrade[d] [...] below the rank of human

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<sup>266</sup> Jordan, *White Over Black*, p. 255.

<sup>267</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, pp. 270.

<sup>268</sup> North Carolina judge John Louis Taylor as cited in Thomas D. Morris, *Southern Slavery and the Law, 1619-1860*, Chapel Hill etc.: The University of North Carolina Press 1996, p. 25.

<sup>269</sup> Randall Kennedy, *Sellout. The Politics of Racial Betrayal*, New York: Pantheon Books 2008, p. 22.

<sup>270</sup> Cf. Forbes, *Africans and Native Americans*, pp. 255 ff.

<sup>271</sup> For a close investigation of the following case, see Taylor, *The Internal Enemy*, pp. 85-110.

beings«, Tucker elaborated on Jefferson's (and Hume's) supposition that »Africans are really an inferior race of mankind« and suggested to find a »middle course, between the tyrannical and iniquitous policy which holds so many human creatures in a state of grievous bondage, and that which would turn loose a numerous, starving, and enraged banditti, upon the innocent descendants of their former suppressors«. <sup>272</sup> Rejected by the legislation, Tucker soon dissociated himself from his cautious efforts at abolitionism and fully endorsed the ›racial‹ exceptions of natural rights in his legal interpretations of slavery and freedom. Refusing unconditional egalitarianism on the basis of the Bill of Rights, Tucker argued to keep slaves in the »same state of bondage that they were in at the revolution, in which they had no concern, agency, or interest«. These slaves, he explained, could be identified on the basis of their ›racial‹ characteristics such as a »flat nose and woolly head of hair«, as traditionally »all negroes, Moors, and mulattoes [...] were slaves«, whereas »all American Indians are prima facie free« and »all white persons are and ever have been free in this country«. <sup>273</sup>

Tucker's extensive references to Jefferson in his earlier *Dissertation on Slavery* bear witness to the third president's influence on the ›racialization‹ of slavery. <sup>274</sup> Additionally, Tucker's abolitionist cousin George Tucker complained that Jefferson's »opinion is but too popular here«, so that »several masters [were] ready to justify their severity to these poor wretches, by alleging, that they are an inferior race, created only to be slaves«. Backed by the »countenance of [Jefferson's] name«, traditional stereotypes and »folk belief about Negroes« were translated into supposedly scientific assessments of ›black‹ nature and set the course for the scientific racism of the nineteenth century. <sup>275</sup> With regard to Jefferson, however, phenotypical observations and biologist speculations were only one part of his ›racial‹ rhetoric on slavery. To the ›physical‹ objections against the incorporation of free ›blacks‹, Jefferson added equally important ›political‹ and ›moral‹ arguments, which demonstrate the

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<sup>272</sup> St. George Tucker, *A Dissertation on Slavery*, Philadelphia: Mathew Carey 1796, pp. 50 f. (›state‹, ›first‹), 89 (›inferior‹), 90 (›middle course‹).

<sup>273</sup> *Hudgins vs. Wrights*, Nov. 1806, in: William W. Hening, William Munford (eds.), *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Appeals of Virginia*, Vol. 1, Philadelphia 1808, pp. 134-144, here pp. 141 (›same‹), 139 (›flat‹, ›negroes‹, ›Indians‹, ›white‹).

<sup>274</sup> Cf. Tucker, *A Dissertation on Slavery*, pp. 77n(v), 83n(z), 86n(a).

<sup>275</sup> Cited according to George Tucker, *George Tucker Criticizes Jefferson's Views of Racial Differences*, in: Willie Lee Rose (ed.), *A Documentary History of Slavery in North America*, Athens etc.: University of Georgia Press 1999, pp. 76-88, here pp. 76 f. (›opinion‹, ›masters‹, ›countenance‹); Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation*, p. 262. See also Smedley, *Race in North America*, pp. 196-200.

complexity of early ›racial‹ thought and the persistence of non-›racial‹ modes of exclusion.

As St. George Tucker rightly interprets the *Notes on the State of Virginia*, it was not primarily natural differences, but the »early impressions of obedience and submission, which slaves have received among us, and the no less habitual arrogance and assumption of superiority, among the whites« that for Jefferson rendered »unfit the former for freedom, and the latter for equality«. <sup>276</sup> Recognizing as Orlando Patterson some centuries later that the presence of slavery »in all slaveholding societies [...] posed grave moral and spiritual dangers«, Jefferson used racist (and ›racial‹) stereotypes of ›blacks‹ for the refutation of immediate abolition, but simultaneously warned against the racist constrictions of American egalitarianism. <sup>277</sup> With their »deep rooted prejudices«, the ›whites‹, in fact, seemed to him ›unfit for equality‹, since centuries of slavery had injured their morals, and would contribute as much to the impending ›race war‹ as the freed ›blacks‹. <sup>278</sup> Read from a present-day perspective, the »post-slavery experiences of black people were consonant with his predictions«, but dealing exclusively with utopian scenarios of abolition and colonization Jefferson failed to address what must have been obvious to him: that slavery (and racism) produced the imagined homogeneity he wanted to protect. <sup>279</sup>

On the contrary, in his early writings on slavery, Jefferson treated the institution itself as the most dangerous social explosive within the American Union, particularly worrying about the social turmoil that would inevitably follow an immediate abolition and result »in the extermination of the one or the other race«. <sup>280</sup> This conflict »in Jefferson's account is explicitly imagined as civil war«, revealing ›race‹ as a »form of social relation« and contradicting some of Jefferson's claims about ›black‹ inferiority, because only the recognized »potential for black equality [...] activates the fantasy of race war«. <sup>281</sup> What Ladelle McWhorter in her Foucauldian approach to Jefferson's racism has interpreted as the ›transposition of the old Puritan anti-

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<sup>276</sup> Cf. Tucker, *A Dissertation on Slavery*, p. 77.

<sup>277</sup> Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, p. 36.

<sup>278</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 264.

<sup>279</sup> Gordon-Reed, *US has yet to overcome its tortured racial past*.

<sup>280</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 264.

<sup>281</sup> Nikhil Singh, *Racial Formation in an Age of Permanent War*, in: Daniel Martinez HoSang, On-eka LaBennett, Laura Pulido (eds.): *Racial Formation on the Twenty-First Century*, Berkeley etc.: University of California Press 2012, pp. 276-301, here p. 292. Singh also hints at the »great irony, as Jefferson implicitly recognized, [...] that it was the crimes committed by whites that constituted the real historical basis for the threat that was in turn displaced onto and into black bodies«, *ibid.*

sovereign race war discourse into the discursive machinery of the sovereign state« is in fact reminiscent of more traditional debates, in which class featured as the social explosive that Jefferson feared in slavery.<sup>282</sup>

It is a traditional position in studies of ›race‹ and racism that »racism was first formulated in conflict between classes« and that ›race‹-thinking even preceded ›class‹-thinking.<sup>283</sup> In fact, early modern social discourses are closely linked to the emergence of the notion of ›race‹, which was initially applied to describe more or less noble descent in various European societies. The »Gothic myth in Spain, the Norman myth in England, or the Frankish myth in France«, as Wulf D. Hund interprets them, commonly »declared political dominance to be a manifestation of inherited superior blood«, but did not associate ›race‹ with global hierarchies of human kind or skin color categories.<sup>284</sup> When established social hierarchies were increasingly challenged on the basis of shifting power relations, ›race‹ initially functioned as a discursive means to (re-)naturalize traditional class differences therewith warrant the stability of hierarchical societies.

With special regard to Virginia and the rise of colonial racism, Edmund Morgan has pointed out that early American discourses on slavery »must be viewed in the context of contemporary English attitudes toward the poor«, which anticipated racist stereotypes of ›black‹ slaves as »in the eyes of unpoor Englishmen the poor bore many of the marks of an alien race«. <sup>285</sup> Bacon's Rebellion of 1676 demonstrated class divisions in colonial America, but diverted the social pressure to the indigenous population of the frontier. After the »chilling prospect of class war« in America had been further mitigated by the increasing enslavement of Africans and the following ›racialization‹ of slaves and slavery, ›white‹ lower classes were effectively integrated in an imagined community of racial superiors, although in times of crisis their political support had to be enlisted with prospects of property in land or in

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<sup>282</sup> McWhorter, *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America*, p. 88.

<sup>283</sup> Ruth Benedict, *Race and Racism*, London: Routledge 1942, p. 111. See also Hannah Arendt, *Race-Thinking Before Racism*, in: *The Review of Politics*, 6, 1944, 1, pp. 36-73, claiming that a pre-racist ›race-thinking‹ originated in European class struggles of the seventeenth century. On the other hand, racism is discussed as an »instrumentality of class rule«, which simplifies but rightly hints at the nexus of social status groups and processes of racist exclusion, Peter McLaren, Foreword. *Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy Against the Resurgence of Confederate Ideology*, in: Pierre W. Orelus (ed.), *Rethinking Race, Class, Language, and Gender. A Dialogue with Noam Chomsky and Other Leading Scholars*, Lanham etc.: Rowman & Littlefield 2011, pp. ix-xvii, here p. xiv.

<sup>284</sup> Hund, *Racism in White Sociology*, p. 27.

<sup>285</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, pp. 325 f.

slaves.<sup>286</sup> In this context, the »vicious traits of character attributed by Englishmen to their poor could in Virginia increasingly appear to be the exclusive heritage of blacks« and (in combination with traditional stereotypes of religious and cultural otherness) turned enslaved and free ›blacks‹ into what Jefferson called »this blot in our country«.<sup>287</sup>

In light of these Marxist interpretations of slavery and ›race‹, Jefferson's failure to politically act according to his moral principles could be described as representing the »inability of a class to challenge effectively, or even to understand, the basic conditions of its own survival«.<sup>288</sup> In his writings, however, the ›racialization‹ of slavery and African American slaves did not entirely overshadow the underlying social and legal implications of the institution. In a brief socioeconomic survey for Jean Baptiste Say, responding to his considerations of moving to the United States, Jefferson explained that in the United States »most of the hired labor here is of people of color, either slaves or free«. This, he continues, was not primarily due to their natural inferiority, but because »white laborers [...] are less subordinate, their wages higher, and their nourishment much more expensive«.<sup>289</sup> Despite his reference to colored subordination, Jefferson characterized the relation of ›black‹ and ›white‹ mainly in socioeconomic terms, as even free African Americans were paid and nourished worse than their lower class Euro-American counterparts.

In another letter, Jefferson makes a connection between British working classes and the enslaved labor force in the southern United States, »comparing the condition and degree of suffering to which oppression has reduced the man of one color, with the condition and degree of suffering to which oppression has reduced the man of another color«, while »equally condemning both«. In contrast with British class society, however, which constantly reproduced the »pauperism of the lowest class, the abject oppression of the laboring, and the luxury, the riot, the domination, and the vicious happiness of the Aristocracy«, the condition even of the miserable American slaves is preferable to the lot of major parts of the British population. Cautiously including »that portion whose color has condemned them« into the

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<sup>286</sup> Nathan I. Huggins, *The Deforming Mirror of Truth. Slavery and the Master Narrative of American History*, in: *Radical History Review*, 49, 1991, 3, pp. 25-48, here p. 36.

<sup>287</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, p. 386 (›vicious‹); Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 214 (›blot‹).

<sup>288</sup> Stanley Elkins, Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism. The Early American Republic, 1788-1800*, New York etc.: Oxford University Press 1993, p. 198.

<sup>289</sup> TJ to Jean Baptiste Say, Mar. 2, 1815.

American »class of laborers«, Jefferson finds that »even these are better fed in these states, warmer clothed, and labor less than the journeymen or day laborers of England«. As integral part of American economy, slaves were decidedly preferable to the British mass of paupers, who exemplified the injustice of Old World aristocracy. Thus, the damnable institution of slavery effectively warranted the social equality and therewith the »happiness and the morality of America«. <sup>290</sup>

Jefferson's objection against a large number of free paupers of any skin color, along with his conviction that a benevolent form of slavery was favorable to the misery produced by European class societies, was to become a »classical argument for the defense of slavery«. <sup>291</sup> Additionally, the existence of slavery and the emergence of its ›racial‹ justification contributed to the symbolic homogenization of the ›white‹ population of the United States, whose »rights of citizenship« were principally available for »all free white persons« that migrated there. <sup>292</sup> Against this backdrop it has been noted that ›whiteness‹ and citizenship entwined »because what a citizen really was, at bottom, was someone who could help put down a slave rebellion or participate in Indian wars«. <sup>293</sup> Even more important than slavery's legal implications might have been the subtle dynamics of racism, which ensured the lower class ›whites‹ of symbolic superiority towards enslaved and free African Americans and therewith integrating them into the body politic of ›white‹ America, while constantly suffering from economic exploitation.

The symbolic uplifting of lower classes through racist societalization has been theoretically discussed with the Bourdieuan framework suggested by Anja Weiß. Interpreting racism as »symbolically reproduced and a structure of social inequali-

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<sup>290</sup> TJ to Thomas Cooper, Sep. 10. 1814. Written in the aftermaths of the War of 1812, Jefferson also addressed the issue of military defense and explained the differently sized armies with reference to the forms of government in the United States and Great Britain: »our men are so happy at home that they will not hire themselves to be shot at for a shilling a day. Hence we can have no standing armies for defence, because we have no paupers to furnish the materials. The Greeks and Romans had no standing armies, yet they defended themselves. The Greeks by their laws, and the Romans by the spirit of their people, took care to put into the hands of their rulers no such engine of oppression, as a standing army«. The British, by contrast, resorted to the »resources of despotism and pauperism«, *ibid.*

<sup>291</sup> Bassani, *Liberty, State, and Union*, p. 58.

<sup>292</sup> Quotes from early American acts on citizenship in Marilyn C. Baseler, ›Asylum for Mankind‹. *America 1607-1800, Ithaca etc.*: Cornell University Press 1998, p. 206. In the same vein, Thomas Jefferson linked his gradual emancipation proposal with an immigration scheme and planned to »to send vessels at the same time to other parts of the world for an equal number of white inhabitants; to induce whom to migrate hither, proper encouragements were to be proposed«, Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 264.

<sup>293</sup> Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color. European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*, Cambridge etc.: Harvard University Press 1998, p. 25.

ty«, which produces and ascribes »racist symbolic capital« to groups and individuals, she holds that especially »persons with a low level of economic and cultural capital experience racist symbolic capital as a central and explicit dimension of their class position«. <sup>294</sup> As numerous studies have shown, racism played an important role in the formation of self-conscious ›white‹ working classes in Europe and the United States, but this symbolic function of racism was hardly an invention of the nineteenth century. <sup>295</sup> From the antisemitic pogroms conducted by European peasants during the ›People's Crusade‹ of the eleventh century to Bacon's Rebellion, the poor fought for beneficial ranks in the racist hierarchy of their societies that made up for their socioeconomic subordination. <sup>296</sup> Jefferson and his contemporaries were well aware of this stabilizing function of racist hierarchies, as Adam Smith exemplified in his comparison of the economic statuses of indigenous Americans and European underclasses. While the »very meanest person in a civilized country« might feel inferior to the wealthy in his society, Smith assessed, his accommodation »exceeds that of many an African king, the absolute masters of the lives and liberties of ten thousand naked savages«. <sup>297</sup> In the American slave society, even the lowest of ›white‹ citizens could feel superior to the increasingly ›racialized‹ mass of slaves and enjoy the vague prospect of acquiring human property for themselves. <sup>298</sup> A hasty abolition of slavery would thus not only unleash a bulk of formerly oppressed indi-

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<sup>294</sup> Weiß, *Racist Symbolic Capital*, pp. 42 (›structure‹), 47 and passim (›racist symbolic capital‹), 48 (low level). On the tradition of similar arguments for example in Max Weber's concept of ›ethnic honor‹, see Hund, *Negative Societalisation*, p. 64.

<sup>295</sup> Cf., among others, Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*; Satnam Virdee, *Racism, Class and the Racialized Outsider*, Houndmills etc.: Palgrave Macmillan 2014.

<sup>296</sup> For the First Crusade, see, Thomas Asbridge, *The First Crusade. A New History*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 2004, pp. 83 ff.; Fredrickson, *Racism*, pp. 19-20. On lower-class persecution of Jews in the later ›Shepherds' Crusade‹, cf. David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence. Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages*, Princeton etc.: Princeton University Press 1996, pp. 43-68. On Bacon's Rebellion, cf. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, esp. pp. 327-330. For the complex class relations in colonial Virginia, see also Peter Thompson, *The Thief, the Householder, and the Commons. Languages of Class in Seventeenth-Century Virginia*, in: *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 63, 2006, 2, pp. 253-280.

<sup>297</sup> Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Edinburgh: Nelson 1843 [1776], p. 6. In an earlier draft, Smith had compared, with the same conclusion, a »common day labourer in Britain or in Holland« with an »Indian prince«. On the evolution of the text, see Jerry Z. Muller, *Adam Smith in His Times and Ours. Designing the Decent Society*, Princeton etc.: Princeton University Press 1993, pp. 65 ff. On its racist dimensions, cf. Hund, *Negative Societalisation*, pp. 68 f. See also Locke, *Two Treatises On Government*, p. 170, who inspired Smith's verdict with his assumption that in America the »king of a large and fruitful territory [...] feeds, lodges, and is clad worse than a day labourer in England«.

<sup>298</sup> This has later been systematically rationalized by the Southern proslavery thinker George Fitzhugh, who explicitly promoted the system of »negro slavery« to prevent the »reducing [of] white men any where to the condition of negro slaves here«, id., *Sociology for the South*, p. 94. For a critical discussion of Fitzhugh, see Hund, *Racism in White Sociology*, pp. 36-40.

viduals on a fragile new society, but also deprive it of the homogenizing impact of racist slavery.

Throughout his life, however, large-scale slave revolts in other colonies and particularly the Haitian Revolution reminded Jefferson that not only the abrupt abolition of the unlawful practice of slavery posed serious threats for the republican social order, but that a »revolution of the wheel of fortune, an exchange of situation, is among possible events« and that it might even »become probable by supernatural interference«.<sup>299</sup> In fact, Jefferson feared »two kinds of civil wars: those that would be the outcome of too early an emancipation and those that would result from one coming too late«, and certainly believed the latter to be the inevitable consequence of political inaction.<sup>300</sup> It was in context of the news from St. Domingue that Jefferson responded approvingly to St. George Tucker's plan for gradual emancipation and warned that »if something is not done, and soon done, we shall be the murderers of our own children«. Addressing the »revolutionary storm sweeping the globe«, Jefferson understood the overthrow of colonial slavery as part of the emancipatory project he and his countrymen had begun in 1776.<sup>301</sup> Nevertheless, his quasi-sociological reservations expressed in the *Notes* and the example of Haiti and the West Indies, where a »total expulsion of the whites [will] sooner or later take place«, supported his conviction that emancipation demanded the immediate expatriation of freed slaves to not interfere with the public good of the »white« American society.<sup>302</sup> In this context, as Jefferson later famously declared, slavery was for Americans as if they had a »wolf by the ear«. They could »neither hold him, nor safely let him go«, because »justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other«.<sup>303</sup>

Ideally, Jefferson suggested in his utopian and unspecific emancipation scheme, freed slaves should be »colonized to such place as the circumstances of the time should render most proper, sending them out with arms, implements of household and of the handicraft arts, feeds, pairs of the useful domestic animals, [... and] to declare them a free and independant people«.<sup>304</sup> At various times, Jefferson considered different destinations possible, but soon decided that the »blacks'« exile had to

<sup>299</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 289.

<sup>300</sup> Spahn, *Thomas Jefferson, Time, and History*, p. 65.

<sup>301</sup> TJ to St. George Tucker, Aug. 28, 1797.

<sup>302</sup> TJ to James Monroe, Jul. 14, 1793.

<sup>303</sup> TJ to John Holmes, Apr. 22, 1820.

<sup>304</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 264.

lie »beyond the reach of mixture« and outside the »whole Northern, if not the Southern Continent« of America, since he could not »contemplate, with satisfaction, either blot or mixture on that surface«. The »West Indies«, he believed, »offer a more probable and practicable retreat for them« and »Africa would offer a last and undoubted resort, if all others more desirable should fail us«. <sup>305</sup> Envisioning the social and ›racial‹ homogeneity of the United States, while also propagating the emancipation of ›blacks‹ and their possible ›civilization‹ in the »country of their origin«, the colonization of African Americans was an integral part of Jefferson's imperial project and will be further discussed in the subsequent chapters. <sup>306</sup> For Jefferson's attitude on slavery and its racist implications, it is crucial to note that in Jefferson's colonization proposals the claim of African ›racial‹ difference was only reluctantly formulated and was secondary to their alleged social and cultural incompatibility. This becomes obvious in his reaction to Gabriel's conspiracy, when he initially wanted to deport only criminal and rebellious ›blacks‹, both enslaved and free, »not to become a legitimate nation but to be severed from Virginia forever«. <sup>307</sup> Clearly not the result of naturalistic speculations, this proposal testifies Jefferson's recognition of African American political agency, while stressing the importance of their ongoing suppression. Even on the large scale Jefferson qualified his earlier emphasis on natural distinctions, when he called it a »solecism to suppose a race of animals created, without sufficient foresight and energy to preserve their own existence«, but he never compromised his judgement »that the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government«. <sup>308</sup>

Until the large-scale colonization of free and enslaved ›blacks‹ was practicable, Jefferson perceived the amelioration of slavery as the most effective remedy against slave rebellions and ›racial‹ unrest. This resulted in the ironic turn, that he, who had once opposed the spread of slavery in the new territories of the United States and throughout his life professed his support for (gradual and conditional) abolitionism, supported the diffusion of slavery in context of the Missouri crisis. <sup>309</sup> The slaves' »diffusion over a greater surface«, he argued, »would make them individually happier and proportionally facilitate the accomplishment of their emancipation; by di-

<sup>305</sup> Ibid., p. 270 (›beyond‹); TJ to James Monroe, Nov. 1, 1801 (›Northern‹, ›contemplate‹, ›West Indies‹, ›probable‹, ›Africa‹).

<sup>306</sup> TJ to John Lynch, Jan. 21, 1811.

<sup>307</sup> Dierksheide, *Amelioration and Empire*, p. 42.

<sup>308</sup> TJ to Frances Wright, Aug. 7, 1825; TJ, *Autobiography*, Jan. 6 - Jul. 29, 1821.

<sup>309</sup> Cf. Wolf, *Race and Liberty in the New Nation*, pp. 173 f.

viding the burthen on a greater number of co-adjutors«. <sup>310</sup> Cynically pleading for the improvement of the slaves' condition, Jefferson certainly knew about other favorable consequences of the admission of further slave states into the Union, politically and economically. While the three-fifth clause ensured Southern influence in the federal institutions, which made Virginia the leading force in support of further slave states' admission, the spread of slavery also opened interstate markets, which certainly benefitted the masters more than the slaves. <sup>311</sup> Moreover, as Peter Onuf has demonstrated, »diffusion would make slavery a national problem, not a narrowly and dangerously sectional one«, which not only threatened the social order of the American South, but also the very existence of the Union. <sup>312</sup> Reducing the concentration of slaves, thus, appeared as the precondition for emancipation because it limited the harmful effects of the institution on the American society and population. <sup>313</sup> Adding to the physical threat, posed by possible slave uprisings to the lives and property of the master class, Jefferson perceived this negative impact especially in the constant corruption of morals through the »perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions«. <sup>314</sup>

This can be exemplified with an incident of not merely anecdotal quality: It is reported that Jefferson disciplined his grandson when he refused to return the salutation of a ›black‹ and asked: »Do you permit a negro to be more of a gentleman than yourself?«. <sup>315</sup> When for Jefferson it was the »manners and spirit of a people which preserve a republic in vigour«, the moral relapse of ›white‹ colonists behind African Americans, whose moral sense he believed intact, was only one consequence of the formers' permission to »trample on the rights« of slaves with impunity. Turning masters »into despots« and slaves »into enemies«, Jefferson understood the institution of slavery not as ›war continued‹ in a Lockean sense, but as a form of »cold war« that took its toll on both parties. <sup>316</sup> Only against the backdrop of slavery's complex social implications, as stabilizing class hierarchies and violating natu-

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<sup>310</sup> TJ to John Holmes, Apr. 22, 1820.

<sup>311</sup> Cf. Sidbury, Thomas Jefferson in Gabriel's Virginia, pp. 211-213.

<sup>312</sup> Onuf, Jefferson's Empire, p. 186.

<sup>313</sup> It is frequently assessed that, different from other proponents of diffusion, Jefferson actually »would diffuse the institution to end it«, William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion, Vol. 1: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854*, New York etc.: Oxford University Press 1990, p. 156.

<sup>314</sup> Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, p. 288.

<sup>315</sup> Cited from a letter of Thomas Jefferson Randolph, in B. L. Rayner, *Sketches of the Life, Writings, and Opinions of Thomas Jefferson*, New York: Francis and Boardman 1832, p. 337.

<sup>316</sup> Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, pp. 288 (›trample‹, ›despots‹, ›enemies‹), 291 (›manners‹); Onuf, Jefferson's Empire, p. 186 (›cold war‹).

ral rights, as preventing bloody upheavals and perpetuating the corruption of morals, Jefferson and his contemporaries came to perceive the »unfortunate difference of colour, and perhaps of faculty« as a »powerful obstacle to the emancipation of these people«. <sup>317</sup> Resorting to an agglomeration of older slave stereotypes in a timely language of biological difference, Jefferson's ›racial‹ characterizations of African Americans added a new chapter to racist justifications of slavery, but were primarily inspired by the sociopolitical conditions of the American founding and not by supposedly new ›findings‹ about the nature of man. The father of American independence was thus not a particularly original thinker when it came to the anti-›black‹ racism that was systematized in the aftermaths of the revolution. He noticed, however, that religious and cultural distinctions of enslaved people would probably not sufficiently fend off the calls for an immediate abolition, which would inevitably destroy the fragile experiment of American liberal democracy. How the racist construction of essentialized others in the cases of both Native Americans and African Americans featured prominently in Jefferson's imperial project of the American republic will be further examined in the following chapters.

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<sup>317</sup> Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, p. 270.

## 5. ›People plus Land‹

### Jefferson and the United States

As Jefferson's multidimensional involvement with slavery increasingly dominates the research into the founder's biography, current studies of Jefferson's political legacy similarly focus on his ›racial‹ thought and try to reconcile the exclusive and inclusive elements of his republicanism – albeit with varying results. When the publication of William Wiencek's controversial *Master of the Mountain* spurred public debates about Jefferson's role in American history,<sup>318</sup> political scientist Corey Robin provokingly characterized the Virginian as an »American Fascist«, who made his »lasting contribution to the American experiment [...] as a theorist of race domination«. Drawing a line from the *Notes on the State of Virginia* to the Nazis' ideology of ›Lebensraum‹, Robin interprets Jefferson's (anti-black) racism as the »perfect counterrevolutionary argument«, because it justified the maintenance of slavery in »ascrib[ing] to whites all the virtues of a ruling class [...] and to blacks all the deficits of a class to be ruled«. Uniting and symbolically uplifting the ›white‹ population of the United States as »equal and, more important, superior«, the institution of ›racialized‹ slavery resembled fascist efforts to establish a social utopia for the ›Herrenvolk‹ through the violent oppression of alleged ›Untermenschen‹. Complemented with the »notions of race war and land empires«, Robin finds in Jefferson's writings not only »one of the most vicious doctrines of racial supremacy the world had yet seen«, but also a social Darwinist »vision of life as permanent struggle«. Therewith, Jefferson and his legacy can be found in »what Hannah Arendt would later call [...] ›race imperialism‹ – which would find its ultimate fulfillment a century later, and a continent away«.<sup>319</sup>

Political philosopher Michael Hardt, by contrast, argues that »reading Jefferson [...] is one way to restore or reinvent the concept of democracy«. In fact, Hardt has »no doubt about the depth and consistency of Jefferson's racism with respect to both Native Americans and African Americans« (therewith going beyond the

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<sup>318</sup> A useful overview on public and scholarly reactions to Wiencek's publication is provided by Hattem, *Jeffersongate*.

<sup>319</sup> Corey Robin, *Thomas Jefferson. American Fascist?*, in: <http://coreyrobin.com/2012/12/01/thomas-jefferson-american-fascist/>. Notably, Robin does not consider the more plausible connection between fascist ideas of ›Lebensraum‹ and the imperial expulsions of Native Americans to make way for the agrarian state Jefferson envisioned.

›black‹ and ›white‹ mainstream reading) and in some of his respective elaborations recognizes »disturbing resemblances to numerous historical examples of projects for racial extermination«. Beyond these heavy biases, however, Hardt identifies precisely Jefferson's position on »racial difference« as the »central field in which he confronts the dilemma of social inequality« and upon which he develops his »rich and precise articulation of the concept of democracy«. A theoretical advocate of emancipating slaves and integrating Native Americans, albeit on racist terms, Jefferson was constrained by »his own racial prejudices and the practical, political pressures of race« and could not live up to his egalitarian convictions.<sup>320</sup> Torn between his philanthropy and the new nation's economic interests and property relations, Hardt's Jefferson sacrificed the high ideals that are suitable to inspire democratic thinking down to the present day.<sup>321</sup>

In their divergent assessments, Robin and Hardt represent two extreme positions in contemporary discourses on ›race‹ in Jefferson's political thought. Whereas the former strongly emphasizes Jefferson's racism towards African Americans and therefore disbelieves his anti-slavery expressions, the latter effectively abstracts the founder's egalitarian ideal from its (acknowledged) racist ballast. Beyond the methodological differences in dealing with Jefferson's commonly asserted racism and despite their contrary findings, both Robin and Hardt identify Jefferson as a principal spokesman of a particular mode of political thought. In Robin's reading, the exclusive elements of enslavement and deportation make Jefferson the progenitor of racist totalitarianism, while Hardt stresses his inclusive efforts for economic equality, at least among the ›white‹ population of the United States, as a fundamental contribution to democratic, if not socialist, thought.<sup>322</sup> It is part of the great and on-

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<sup>320</sup> Michael Hardt, *Jefferson and Democracy*, in: *American Quarterly*, 59, 2007, 1, pp. 41-78, here pp. 41 (›restore‹), 44 (›difference‹, ›central‹), 45 (›prejudices‹), 51 (›depth‹, ›disturbing‹), 73 (›rich‹).

<sup>321</sup> In the scholarly reactions to Hardt's essay, some of his assumptions about Jefferson's concept of democracy were challenged on account of the founder's »views of blacks, Natives, and women; his ownership of slaves; his expansionist vision of the West; and his appropriation of Native lands«. Contrary to Hardt's assessment, one responder presents Jefferson as a »truly impossible source for a new project of democracy in our own time« precisely because his democratic principles were »disrupted by racial difference«, cf. Betsy Erkkila, *Radical Jefferson*, in: *American Quarterly*, 59, 2007, 2, pp. 277-289, here p. 277 (›views‹); Shank, *Jefferson, the Impossible*, p. 297 (›disrupted‹), 298 (›impossible‹).

<sup>322</sup> Similar to Hardt, Hannah Arendt earlier assessed that Jefferson's suggestion to »divide the counties into wards of such size as that every citizen can attend, when called on, and act in person« »anticipated with an utmost weird precision those councils, soviets and Räte, which were to make their appearance in every genuine revolution throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries«, cf. TJ to ›Henry Tompkinson‹ (Samuel Kercheval), Jul. 12, 1816 (›divide‹); Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 241 (›precision‹).

going fascination with Jefferson that in both cases the authors have a point, but at the same time obscure the complexity of racism in Jefferson's political vision for the new republic. Resting more firmly on historical contextualization and theoretical reflections on racism, this chapter will explore the middle ground between the two accounts. But before Jefferson's racism can be discussed in context of American empire and nation-building, some thoughts have to be spent on the theoretical relation between the concepts of racism, imperialism and nationalism.

As early as 1944, Hannah Arendt stated that the »fact that racism is the main ideological weapon of imperialistic politics is so obvious that it seems as though many students prefer to avoid the beaten track of a truism«. Reducing racism (and imperialism) to the second half of the nineteenth century, she traces back the alleged ideology to an earlier »race«-thinking and its accompanying »antinational trends«. Building on a somewhat essentialist understanding of »races«, Arendt thus contrasted racist imperial policies with the »great principle upon which national organizations of peoples are built, the principle of equality and solidarity of all peoples guaranteed by the idea of mankind«. <sup>323</sup> In fact, she argued in a later review article, it is the »ultimate, political aim of the racial pseudo-sciences [to] prepare the destruction of societies and communities whose atomization is one of the prerequisites of imperialistic domination«. Conceding that »almost all modern brands of nationalism are racist to some degree«, she maintains the theoretical distinction of divisive »race«-thinking, manifested in aggressive state policies of imperialism, and the traditionally unifying idea of the nation as the »milieu« into which man is born, [...] to which one belongs by right of birth«. Only when the nation became identified with the state and the »solid cement of national sentiment« provided the »connection between the individuals of the national state«, modern nationalism could turn racist and be utilized for imperialist political projects. <sup>324</sup>

These assessments reverberate in more recent research, which principally distinguishes nation states based on egalitarian homogeneity from empires incorporating a variety of cultures hierarchically bound to a central authority. Under specific historical conditions, however, »empires can be nations writ large; nation-states em-

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<sup>323</sup> Arendt, *Race-Thinking Before Racism*, pp. 41 (»fact«), 42 (»great«), 44 (»antinational«).

<sup>324</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Nation*, in: *The Review of Politics*, 8, 1946, 1, pp. 138-141.

pires under another name«. <sup>325</sup> On the one hand, nations as empires could result from war and conquest, on the other, narratives of national identity could embrace missionary elements such as religion and concepts of progress. <sup>326</sup> Historically, territorial expansion was often accompanied by the adaption of national mythologies and liberal forms of nationalism, such as the American, fundamentally rest on the opportunity of individuals and collectives to join the national community. <sup>327</sup> Although guided by different principles, nationalism and imperialism can thus be complementary forces in structuring a polity and negotiating its relation to individual citizens and the society at large. This complex relationship is mirrored in the interplay with racism, which has often been interpreted as a driving force of imperialism, but as incompatible with nationalism.

Thus, Benedict Anderson denied the connection between nation and ›race‹, because ›nationalism thinks in terms of historical destinies‹, whereas ›racism dreams of eternal contaminations, transmitted from the origins of time through an endless sequence of loathsome copulations: outside history‹. According to Anderson, this difference in normative foundation corresponds to the varying scopes of the two discursive formations: Originating in ›ideologies of class‹ and in the ›claims to divinity among rulers‹, racism serves to ›justify not so much foreign wars as domestic repression and domination‹. This framework rightly accounts for the longevity of racism and for its inbound effects particularly in imperial contexts, as colonial domination ›convey[ed] the idea that if, say, English lords were naturally superior to other Englishmen, no matter: these other Englishmen were no less superior to the

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<sup>325</sup> Krishan Kumar, *Nation-States as Empires, Empires as Nation-States. Two Principles, One Practice?*, in: *Theory and Society*, 39, 2010, 2, pp. 119-143, here p. 124.

<sup>326</sup> The emergence of European nations is traced back to ›conquest and the peopling of distant countries by immigrants along the peripheries of the continent‹ in Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe. Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change, 950-1350*, London etc.: Penguin Books 1994, p. 3. On the role of religion for the formation of early European nationalism, see John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Manchester: Manchester University Press 2001 [1993], pp. 73-81. For early America, the nexus of religion, secularism and nationalism is analyzed in Sam Haselby, *The Origins of American Religious Nationalism*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 2015. Although committed to a secular republic, Haselby argues, ›Thomas Jefferson and James Madison struggled to leave religion behind. Unable to disentangle religion from techniques of governing and nation-state building, they turned to mystical and theological techniques for help in inventing modern nationalism‹, *ibid*, p. 49. For a general discussion of religion as a source of nationalist exclusion and other ›exclusionary origins of nationalism‹, see Anthony Marx, *Faith in Nation. Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 2003.

<sup>327</sup> For liberal nationalism as a pluralistic nationalism, see Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism*, Princeton etc.: Princeton University Press 1993, pp. 90-94.

subjected natives«. <sup>328</sup> Although Anderson seems to recognize the structural similarities between racist and nationalist imaginations of community and identity, he refrains from analyzing the connections between the categorical constructions of difference and reduces racism to its transhistorical, almost metaphysical, form. <sup>329</sup>

Responding to Anderson's spadework, Robert Miles more systematically approaches the connections of racism and nationalism, paying special attention to the »range of economic differentiation within the imagined communities of ›race‹ or ›nation««. Assuming the functional and historical commonality of racism and nationalism in dividing the »world's population [...] into natural and discrete units« at a time when nation states emerged and »science was first widely regarded as capable of revealing the truth about the natural and social world«, Miles refutes Anderson's claim of incoherency and asserts with reference to scientific racism that in some cases the »symbols of ›nation‹ were themselves grounded in ›race««. It was especially in the ideological projects of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, he points out, that the categories of ›race‹ and nation intertwined and coalesced »historical certainty« with a »reference to biology«. Nevertheless, both constructs neither amount merely to ideological vehicles justifying economic and social relations in and between capitalist societies nor result solely from immaterial discursive processes. In fact, as Miles himself admits, an »assessment of the interrelation between racism and nationalism is better achieved by means of historical analysis rather than by ahistorical, abstract determination«. <sup>330</sup> Prior to the historicized analysis of racism and nationalism in Jefferson's thought and political actions, however, some theoretical guidelines have to be clarified.

Étienne Balibar has outlined four premises about the interplay of racism and nationalism, which will inform the following interpretations: Nationalism, firstly, »cannot be defined as ethnocentrism except precisely in the sense of the product of a fictive ethnicity«. In this context, secondly, the various forms of »depreciation«

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<sup>328</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed., London etc.: Verso 2006 [1983], p. 154.

<sup>329</sup> Cf. Dietmar Schirmer, Introduction, in: Norbert Finzsch, Dietmar Schirmer (eds.), *Identity and Intolerance. Nationalism, Racism, and Xenophobia in Germany and the United States*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 1998, pp. xi-xxiii, here p. xxi. The latter problem of transhistoricity in Anderson's concept of racism is addressed in Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London etc.: Routledge 1994, pp. 356 f.

<sup>330</sup> Robert Miles, Recent Marxist Theories of Nationalism and the Issue of Racism, in: *The British Journal of Sociology*, 28, 1987, 1, pp. 24-43, here pp. 27 (›range‹), 28 (›world's‹, ›science‹), 30 (›symbols‹), 41 (›historical‹, ›reference‹, ›assessment‹).

and ›racialization‹ constitute a »historical system of complementary exclusions and dominations which are mutually interconnected«, and, thirdly, as a heterogeneous »structure of racism [...] maintains a necessary relation with nationalism«. Finally, the paradoxical concomitance of egalitarianism and racism is partly due to the »national environment itself«, as the proclaimed equality »is, first and foremost, an equality in respect of nationality«. <sup>331</sup> Hence, suggesting a dialectic relation between racism and nationalism (in which early modern imperialism coincided with racist conceptions of purity and contamination, as the current economic tensions of global capitalism are discussed in terms of migration and national sovereignty), Balibar's framework allows to account for the racist elements within Jefferson's national vision, while acknowledging the impact of early American nationalism (and imperialism) on the formation of contemporary racism.

Contrary to these theoretical assumptions and despite the prominent role of racist and explicitly ›racial‹ thought during and immediately after the American Revolution, some scholars continuously argue that in its first decades the »exceptional status of the American nation was not yet represented in racial terms«. <sup>332</sup> Still, however, the masterminds of the American Enlightenment dovetailed with their European contemporaries in the conviction that »their own national diversity was far more significant than any comparable distinction among non-European ›races‹«. <sup>333</sup> When the United States declared their independence to be recognized as an equal partner within the community of nations, this appeal was directed at the governments of Europe. <sup>334</sup> In fact, the new nation claimed its place among the ruling powers of the globe, endorsing an imperial world order in which for the last century

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<sup>331</sup> Étienne Balibar, Racism and Nationalism, in: Étienne Balibar, Immanuel Wallerstein (eds.), *Race, Nation, Class. Ambiguous Identities*, transl. by Chris Turner, London etc.: Verso 1991 [1988], pp. 37-67, here pp. 49 f. Especially in his last premise, Balibar is drawing on Louis Dumont's analysis of racism in egalitarian societies, id., *Homo Hierarchicus. The Caste System and Its Implications*, Chicago etc.: University of Chicago Press 1970, esp. pp. 262-265.

<sup>332</sup> Thomas McCarthy, *Race, Empire and the Idea of Human Development*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 2009, p. 71.

<sup>333</sup> Nicholas Hudson, From ›Nation‹ to ›Race‹. The Origin of Racial Classification in Eighteenth-Century Thought, in: *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 29, 1996, 3, pp. 247-264, here p. 251.

<sup>334</sup> Cf. David Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence. A Global History*, Cambridge etc.: Harvard University Press 2007. Armitage sheds light on the principal aim of the document, the declaration of independence, instead of reading it mainly as a declaration of rights. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, he argues, the »representatives of the United States announced that they had left the transnational community of the British Empire to join instead an international community of independent sovereign states«. For this claim to be valid, it had to stand the »judgement of a wider world« and ensure the »recognition and assistance from other European powers«, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 30 (›representatives‹), 32 (›judgement‹), 35 (›recognition‹).

Africans had provided the work force and Native Americans the land for the primitive accumulation of European wealth.<sup>335</sup>

With regard to Jefferson, it is frequently noted that the unsettled meaning of the term ›race‹ in Jefferson's writings, make it nearly impossible to study his attitude on Native Americans and African Americans as racism. Respective claims not only misrepresent the complex mechanisms of racism, which only (re-)produce ›race‹ in the first place, but often also propose to substitute the controversial term with seemingly better-defined categories such as ethnicity and nation. In this vein, Peter Onuf suggests that the »common ground for Jefferson's idea about race and slavery is his understanding of American and African national identities« and that, more generally, »Jefferson's conception of race proceeded from his recognition of distinct national identities – African, British, and American – during the extended Revolutionary crisis«. Acknowledging that the »terms ›race,‹ ›nation,‹ and ›people‹ were not yet clearly distinguished before the era of the American Revolution«, Onuf holds that from Jefferson's efforts to define the United States' post-revolutionary nationhood originated his ideas about the ›racial‹ difference especially of African American slaves.<sup>336</sup>

At first glance, Onuf's account of nation and ›race‹ resembles Tom Nairn's interpretation of racism as a mere derivative of nationalism. As an irrational and excessive form of nationalism, Nairn argues, racism unleashed the »catastrophic side« of capitalist progress that was unforeseen by Enlightenment philosophy.<sup>337</sup> With regard to Jefferson and early America, Onuf similarly perceives the emerging national consciousness and the exploitative power relations of slavery as preconditions for the transformation of widely undefined ›racial‹ thought into racist conceptions of human difference. Thus, Onuf states, Jefferson's initial take on slavery was primarily driven by the ambition to »define and secure national identities«, identifying African American slaves as a »captive nation« that had to be endowed with collective national independence outside of the American national borders.<sup>338</sup> Jefferson's emphasis on the social and political implications of the ›racial‹ conflict suppressed by the regrettable institution and his concern with the stability of the Union prompt

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<sup>335</sup> Cf. Wolfe, *Traces of History*, p. 3.

<sup>336</sup> Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire*, pp. 148 (›common‹), 158 f. (›conception‹), 159 (›terms‹).

<sup>337</sup> Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain. Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, 3<sup>rd</sup> exp. ed., Altona etc.: Common Ground 2003 [1977].

<sup>338</sup> Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire*, p. 160 (›define‹) and passim (›captive‹).

Onuf to prioritize Jefferson's nationalism over a supposedly subsidiary racism that only served to add a scientific smokescreen to the broader political project. This reading neglects the fact that racism even in its most biologicistic (›racial‹) form »is not so much a discourse on natural qualities as a discourse on naturalized social relations that deems certain people to be degraded«. <sup>339</sup> ›Race‹ and nation were closely interrelated categories in Jefferson's construction of American identity and its multiple opposites in the aftermaths of the Revolution, but the systematic exclusion of the peoples that were to be described as ›races‹ clearly preceded the American struggle for independence and its logics significantly influenced the narratives of American nationhood. With Balibar's framework of nationalism and racism, it could be answered to Onuf's emphasis on ›nation‹ (and Shuffleton's case for ›ethnicity‹) that it was racism which plays an important part in »producing the fictive ethnicity around which [nationalism] is organized«. <sup>340</sup>

The present chapter expands particularly on this function of racism in facilitating American imperial policies and the construction of an American national identity. The first part examines how racism was involved in Jefferson's policies of westward expansion and set the field for a later formalized doctrine of discovery. In the following, the concomitant discourse about American national identity will be analyzed with regard to its exclusive potential. Dealing, on the one hand, with Jefferson's concept of the ›American Man‹ and its relation to European, African and aboriginal counterparts, and, on the other hand, with his policies of citizenship and national integration, the underlying racism is discussed in its theoretical and practical dimensions. Against the backdrop of the historical conditions of the founding period, Jefferson's claim for homogeneity, comprising ›racial‹ and cultural purity, emerges as a critical driving force of American nation-building and imperialism.

## 5.1 Racism and Empire

In December 1780, at the climax of the Revolutionary War, when the victory of the Continental Army was anything but granted and only days before the troops of General Arnold drove his Virginian government out of Richmond, Thomas Jefferson wrote a letter to militia leader George Rogers Clark in which he described the project of the American states that became united in their struggle for independence

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<sup>339</sup> Dietmar Schirmer, Introduction, p. xx.

<sup>340</sup> Balibar, Racism and Nationalism, p. 49.

as the formation of an »Empire of Liberty«.<sup>341</sup> Ever since, this phrase that somewhat paradoxically captured the Enlightenment critique of aristocratic imperialism in the language of empire, has been used as a metaphor for the foundations of American nation-building in the late eighteenth century. The American nation, in the mainstream reading, is perceived as exceptional from the start, with its preeminent political thinker »conceiv[ing] of his ›empire of liberty‹ as one of like principles, not like boundaries«, as Gordon Wood recently put it.<sup>342</sup> In his letter to Clark, however, Jefferson's principal concern was the very boundaries of the Union, to which he wanted to »add [...] an extensive and fertile country«.<sup>343</sup> In fact, from his early revolutionary writings to his late comments on the state of the Union, Jefferson made no secret of his conviction that territorial expansion was the fundamental precondition of American liberty and independence. Based on »well founded prospects of giving liberty to half the globe«, Jefferson perceived the American Revolution as an event of world-historical impact, but the republic initially had to prove itself on the American continent and in contest with its indigenous population.<sup>344</sup>

Only in 1823, the Supreme Court officially announced that Native American's »rights to complete sovereignty [...] were necessarily diminished [...] by the original fundamental principle that discovery gave exclusive title to those who made it«.<sup>345</sup> This explicit juridification of occupation and conquest in the so-called ›doctrine of discovery‹, however, built on prevalent practices of dispossession and its underlying logics. In fact, an early version of this doctrine featured prominently in the American Revolution, when the settlers' insatiable thirst for land was one of the driving forces against British rule. Following the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which formally confirmed Native American ownership and against flourishing land speculations entitled only the Crown to rightfully purchase Trans-Appalachian lands, Jefferson and his contemporaries attacked the »feudal tenures«, because »America was not conquered by William the Norman, nor its lands surrendered to him, or any of his successors«. Conquerors (and discoverers) of America, in Jefferson's reading, were undoubtedly »our ancestors«, who made use of their natural freedom and set-

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<sup>341</sup> TJ to George Rogers Clark, Dec. 25, 1780.

<sup>342</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *The Invention of the United States*, in: Peter Nicolaisen, Hannah Spahn (eds.), *Cosmopolitanism and Nationhood in the Age of Jefferson*, Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter 2013, pp. 23-39, here p. 35.

<sup>343</sup> TJ to George Rogers Clark, Dec. 25, 1780.

<sup>344</sup> TJ to Samuel Huntington, Feb. 9, 1780.

<sup>345</sup> *Johnson v. M'Intosh*, 21 U.S. 574 (1823).

tled on the new shores where occupation gave them title.<sup>346</sup> Consequently, the »western lands were in a sense the major reward for having prevailed as victors in the American Revolution«, which was not only fought against British and Loyalist troops, but according to Jefferson's *Declaration of Independence* also against the »inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian savages«.<sup>347</sup>

In line with some of his fellow founders, who like George Washington promised a »System corresponding with the mild principles of religion and philanthropy towards an unenlightened race of men«, Jefferson proposed a dual strategy towards Native Americans and advocated the civilization of Natives »from motives of pure humanity only«.<sup>348</sup> As the stereotypical »embodiment of primitive simplicity and virtue«, real Native Americans were often addressed in a rhetoric »congruent with the new nation's benign perception of itself«.<sup>349</sup> In preparation of his second inaugural address, in which Jefferson planned to elaborate »on the subject of the Indians«, he thought this a »proper topic, not only to promote the work of humanising our citizens towards these people, but to conciliate to us the good opinion of Europe«.<sup>350</sup> In his public utterances, Jefferson overwhelmingly denied (or at least belittled) the violence involved in the colonial expansion. In more confidential letters, however, Jefferson revealed the shady sides of his agenda. If they wanted to »incorporate with us as citizens of the US«, Native Americans had to abandon their traditional ways and quickly conform to the mechanisms of a commercial society. The past and present confrontations were seen as empirical evidence of the superiority of the colonists' civilization, so that »our strength and their weakness is now so visible that they must see we have only to shut our hand to crush them«.<sup>351</sup> From his early legal career to his experiences as Virginia's wartime governor and third president,

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<sup>346</sup> TJ, Draft of Instruction to the Virginia Delegates in the Continental Congress (MS Text of A Summary View, etc.), July 1774. On Jefferson's concept of occupation, see, for example, Andrew Fitzmaurice, *Sovereignty, Property and Empire, 1500-2000*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 2014, pp. 199-203.

<sup>347</sup> Anthony J. Hall, *Earth into Property. Colonization, Decolonization, and Capitalism*, Montréal etc.: McGill-Queen's University Press 2010, p. 272; *American Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776)*, reprinted in: David Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence. A Global History*, Cambridge etc.: Harvard University Press 2007, pp. 165-171, here p. 169.

<sup>348</sup> George Washington to the United States Senate and House of Representatives, Oct. 25, 1791 (»System«); TJ to William Henry Harrison, Feb. 27, 1803 (»motives«).

<sup>349</sup> Matthew Dennis, *Red Jacket's Rhetoric. Postcolonial Persuasions on the Native Frontiers of the Early American Republic*, in: Ernest Stromberg (ed.), *American Indian Rhetorics of Survivance. Word Medicine, Word Magic*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press 2006, pp. 15-33, here p. 20.

<sup>350</sup> TJ, Notes for Inaugural Address, Mar. 3, 1805.

<sup>351</sup> TJ to William Henry Harrison, Feb. 27, 1803.

Jefferson witnessed, approved and designed a variety of strategies for the expropriation of Native American lands.

As early as the 1760s, Robert Miller has analyzed, Jefferson »demonstrate[d] his knowledge of the elements of Discovery« and was »well acquainted with the process Virginia governments had historically used to extinguish Indian titles«. <sup>352</sup> As a shareholder of the Loyal Land Company, whose activities in Western expansion were significantly disturbed by British policies, <sup>353</sup> and a lawyer, entrusted with the land claims of frontier farmers and investors, young Thomas Jefferson dealt with so-called ›Indian affairs‹ on a daily basis. His legal practice at Augusta court also provided Jefferson with first-hand information about indigenous opposition to the settlers' expansion. As a »scene of fierce fighting during the French and Indian War«, the frontier town of Staunton remained the site of Native American raids and contrasted Jefferson's vision of settler colonialism as a win-win situation. <sup>354</sup>

In Thomas Jefferson's political agenda as in American history more generally, the »relations between indigenous people and the United States« represented the »relations of liberal imperialism – that imperialism that presents itself as benevolent and civilizing«. <sup>355</sup> Since his time as Virginian governor, Jefferson held out the prospect of assimilation to cooperative Native Americans, while at the same time striving for the »extermination of those hostile tribes of Indians« that refused to surrender. <sup>356</sup> Elaborating on this ambivalent strategy during his presidency, Jefferson specified the »two objects [...] principally kept in view« in relation to Native Americans: »1. the preservation of peace. 2. the obtaining lands«. <sup>357</sup> In order to accomplish these objects, Jefferson wanted the indigenous peoples to be instructed in agriculture and the »arts of first necessity«, but also promoted more aggressive tactics to convert them to the commercial ways of the settler society. »To exchange lands which they have to spare and we want«, Jefferson suggested, »we shall push our trading houses, and be glad to see the good and influential individuals among them

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<sup>352</sup> Miller, *Native America, Discovered and Conquered*, pp. 60 f.

<sup>353</sup> Cf. Eugene M. Del Papa, *The Royal Proclamation of 1763. Its Effect upon Virginia Land Companies*, in: *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 83. 1975, 4, pp. 406-411.

<sup>354</sup> Dewey, *Thomas Jefferson, Lawyer*, p. 27.

<sup>355</sup> Maureen Konkle, *Indigenous Ownership and the Emergence of U.S. Liberal Imperialism*, in: *American Indian Quarterly*, 32, 2008, 3, pp. 297-323, here p. 298.

<sup>356</sup> TJ to George Rogers Clark, Jan. 1, 1780, n1. This formulation was deleted from the final version of this letter. So, too, was the specification of these ›hostile tribes‹: »The Shawanese, Mingos, Munsies and Wiandots can never be relied on as friends, and therefore the object of the war should be their total extinction, or their removal beyond the lakes or the Illinois river and peace«.

<sup>357</sup> TJ to James Jackson, Feb. 16, 1803.

run in debt«. <sup>358</sup> With the final military option always at hand, Jefferson preferred a more subtle force in coercing Native American land cession. Personally familiar with the stranglehold of creditors, Jefferson established a system of »arm-twisting, bribery, and deceit« in order to ensure the ongoing expansion of the United States. <sup>359</sup>

Jefferson's vision of an allegedly soft imperialism, based on benevolence and cultivation, stands emblematic for early American expansion, whose »imperial ideology [...] required a significant degree of abstraction because of the nature of relations with indigenous people«. Construed »as the site of an abstract world-historical conflict between savagery and civilization«, the United States were regarded as a vanguard of progress and its imperial policies »as the result of the inevitable forces of human history«. <sup>360</sup> The narrative of American imperialism as civilization and progress, which continued to shape American policies throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, was explicit already in Jefferson's conception of the nation's destiny and Native American retreat. In his second inaugural address, in the wake of the Louisiana Purchase, Jefferson portrayed the »Aboriginal inhabitants of these countries« as »overwhelmed by the current« of European immigrants and »reduced within limits too narrow for the hunter-state«. Only the benevolent support of the settler society could »enable them to maintain their place in existence, and to prepare them in time for that state of society«. <sup>361</sup> Based on the doctrines of discovery and conquest, Jefferson endorsed traditional claims of Native American savagery to justify war and dispossession, integrated the struggles over Western territories in a broader context of human development and followed in the steps of earlier theorists in a long tradition of racist conquest.

Beginning with the papal bulls of the fourteenth and fifteenth century, referring to the conquest of the Canary Islands and other overseas territories, imperial ambitions were linked to hierarchical divisions of mankind, in this case justifying the Portuguese and Spanish conquest of foreign lands as the legitimate submission of

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<sup>358</sup> TJ to Creek Nation, Nov. 2, 1805 (»arts«); TJ to William Henry Harrison, Feb. 27, 1803 (»exchange«, »trading«).

<sup>359</sup> Robert M. Owens, Jeffersonian Benevolence on the Ground. The Indian Land Cession Treaties of William Henry Harrison, in: *Journal of the Early Republic*, 22, 2002, 3, pp. 405-435, here p. 435.

<sup>360</sup> Konkle, *Indigenous Ownership and the Emergence of U.S. Liberal Imperialism*, pp. 297 f.

<sup>361</sup> TJ, Second Inaugural Address, Mar. 4, 1805.

heathens to Christianity.<sup>362</sup> While Christianity, and paganism respectively, remained the most important categories of differentiation in the first centuries of the American conquest, the church's sovereignty was soon challenged on the basis of early concepts of natural rights.<sup>363</sup> Corresponding to the theoretical recognition of Native American titles, representations of Native Americans increasingly focused on their alleged cultural backwardness that was contrasted with European civilization. In legal terms, the construction of the more or less noble savage was closely linked to the idea of a ›terra nullius‹, a blank space untouched and unappropriated.<sup>364</sup> Representing the real equivalent to the metaphorical natural state of contractarianism, Native Americans were perceived as living not only without government but also, most importantly, without legitimate property.<sup>365</sup>

When, in 1823, the ›doctrine of discovery‹ was formally recognized, the court stated that »all the nations of Europe, who have acquired territory on this continent, have asserted in themselves, and have recognised in others, the exclusive right of the discoverer to appropriate the lands occupied by the Indians«. <sup>366</sup> This argument can also be found in Jefferson's writings, who famously justified American independence with the Anglo-Saxon occupation of the New World. His »neat equation wherein people plus land equals society with sovereignty«, as Barry Shank has aptly demonstrated, »is disrupted by racial difference«, because when Jefferson thought about possible destinations for the colonization of former slaves, he rather worried about the accordance of the European empires than about the indigenous inhabitants. Recognizing that »outside the borders of the United States, where lands are populated by multiple races, colonial powers maintain sovereignty and rule by

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<sup>362</sup> Cf. Cathal M. Doyle, *Indigenous Peoples, Title to Territory, Rights and Resources. The Transformative Role of Free Prior and Informed Consent*, London etc.: Routledge 2015, pp. 21-25. See also James Muldoon, *Popes, Lawyers, and Infidels*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1979.

<sup>363</sup> Cf. Stuart Banner, *How the Indians Lost Their Land. Law and Power on the Frontier*, Cambridge etc.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2005, pp. 16 f.

<sup>364</sup> Cf. Mills, *The Racial Contract*, p. 49. The actual notion of terra nullius emerged only in the late nineteenth century, but built on earlier concepts as the Roman law of the first taker and the term *res nullius*, which were employed in early modern discourses on the colonization of America, cf. Andrew Fitzmaurice, *The Genealogy of Terra Nullius*, in: *Australian Historical Studies*, 129, 2007, 1, pp. 1-15.

<sup>365</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the European legal discourses about conquest and dispossession, and how they resulted in an »international society that was unjust in the way it discriminated between different people and treated them as unequal«, see Paul Keal, *European Conquest and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Moral Backwardness of International Society*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 2003, esp. pp. 84-112, here p. 112.

<sup>366</sup> *Johnson v. M'Intosh*, 21 U.S. 584 (1823).

force, not consent«, Jefferson revealed that he closely linked the legitimacy of property to certain political and socio-economic formations, which he racistly described in terms of cultural and natural identity.<sup>367</sup>

The notion of propertyless Native Americans itself rested on a racist social construction. Against the prevalent stereotype, English colonists initially recognized »Indian property rights« and »treated the Indians as owners of their land«, even though this »does not imply that the English [...] considered the Indians their equals«. <sup>368</sup> When the Virginia Company established the first American colony with the settlement of Jamestown, the occupation of the populated continent was highly controversial among the colonists and aboriginal populations did not simply consent to their expropriation. As early as 1610, church officials warned that a »Christian may take nothing from a Heathen against his will, but in faire and lawfull bargain«, while others objected that »Savages have no particular proprietie in any part or parcel of that Countrey, but only a general recidencie there, as wild beasts have in the Forrest«. <sup>369</sup> Resembling earlier debates among Spanish scholastics, British authorities argued about appropriate justifications for the colonization of the New World, recognizing that the absence of formal property titles weakened their position in confrontation with other European empires. <sup>370</sup> Despite the principal recognition of Native American land ownership, however, the settlers' land policies long before John Marshall's verdict of 1823 rested on the assumption that »indigenous title must be something other than absolute, and indigenous authority something other than sovereign«. <sup>371</sup> In fact, the problem of conquest and discovery posed a central problem for political thought of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, being co-responsible (with the problem of slavery) for the racist implications particularly within the contractarian tradition.

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<sup>367</sup> Shank, Jefferson, the Impossible, pp. 297 f.

<sup>368</sup> Banner, How the Indians Lost Their Land, p. 12. For the following, see *ibid.*, pp. 12 ff.

<sup>369</sup> William Crashaw and Robert Gray as cited in Daniel K. Richter, To »Clear the King's and Indians' Title«. Seventeenth-Century Origins of North American Land Cession Treaties, in: Saliha Belmessous (ed.), *Empire by Treaty. Negotiating European Expansion, 1600-1900*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 2015, pp. 45-77, here p. 48.

<sup>370</sup> Cf. Richard Frohock, *Heroes of Empire. The British Imperial Protagonist in America, 1596-1764*, Newark: University of Delaware Press 2004, pp. 31-35. For the Spanish debate, see also Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Liberty and Property. A Social History of Western Political Thought from Renaissance to Enlightenment*, London etc.: Verso 2012, pp. 89-103; Dieter Dörr, The Background of the Theory of Discovery, in: *American Indian Law Review*, 38, 2013/2014, 2, pp. 477-499, here pp. 480-483.

<sup>371</sup> Richter, To »Clear the King's and Indians' Title«, p. 45.

In his critical reassessment of contractarianism, Charles Mills examines the ›racialization‹ of space and people in social contract theories, looking particularly at the dual function of the natural state in justifying the ›Europeanization of the world‹ in the age of imperialism. Whereas the metaphysical concept of the state of nature served merely as a theoretical tool to rationalize the emergence of civil societies and their institutions, non-European peoples were perceived as actually living in a state of nature, with their cultural backwardness reflecting their own defectiveness and potentially that of their environment. From these observations derived a ›Racial Contract [that] is necessarily more openly material than the social contract‹ in its provision that ›these strange landscapes (so unlike those at home), this alien flesh (so different from our own), must be mapped and subordinated‹.<sup>372</sup> In Mills reading, the natural morality of men and the derivative rights were thus fundamentally tied to ›racial‹ identity and ›whiteness‹. Assessing for ›overlapping dimensions‹ of discrimination, such as ›Europeans versus non-Europeans (geography), civilized versus wild/savage/barbarians (culture), Christians versus heathens (religion)‹, Mills perceives ››race‹ [as] the common conceptual denominator‹, as the various modalities of exclusion ›all coalesced into the basic opposition of white versus nonwhite‹.<sup>373</sup>

Despite their prominent role in Locke's *Second Treatise*, however, the ›Indians in America‹ were by no means characterized through their complexion or racial identity. Even in the colonies themselves, representations of Native Americans only gradually shifted to darker, and eventually reddish, complexions during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and therewith complemented culturalistic categories of exclusion with biologicistic notions of ›race‹.<sup>374</sup> In fact, with regard to the early centuries of conquest, Mills (as many others) confuses the mechanism of racism in producing essentialized categories of differentiation with the specifics of ›racial‹ discrimination. What he framed as the ›racial contracts‹ underlying the social contracts of European empires are thus better understood as ›racist contracts‹, with their precluding clauses not solely based on ›race‹ but also on culturalistic and religious patterns of exclusion.

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<sup>372</sup> Mills, *The Racial Contract*, pp. 42 f. In his analysis, Mills is focusing on what he identifies as the ››mainstream of the contract tradition‹. By contrast to the Hobbesian concept of the social contract, Locke and Kant assume an ››objective moral code in the state of nature itself‹, so that ››any society, government, and legal system that are established should be based on that moral code‹, *ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>374</sup> Cf. Vaughan, *From White Man to Redskin*.

This problem is less obvious in Carol Pateman's attempt to understand conquest and colonization in terms of a Settler Contract. Supposing that the legitimacy of colonial states is »ultimately based on the claim that [...] they were created in a *terra nullius*«, the establishment of settler societies is traced back to the abstract idea of original contracts between colonists and aborigines, which »simultaneously presupposes, extinguishes, and replaces a state of nature«. <sup>375</sup> The Settler Contract, thus, fundamentally rests on the assumption of the Natives' deficiency and denies their societal and political organizations. At the same time, it allows the European settlers to cast off the social laws of the mother country and regain the natural right to found new institutions. This latter line of thought is particularly evident in Jefferson's justification for American independence and his rejection of royal land claims. As British tenure laws were invalid in America, the colonial possessions were »undoubtedly of the allodial nature« and were legitimate subjects of negotiation between settlers and Native Americans. <sup>376</sup> Consequently, Pateman assesses that the founding generation's reference to social contract theory in opposition to the Royal Proclamation represented a »beautiful piece of colonial irony«, as the »settlers turned to the principles of natural freedom and rights« to declare that Native Americans had a »natural right freely to dispose their land to whom they pleased«. <sup>377</sup>

Jefferson's policies towards Native Americans were based on some theoretical grounding, including both the construction of Native Americans as living in a state of nature and the theoretical justification of their dispossession. In his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, he characterized Native Americans as fundamentally improvable and virtuous. Their »ardent love of liberty and independence«, he asserted, almost bordered on self-destruction when they were »chusing to be killed, rather than to surrender, though it be to the whites, who he knows will treat him well«. <sup>378</sup> »Perhaps this is nature«, he goes on, that the Native American »meets death with more deliberation, and endures torture with a firmness unknown almost to religious en-

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<sup>375</sup> Carol Pateman, *The Settler Contract*, in: Carol Pateman, Charles W. Mills, *Contract and Domination*, Cambridge etc.: Polity Press 2007, pp. 36-78, here pp. 37 (»ultimately«), 67 (»simultaneously«). See also Robert Nichols, *Indigeneity and the Settler Contract today*, in: *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 39, 2013, 2, pp. 165-186.

<sup>376</sup> TJ, *Draft of Instruction to the Virginia Delegates in the Continental Congress* (MS Text of A Summary View, etc.), July 1774.

<sup>377</sup> Pateman, *Settler Contract*, p. 50.

<sup>378</sup> TJ, *Second Inaugural Address*, Mar. 4, 1805 (»ardent«); Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, pp. 184 (»killed«).

thusiasm with us«. <sup>379</sup> The individual spirit of bravery and stoicism, which is a traditional and persistent element of the stereotypical »noble savage«, <sup>380</sup> was allegedly met on the collective level with societies governed only by »their manners, and that moral sense of right and wrong, which [...] in every man makes a part of his nature«. Living without »any shadow of government«, Jefferson observed the Native Americans in a natural state of mankind prior to the establishment of »coercive power«. However, he concludes,

»crimes are very rare among them: insomuch that were it made a question, whether no law, as among the savage Americans, or too much law, as among the civilized Europeans, submits man to the greatest evil, one who has seen both conditions of existence would pronounce it to be the last: and that the sheep are happier of themselves, than under care of the wolves«. <sup>381</sup>

Similar to other social contract theorists, Jefferson perceived the natural state not merely as an abstract thought experiment, but also as the real condition of the aboriginal peoples living beyond the frontier. In contrast to some of his predecessors, however, Jefferson did not conceive of the natural state as one of violent anarchy. <sup>382</sup> In fact, he called it »a problem, not clear in my mind«, that the absence of government was not the best condition of society, with the only reservation that it was supposedly »inconsistent with any great degree of population«. <sup>383</sup> Harold Hellenbrand has aptly described Jefferson's fascination with the Natives in his assessment that »over the centuries, only the isolated American Indians preserved the natural law intact«. <sup>384</sup> Still, it was a matter of fact for Jefferson that the indigenous peoples had not developed beyond the simplest form of society and it was the inevitable consequence of their confrontation with the colonists' civilization, that this natural

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<sup>379</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, pp. 184 f. Only twenty years after the publication of Jefferson's original, an early encyclopedia cites the latter passage as »[...] endures torture with a firmness unknown amongst civilized people«, cf. *The New and Complete American Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, New York: John Low 1805, p. 320.

<sup>380</sup> Cf. Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage*, Berkeley etc.: University of California Press 2001, p. 104.

<sup>381</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, pp. 220.

<sup>382</sup> As he explained to Samuel Kercheval, Jefferson believed the »bellum omnium in omnia, which some philosophers observing to be so general in this world, have mistaken it for the natural, instead of the abusive state of man«, to be only a consequence of poor government: »And the fore horse of this frightful team is public debt. Taxation follows that, and in its train wretchedness and oppression«, TJ to »Henry Tompkinson« (Samuel Kercheval), Jul. 12, 1816.

<sup>383</sup> TJ to James Madison, Jun. 30, 1787. »It will be said, that great societies cannot exist without government«, Jefferson had already written in the *Notes*, inferring that the »Savages therefore break them into small ones«, Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 220.

<sup>384</sup> Harold Hellenbrand, *Not »to Destroy But to Fulfil«*. Jefferson, Indians, and Republican Dispensation, in: *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 18, 1985, 4, pp. 523-549, here p. 525.

state was disturbed, albeit, as Jefferson continuously emphasized, it was for their own good.

Even more consciously than his contractarian predecessors, Thomas Jefferson subordinated the natural rights of Native Americans to the property interests of the settler society. In the original manuscript of his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson recapitulated the practical conditions of the ›original contract‹ with the indigenous peoples and admitted that the original purchases of land »were sometimes made with the price in one hand and the sword in the other«. In the published version of the text, however, ›these purchases‹ appear as evidence for the overwhelmingly peaceful appropriation of lands »in the most unexceptionable form«. <sup>385</sup> This ideological misrepresentation of the original accumulation of Native American territory illustrates both Jefferson's awareness of the violent history of colonization and his willingness to disguise it. In fact, even the seemingly »peaceful purchase of Indian territory«, as Francis Jennings has famously assessed, »was more drastic in its consequences than many armed conquests of one European power by another«. <sup>386</sup> The treaties and agreements with Native Americans rested on the notion of their cultural inferiority and the constantly revocable recognition of their land titles merely underpinned the benevolent self-image of the paternalistic settler republic. Like Bacon's Rebellion of 1676 provided a cross-class and multi-ethnic colonial population with the »first lessons in racial hatred by putting down the Indians«, <sup>387</sup> stereotypical ideas of Native Americans remained important antipodes during post-revolutionary processes of nation-building. Hence, American discourses of settler colonialism fused traditional religious discrimination with concepts of savagism and gendered tropes of virgin lands and feminine aborigines. <sup>388</sup>

Despite Jefferson's profound knowledge about the attending ills of colonization, »spirituous liquors, the small-pox, war, and an abridgment of territory«, which had drastically reduced the indigenous peoples and impeded their capacities to resist the colonists' westward expansion, he retrospectively rationalized the retreat as the result of cultural backwardness. Living »principally from the spontaneous production of nature«, they were supposedly vulnerable to outside influences and were not suf-

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<sup>385</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 221. For the omission, see Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, pp. 23 f.

<sup>386</sup> Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America. Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest*, New York etc.: W.W. Norton 1976 [1975], p. 145.

<sup>387</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, p. 328.

<sup>388</sup> Cf. Hixson, *American Settler Colonialism*, pp. 9 ff.

ficiently prepared to warrant the maintenance of their societies, cultures and even ›racial‹ purity. Thus, the Mattaponi allegedly had »more negro than Indian blood in them«, »lost their language« and »reduced themselves, by voluntary sales, to about fifty acres of land«. Others, even though »tolerably pure from mixture with other colours«, needed the benevolent assistance of European settlers to »watch over their interests, and guard them from insult and injury«. <sup>389</sup> These ›other colours‹ from which Native Americans should be kept clean, however, did not include the ›white‹ of frontier settlers. On the contrary, Jefferson's imperial vision explicitly approved the physical amalgamation of ›white‹ and ›red‹, anticipating the »natural progress of things« when »our settlements and theirs meet and blend together, to intermix and become one people«. <sup>390</sup>

In Jefferson's speculations about the distant future, when the »whole Northern, if not the Southern continent« would be peopled »with a people speaking the same language, governed in similar forms, and by similar laws«, settlements of African Americans appeared as potential »blot or mixture on that surface«. <sup>391</sup> Native Americans, by contrast, not explicitly threatened this future scenario. Many years later, Jefferson concisely described how he perceived their position in relation to the settler society and how their gradual incorporation should proceed. With regard to the »march of civilization advancing from the sea coast, passing over us like a cloud of light«, Jefferson located Native Americans on the margins of this societal progress. While some of them constituted the »savages of the Rocky mountains«, others had allegedly proceeded to the »pastoral state, raising domestic animals to supply the defects of hunting«. <sup>392</sup> Nevertheless, Jefferson positioned all of them outside the American society, although the former represented a »barbarism« that will soon »disappear from the earth«, while the latter had proven their capacity for cultivation and could benefit from the political »endeavors we have been making to encourage and lead you in the way of improving your situation«. Presented to the indigenous peoples as an almost unrefusable offer, Jefferson interpreted the increasing adoption of colonialist lifestyles as evidence for cultural superiority and as inevitable consequence of progress. For an integration within the settler society, however, much

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<sup>389</sup> Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, pp. 221 f.

<sup>390</sup> TJ to Benjamin Hawkins, Feb. 18, 1803.

<sup>391</sup> TJ to James Monroe, Nov. 24, 1801.

<sup>392</sup> TJ to William Ludlow, Sep. 6, 1824.

more was needed for Native Americans than simply »learning the use of the plough and the hoe«. <sup>393</sup>

Jefferson's ideas of successful assimilation are explicitly outlined in a letter to Hendrick Aupaumut, an indigenous diplomat representing Mohicans, Mungees and Delawares, <sup>394</sup> to whom the president explained his point of view on the »increase of our numbers and the decrease of yours«. First of all, the deficient reproduction rates resulted from the anachronistic practice of hunting, although »frequent wars too, and the abuse of spirituous liquors have assisted in lessening your numbers«. As it consequently »depend[ed] on yourselves alone to become a numerous and great people«, the advancement into the pastoral state had to be followed by the introduction of social institutions to facilitate an eventual inclusion within the settler state. »When once you have property«, Jefferson predicted, »you will want laws and Magistrates to protect your property and persons, and to punish those among you who commit crimes«. Luckily, a quick fix was close at hand, as »you will find that our laws are good for this purpose; you will wish to live under them, you will unite yourselves with us, join in our great Councils and form one people with us«. In order that »we shall all be Americans«, however, a last condition had to be fulfilled. To »see how from a small family you may become a great nation«, the Natives not only had to follow the settlers' ways of life, but also »mix with us by marriage«, so that »your blood will run in our veins, and will spread with us over this great Island«. Only through replacing traditional cultures with European ›civilization‹ and physically merging with the ›white‹ society, Native Americans could thus be ›saved‹ from the »total disappearance from the face of the earth«. <sup>395</sup>

As »Jefferson's desire to assimilate Native Americans involved both cultural and biological adaptation«, it has been noted that his policies effectively made him the »planner of cultural genocide«. <sup>396</sup> Other than Aupaumut, who promoted a cultural pluralism and wanted to »give liberty to our young men and women to go and hear the Ministers of the gospel«, but also »to hear and see the ancient ways of worship

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<sup>393</sup> Ibid. (›barbarism‹, ›disappear‹); TJ to Cherokee Nation, Jan. 10, 1806 (›endeavors‹, ›plough‹).

<sup>394</sup> A detailed account of Aupaumut's engagement for indigenous rights is provided in Alan Taylor, Captain Hendrick Aupaumut. The Dilemmas of an Intercultural Broker, in: *Ethnohistory*, 43, 1996, 3, pp. 431-457.

<sup>395</sup> TJ to Hendrick Aupaumut, Dec. 21, 1808.

<sup>396</sup> Gregory D. Smithers, *Science, Sexuality, and Race in the United States and Australia, 1780s-1890s*, New York etc.: Routledge 2009, p. 20 (›desire‹); Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, p. vii (›planner‹).

of your forefathers«, Jefferson made cultural (and ›racial‹) homogeneity the precondition of integration.<sup>397</sup> In 1808, he granted the indigenous diplomat the »right to hold, against all persons the lands given to you by the Miamis and Poutewatamies«, but at the same time threatened »that if ever they and you agree to sell, no paper which I can give you can prevent your doing what you please with your own«. In the long run, he concluded, the »only way to prevent this is to give to every one of your People a farm [...]. It is not the keeping your lands, which will keep your people alive [...]. It is the cultivating them alone which can do that.«<sup>398</sup> Not even ten years after Jefferson's letter, a land cession treaty was signed against the Mohicans' declared intentions and the tribe was forced to move further west.<sup>399</sup>

Despite the fact that scholars have repeatedly assessed that in order »to become American citizens, Indians would need to cease being Indians«,<sup>400</sup> Jefferson's Native American policies are frequently contrasted with his explicit stand against ›racial‹ mixture with African Americans and, thus, assessed as not racist in the proper meaning of the word.<sup>401</sup> In this respect, it has to be considered that »Jefferson and the American economy had located [Native Americans and African Americans] in different places« and this assessment by Ronald Takaki is to be taken literally.<sup>402</sup> Whereas the ›black‹ slave worker threatened the ›racial‹ and social homogeneity of the Union from the inside, which will be examined in the next chapter, the Native Americans were constantly (re-)located on the frontier. In Jefferson's imperial vision, this borderland fulfilled a crucial function as a contact zone between savagery and civilization, which provided for the physical and cultural improvement of both Native Americans and precarious ›whites«.

In the metaphorical coast-to-coast journey he described to William Ludlow, Jefferson's ›philosophic observer‹ finds bordering on the ›improvable‹ farming aborigi-

<sup>397</sup> Cited in Rachel Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope. Mohicans and Missionaries in the Eighteenth-Century Northeast*, Ithaca etc.: Cornell University Press 2013, p. 243.

<sup>398</sup> TJ to Hendrick Aupaumut, Dec. 21, 1808.

<sup>399</sup> Cf. James W. Oberly, *A Nation of Statesmen. The Political Culture of the Stockbridge-Munsee Mohicans, 1815-1972*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press 2005, pp. 27 f.

<sup>400</sup> Steele, *Thomas Jefferson and American Nationhood*, p. 174. For similar statements, see Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, p. 11; Takaki, *Iron Cages*, p. 63.

<sup>401</sup> As Steele writes elsewhere, »Indians and European peasants could become American via a process of casting off the culture and principles that, in Jefferson's view, distorted their human nature«, but »Jefferson never could comprehend African Americans, by contrast, as fit subjects of assimilation into white society«, id., *Thomas Jefferson and American Nationhood*, pp. 176 f.

<sup>402</sup> Takaki, *Iron Cages*, p. 64. Patrick Wolfe hints at the fact that in the context of settler colonialisms, the indigenous »non-White blood figured as highly unstable rather than as inexhaustibly resistant to admixture«, id. *Traces of History*, p. 4.

nes, »our own semi-barbarous citizens, the pioneers of the advance of civilization«. <sup>403</sup> Contrary to »Jefferson's otherwise idealized husbandmen«, this class of settlers apparently did not represent the virtuousness of the American independence, but rather comprised the uncultivated lower ranks of society, which themselves strove towards the »most improved state« of man that could be observed »in our seaport towns«. <sup>404</sup> Almost like the Native Americans, especially poor Americans and immigrants from Europe had to undergo this »cultural transformation« and were thus perceived by Jefferson as the adequate agents of civilization, who could back the governmental efforts in the instruction of Native Americans, while at the same time fostering their individual spirit of independence. <sup>405</sup>

Claiming that the »small landholders are the most precious part of a state«, Jefferson perceived the vast territories of the West as the only feasible provision against the formation of impoverished underclasses in America, which »add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body«. <sup>406</sup> In the colonial history of America, Jefferson argued, it were »poor Europeans who went to America to settle themselves«, and who during their indentured servitude »learn[ed] the husbandry of the country« to subsequently acquire their own parcel of land to cultivate. Still, after the Revolution, »so desirous are the poor of Europe to get to America« and so miserable their condition in Europe, that »humanity dictates« to maintain this practice. After only some years of self-exploitation, the new republic would provide these immigrants with opportunities to »buy a farm, marry, and enjoy the sweets of a domestic society of their own«, benefits that essentially relied on the continuous expansion of the American empire. <sup>407</sup>

Frequently contrasting American virtuousness with European corruption, Jefferson knew that the »wonderful progression in the republican spirit« could not be detached from its socio-economic conditions. <sup>408</sup> In Europe, where »property [...] is

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<sup>403</sup> TJ to William Ludlow, Sep. 6, 1824.

<sup>404</sup> Helo, Thomas Jefferson's Ethics and the Politics of Human Progress, p. 21; TJ to William Ludlow, Sep. 6, 1824.

<sup>405</sup> Steele, Thomas Jefferson and American Nationhood, p. 169.

<sup>406</sup> TJ to James Madison, Oct. 28, 1785 (»landholders«); Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, p. 291 (»sores«).

<sup>407</sup> TJ, Observations on D meunier's Manuscript, Jun. 22, 1786.

<sup>408</sup> TJ to Peter Carr, Oct. 25, 1801. On Jefferson's repulsion particularly for European cities and its implications for his policies towards American urbanization, cf. Carl Zimring, Clean and White. A

absolutely centered in a very few hands«, the population was economically divided, with the »most numerous of all the classes [being] the poor who cannot find work«. <sup>409</sup> In fact, the guarantor of America's and the Americans' »pure« republicanism, Jefferson thought, was not primarily the United States' independence and constitution, but the individual citizens' liberty warranted through ownership of land. As long as America had »land to labour«, Americans should refrain from all sorts of hired labor, which was accompanied by »subservience and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition«. What his ideal agrarian society lost »by the transportation of commodities across the Atlantic will be made up in happiness and permanence of government«, as the »corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a phaenomenon of which no age nor nation has furnished an example«. <sup>410</sup> Combining ancient traditions of the »farm as the very cradle of civic virtues« and contemporary theories of international labor division, Jefferson's agrarianism defined his concept of America in a moral and economic sense. <sup>411</sup>

European immigrants and poor Americans should thus be given access to land to become valuable citizens themselves, but also to »seduce by example« the neighboring indigenous peoples to convert to the »civilized« lifestyles of agriculture and commerce. <sup>412</sup> Additionally, the frontier settlers were supposed to physically »integrate« Native Americans by marriage and procreation, which in fact constituted an essential part of their »improvement«. »Submitted to unjust drudgery«, indigenous women allegedly »raise fewer children than we do«, which in combination with their unsteady supply of food resulted in the »restraining [of] their numbers within certain bounds«. Only in custody of »white« settlers, the steady decline of indigenous population was effectively suspended. Thus, the »same Indian women, when married to white traders, [...] produce and raise as many children as the white women«. The same could be observed at the time when Native Americans were enslaved to-

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History of Environmental Racism in the United States, New York etc.: New York University Press 2015, pp. 10-14.

<sup>409</sup> TJ to James Madison, Oct. 28, 1785.

<sup>410</sup> Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, pp. 290 f.

<sup>411</sup> Winterer, Thomas Jefferson and the Ancient World, p. 386. See also Claudio J. Katz, Thomas Jefferson's Liberal Anticapitalism, in: American Journal of Political Science, 47, 2003, 1, pp. 1-17; Mark Sturges, Enclosing the Commons. Thomas Jefferson, Agrarian Independence, and Early American Land Policy, 1774-1789, in: The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 119, 2011, 1, pp. 42-74.

<sup>412</sup> The idea of a »seduction by example« was employed by Jefferson with regard to lessons taken from history and has been discussed in Spahn, Thomas Jefferson, Time, and History, pp. 143-145.

gether with African Americans and the »Indian women so enslaved produced and raised as numerous families as either the whites or blacks among whom they lived«. Other than with the ›black‹ slave, however, the Native American seemed to need the amalgamation with ›whites‹ to provide for sustainable reproduction and, notably, was not »staining the blood of his master«. <sup>413</sup>

Historian Patrick Wolfe has described this line of thought, which historically developed in various settler societies, and according to which »White blood has been credited with a cuckoo-like capacity to bread Nativeness out«, in striking contrast to the segregation laws and one-drop-rules that were established to prevent the intermixture with (imported) slaves. <sup>414</sup> In fact, Jefferson could contemplate the intermixing of ›white‹ settlers and Native Americans only in the frontier scenario, which involved precarious pioneers of civilization with vanishing ›savages‹. The gradual infiltration of cultural improvement in the course of natural progress was thus accompanied by physical amalgamation, something that he could not imagine for the inner Union and their large proportions of enslaved and free ›blacks‹.

In the decades following the American Revolution the frontier regions witnessed a massive increase in population, but at the same time the worsening of living conditions and growing inequalities between Eastern land speculators and resident subsistence farmers. In this situation of »extreme social and economic turmoil«, as Thomas Slaughter has shown for Western Pennsylvania, poor frontier settlers perceived Native Americans as additional threats and, forsaken by their government and Eastern compatriots, »demanded total liberty to fight the Indians whenever and however they wanted«. <sup>415</sup> Thus, Jefferson could not hope for the outright support of the frontiersmen in the physical and cultural ›improvement‹ of Native Americans, but they certainly endorsed his aim of territorial expansion. In any case, it remained up to the settler state to decide whether Native Americans have sufficiently proved their willingness to assimilate. In case that »any tribe be fool-hardy enough to take up the hatchet«, Jefferson always reserved the right for »seizing the whole country of that tribe« as an »example to others«, specifying that »in war they will kill some of us; we shall destroy all of them«.

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<sup>413</sup> Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, pp. 185 (›submitted‹), 186 (›raise‹, ›restraining‹, ›same‹), 187 (›enslaved‹), 270 (›staining‹).

<sup>414</sup> Wolfe, Traces of History, p. 4.

<sup>415</sup> Slaughter, The Whiskey Rebellion, pp. 66 (›extreme‹), 72 (›demanded‹).

Even beyond the various resistance and negotiation strategies of Native Americans, the violent policies of American settlers towards the indigenous population neither went unnoticed nor unchallenged. The immigrated French economist Pierre Samuel Du Pont de Nemours doubted whether Jefferson's praise for the »savages [...] becoming a little civilized; and [...], instead of wasting away, [...] increasing their population« reflected the general attitudes and actual policies of the American public. Especially the »inhabitants of your countryside«, he noted, regarded Native Americans »as natural enemies that must be exterminated by fire, sword, and brandy in order to occupy their territory«. This aggressive possessiveness, he believed, was due to the self-perception of American colonists »as collateral heirs of all the beautiful domains that God created, from the Cumberland and the Ohio, as far as the great ocean, so-called ›Pacific«.<sup>416</sup> In a conversation with Thomas Jefferson, British diplomat George Hammond similarly accused the then Secretary of State that the United States attempted to »exterminate the Indians and take their lands«. Whereas Jefferson, unsurprisingly, rejected the accusations and emphasized the benevolent principles underlying American policies towards indigenous peoples, it was notably in the political controversy with Hammond that he revealed the significance of racism for westward expansion.

In a controversy about British violations of United States territory, Jefferson outlined the principles of American land policies and particularly of the right of preemption. The latter derived, he argued from the customary practice among colonial empires »that a White nation setting down and declaring that such and such are their limits, makes an invasion of those limits by any other White nation an act of war, but gives no right of soil against the native possessors«.<sup>417</sup> More precisely, he added in a next conversation with Hammond, it was an »established principle of public law among the white nations of America that while the Indians included

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<sup>416</sup> Pierre Samuel Du Pont de Nemours to TJ, Dec. 17, 1801, cited from the editor's translation. The original passage reads: »Vous la félicitez de ce que les Sauvages se civilisent un peu; et de ce que, au lieu de déperir, les progrès de quelques unes de leurs Tribus dans l'Agriculture augmentent leur Population. – Les habitans de vos campagnes regardent, à très grand tort il est vrai, les Sauvages et les Arbres comme des ennemis naturels qu'il faut exterminer par le fer, par le feu, par le Brandy pour occuper leur territoire. Ils se regardent, eux et leur Postérité comme des héritiers collatéraux de tous les beaux domaines que Dieu a créés depuis la Cumberland et l'Ohio jusqu'au grand Océan, soidisant pacifique«. While Jefferson understood his correspondent's doubts, mainly because of his situation in a »great commercial«, he rejected the assumptions about the »agricultural inhabitants of my country«, whom he once more described as immune to the corruptions of urban life, TJ to Pierre Samuel Du Pont de Nemours, Jan. 18, 1802.

<sup>417</sup> TJ, Notes of a Conversation with George Hammond, Jun. 4, 1792.

within their limits retain all other national rights, no other white nation can become their patrons, protectors or Mediators, nor in any shape intermeddle between them and those within whose limits they are«. <sup>418</sup> As Jefferson »accurately foretold the Supreme Court’s definition of Discovery«, he declared the Native Americans a subject people divided between the United States and European colonies and restricted to the ›right‹ to sell their lands to the colonists. <sup>419</sup> While the latter would have been for the Natives’ good, Jefferson perceived even their militant resistance as orchestrated from the European competitors. From his paternalistic perspective, shaped by the ›savage‹ stereotype, indigenous peoples had to choose between the merciful civilization, which required the selling of lands, or the maintenance of savagism that was easily instrumentalized by more ruthless empires.

Consequently, when some tribes sided with the British in the War of 1812, he complained that the »benevolent plan we were pursuing here for the happiness of the Aboriginal inhabitants« had to be scrapped, since the »cruel massacres they have committed on the women and children of our frontiers [...], will oblige us now to pursue them to extermination, or drive them to new seats beyond our reach«. Although the aborigines could have »mixed their blood with ours and been amalgamated and identified with us within no distant period of time«, the »interested and unprincipled policy of England has defeated all our labors for the salvation of these unfortunate people«. The »confirmed brutalisation, if not the extermination of this race in our America« was thus an »additional chapter in the English history«, which knew of similar crimes towards the »same colored man in Asia, and of the brethren of their own colour in Ireland«. <sup>420</sup> Hence, Jefferson himself involuntarily classified the removal policies among other violent episodes in the history of racism and colonialism or, as Ben Kiernan put it, »acknowledge[ed] U.S. involvement in a continuing global narrative of genocide«. <sup>421</sup>

Referring to Native Americans and the ›same colored man in Asia‹ on the one hand, and ›brethren of their own colour‹ on the other, this passage also confirms that the framework of ›racial‹ classifications also shaped his perception of Native

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<sup>418</sup> TJ, Notes for a Conversation with George Hammond, Dec. 10, 1792.

<sup>419</sup> Robert J. Miller, The Doctrine of Discovery in United States History, in: Robert J. Miller, Jacinta Ruru, Larissa Behrendt, Tracey Lindberg (eds.), *Discovering Indigenous Lands. The Doctrine of Discovery in the English Colonies*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 2010, pp. 66-88, here p. 67.

<sup>420</sup> TJ to Alexander von Humboldt, Dec. 6, 1813.

<sup>421</sup> Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil. A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur*, New Haven etc.: Yale University Press 2007, p. 329.

Americans.<sup>422</sup> Metaphorically emphasizing the ›family‹ ties between people of the same complexion (›brethren‹) underlined the fundamental opposition he construed between ›Indians‹ and ›whites‹.<sup>423</sup> In fact, Jefferson's imperial politics and his record of warfare and land purchase were based on the construction of indigenous Americans as fundamentally different from Euro-American settlers. In a complex combination of cultural and social attributions, embedded in a naturalistic framework of human ›races‹, they were denied the preconditions for territorial sovereignty and the potential for autonomous development. In a racist circular argument, Jefferson and many of his Enlightenment contemporaries regarded civilization as the means to legitimately acquire property, ›white‹ Europeans as the exclusive representatives of cultural progress, and, therewith, conceived of the ›white nations of America‹ as justly taking possession of the New World they ›discovered‹.

As a self-declared pioneer of emancipative and egalitarian government, Jefferson exemplified that »liberalism's universal claims were consistently flanked by justifications for the suppression and exploitation of peoples deemed culturally or racially inferior«.<sup>424</sup> At the same time, the founding generation needed to distinguish their new republic from Old World aristocracies, rejected European interference in American affairs and could not endorse environmental theories of a degenerative continent. On the contrary, for the early United States, the open space and natural abundance of America were economically vital and symbolically important. The public image of Native Americans was significant for the construction of the new nation's favorable environment. Hence, their racist representation as essentially uncivilized, liberty-loving, but probably dwindling savages was couched in the benevolent language of improvement and progress, advanced within a »system of peace and fraternity with mankind«.<sup>425</sup> Effectively, however, they only served to retrospectively prove the potential of American natural resources, which would finally be unfolded with European cultivation.

»We are descended from the old nations which live beyond the great water«, President Jefferson explained to the aboriginal Mandan people in 1806, »but we

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<sup>422</sup> Cf. Drinnon, *Facing West*, pp. 81 ff.

<sup>423</sup> This is briefly discussed in Renaud Contini, *Nurturing Utopia. Jeffersonian Expansionism in Contexts, 1760-1810*, unpublished PhD thesis, National University of Ireland Maynooth 2012, p. 144.

<sup>424</sup> Jens-Uwe Guettel, *German Expansionism, Imperial Liberalism, and the United States, 1776-1945*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 2012, p. 33.

<sup>425</sup> TJ to James Monroe, Jun. 11, 1823.

and our forefathers have been so long here that we seem like you to have grown out of this land«. <sup>426</sup> He thus naturalized the relation between the settler and his occupied territory, constructing a ›man of America‹ that was still different from the aborigine, but equally justified to act out his natural right of liberty in his adopted home overseas. Historically, Jefferson believed, the later conflicts aroused because the colonists imported their societal attainments, including civil institutions and, most importantly, property rights. In the alleged absence of equivalent concepts on the side of the indigenous, the European land titles overwrote traditional allocations, although the colonists formally agreed to warrant and even protect the Native American claims. In the long run, however, the self-reserved right of preemption was used by federal authorities to reduce the Native American territories and expand the limits of the ›empire of liberty‹.

In multiple ways, Jefferson denied Native Americans the rights he claimed for citizens of the United States. Allowing for their integration only at the price of collective self-abandonment, they were basically doomed to vanish in the face of a rising empire. Other than Jefferson's romanticized rhetoric suggested, this empire did not solely strive for lands to feed a population of subsistence farmers. The anticipated colonization of the American continent, explicitly including Texas, Florida and Cuba, was part of a ›hemispheric imperialism‹ that intended to reduce European influence and increase the new republic's economic and political capacities. <sup>427</sup> Native Americans and African Americans were of significant importance in this global power play, as they provided the new empire's land and labor. Thus, the Louisiana territory was not purchased as a ›vacant wilderness‹, but as a ›major hub of transportation and trade, as well as a profitable plantation region‹. The spread of slavery was always a part of an ›American colonialism [that] involved both indigenous and imported subject populations«. <sup>428</sup>

It has been assessed that the ›American Revolution [had] radically altered the lines of authority from the crown to ›the people‹ [...], but it left entirely untouched various Enlightenment assumptions about who ›the people‹ properly ought to be«. <sup>429</sup> Nevertheless, the analysis of Jefferson's imperial ideas has shown that his justifica-

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<sup>426</sup> TJ to Chief Wolf and People of the Mandan Nation, Dec. 30, 1806.

<sup>427</sup> Drinnon, *Facing West*, p. 114.

<sup>428</sup> Shannon Lee Dauwdy, *Proper Caresses and Pudent Distance. A How-To Manual from Colonial Louisiana*, in: Ann Laura Stoler (ed.), *Haunted By Empire. Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, Durham etc.: Duke University Press 2006, pp. 140-162, here pp. 142 f.

<sup>429</sup> Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, p. 26.

tions for the exclusion and dispossession of Native Americans were based on some concept of American identity, which was in fact constantly (re-)defined in confrontation with the ›savages‹ on the frontiers. While the outward differentiation of the new nation and its citizens was concerned mainly with the indigenous and European inhabitants of the American continent, the inward differentiation proceeded along the line of free and enslaved, a dichotomy that was increasingly racialized as ›white‹ and ›black‹. Racism was not only at the heart of early American expansion, but also vital to the underlying conception of American identity. With his almost obsessive emphasis on homogeneity and purity, Thomas Jefferson once again stands emblematic for early America and the racist implications of its nation-building discourses.

## 5.2 Racism and National Identity

»What then is the American, this new man?«, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur famously asked in his *Letters from an American Farmer* and therewith, near the end of the Revolutionary War, pointed towards the great challenge of defining a new national and, in fact, ›racial‹ identity:

»He is an American, who leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. [...] Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world. Americans are the western pilgrims, who are carrying along with them that great mass of arts, sciences, vigour, and industry which began long since in the east; they will finish the great circle. The Americans were once scattered all over Europe; here they are incorporated into one of the finest systems of population which has ever appeared, and which will hereafter become distinct by the power of the different climates they inhabit. The American ought therefore to love this country much better than that wherein either he or his forefathers were born. [...] The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas, and form new opinions. From involuntary idleness, servile dependence, penury, and useless labour, he has passed to toils of a very different nature, rewarded by ample subsistence. This is an American.«<sup>430</sup>

Couched in the language of progress and civilization, Crèvecoeur's composition of the new American stands symbolically for the self-referential optimism of the

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<sup>430</sup> J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer and Other Essays*, ed. by Dennis D. Moore, Cambridge etc.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2013, pp. 31 f.

American Enlightenment and in many ways resembled Thomas Jefferson's conception of American identity. Well aware of the founding's historical significance, Jefferson and his contemporaries conceived of the new nation as the political manifestation of a new man, in whose virtues and spirit they perceived the true cradle of republicanism and whose natural rights to property and occupation only justified the claim of independence in the first place.<sup>431</sup> The revolutionary narratives of American identity emerged in the context of complex socio-economic transformations, were constructed and popularized through multiple sub-discourses, and served a variety of political causes.<sup>432</sup> Particularly Jefferson's concept of a homogeneous American society, however, not only posited a set of common values, historical backgrounds and natural conditions as fundamental national characteristics, but defined his positive notion of American nationality in opposition to the constant threat of contamination.

Like Crèvecoeur, Jefferson found the new Americans primarily in the »new principles« they embodied.<sup>433</sup> Building on a »composition of the freest principles of the English constitution, with others derived from natural right and natural reason«, the American Revolution had established principles of government that »perhaps are more peculiar than those of any other in the universe«. <sup>434</sup> In times of war, Jefferson was not entirely sure whether these principles were sufficiently represented in the American people and was concerned to »keep up the spirits of our people« or celebrating the Continental forces for the »spirited manner in which the insurrection of the tories has been suppressed«. <sup>435</sup> Subsequently, however, he explained independence as the inevitable result of Americans' »noble love of liberty and republican government which carried us triumphantly thro' the war«. <sup>436</sup> Even confronting the

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<sup>431</sup> Thus he explained in the *Summary View* that »our ancestors, before their emigration to America, were the free inhabitants of the British dominions in Europe, and possessed a right which nature has given to all men, of departing from the country in which chance, not choice, has placed them, of going in quest of new habitations, and of there establishing new societies, under such laws and regulations as to them shall seem most likely to promote public happiness«, TJ, Draft of Instruction to the Virginia Delegates in the Continental Congress (MS Text of A Summary View, etc.), July 1774.

<sup>432</sup> See, for example, John M. Murrin, *A Roof without Walls. The Dilemma of American National Identity*, in: Richard Beeman, Stephen Botein, Edward C. Carter II (eds.), *Beyond Confederation. Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity*, Chapel Hill etc.: University of North Carolina Press 1987, pp. 333-348.

<sup>433</sup> On Jefferson and the American character, see, among others, Steele, *Thomas Jefferson and American Nationhood*, pp. 91-130; Jean M. Yarbrough, *American Virtues. Thomas Jefferson on the Character of a Free People*, Lawrence: University of Kansas Press 1998.

<sup>434</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 211.

<sup>435</sup> TJ to John Mathews, Sep. 2, 1780 (»keep«); TJ to Arthur Campbell, Aug. 9, 1780 (»manner«).

<sup>436</sup> TJ to Philip Mazzei, Apr. 24, 1796.

Federalists' later attempts to restore authoritarian government, Jefferson assured his friend Lafayette, »our people [were] firm and constant in their republican purity«, and were raising a generation of republican citizens that had »sucked in the principles of liberty as it were with their mother's milk« to eventually overcome even the prevalent injustice of slavery.<sup>437</sup> Consequently, American »republicanism [was] to be found [...] merely in the spirit of our people. That would oblige even a despot to govern us republicanly«. <sup>438</sup> The American fitness for republicanism and democracy, however, was by no means a general capacity of mankind. In fact, Jefferson thought, the »excellence of government is it's adaption to the state of those to be governed by it«, and the »great mass of people in Europe«, he observed, lived in conditions »very much inferior [...] to the tranquil permanent felicity with which domestic society in America blesses most of it's inhabitants«. <sup>439</sup>

European immigrants had to be morally, culturally and economically uplifted to become eligible for American citizenship. Otherwise they »will bring with them the principles of the governments they leave« and will corrupt the new republic, »infuse into it their spirit, warp and bias its direction, and render it a heterogeneous, incoherent, distracted mass«. <sup>440</sup> For the sake of (imaginary) homogeneity, authorities should thus have the right to »exclude them from our territory, as we do persons infected with disease«. <sup>441</sup> Applying a language of purity, contamination and health, Jefferson portrayed the American public as something of a national corpus that had to be protected against external threats. Much earlier, he similarly summarized the revisal of some laws after the revolution with a striking linkage of animal breeding and public health:

»The laws have also descended to the preservation and improvement of the races of useful animals, such as horses, cattle, deer; to the extirpation of those which are noxious, as wolves, squirrels, crows, blackbirds; and to the guarding our citizens against infectious disorders, by obliging sus-

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<sup>437</sup> TJ to Marquis de Lafayette, Jun. 16, 1792 (»firm«); TJ to Richard Price (»sucked«), Aug. 7, 1785. Similarly, Jefferson wrote to James Madison on the danger of relapsing to monarchy that the »rising race are all republicans. We were educated in royalism: no wonder if some of us retain that idolatry still. Our young people are educated in republicanism. An apostacy from that to royalism is unprecedented and impossible«, TJ to James Madison, Mar. 15, 1789.

<sup>438</sup> TJ to »Henry Tompkinson« (Samuel Kercheval), Jul. 12, 1816.

<sup>439</sup> TJ to Du Pont de Nemours, in: Correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and Pierre Samuel Du Pont de Nemours, 1798-1817, ed. by Dumas Malone, Boston etc.: Houghton Mifflin 1930, p. 181 (»excellence«); TJ to Charles Bellini, Sep. 30, 1785.

<sup>440</sup> Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, p. 211.

<sup>441</sup> TJ to William H. Crawford, Jun. 20, 1816.

pected vessels coming into the state, to perform quarantine, and by regulating the conduct of persons having such disorders within the state«. <sup>442</sup>

»Turning with great ease from political to physical hygiene«, as Ronald Takaki read this passage, Jefferson seemed to contemplate the »extirpation« of »noxious« elements also within the human population of the new found nation. <sup>443</sup> In fact, this was hardly confined to sick and corrupted immigrants from Europe, but also to the alleged alien elements within the American territory.

Before the exclusive potential of Jefferson's doctrine of homogeneity will be discussed with regard to its racist implications, it has to be noted that Jefferson's seemingly egalitarian vision of a smallholder society also contained a number of internal hierarchizations. Thus, Jefferson did not have women in mind for a life in autonomous and independent subsistence farming with equal access to political participation. Quite the contrary, he speculated about possible »mental or physical disqualifications« by which »nature may [...] have marked infants and the weaker sex«. That these constraints qualified the latter »for the protection, rather than the direction of government« did not mean to Jefferson that they were constricted in their natural rights. <sup>444</sup> In fact, the »civilization alone which replaces women in the enjoyment of their natural equality« intended them for domesticity and political passivity. Jefferson found this ideal condition of women exclusively in America and contrasted it with the situation among »barbarous people« such as Native Americans, where the »women are submitted to unjust drudgery«. Beyond the Atlantic, moreover, the »voluptuary dress and art of European women« did not match the »chaste affections and simplicity of those« in America and led men »into a spirit for female intrigue destructive of his own and others happiness«. <sup>445</sup> »Articulating a normative gendered American identity that profoundly liberated both men and women to enact their natural roles«, Jefferson's conception of the national character appears as fundamentally intersectional, incorporating the categories of »race«, gender and class. <sup>446</sup>

With regard to the latter status differences, Jefferson did not approve distinctions by wealth or nobility, which merely constituted an »artificial aristocracy«, but as-

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<sup>442</sup> Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, p. 261.

<sup>443</sup> Takaki, Iron Cages, pp. 64 f.

<sup>444</sup> TJ to John Hampden Pleasants, Apr. 19, 1824.

<sup>445</sup> Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, pp. 185 f. (»civilization«, »barbarous«, »drudgery«); TJ to John Banister, Jr., Oct. 15, 1785 (»voluptuary«, »chaste«, »spirit«).

<sup>446</sup> Steele, Thomas Jefferson and American Nationhood, p. 64.

serted the existence of a »natural aristocracy«, which was based on notions of innate differences.<sup>447</sup> »Experience proves«, Jefferson wrote to John Adams in a discussion of the eugenic thought of Theognis, »that the moral and physical qualities of man, whether good or evil, are transmissible in a certain degree from father to son«. Consequently, »selecting the male for a Haram of well chosen females [...] would doubtless improve the human«. On account of the »equal rights of men«, however, enlightened societies had to rely on the »accidental aristoi« and provide for other mechanisms of selection. Characterized by »virtue and talents«, free elections should serve to separate the »wheat from the chaff«, supported by an educational system that selected the »best geniusses [...] from the rubbish annually«. <sup>448</sup> In practice, the »outlines of the Jeffersonian educational system were designed to prepare each individual for the practical tasks assigned to him by his present place in the social hierarchy« and followed the principle he revealed to Peter Carr in 1814: that »every citizen [...] should receive an education proportioned to the condition and pursuits of his life«, since the »mass of our citizens may be divided in two classes, the laboring, and the learned«. <sup>449</sup>

In light of these sexist and classist constraints to Jefferson's narrative of a homogeneous American society, whose common republican spirit allegedly formed the basis of independence and national identity, it is probably unsurprising that he held pejorative views of other ›races‹ and their fitness for republican citizenship. In fact, only the theoretical dissociation of Native Americans and African Americans and their practical exclusion enabled him to draw his harmonious picture of social equality. Whereas indigenous peoples possessed an untamed spirit of liberty, their allegedly savage ways of life justified American policies of expropriation and provided the lands that were supposedly meant to provide each American citizen with economic opportunities. African American slaves, by contrast, were shaped by centuries of ›degrading submission‹ and thus formed the antipodes to American inde-

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<sup>447</sup> TJ to John Adams, Oct. 28, 1813. See also Richard A. Samuelson, *Consistent in Creation*. Thomas Jefferson, *Natural Aristocracy, and the Problem of Knowledge*, in: Robert M. S. McDonald (ed.), *Light and Liberty. Thomas Jefferson and the Power of Knowledge*, Charlottesville etc.: University of Virginia Press 2012, pp. 75-95.

<sup>448</sup> TJ to John Adams, Oct. 28, 1813 (›experience‹, ›moral‹, ›selecting‹, ›equal‹, ›accidental‹, ›virtue‹, ›wheat‹); Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 272 (›geniusses‹).

<sup>449</sup> Boorstin, *The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson*, p. 223 (›outlines‹); TJ to Peter Carr, Sep. 7, 1814 (›citizen‹). In his letter to Carr, Jefferson explicitly also divides the »learned class [...] into two sections. 1. those who are destined for learned professions as a means of livelihood; and 2. the Wealthy who possessing independant fortunes may aspire to share in conducting the affairs of the nation«, therewith including the ›artificial‹ into the ›natural aristocracy‹, *ibid.*

pendence. Stereotyped conceptions of both groups represented essential contrasts to Jefferson's ideal of the American citizen and effectively contributed to the consolidation of national identity.

Hence, the morals and character of the American citizens were at stake in Jefferson's most-cited critique of slavery, in which he assessed that the practice of »one half the citizens [...] to trample on the rights of the other, transforms those into despots, and these into enemies, destroys the morals of the one part, and the amor patriae of the other«. »If a slave can have a country in this world«, he concluded, »it must be any other in preference to that in which he is born to live and labour for another«, and this problem had to be addressed quickly, as in the aftermaths of the »present revolution«, the »spirit of the master is abating, that of the slave rising from the dust«. <sup>450</sup> In this striking passage, which portrays slaves as citizens in principle, whose exclusion was based on their socio-economic status rather than their natural qualities, Jefferson not only »revealed race to be racism«, as Barbara J. Fields put it. <sup>451</sup> In fact, Jefferson also revealed that the new nation demanded ongoing »racial« segregation (and eventual expatriation of emancipated slaves) for the sake of moral and natural homogeneity, and to prevent the (up-)rising of slaves.

It »must be ascribed to their situation, and not to any depravity of the moral sense«, Jefferson assessed, that African American slaves were prone to theft, »tak[ing] a little from one, who had taken all from him«. <sup>452</sup> Although the masters were no less corrupted by the practices of slavery, the slaves were the ones that were likely to transmit the evils of the institution beyond their eventual emancipation. Against this premise, an amelioration of slavery, for example through the educational schemes he introduced at Monticello, emerged as the only practicably way of preventing immediate abolition and large-scale slave rebellions. <sup>453</sup> The improvement of slavery, as Jefferson recapitulated in 1823, affected a »great improvement in the condition and civilization of that race«, so that slaves could »more advantageously compare their situation with that of the laborers of Europe«. In this cynical inversion of Locke's and Smith's comparison of European laborers to American

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<sup>450</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, pp. 288 f.

<sup>451</sup> Karen E. Fields, Barbara J. Fields, *Racecraft. The Soul of Inequality in American Life*, London etc.: Verso 2012, p. 99.

<sup>452</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 269.

<sup>453</sup> For the concept of amelioration, which in Jefferson's version »inadvertently wrote the language for slavery's perpetuation«, see Dierksheide, *Amelioration and Empire*, p. 20. For the more general discussion, see *ibid.*, pp. 10-22.

›savages‹, Jefferson refutes the notion of firm, unchangeable ›races‹ even with regard to African Americans. Nevertheless, he never completely dropped the idea of the »heteromorph peculiarities of the race« and maintained that »with them, physical compulsion to action must be substituted for the moral necessity which constrains the free laborer to work equally hard«. <sup>454</sup> As he thus perceived the moral facilities of African Americans as not entirely equal to those of ›whites‹, Jefferson deemed slaves unfit for large-scale liberation, even when they had been ›civilized‹ or ›improved‹ by the humane version of slavery he advocated. <sup>455</sup>

When it came to slavery, Jefferson's principal concern remained the integrity and morality of a ›white‹ population that was only in the making. Insofar, his claims of moral homogeneity answered the problem of social inequality and heterogeneity that was characteristic for early American society. <sup>456</sup> At a time when ›white‹ underclasses in the North increasingly perceived free ›black‹ laborers as competitors and the »social deference that was the organizing principle of colonial society [...] gave way to stratification based more clearly on race as well as class«, Jefferson's rhetoric clearly sought to rationalize the maintenance of social segregation. <sup>457</sup> In all his theoretical objection to the institution, Jefferson was aware that »hired labor« was widely limited to »people of color« and hoped that slavery (and racism) prevented the further unleashing of social tensions. <sup>458</sup> Unlike in Europe, where the unemployed poor were supposedly worse off than slaves in America, economic injustice was not supposed to structure society, but instead »color has condemned« African Americans »to a subjection to the will of others«. <sup>459</sup> Slavery, Jefferson believed, was certainly un-American. But in their habitual dependence and submissiveness, their alleged slavish character, ›black‹ slaves were even more so. As long as their colonization (and their masters' compensation) was impracticable, slavery remained a »hideous blot« to »deplore [...] morally and politically«, but it also provided for a visible antithesis of American character and for an opportuni-

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<sup>454</sup> TJ to William Short, Sep. 8, 1823.

<sup>455</sup> Which did not preclude him from emancipating a few of his »good, affectionate, and faithful servant[s]« and provide them with »all the tools of their respective shops or callings«, TJ, Will and Codicil, Mar. 16, 1826. His assessment of ›black‹ indolence was thus not an inescapable ›racial‹ characteristic, but a stereotyping generalization that served to justify the maintenance of slavery.

<sup>456</sup> Thus, as Brian Steele notes, the »narrative Jefferson told about American homogeneity and its power to assimilate the other was always troubled by differences already extant within the community«, id., *Thomas Jefferson and American Nationhood*, p. 172.

<sup>457</sup> Horton, *From Class to Race in Early America*, p. 643.

<sup>458</sup> TJ to John Baptiste Say, March 2, 1815.

<sup>459</sup> TJ to Thomas Cooper, Sep. 10, 1814.

ty to prove American benevolence in improving the slaves' unfortunate condition.<sup>460</sup>

The impossibility of entirely integrating African Americans, Jefferson argued, was evident from the history of slavery, which had situated them »in countries where the arts and sciences are cultivated to a considerable degree«. This could be precluded for their countries of origin, so that it would have been »unfair to follow them to Africa for this investigation«. <sup>461</sup> Thus echoing infamous Enlightenment claims of Africa as a continent with no history, <sup>462</sup> Jefferson anticipated later colonialist positions when he speculated about the civilizing effects of a possible repatriation of emancipated slaves. »Going from a country possessing all the useful arts«, he wrote, »they might be the means of transplanting them among the inhabitants of Africa, and would thus carry back to the country of their origin the seeds of civilisation«. <sup>463</sup> In line with a larger colonization movement, Jefferson seemed to believe that the ›blacks‹ he »considered debased aliens in America« could be ›improved‹ by ›white‹ culture and civilization to become »men of virtue and character« when returned to Africa. <sup>464</sup> His negative assessment of African development in America, however, signaled that a possible cultural progress would always be retarded by natural deficiencies and would impede African nations from catching up with America and Europe, although Jefferson believed the latter's future prospects to be anything but promising.

In the case of the United States, the ›seeds of civilisation‹ also had to be imported and had not been developed by indigenous inhabitants. The virtues brought to the New World by the settlers' ancestors on their arrival in the New World, however, already dated from the Anglo-Saxon times prior to the Norman Conquest. <sup>465</sup> In his *Summary View of the Rights of British America*, Jefferson claimed that the first British settlers by »establishing new societies« in America, made use of their natural right

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<sup>460</sup> TJ to William Short, Sep. 8, 1823.

<sup>461</sup> Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, pp. 266.

<sup>462</sup> Examples by Hume, Kant, Hegel and Jefferson himself can be found in Eze, Race and the Enlightenment.

<sup>463</sup> TJ to John Lynch, Jan. 21, 1811.

<sup>464</sup> Saillant, The American Enlightenment in Africa, p. 271.

<sup>465</sup> Cf. TJ to John Cartwright, Jun. 5, 1824. In the letter to British reformer, Jefferson assessed that the Anglo-Saxons »doubtless had a constitution; [...] and altho' this constitution was violated and set at nought by Norman force, yet force cannot change right. a perpetual claim was kept up by the nation by their perpetual demand of a restoration of their Saxon laws; which shews they were never relinquished by the will of nation«.

like »their Saxon ancestors had [...] possessed themselves of the island of Britain«.<sup>466</sup> Accordingly, Americans had become a distinct people by occupying new land, while at the same time reviving the allegedly republican heritage of their ancient forebears through shaking off feudalism. An American empire to come, he argued, had to be shaped following the example of »that happy system of our ancestors [...] as it stood before the 8th century«: A society of small scale farmers living close to nature under liberal laws inspired by universal rights of man. Throughout his life, Jefferson emphasized the Saxon spirit of the American revolution, stating shortly after the Declaration of Independence that »every restitution of the Antient Saxon laws had happy effects« and declaring a year prior to his death that the Saxon reign had »exhibit[ed] the [...] political principles of the people constituting the Nation, and founded in the rights of man«.<sup>467</sup> Building on what he passed off as America's Saxon legacy, Jefferson theoretically dissociated the American nation from the British Empire and other feudal systems in Europe. His imperial vision for the conquered America also implied that it was »a place for the development of European descendants«.<sup>468</sup> In fact, at the time he was writing, the new nation was hardly experienced by its inhabitants as the egalitarian and liberal community of smallholders that Jefferson envisioned.

The attempts to emphasize the Anglo-Saxon heritage and the traditional legitimacy of the new nation, while holding out opportunities of integration to a heterogeneous population from various European countries became apparent in the early days of American independence, when Thomas Jefferson was involved in the preparation of a national seal.<sup>469</sup> In line with the other committee members Benjamin Franklin and John Adams, Jefferson sought inspiration in ancient texts and wanted to illustrate one side of the medal with the biblical motive of God guiding the Israelites through the wilderness, allegorically capturing the notion of American migration. The other side, he suggested, should feature the Saxon chiefs Hengist and Horsa, »from whom«, as John Adams paraphrased Jefferson's proposal, »we claim

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<sup>466</sup> TJ, Draft of Instruction to the Virginia Delegates in the Continental Congress (MS Text of A Summary View, etc.), July 1774.

<sup>467</sup> TJ to Edmund Pendleton, Aug. 13, 1776 (»happy system«, »restitution«); TJ to George W. Lewis, Oct. 25, 1825 (»political principles«).

<sup>468</sup> Scott L. Pratt, *Native Pragmatism. Rethinking the Roots of American Philosophy*, Bloomington etc.: Indiana University Press 2002, p. 61.

<sup>469</sup> For the following, see David Hackett Fischer, *Liberty and Freedom. A Visual History of America's Founding Ideas*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 2005, pp. 132 ff.

the honour of being descended and whose political principles and form of government we have assumed«. <sup>470</sup> The combination of Christian and Anglo-Saxon iconography on the national seal, however, not only emphasized that the »Americans established peoplehood upon migration«, but also the cultural and ethnical background of this imagined ›people«. <sup>471</sup>

Especially the latter was even more explicit in the drafts of Pierre Eugène Du Simitière, a Swiss born artist and antiquarian, whom Jefferson hired to assist the committee and whose designs were created in consultation with the new hero of American independence. <sup>472</sup> In the center of the crest, Du Simitière drew an English rose, a Scottish thistle, an Irish harp, a French fleur-de-lis, a German eagle and a Belgian lion, therewith representing the »six principal nations of Europe from whom the Americans have originated«. <sup>473</sup> Complimented with the seal's motto ›e pluribus unum‹ (›one out of many‹), which actually became part of the final version, America was thus visualized as the great ›melting pot‹ that Crèvecoeur and Jefferson evoked and that shaped discourses on American identity for centuries to come. <sup>474</sup> Despite Du Simitière's and Jefferson's naturalist research into the indigenious populations of America, the drafts did not include Native Americans (not to mention people of African descent). This omission is striking also in another suggestion of Du Simitière for a seal of Virginia, in which the nature of the continent featured prominently in a »tobacco plant« and »indian corn«, while humanity should be represented by Walter Raleigh and a »Virginia rifle man of the present times«. <sup>475</sup> On the eve of the new era, the visualizations of American and Virginian identities demonstrated that the founders had »little use for real Indians«, but rather built the new nation on images of conquest, military strength and Anglo-Saxon tra-

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<sup>470</sup> John Adams to Abigail Adams, Aug. 14, 1776. Considering the lack of Jefferson's actual research into the political tradition of the Anglo-Saxons, it still seems a stretch, when Gilbert Chinard assumed that »Jeffersonian democracy was born under the sign of Hengist and Horsa, not of the Goddess Reason«, id., Thomas Jefferson. The Apostle of Americanism, Boston: Little, Brown, and Company 1929, p. 87.

<sup>471</sup> Steele, Thomas Jefferson and American Nationhood, p. 35.

<sup>472</sup> Cf. Daniel J. Boorstin, The Genius of American Politics, Chicago etc.: The University of Chicago Press 1953, p. 93.

<sup>473</sup> Du Simitière's Proposal, Aug. 20, 1776.

<sup>474</sup> For a critical perspective on the ›melting pot‹ concept, see, for example, Desmond King, Making Americans. Immigration, Race, and the Origins of the Diverse Democracy, Cambridge etc.: Harvard University Press 2000, esp. pp. 15-19.

<sup>475</sup> Du Simitière's Design for a Coat of Arms for Virginia, Aug. 1776.

dition.<sup>476</sup> Raleigh, »planting with his right hand the standard of liberty with the words magna charta written on it«, should illustrate Jefferson's »faith in those ancient institutions and a desire to return to their essentials«.<sup>477</sup> The militia man, combined with the symbols of natural abundance and an allegorical naked virgin, stood for the willingness and ability of the colonists to defend their liberty and subdue the continent that was supposedly untouched by civilization.

In some ways, the debates about the national seal mirrored the complexity of the early American discourses of nation-building, in which the allegedly shared ideals of revolution were not sufficient to unify a society divided in status, religion and descent. On the one hand, the national motto »e pluribus unum«, which resembled Jefferson's elaborate suggestion »insuperabiles si inseparabiles«, emphasized the need for social cohesion and implied that this could not be taken for granted. On the other hand, the explicit references to Anglo-Saxon heritage, and to Christian mythology, bore witness to the British Protestant roots of the American elites and formed the »mytho-symbolic core« that dominated the new society's culture.<sup>478</sup> The dual task of integration and restoration was at the heart of Jefferson's political thought and he continuously struggled to theoretically conciliate the diversity that resulted from individual liberty with the common national identity that he perceived as essential precondition for social peace.<sup>479</sup> In rationalizing the conditions and mechanisms of social inclusion, however, Jefferson implicitly presupposed the exclusion of Native Americans and African Americans, albeit on different terms, as a necessary precondition for the consolidation of the new republic.

Jefferson was famously aware that an egalitarian democracy could not be based solely on the equal distribution of civil liberties, which he knew could result in a dangerous inequality of property relations, but had to provide for economic opportunities. Thus, when he was appointed in a committee to cause desertions of Hessi-

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<sup>476</sup> Andrew Burstein, Nancy Isenberg, Madison and Jefferson, New York etc.: Random House 2010, p. 30.

<sup>477</sup> Boorstin, *The Genius of American Politics*, p. 92. These institutions, Jefferson believed in line with an influential Whig tradition, long preceded the Magna Carta and Raleigh's establishment of Virginian settlements as some form of an »ancient constitution« in Anglo-Saxon society, cf. Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, pp. 18 f. For a slightly different reading, see Valsania, *The Limits of Optimism*, p. 111.

<sup>478</sup> Eric P. Kaufman, *The Rise and Fall of Anglo-America*, Cambridge etc.: Harvard University Press 2004, pp. 11 f.

<sup>479</sup> There is a longstanding scholarly debate about individualism and communitarianism in Jefferson's political thought. A brief synopsis, with particular regard to the various interpretations of the *Declaration of Independence*, is provided in Allen Jayne, *Jefferson's Declaration of Independence. Origins, Philosophy, and Theology*, Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky 1998, pp. 1-6.

an mercenaries during the Revolutionary War, he deemed it insufficient to merely present the prospect of civic rights and religious freedom. Whereas George Wythe's early draft of an address to the foreign soldiers was implicit in promising the »blessings of peace« that »numberless Germans and other foreigners [...] will testify«, Jefferson specified that »such foreigners [...] would chuse to accept lands, liberty, safety and a communion of good laws and mild government« in this non-random order.<sup>480</sup> Consequently, the final and approved appeal was very clear in assigning »unappropriated lands in the following quantities and proportions to them and their heirs in absolute dominion. To a Colonel 1000 acres, to a Lieutenant Colonel 800 as., to a Major 600 as«, and so forth.<sup>481</sup> As with Jefferson's draft for the Virginia constitution of the same year, in which he suggested that »every person of full age [...] shall be entitled to an appropriation of 50 acres [...] in full and absolute dominion«, this plan was not meant to compromise the property rights of large landowners such as himself.<sup>482</sup> The »unappropriated lands« for this distribution had to be acquired by means of purchase and warfare, following the racist logics of conquest and civilization that Jefferson applied in his policies towards Native Americans.

While Jefferson advocated similar redistribution policies in favor of religious dissenters, European immigrants and unemployed poor, including the proposed slave bounties for smallholder conscripts, these almost radical ideas clashed with property interests and rarely became political practice.<sup>483</sup> Nevertheless, as the achievement of economic and social equality remained utopian for a variety of marginalized groups in early American society, citizenship itself became a form of »inherited property«, one that realized as »racist symbolic capital«. <sup>484</sup> Frequently studied with regard to the nineteenth century and the political formation of the working class, the capacity of »white« European immigrants to experience a symbolic uplifting through the racist dissociation especially of enslaved and free African Americans

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<sup>480</sup> Wythe's and Jefferson's drafts are cited in Butterfield, *Psychological Warfare in 1776*, pp. 235 f. A similarly worded proclamation from 1781 can be found in the Jefferson Papers, which, according to the editorial note, »restated, on the part of Virginia and in somewhat amplified terms, the Proclamation of Congress, 14 Aug. 1776, inviting the German mercenary troops to desert the British service«, TJ, *Proclamation Inviting Mercenary Troops in the British Service to Desert*, Feb. 2, 1781.

<sup>481</sup> TJ, *Report of a Plan to Invite Foreign Officers in the British Service to Desert*, Aug. 27, 1776. For the German version of the text, see Butterfield, *Psychological Warfare in 1776*, p. 239.

<sup>482</sup> TJ, III. *Third Draft by Jefferson*, bef. Jun., 1776.

<sup>483</sup> For Jefferson's stance on the redistribution of property, see, for example, Valsania, *Nature's Man*, esp. pp. 89-96; Benjamin Radcliff, *The Political Economy of Happiness. How Voters' Choices Determine the Quality of Life*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 2013, pp. 21 ff.

<sup>484</sup> Ayelet Shachar, Ran Hirschl, *Citizenship as Inherited Property*, in: *Political Theory*, 35, 2007, 3, pp. 253-287 (»inherited«); Weiß, *Racist Symbolic Capital* (»racist«).

can actually be traced back to earlier discourses on citizenship and national identity.<sup>485</sup> Building on notions of European cultural superiority and ›whiteness‹, Jefferson contributed to this process of social inclusion that essentially built on racist exclusion.

As he repeatedly stressed in conflict with the bordering European empires, Jefferson located the United States »among the white nations of America«.<sup>486</sup> Following his expansionist doctrine and his faith in the potency of American civilization, he quite possibly anticipated a time when the new republic would be *the* ›white‹ nation of America.<sup>487</sup> Throughout his life, Jefferson used the category of ›whiteness‹ to refer to people of European descent and to characterize those inhabitants of the American colonies that were not ascribed a Native American or African American identity.<sup>488</sup> His initial colonization scheme, outlined in the *Notes on the State of Virginia*, proposed »to send vessels at the same time to other parts of the world for an equal number of white inhabitants« to replace the emancipated slaves.<sup>489</sup> In his singular plan for a gradual emancipation of his own slaves without deportation, he thought about »import[ing] as many Germans as I have grown slaves« to educate them commonly in »habits of property and foresight«, so that they interbreed and their children become »good citizens«.<sup>490</sup> As the latter proposal exemplifies the flexibility of Jefferson's ›racial‹ thought, he was consistent in making emancipation conditional on the import of supposedly ›white‹ Europeans.

This emphasis of ›racial‹ identity and purity was all the more important for social cohesion, as the institution of slavery was increasingly challenged by concepts of natural rights. Jefferson knew that slavery and slaves were a product of positive law

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<sup>485</sup> A useful overview about this area of ›whiteness‹ and racism studies can be found in David R. Roediger, *The Pursuit of Whiteness. Property, Terror, and Expansion, 1790-1860*, in: *Journal of the Early Republic*, 19, 1999, 4, pp. 579-600.

<sup>486</sup> TJ, *Notes for a Conversation with George Hammond*, Dec. 10, 1792.

<sup>487</sup> This can be exemplified with his letter to James Monroe, anticipating »distant times, when our rapid multiplication will expand itself beyond those limits, and cover the whole Northern, if not the Southern continent with a people speaking the same language, governed in similar forms, and by similar laws«, TJ to James Monroe, Nov. 24, 1801. For the ›racial‹ dimension of Jefferson's imperial vision in context of the Louisiana Purchase, see also Jason E. Pierce, *Making the White Man's West. Whiteness and the Creation of the American West*, Boulder: University Press of Colorado 2016, pp. 29-43.

<sup>488</sup> Thus, Jefferson refers to himself and his fellow countrymen as »white people« in at least nine of his presidential addresses to Native American peoples, cf. to Seneca, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Munsee Indians, Feb. 24, 1802; to Handsome Lake, Nov. 3, 1802; to Owl and Others, Jan. 8, 1803; to Puckshunubbee, Mar. 13, 1805; to Creek Nation, Nov. 2, 1805; to Shawnee Chiefs, Feb. 19, 1807; to Kitchao-Geboway, Feb. 27, 1808; to Beaver, Dec. 21, 1808; to Indian Nations, Jan. 31, 1809.

<sup>489</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 264.

<sup>490</sup> TJ to Edward Bancroft, Jan. 26, 1789.

– albeit in violation of natural law. This is exemplified by the structure of his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, in which Jefferson analyzes African Americans in the query on law, whereas Native Americans are discussed as part of the natural riches of his native country.<sup>491</sup> Similarly, Jefferson observed how the ›racial‹ status became a subject of legislation, with laws codifying how many crosses with ›pure white‹ were needed for ›clearing the issue of negro blood‹. The whitening of ›blacks‹, he made sure, ›does not reestablish freedom, which depends on the condition of the mother‹. Only if the slave was freed, he concluded the hypothetical ›trifle‹, ›he becomes a free white man, and a citizen of the U.S.‹<sup>492</sup> Hence, it was a crucial constraint when Jefferson wrote in his *Notes* that the ›black‹ ›when freed‹ had to be ›removed beyond the reach of mixture‹.<sup>493</sup> Within slavery, ›racial‹ mixture did not undermine the established power relations.

The progressive overlapping of ›racial‹ and civic status in early American law, which even in Northern states ›ushered many blacks into a newly instituted second-class black citizenship‹, rested on Jeffersonian notions of homogeneity as a precondition for democracy and ›racial‹ segregation as a consequence of slavery.<sup>494</sup> In this respect, Jefferson advocated what scholars have called a ›Herrenvolk democracy‹, which at least theoretically provided for liberty and equality among the dominant population, but at the same time justified the oppression and dispossession of racially defined out-groups.<sup>495</sup> His concept of the ›empire of liberty‹ not only rested on the westward expansion, but also on a common ›white‹ American identity that for European immigrants, religious minorities and poor people constituted a ›niche

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<sup>491</sup> Similarly, Catherine Holland links Jefferson's discussion of Native Americans and African Americans to the narrative structure of his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, holding that ›slaves cannot be fully or comfortably integrated as American citizens within the terms of Jeffersonian nationalism because they are, paradoxically enough, not products of American nature but creations of the law itself or, more precisely, of what is most injudicious in American law‹, id., *Notes on the State of America. Jeffersonian Democracy and the Production of a National Past*, in: *Political Theory*, 29, 2001, 2, pp. 190-216, here p. 206.

<sup>492</sup> TJ to Francis C. Gray, Mar. 4, 1815.

<sup>493</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 270.

<sup>494</sup> Horton, *From Class to Race in Early America*, p. 645.

<sup>495</sup> This terminology for a ›parliamentary regime in which the exercise of power and suffrage is restricted, de facto, and often de jure, to the dominant group‹ has been developed by sociologist Pierre van den Berghe. With special regard to racism in the United States, van den Berghe claimed that ›this republic has been, since its birth and until World War II, a ›Herrenvolk democracy‹, id., *Race and Racism*, pp. 18 (›parliamentary‹), 77 (›republic‹). In context of Jefferson's racism, the notion is applied in Walker, *Mongrel Nation*, pp. 16 f. For an adaption of the concept as ›Herrenvolk republicanism‹, see Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, pp. 59 f.

amid the uncertainties of the early national era«. <sup>496</sup> As James Ceaser noted, Jefferson wanted to »establish political regimes that recognize natural rights and that employ race as a fundamental criterion for defining the make-up of political communities«. <sup>497</sup>

This became additionally obvious in his plans for colonization. When emancipated slaves would not be accepted for exile in the imperial domains of Spain and Great Britain, Jefferson believed that they would find the most probable retreat in the West Indies and Haiti, where »people of their own race and colour [...] are established into a sovereignty de facto, and have organised themselves under regular laws and government«. <sup>498</sup> In Jefferson's political thought, independence and national sovereignty could not simply be established on the basis of people and land, as has been suggested by Michael Hardt, but on a »racially homogenous people plus land«. <sup>499</sup> »Insulated from the other descriptions of men«, ›blacks‹ could eventually enjoy their natural rights, as their colonization enabled ›white‹ Americans to simultaneously remove the moral flaw of slavery and the »blot or mixture« associated with free ›blacks«. <sup>500</sup> It was this political isolation of the distinct ›races‹, besides the complexities of international diplomacy, which inspired Jefferson's Haitian policies and his racist »response to the rising of people of color in St. Domingue«. <sup>501</sup>

In this context, the category of ›race‹ served to perpetuate and theoretically reinforce a social relation of exploitation and inequality that had long been established on the basis of violent colonization and justified with non-›racial‹ racisms building for example on religious categories of difference. Jefferson's notion of ›racial‹ homogeneity, thus, went beyond the mathematical logics of breeding and resembled metaphysical ideas of contamination and purity. His anxieties about ›stained blood‹ and potential ›blots‹ within a ›white‹ society echoed the religiously connoted ›blood‹ metaphors of early modern Spanish discourses, which reacted to the increasing social mobility of Jews and converts with the stigmatization of Jewish (and Muslim)

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<sup>496</sup> Jon Gjerde, ›Here in America There Is Neither King nor Tyrant‹. European Encounters with Race, ›Freedom,‹ and Their European Pasts, in: *Journal of the Early Republic*, 19, 1999, 4, pp. 673-690, here p. 675. For Jefferson's ›empire‹ as a ›land of opportunity«, see Patrick M. Garry, *Liberalism and American Identity*, Kent etc.: Kent University Press, 1992, pp. 53 ff.; Steven Sarson, *The Tobacco-Plantation South in the Early American World*, New York etc.: Palgrave Macmillan 2013, p. 105.

<sup>497</sup> Ceaser, *Natural Rights and Scientific Racism*, p. 167.

<sup>498</sup> TJ to James Monroe, Nov. 24, 1801.

<sup>499</sup> Shank, *Jefferson, the Impossible*, p. 298.

<sup>500</sup> TJ to James Monroe, Nov. 24, 1801.

<sup>501</sup> Zuckerman, *The Power of Blackness*, p. 176.

›genealogy‹. Building on absolute categories of damnation and chosenness, supposed to structure not merely the afterlife but also the social order of the mortal world, religious identity was constructed as an indelible trait that could in various ways ›infect‹ and contaminate ›pure‹ blood.<sup>502</sup> Facing an alleged internal threat posed by the presence (and the potential demands) of a socially constructed group of outsiders, the societies of early modern Spain and the early United States developed strikingly similar logics of purity, which stood in marked contrast to the policies on the borders of their colonial empires. Whereas Native Americans were supposed to be vanishing peoples, who would disappear without a trace when they intermixed with the settlers, the characteristics of ›Jews‹ or ›blacks‹ respectively were perceived as resistant and even contagious.<sup>503</sup> This almost supernatural logic of contamination is vividly captured in the images of ›torna atrás‹ children in Mexican casta paintings. Born to phenotypically pale parents, the African descent (usually of the mother) is revealed in the dark complexion of the infant. Similar to a biblical curse, the fundamental otherness of Africans could not be extinguished through progressive intermixture, but created an irreconcilable division of mankind, which required policies of segregation.<sup>504</sup> As Jefferson put it, »color has condemned« African Americans to either maintain slaves or to be expelled from ›white‹ American society.<sup>505</sup>

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<sup>502</sup> Because of its references to blood, signifying »deficiencies that allegedly could not be eradicated by conversion or assimilation«, George Fredrickson assesses the Spanish policies of *limpieza de sangre* as »undoubtedly racist«, *id.*, *Racism*, p. 33. It is important to bear in mind, however, that this early modern notion of blood was infused with theological ideas of sinfulness and purity and did not anticipate the biological connotations of blood in later eugenics and ›racial‹ sciences, cf. Torres, *Rassismus in der Vormoderne*, pp. 260 f. See also Jerome C. Branche, *Colonialism and Race in Luso-Hispanic Literature, Columbia etc.*: University of Missouri Press 2006, pp. 49-61.

<sup>503</sup> Thus, Evelyn Nakano Glenn links the »contrasting positions of eliminable Native Americans and enslavable and exploitable blacks« to differing classification rules and policies towards ›racial‹ mixing, *id.*, *Settler Colonialism as Structure. A Framework for Comparative Studies of U.S. Race and Gender Formation*, in: *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 1, 2015, 1, pp. 54-74, here p. 62.

<sup>504</sup> For the imagined potency of African blood in casta paintings and its relation to the ›Curse of Ham‹, see Rebecca Earle, *The Body of the Conquistador. Food, Race and the Colonial Experience in Spanish America, 1492-1700*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 2012, pp. 189-200. As Earle indicates, albeit without further discussion, the emergence of the imaginary relapse to ›blackness‹ roughly coincided with improving opportunities of African Americans within the traditional casta hierarchies, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 196 ff. For further background on racism and casta paintings, see also Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting. Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico*, New Haven etc.: Yale University Press 2004; Ruth Hill, *The Blood of Others. Breeding Plants, Animals and White People in the Spanish Atlantic*, in: Kimberley Anne Coles, Ralph Bauer, Zita Nunes, Carla L. Peterson (eds.), *The Cultural Politics of Blood, 1500-1900*, New York etc.: Palgrave Macmillan 2015, pp. 45-64.

<sup>505</sup> TJ to Thomas Cooper, Sep. 10, 1814.

Against this backdrop, it is improbable that Jefferson actually wrote that the »course of events will likewise inevitably lead to a mixture of the whites and the blacks and [...] the blacks will ultimately be merged in the whites« or that he had »faith in the robust and transformative powers of whiteness«. <sup>506</sup> More likely, his emphasis of possible contamination mirrored his fear of contagious social upheavals in case of an immediate abolition. As social stability rested on a neat division of free citizens and unfree slaves, the physical amalgamation of ›white‹ and (free) ›black‹ symbolized a transgression not only of ›racial‹, but also of social limits and therewith endangered the future of the nation. To a considerable degree, as James Saillant put it, »sameness and similarity defined Jefferson's philosophy«, especially as »European forms of social authority and social cohesion had fallen away [...] from Americans«. <sup>507</sup> The emerging frameworks of ›racial‹ division and skin color categories served to rationalize new modes of unification and at the same time justified perpetuated social exclusion.

Despite Jefferson's advocacy of modern ›racial‹ language and his strengthening of ›whiteness‹ as a common denominator of American identity, it would be misleading to reduce his ›racial‹ thought to its biologicistic, phenotypical elements. In fact, Jefferson never dropped the idea of a mythical Anglo-Saxon spirit that unfolded in the new republic and provided for the guiding culture of the American society. <sup>508</sup> In a lengthy essay on the history of the English language, Jefferson revealed that his Anglo-Saxonism was fueled by quasi-›racial‹ ideas about purity and mixture, but maintained its core assumption of cultural and civilizational superiority. <sup>509</sup>

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<sup>506</sup> Thus he is cited from a ›rare‹ edition of the Jeffersonian articles in J. A. Rogers, *Sex and Race. A History of White, Negro, and Indian Miscegenation in the Two Americas*, Vol. 2, New York: Helga M. Rogers 1942, p. 186 (›course‹); Gregory D. Smithers, *The ›Right Kind of White People‹. Reproducing Whiteness in the United States and Australia, 1780s-1930s*, in: Manfred Berg, Simon Wendt (eds.), *Racism in the Modern World. Historical Perspectives on Cultural Transfer and Adaptation*, New York: Berghahn 2011, pp. 303-328, here p. 309 (›faith‹).

<sup>507</sup> Saillant, *The American Enlightenment in Africa*, pp. 263 f. Drawing on the Foucauldian notion of the classical episteme, Saillant interprets Jefferson as a somewhat pre-modern thinker, who based his ideas of nation and society on close ties between individuals and modeled his ideal republic after a classical city. Consequently, »black Americans had no home in Jefferson's imagined city, nor did a liberal political philosophy, suited for a diverse, expanding nation«, *ibid.*, p. 264.

<sup>508</sup> On Jefferson's ›racial‹ Anglo-Saxonism, see, for example, Smedley, *Race in North America*, pp. 192-202. Smedley introduces Thomas Jefferson in a broader discussion of the »myth of Anglo-Saxon racial purity and superiority«, which he allegedly believed in. This concept, in her interpretation, »gave added strength to the idea of racial purity« and ensured that »culture and biology became [...] intricately interwoven«, *ibid.*, pp. 91 (›myth‹), 99 (›added‹, ›culture‹).

<sup>509</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *An Essay towards Facilitating Instruction in the Anglo-Saxon and Modern Dialects of the English Language*, New York: John F. Trow 1851. Parts of the posthumously published essay were compiled prior to 1798 and attached by Jefferson to a letter to Herbert Croft (Oct.

As the Anglo-Saxon language was supposedly »spoken pure and unmixed« between the sixth and thirteenth century, Jefferson believed that also physically the occupying Romans »had little familiar mixture with the native Britons«. It could therefore be assumed, he continued, that »pure Anglo-Saxon constitutes at this day the basis of our language«, seemingly equivalent to the »pure« virtuousness he wanted to restore in the new republic and the »pure« »whiteness« that used to be associated with Anglo-Saxons exclusively.<sup>510</sup> Thus, the new citizens Jefferson wanted to educate for republicanism were supposed to learn the old English dialect, as »they will imbibe, with the language, their free principles of government«.<sup>511</sup>

With his introduction of Anglo-Saxon language at the University of Virginia in 1825, Jefferson fueled a scientific Anglo-Saxonism that became increasingly »racialized« in the course of the nineteenth century.<sup>512</sup> Eventually, in 1900, a commentator could summarize colonial history in assessing that the »Anglo-Saxon race has added to its territories by conquest, treaty, purchase, annexation and discovery«, while emphasizing that president Jefferson has contributed to »increasing the area over which the flags of liberty and progress have been unfurled«.<sup>513</sup> However, it was not Jefferson's expansionist policies, but rather his socio-political vision that in the combination of Anglo-Saxon »hereditarianism and scientific racism« established an American tradition of »racial« categorizations and »created the mythic »American race««.<sup>514</sup>

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30, 1798). According to this letter's editorial note, however, »TJ likely composed most of the Essay, which is a fairly substantial work in several sections, over a course of years, probably 1818 to 1825, in conjunction with his inclusion of Anglo-Saxon in the curriculum of the University of Virginia«. For an in-depth analysis of the essay that reveals Jefferson to be an »amateur in Anglo-Saxon [...] rather than a meticulous scholar«, see Hauer, Thomas Jefferson and the Anglo-Saxon Language, here p. 879.

<sup>510</sup> Jefferson, *An Essay towards Facilitating Instruction in the Anglo-Saxon and Modern Dialects of the English Language*, pp. 7 f. For a critical analysis, hinting at the essay's equation of »language with biological descent«, its »emphasis on blood purity« and »race talk«, see Painter, *The History of White People*, p. 112.

<sup>511</sup> TJ to John Cartwright, Jun. 5, 1824.

<sup>512</sup> Cf. Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, esp. pp. 18-24. On Jefferson's influence in nineteenth century Anglo-Saxon studies, see also Gregory A. VanHoosier-Carey, *Byrhtnoth in Dixie. The Emergence of Anglo-Saxon Studies in the Postbellum South*, in: Allen J. Frantzen, John D. Niles (eds.), *Anglo-Saxonism and the Construction of Social Identity*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida 1997, pp. 157-172, here pp. 159-161.

<sup>513</sup> Charles Beresford, *The Future of the Anglo-Saxon Race*, in: *The North American Review*, 171, 1900, pp. 802-810, here p. 806.

<sup>514</sup> Gregory Michael Dorr, *Segregation's Science. Eugenics and Society in Virginia, Charlottesville etc.*: University of Virginia Press 2008, pp. 26 f. For the nexus of Anglo-Saxonism, »race«, and American nationalism, see also Eric Kaufman, *American Exceptionalism Reconsidered. Anglo-Saxon Ethnogenesis in the »Universal« Nation*, in: *Journal of American Studies*, 33, 1999, 3, pp. 437-457.

The ›racial‹ formation of a ›white‹ and Anglo-Saxon America under the conditions of a liberal political doctrine could only work through the simultaneous exclusion of Native Americans and African Americans. The American concept of ›race‹ therefore emerged as a »Jeffersonian fusion« that »reconciled and unified two of the most formative [...] components of Enlightenment discourse, resolving the tension between improvement and fixity by allocating them differently«.<sup>515</sup> With his complex ›racial‹ framework, ranging from the culturalistic construction of Native American backwardness to the essentialist emphasis on African inferiority, Jefferson stands emblematic for the flexibility of Enlightenment racism, which translated a variety of social exclusions into the language of science and civilization. Along the categories of nature and history, the following chapter will scrutinize Jefferson's philosophical and scientific contributions to contemporary ›racial‹ thought and examine his position within the Enlightenment project of the reformulation of racism.

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<sup>515</sup> Wolfe, *Traces of History*, p. 9.

## 6. ›The Prevailing Perplexity‹

### Jefferson and Science

In his brief assessment of ›Thomas Jefferson, Race, and National Identity‹, Peter Onuf pointedly concludes that »Jefferson did not simply discover racial boundaries already inscribed and fixed in nature: he helped construct them, contributing significantly to the racial ›science‹ that would in subsequent decades naturalize racial hierarchy«. <sup>516</sup> Other scholars agree that Jefferson was »instrumental in casting the whole question of racial inferiority into the arms of science« and therewith represented a »new world view, in which science and economics replaced religion and community«. <sup>517</sup> Some even hold that there is »no better example of the contradictions and present legacy of race coming from this period« and »no figure captures the tensions between Enlightenment notions of natural rights and universal human nature versus the growing racial ideology better than [...] Thomas Jefferson«. <sup>518</sup> With eighteenth-century scientists perceived as »putting their disciplines on a road that led by the later nineteenth century to a kind of official racism in Western culture«, Jefferson, the distinguished philosopher president, emerges as the embodiment also of the shady sides of the American Enlightenment. <sup>519</sup> Still, the assessment prevails that the full potential of ›race‹ sciences only unleashed in the following century, so that Jefferson was merely an »eighteenth-century Enlightenment mind playing in the dark, not a nineteenth-century hard racist one«. <sup>520</sup>

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<sup>516</sup> Onuf, *The Mind of Thomas Jefferson*, p. 211.

<sup>517</sup> Smedley, *Race in North America*, p. 192 (›casting‹); Boulton, *The American Paradox*, p. 477 (›new‹). Smedley and Boulton similarly focus on Jefferson's elaborations on ›blacks‹, arguing that Jefferson solved his personal dilemma over slavery by »increasingly projecting the African as something subhuman«, Smedley, *Race in North America*, p. 198. An exaggerated interpretation of Jefferson as an Enlightenment mastermind of ›racial‹ thought is put forward by Robert Forbes, who argued that Jefferson »import[ed] the slaveholder's sense of slaves as chattel into an Enlightenment world view«, by which he »redirected the course of Enlightenment thought regarding race [... and] set in motion a paradigmatic shift in the human sciences – and ultimately in society as whole – as momentous as those of Copernicus in astronomy and Kant in cognition«, id., *Secular Damnation. Thomas Jefferson and the Imperative of Race*, in: *Torrington Articles*, 2012, [http://works.bepress.com/robert\\_forbes/3](http://works.bepress.com/robert_forbes/3), here p. 4.

<sup>518</sup> Fluehr-Lobban, *Race and Racism*, p. 74 (›example‹); John P. Jackson, Jr., Nadine M. Weidmann, *Race, Racism, and Science. Social Impact and Interaction*, Santa Barbara etc.: ABC- Clio 2004, p. 23 (›figure‹).

<sup>519</sup> Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, p. 76. In contrast to the »racist statements made by many of the leading figures of the European Enlightenment«, Davis assesses, »Jefferson's racist views have attracted some attention in recent years«, *ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>520</sup> Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind*, p. 3.

As the present chapter will demonstrate, the Enlightenment tradition of natural history resulted in (racial) classifications of mankind that are inextricably linked to the ›hard racist‹ frameworks developed by Arthur de Gobineau and other infamous ›race‹ scientists some decades later.<sup>521</sup> This continuity, however, does not mean that Enlightenment theories about human diversity were tantamount with a sudden shift from cultural notions of difference to more ›scientific‹ natural parameters. In fact, the study of Thomas Jefferson's conceptions of human ›races‹ sheds light on the complex overlaps of physical and cultural ascriptions that are characteristic for racist social constructions. Rather than assuming a caesura between culturalistic discrimination and naturalistic racism, his example suggests that enduring logics of exclusion and inclusion had been established long before the notion of ›race‹ shaped social and political discourses and have to be interpreted with regard to their specific historical contexts.

It is a truism in racism studies that Enlightenment taxonomy and its incorporation of the category of ›race‹ significantly contributed to the rise of scientific racism, which reached its peak when ›race became the common principle of academic knowledge in the nineteenth century.«<sup>522</sup> Other than around 1850, when Benjamin Disraeli's assessment that »all is race« (followed shortly by Robert Knox's »race is everything«) signaled a broad consensus about the meaning and significance of the concept, it is supposed that the Enlightenment period was characterized by a strikingly inconsistent application of the idea, which was not least manifested in the great variety of ›race‹ classifications. Although these systems, as for example the scheme suggested by Linnaeus, had »clear evaluative judgements built into it«, they are still widely perceived as resulting from a principally innocent trend of scientifically organizing the natural world.<sup>523</sup> Overwhelmingly maintaining that all humans were part of one species and sometimes even recognizing that the introduced »categories were abstractions or ideal types rather than discrete units«, the Enlighten-

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<sup>521</sup> With regard to Enlightenment classifications of human ›races‹, it is frequently differentiated between racism and ›racialism‹, as they supposedly did not contain the »distinctive content of nineteenth-century racism«, that is »moral distinctions between members of different races because [...] the racial essence entails certain morally relevant qualities«. Other than racism, mere ›racialist‹ divisions of humankind into different ›races‹ are thus perceived as a »cognitive rather than a moral problem«, Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House. Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*, New York etc.: Oxford University Press 1993, p. 13.

<sup>522</sup> Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire. Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, London etc.: Routledge 1995, p. 88. For the following quotations, see *ibid.*

<sup>523</sup> Ali Rattansi, *Racism. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 2007, p. 26.

ment scientists are credited with basically noble intentions and deemed unaccountable for the fatal consequences of their work.<sup>524</sup> The present study, however, neither treats racism as an ideology with underlying intentions nor aims at the identification of malevolent culprits. The way in which various forms of social exclusion were ›racialized‹ in Enlightenment discourses therefore provides a necessary background for the analysis of Jeffersonian racism.

Phenotypical differences between populations, including skin-color gradations, have been noticed and described since antiquity.<sup>525</sup> Although these observations were at any time accompanied by derogatory characterizations, ancient and medieval times did not ›know‹ of systematic correlations between physical appearance and moral qualities.<sup>526</sup> Absolute distinctions between groups, which were used to justify social and political exclusion, were rather based on the essentialization of invisible innate characteristics such as barbarism or religious identity. At the same time, however, philosophers had long begun to arrange the natural world in a hierarchical order. Derived from Platonic hierarchies, the idea of a *scala naturae*, a great chain of being, permeated theories of nature and mankind from antiquity through to the nineteenth century. While its early versions fundamentally structured the relations between divine beings and the mortal world, subsequent frameworks allotted specific ranks to humans, animals, plants and minerals.<sup>527</sup>

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<sup>524</sup> Fredrickson, *Racism*, p. 57.

<sup>525</sup> This fact has inspired numerous studies, examining ancient perceptions of dark-skinned peoples, cf. Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*; Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham*; Lloyd A. Thompson, *Romans and Blacks*; Frank M. Snowden, Jr., *Before Color Prejudice. The Ancient View of Blacks*, Cambridge etc.: Harvard University Press 1983.

<sup>526</sup> Although there is no scholarly consensus about the existence of (proto-)›racial‹ ideas in ancient societies, it is overwhelmingly assessed that skin-color was not the critical denominator of these possible categories. Thus, Denise McCoskey states that the evidence for the ›insignificance of skin colour, did not in point of fact demonstrate that the ancients did not think racially, only that they did not endorse one particular brand of racial ideology‹, id., *Race. Antiquity and its Legacy*, London etc.: Tauris 2012, p. 9. See also Charles W. Mills, *Bestial Inferiority. Locating Simianization within Racism*, in: Wulf D. Hund, Charles W. Mills, Silvia Sebastiani (eds.), *Simianization. Apes, Gender, Class, and Race*, Berlin etc.: Lit 2015, pp. 19-41, here pp. 20 f. Other than McCoskey, Mills applies the concept of racism (rather than ›race‹) and argues that this ›term should not be so constructed as to rule out other kinds of racism that are not color-coded‹, so that ›pre-modern forms of Western racism [...] might indeed have existed‹, ibid, pp. 20 (›term‹), 21 (›pre-modern‹).

<sup>527</sup> For the history of the concept, see Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being. A Study of the History of an Idea*, Cambridge etc.: Harvard University Press 1936. For the influence of the ancient idea of a chain of being on later classifications of humankind, see Gustav Jahoda, *Images of Savages. Ancient Roots of Modern Prejudice in Western Culture*, New York etc.: Routledge 1999, pp. 32-35. With special regard to the ›racial‹ conceptions of the American Enlightenment, Stephen Asma writes that especially environmentalist theories about Native American and African American savagism were ›wed to the ancient idea of a hierarchical *scala naturae* and presupposed that one could ›better‹ the savage (raise him to the ›higher‹ White-level of the ladder) by altering his environment‹,

By the thirteenth century, Albertus Magnus included »man-like beasts« into the classification and therewith went beyond the known »dichotomy of man, the most perfect of the animal creation, and the beasts in a descending scale«. <sup>528</sup> With his intermediate category, Albertus wanted to describe monkeys and mythical humanoids like pygmies, who early on were associated with dark complexion. However, it took another five centuries before essentialized skin color categories were used to define human »races«.

The *scala naturae* remained the predominant framework for classification, when the William Petty explained in the 1670s that the

»Europeans doe not only differ from the afforementioned affricans in Collour, which is as much as white differs from black, but also in their haire, which differs as much as a straight line differs from a Circle, but thay differ also in the shape of their noses, lipps & cheek bones as also in the very out line of their faces and the Mold of their skulls, Thay differ also in their Naturall Maners, and in the Internall qualities of their Minds«. <sup>529</sup>

Even if Petty's extended version of the *Scale of Creatures* »had no discernable influence on later anthropological thought« and regardless of whether he only gave »voice to commonplaces drawn from early modern writing on travel and anthropology«, his suggestion »that a form of hierarchical scaling also seems to obtain within the human species« signaled a shift in European perceptions of human varieties. <sup>530</sup> Petty's conception of a hierarchically divided humankind set the tone for later »scientific racism«, but also exemplified the close connection between the emergence of »racial« categories and the socio-economic conditions of slavery and

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id., *Metaphors of Race. Theoretical Presuppositions behind Racism*, in: *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 32, 1995, 1, pp. 13-29, here p. 16.

<sup>528</sup> Jahoda, *Images of Savages*, p. 33. Jahoda points out that Albertus' ideas »anticipated an intensive 18<sup>th</sup>-century debate«, because he contemplated the possibility of inferior humans, whom he characterized through a combination of physical features and mental observations. Effectively, the »correlation between physical and mental similarity [...] as an organizing principle in his classification of the animal world [...] foreshadowed some of the ideas put forward by Cuvier some five centuries later«, *ibid.*, pp. 33 ff.

<sup>529</sup> William Petty, *Of the Scale of Creatures* (letter to Robert Southwell) as cited in Rhodri Lewis, *William Petty's Anthropology. Religion, Colonialism, and the Problem of Human Diversity*, in: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 74, 2011, 2, pp. 261-288, here p. 273.

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 264 (hierarchical), 273 (discernable, »voice«). In line with the abovementioned division of Enlightenment classifications from later racist frameworks, Lewis »defends« Petty by stressing his »commitment to the monogenetic theory of human origins outlined in the book of Genesis, and his concomitant view that human diversity is the product of environmental factors rather than radical biological difference«, *ibid.*, p. 273. For an earlier discussion of Petty's scale, see Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, 419-422.

colonization.<sup>531</sup> That these were not necessarily corresponding to emerging skin-color categories is revealed by Petty's treatment of the Irish. As a »strong advocate for English colonization of Ireland«, his surveys justified the confiscation of lands as well as the deportation and possible enslavement of its inhabitants with the alleged barbarism and religious depravity of the Irish population – in a way that strikingly resembled simultaneous constructions of Native American »savages«.<sup>532</sup>

Subsequent »racial« classifications similarly emerged from older discourses about natural diversity and developed their destructive potential in close connection with preexisting structures of social exclusion.<sup>533</sup> When the later editions of Linnaeus' *Systema Naturae* established the classification of mankind according to skin color, the »physical and psychological description of the four human races synthesized prejudices developed over the past three centuries« and were accompanied by »political stereotypes« suggesting different stages of societal organization.<sup>534</sup> In the decades following Linnaeus' classification, scholars all over Europe were engaged in debates about the essence and variations of humankind, discussing the »transition from »physical« to »moral« to »historical« man« and eventually established typologies of humankind that progressively rested on the notion of »race«.<sup>535</sup> Revolutionary in allotting humankind its place in the animal kingdom, Linnaeus had divided the species of »Homo Sapiens« into distinct varieties defined by timeless and God-given

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<sup>531</sup> Peter Linebaugh, Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra. Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*, Boston: Beacon Press 2000, p. 139. Emphasizing his familiarity with the colonial exploitation of slavery, Linebaugh and Rediker hold that Petty »was developing a new discourse, an ideological racism different in tone and methods from the racial prejudice of the overseer with a whip or the bully on deck«, *ibid.* Similarly, Wulf D. Hund assesses that »Petty formulated an outline of what was later to be developed into modern race theory«, *id.*, *Negative Societalisation*, p. 66.

<sup>532</sup> Baum, *The Rise and Fall of the Caucasian Race*, p. 51. For the parallel processes of stereotyping regarding Irish and Native Americans, see Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government. Science, Imperial Britain, and the »Improvement« of the World*, New Haven etc.: Yale University Press 2000, pp. 55 f.; Patrick Griffin, *Reforming and Destroying Canaan. Making America British*, in: Patrick Griffin, Robert G. Ingram, Peter S. Onuf, Brian Schoen (eds.), *Between Sovereignty and Anarchy. The Politics of Violence in the American Revolutionary Era*, Charlottesville etc.: University of Virginia Press 2015, pp. 40-59, here esp. pp. 47-53. Andrew Hadfield and John McVeagh similarly stress the »connection between Petty's anthropological theory and his Irish work«, *ids.*, *Strangers to that Land. British Perceptions of Ireland from the Reformation to the Famine*, Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe 1994, p. 16.

<sup>533</sup> Robert Miles and Malcolm Brown, among others, observe that the »scientific discourse of »race« did not replace earlier conceptions of the Other. Ideas of savagery, barbarism, and civilisation both predetermined the space that the idea of »race« occupied but were then themselves reconstituted by it. Thus, [...] extant imagery was refracted through the representational prism of »race«, *ids.*, *Racism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London etc.: Routledge 2003 [1989], p. 40.

<sup>534</sup> Bethencourt, *Racisms*, p. 253.

<sup>535</sup> Silvia Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment. Race, Gender, and the Limits of Progress*, New York etc.: Palgrave Macmillan 2013, p. 46.

characteristics such as color, character, and geographical location. His successors Buffon and Blumenbach conceived of species and variations (for which they inconsistently used the term ›race‹) not as immutable entities, but as flexible groups shaped by the natural and climatic conditions of their habitat.<sup>536</sup> Georges Cuvier, eventually, was among the naturalists who hardened the secular conception of human ›races‹ and, in the words of Michel Foucault, »substitut[ed] anatomy for classification, organism for structure, [and] internal subordination for visible character«.<sup>537</sup> In any case, however, these scientific discourses amounted to more than abstract thought experiments. Informed by expeditions, experiments and travel reports from all corners of the world, Enlightenment minds firmly located their frameworks within the political geography of eighteenth-century colonialism. Based on the common ›knowledge‹ derived from discovery, conquest and slavery, even the most diverse methodologies of classification could arrive at strikingly similar assessments in, for example, describing the Native American as a vanishing ›race‹ and Africans as physically robust.<sup>538</sup>

Given this interaction between scientific discourses on ›race‹ and racist practices, and their constant incorporation of natural *and* cultural markers of difference, it seems misleading to distinguish allegedly idealistic Enlightenment taxonomies from supposedly ideological hierarchies that were developed in the course of the nineteenth century. Especially with regard to Jeffersonian racism, it is more promising to examine the conflicting logics that were inherent to the various concepts of ›race‹

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<sup>536</sup> The environmentalist theories put forward especially by Buffon had antecedents dating back to antiquity and Hippocrates' ideas *On Airs, Waters, and Places*, cf. Hoquet, *Biologization of Race and Racialization of the Human*, pp. 20 f. Read together with Galenic theories of humors, however, ancient medical ›knowledge‹ could also be used to advocate a »theory of fixed races or even perhaps several differing fixed human species«, Martin S. Staum, *Labeling People. French Scholars on Society, Race, and Empire, 1815-1848*, Montreal etc.: McGill-Queen's University Press 2003, p. 14. On the theoretical differences and similarities between, Linnaeus, Buffon and Blumenbach (and Cuvier), see Sussman, *The Myth of Race*, pp. 15-22.

<sup>537</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, New York: Vintage Books 1973 [1966], p. 138. Despite his commitment to the new methods of comparative anatomy, however, Cuvier effectively suggested a scale between Europeans other ›races‹ and primates that mirrored older aesthetic or theological hierarchizations of mankind, cf. Nancy Stephan, *The Idea of Race in Science. Great Britain 1800-1960*, Houndmills, Macmillan Press 1982, pp. 13 ff. Moreover, the example of Cuvier reveals how racist classifications could contrast with personal experience, as the French anatomist had earlier opposed »claims about the supposedly innate deficiencies of ›the negro‹«, because »his own African servant was ›intelligent‹, freedom-loving, disciplined, literate, ›never drunk‹, and always good-humoured«, cf. Bronwen Douglas, *Climate to Crania, Science and the Racialization of Human Difference*, in: Bronwen Douglas, Chris Ballard (eds.), *Foreign Bodies. Oceania and the Science of Race 1750-1940*, Canberra: Australian National University E Press 2008, pp. 33-96, here p. 33.

<sup>538</sup> For the emergence of various ›racial‹ theories in context of colonial experience and socioeconomic transformations in Europe, see Baum, *The Rise and Fall of the Caucasian Race*, pp. 58-94.

particularly during the late eighteenth century. Racism studies has long been aware that in the early concept of ›race‹ there was a fluent passage between ›race as lineage‹ and ›race as type‹, to draw on Michael Banton's categorization.<sup>539</sup> This complexity was nowhere more obvious than on the colonial scene, where the ›ambivalent tension between these bedrock themes of Enlightenment thinking – taxonomy/fixity versus mutability/improvement – equipped race with a strategic versatility that enabled subject populations to be differently racialised‹.<sup>540</sup> As prevalent already in William Petty's conflicting assessments of ›species‹ naturally inferior to Europeans and inner-European distinctions between culturally advanced and retarded populations, this duality of exclusion roughly corresponds to the categories of nature and culture, with the latter codified as religion or civilization.

The ambivalence between the logics of ›racial naturalism‹ and ›racial historicism‹ has been systematized by David Theo Goldberg, who with this terminology distinguishes the ›claim of inherent racial inferiority‹ and the ›contrasting claims of historical immaturity‹. Accounting for the ›different forms of racial rule‹, Goldberg acknowledges that although naturalist modes were historically ›more viscerally vicious and cruel‹, racial historicism is equally absolute with its ›implications of ›progress‹ tending to hide assumptions about inferiority‹ and ›tolerance as veils for continued invocation of racial power‹.<sup>541</sup> Despite his ›race‹-centered approach, Goldberg's framework of naturalism and historicism, with the respective implications regarding assimilation and amalgamation policies, seems a useful starting point for an analysis of Jeffersonian racism. Moreover, Goldberg applies his framework to the study of political thinkers in a way that strikingly invokes the example of Thomas Jefferson. Arguing that the ›two views [of racial historicism and racial naturalism] don't preclude each other‹, because they ›become more or less dominant in relation to historical circumstances‹, he exemplifies his point with the biography

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<sup>539</sup> Banton, *Racial Theories*, pp. xi f. In his three-phase-model of ›race‹, Banton locates the first stage between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, when ›racial‹ notions were supposedly based on a concept of lineage ›to refer to a group of persons, animals, or plants, connected by common descent or origin‹. Only later, Banton assumes, ›race‹ was used ›in the sense of type, in which the word designated one of a limited number of permanent forms‹, *ibid.*

<sup>540</sup> Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History*, p. 9.

<sup>541</sup> Goldberg, *The Racial State*, pp. 74 (›naturalism‹, ›historicism‹, ›claim‹, ›contrasting‹), 77 (›different‹), 79 (›viscerally‹, ›implications‹, ›tolerance‹). For the following, see *ibid.*, pp. 80-89. Here, Goldberg integrates the assimilationist policies of colonization within a ›historicizing view‹, while he notes that ›[r]acial naturalists almost always have been committed to miscegenation laws‹, pp. 80 (›historicizing‹), 85 (›naturalists‹). See also Alana Lentin, *Racism. A Beginner's Guide*, Oxford: Oneworld 2008, pp. 23-31; *id.*, *Racism and Ethnic Discrimination*, pp. 18-25.

of Bartolomé de las Casas. The Spanish friar, Goldberg says, »represents racial historicism in his resistance to enslaving the Indios of the Americas«. On the other hand, »Las Casas himself owned African slaves, blind to the contradiction precisely by his racial naturalism with respect to Africans«. <sup>542</sup>

Accounting for the conceptual differences between ›race‹ and racism, it seems more accurate to speak in the following of ›racist historicism‹ and ›racist naturalism‹, since the specific notion of ›race‹ was not consistently applied by Las Casas and his contemporaries (although early modern Spanish thought significantly inspired the logics of ›racial‹ racism). Against the backdrop of the previous chapters, however, it seems obvious that Goldberg's assessment of Las Casas' dual racism could easily be transferred to Thomas Jefferson. In fact, one could simply exchange the names and the resulting statement that ›[Jefferson] represents racial historicism in his resistance to enslaving the Indios of the Americas. But [Jefferson] himself owned African slaves, blind to the contradiction precisely by his racial naturalism with respect to Africans‹, is not too far from the truth. With Jefferson, however, there is something more at stake than the simple assessment of his discriminatory treatment of both Native Americans and African Americans on ambivalent grounds. Living and writing when both the American nation and the concept of ›race‹ were consolidated, and occupied with the power to realize his thought in political action, Jefferson's racist ideas had a lasting impact not only in scientific racism, but also with regard to its manifestations in American society and culture. <sup>543</sup>

Despite his lack of formal education in the natural sciences, Jefferson's writings bear witness to his lasting fascination and considerable familiarity with the respective discourses of his time. In fact, biologists have praised Jefferson for leaving »his scientific imprint on our history« through »scientific achievements that thoroughly merit comparison with the best of his acts of statesmanship«. <sup>544</sup> His commission of

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<sup>542</sup> David Theo Goldberg, *Sites of Race. Conversations with Susan Searls Giroux*, Cambridge etc.: Polity Press 2014, p. 23.

<sup>543</sup> This is noted by Goldberg himself, who assesses that »what makes Jefferson's insistence [on racial naturalism] more troubling than those of most contemporary or later racial scientists is precisely that he stood in a position to act on it politically. Jefferson could invoke the state apparatus at his disposal to effect his proto-segregationist imperative even though in fact he proved reluctant to do so«, Goldberg, *The Racial State*, p. 77. While the latter assumption will be discussed later, it is striking how Goldberg fails to notice the complexity of Jefferson's ›racial‹ concept and particularly its historicist elements.

<sup>544</sup> C. Edward Quinn, *The Biological Training of Thomas Jefferson*, in: *Bios*, 55, 1984, 3, pp. 151-157, here p. 155. For Jefferson's influence on American natural sciences, see also Lester P. Coonen,

Lewis and Clark's expedition, the detailed surveys in the *Notes on the State of Virginia*, the meteorological and horticultural records in his *Garden Book*, and the experiments he conducted with specimens he collected, all of these accomplishments rank among the notable merits of early American science. On the contrary, it is precisely with reference to his scientific endeavors that the sincerity of Jefferson's political values is challenged in contemporary scholarship. Representing the alleged paradox (or hypocrisy) of Enlightenment thought in simultaneously advocating egalitarian ideas of individual natural rights and the ›racial‹ exceptions that supposedly rooted in natural difference, Jefferson's efforts in natural science are mostly discussed regarding their racist implications.<sup>545</sup> Although, as this study argues, Jefferson's racism (as well as his notion of ›race‹) comprised not only naturalistic ideas of variety, his involvement with contemporary biology, botany or zoology evoked conceptions of humankind that were closely related to the socio-political realities in the early republic.

The present chapter will therefore look more closely at Jefferson's contributions to racist and ›racial‹ thought, identify its sources, consider its historical conditions, and examine its reverberation in political practice. While the first part will focus particularly on the element of ›racist naturalism‹, as in Jefferson's endorsement of ›racial‹ classifications and his own observations of natural variations within humanity, the second part deals with the more cultural strain of ›racist historicism‹ and elaborates on Jefferson's idea of civilization and progress.

## 6.1 Racism and Nature

From the early colonial encounters, the subordination and exploitation of indigenous populations and enslaved Africans was accompanied by discourses that blended moral and aesthetical assessments with questions of equality and status. As early as the sixteenth century, the four known continents of Africa, America, Asia and Europe were symbolized in allegorical paintings by stereotypical figures representing the alleged characteristics of the respective parts of the world. Initially, concep-

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Charlotte M. Porter, Thomas Jefferson and American Biology, in: *BioScience*, 26, 1976, 12, pp. 745-750.

<sup>545</sup> Thus, Robert Bernasconi calls the case of Jefferson the »most famous and most debated example« of philosophers that »join their racism to the new universalism or cosmopolitanism, which is supposed to be one of the great achievements of the Enlightenment and an antidote to racism«, id., Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism, in: Julie K. Ward, Tommy L. Lott (eds.), *Philosophers on Race. Critical Essays*, Oxford etc.: Blackwell 2002, pp. 145-166, here pp. 145 f.

tions of barbarism and savagism were linked to exotic garments or nakedness, and complemented with unsystematic references to phenotypical differences.<sup>546</sup> In fact, early travel accounts reported of pale-skinned people in Asia and America, occasionally using the term ›white‹, and bore witness to the unsettled skin-color categories of early modern times.<sup>547</sup> The fundamental message of European superiority increasingly conflated with phenotypical ascriptions as the institution of African slavery hardened and ›white‹ came to signify a common European identity. From the seventeenth century onwards, ubiquitous representations of ›black‹ slaves highlighted the fair skin of their European masters and were »contrasted with native Americans, who were characterized by their love of freedom but also represented the hunter-gatherer stage of humanity«.<sup>548</sup> Only by the mid-eighteenth century, indigenous Americans were somewhat consistently described as ›red‹ and were incorporated in color-coded systems of ›racial‹ classification.<sup>549</sup> At this time, the ›racialization‹ of human differences was still closely intertwined with the colonial and, in fact, the American experience, as can be demonstrated with the example of Samuel Thomas Soemmerring, a German anatomist who posthumously measured and dissected African American slaves that had been brought to Kassel by Hessian mercenaries of the Revolutionary War.<sup>550</sup>

At the very same time that Soemmerring published the first edition of his tractate on the physical differences between ›moors‹ and Europeans,<sup>551</sup> Thomas Jefferson himself started to elaborate on the alleged natural inferiority of ›blacks‹ and based his assessments on the aesthetic evaluation of phenotypical distinctions. The ›first

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<sup>546</sup> Cf., for example, Bethencourt, *Racisms*, pp. 65-82.

<sup>547</sup> See, among others, Gary Taylor, *Buying Whiteness. Race, Culture, and Identity from Columbus to Hip-Hop*, New York etc.: Palgrave Macmillan 2005, pp. 73-95.

<sup>548</sup> David Bindman, *Ape to Apollo. Aesthetics and the Idea of Race in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century*, London: Reaktion Books 2002, p. 42. On the ›whitening‹ of the European self-perception, see also Taylor, *Buying Whiteness*, pp. 97-119.

<sup>549</sup> Cf. Vaughan, *From White Man to Redskin*.

<sup>550</sup> Cf. Wulf D. Hund, *Die Körper der Bilder der Rassen. Wissenschaftliche Leichenschändung und rassistische Entfremdung*, in: Wulf D. Hund (ed.), *Entfremdete Körper. Rassismus als Leichenschändung*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2009, pp. 13-79, here pp. 35 f.

<sup>551</sup> Samuel Thomas Soemmerring, *Über die körperliche Verschiedenheit des Mohren vom Europäer*, Mainz: 1784. In a subsequent edition only one year after the original publication, Soemmerring replaced the term ›Mohr‹ (›moor‹) with ›Neger‹ (›negro‹) and therewith bore witness to the flexibility of contemporary ›racial‹ designations, but also to the hardening of ›racial‹ categories under the impression of slavery and colonialism, id., *Über die körperliche Verschiedenheit des Negers vom Europäer*, Frankfurt etc.: Varrentrapp Sohn und Wenner 1785. For historical transformations of European racist language in context of the colonial experience, see also Malte Hinrichsen, Wulf D. Hund, *Metamorphosen des ›Mohren‹. Rassistische Sprache und historischer Wandel*, in: Gudrun Hentges, Kristina Nottbohm, Mechthild M. Jansen, Jamila Adamou (eds.), *Sprache – Macht – Rassismus*, Berlin: Metropol 2014, pp. 69-96.

difference which strikes us is that of colour«, he begins his characterization and subsequently argues, in form of rhetorical questions, that the »fine mixtures of red and white, the expressions of every passion by greater or less suffusions of colour in the one, [are] preferable to that eternal monotony, which reigns in the countenances, that immoveable veil of black which covers all the emotions of the other race«. <sup>552</sup> Adding »to these, flowing hair, a more elegant symmetry of form«, Jefferson concludes that the »circumstance of superior beauty« must not be disregarded when considering the free cohabitation of both ›races‹, suggesting that a ›lover of natural history« would keep the human ›races‹ »as distinct as nature has formed them«. In Jefferson's ›racial‹ rhetoric, aesthetic perceptions serve as a principal objection to ›race‹ mixture, an argument he underlines by emphasizing the ›blacks'‹ »own judgment in favour of the whites«, which was »as uniformly as is the preference of the Oranootan for the black women over those of his own species«. <sup>553</sup> Implicitly connecting the popular idea of the African as the missing link between humans and animals with the stereotypical (free) ›black‹ man as a sexual threat for ›white‹ women, Jefferson revealed the political implications of his observations and declared the segregation of ›races‹ to be both a dictate of natural history and a precondition of social peace. <sup>554</sup>

Other than his elaborations on Native Americans, Jefferson's classificatory remarks on Africans and African Americans showed little commitment to environmentalist theories. As for their mental and physical capacities, the emphasis was on difference – that is, a difference in nature not in circumstance. Reluctant to »degrade a whole race of men from the rank in the scale of beings which their Creator may perhaps have given them«, Jefferson phrased his assessment of ›black‹ inferiori-

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<sup>552</sup> Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, pp. 264 f. In the course of American ›race‹ relations, Jefferson's veil metaphor became a powerful cipher, signifying that »blackness [...] stands between black folk and the full promise of America«, Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925*, New York etc.: Oxford University Press 1988 [1978], p. 167. Most notably, the theme was taken up and subverted by W. E. B. Du Bois, who claimed that »the negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world«, *ibid.*, *The Souls of Black Folk. Essays and Sketches*, Chicago: A. C. McClurg 1904, p. 3. On Du Bois' use of the veil metaphor, see Stephanie J. Shaw, *W. E. B. Du Bois and the Souls of Black Folk*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2013, pp. 15-19.

<sup>553</sup> Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, pp. 265 (›flowing‹, ›circumstance‹, ›judgement‹, ›uniformly‹), 270 (›lover‹, ›distinct‹) With these assessments, Jefferson was in line with the »pre-Darwinian speculation on the relationship between Africans and apes« that originated in Islamic literature and early colonial discourses, see Jordan, *Inhuman Bondage*, p. 74.

<sup>554</sup> For the history and dimensions of the ape stereotype in racist constructions of Africans, cf. Wulf D. Hund, Charles W. Mills, Silvia Sebastiani (eds.), *Simianization. Apes, Gender, Class, and Race*, Berlin etc.: Lit 2015.

ty »to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind« as a »suspicion only«, but at the same time evoked the most absolute schemes of natural hierarchizations.<sup>555</sup> Although Jefferson was not a decided polygenist, his reference to the natural scale and its divine originator implied a radical departure from Buffon's framework of fluid and mutable varieties within humankind. Contemplating the possibility that Africans were »originally a distinct race«, Jefferson invoked one of Buffon's greatest critics, Lord Kames, who had recently argued that »there are different species of men as well as of dogs: a mastiff differs not more from a spaniel than a white from a negro«. <sup>556</sup> As the Scottish philosopher (and Voltaire, among others), Jefferson was accused of blasphemy for his endorsement of seemingly polygenist ideas and subsequently »learned to couch his own views with more ›diffidence‹ across the rest of his public life«. <sup>557</sup> Regardless of whether and to what degree the elaborations in the *Notes* represented Jefferson's ›own views‹ (in contrast to his latter statements), their taxonomical implications shaped his legacy and mark the starting point for almost any discussion of Jefferson, ›race‹ and racism.

With regard to his remarks on African American slaves, scholars quite commonly assess that »in sharp contrast to his defense of the capacities of Indians, Jefferson drew on racist folklore and his own observations to provide the cornerstone statement of American scientific racism«. <sup>558</sup> His »preevolutionary rationale supporting the inferior ranking of blacks« is interpreted as fundamental to the »later racist theorizing of the ›American School‹ of anthropology« and therefore perceived as an in-

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<sup>555</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 270.

<sup>556</sup> *Ibid.* (originally); Henry Home of Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man*, Vol. I., Edinburgh: Creech 1807 [1774], p. 15 (›species‹). Jefferson was well aware of Kames writings, but as Bruce Dain notes »would not have avowed« Kames argument that the »Bible was the literal Word of God« and that »God had enabled humans to distinguish among species if they but used their eyes and their reason«, Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind*, p. 36. In a more secular and nominalist fashion, however, this empiricism was evident in Jefferson's later claim »to adopt [in classification] as much as possible such exterior and visible characteristics as every traveller is competent to observe«, TJ to John Manners, Feb. 22, 1814.

<sup>557</sup> Guyatt, *Bind Us Apart*, p. 27.

<sup>558</sup> Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals. Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History*, New Haven etc.: Yale University Press 1997, p. 105. Smith is exemplary for a wide range of scholarship that acknowledges Jefferson's contribution to racism, but limits it to his essentialized conception of ›blacks‹ as a distinct ›race‹ marked by natural inferiority, cf. also Eric Gable, who assesses that »like Thomas Jefferson, many [Americans] associate Indians with America itself« and even »want to be Indians or at least to believe that Indians are the best, most noble, most spiritual part of us«. »Race«, Gable continues, »is another story«, as it has always been closely linked to the somatic features Gable ascribes to »faces and bodies«, *id.*, *Anthropology and Egalitarianism. Ethnographic Encounters from Monticello to Guinea-Bissau*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2011, p. 73.

novation of traditional modes of exclusion.<sup>559</sup> On the contrary, Douglas Egerton suggests that, theoretically, »Jefferson trailed far behind the prevailing philosophers of his day«, with »his static, racist views of African Americans belong[ing] to an earlier century, before Enlightenment ideas of progress began to erode the hierarchical assumptions that informed older views of humankind«. <sup>560</sup> As Jefferson's flexible usage of ›race‹ and classification schemes »stemmed from the prevailing perplexity over the best explanation of apparent racial differences« in contemporary science, the dissensions about the proper assessment of Jefferson's racism stem from the persistent perplexity about the basic meaning of racism.<sup>561</sup> Perceived in context of racist social relations that built on a variety of discriminatory logics to define outgroups and symbolically consolidate heterogeneous societies, Jefferson's conflicting positions on the classification of humankind appear as simultaneously innovative and traditional.

Regarding Native Americans, it is often emphasized, Jefferson endorsed a radical environmentalism, tracing indigenous inferiority back to their cultural backwardness and the accompanying deficiencies in diet and societal organization, and therefore believed »in the inherent racial equality of Indians with whites and their innate capacity for climbing the ladder of cultural evolution«. <sup>562</sup> In fact, Jefferson's description abounds with references to European and Native American similarity. On a physical level, he states, the typical aborigine »is neither more defective in ardor, nor more impotent with his female, than the white reduced to the same diet and exercise« and »his vivacity and activity of mind is equal to ours in the same situation«. Regarding the social relations, »his affections comprehend his other connections, weakening, as with us, from circle to circle, as they recede from the center«. Scientific investigation, thus, must make »great allowance [...] for those circumstances of their situation which call for a display of particular talents only«.

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<sup>559</sup> Addison, ›We Hold These Truths to Be Self-Evident...‹, pp. 162 f. Similarly, Jared Gardner stated that Jefferson came »dangerously close to making the argument that was to become the central tenet of American racial anthropology in the next half-century«, id., *Master Plots*, p. 18.

<sup>560</sup> Egerton, *Race and Slavery in the Era of Jefferson*, pp. 78 f.

<sup>561</sup> Helo, *Thomas Jefferson's Ethics and the Politics of Human Progress*, p. 57. To some degree, Helo himself is trapped in this confusion, as he treats the notions of ›varieties‹, ›gradations‹ and ›races‹ as strictly defined terms, and perceives Jefferson's inconsistency as somewhat exceptional, *ibid.*, pp. 57 ff.

<sup>562</sup> Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, p. 78. For Jefferson's environmentalism towards Native Americans, see also Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction*, pp. 15-44. In mainstream assessments of Jefferson's ›racial‹ ideas, this reading has replaced Daniel Boostin's position that Jefferson's descriptions of both Native Americans and African Americans resulted from an »extreme environmentalism«, *id.*, *The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson*, p. 98.

On that condition, »we shall probably find that they are formed in mind as well as in body, on the same module with the ›Homo sapiens Europaeus‹«. <sup>563</sup>

Addressing Buffon's general opinion that the »animals common both to the old and new world, are smaller in the latter« and thus demonstrate the deficiency of the American environment, Jefferson linked his examinations to the logical derivation of universalism, which allegedly contradicted the French naturalist's dubious premises:

»As if both sides were not warmed by the same genial sun; as if a soil of the same chemical composition, was less capable of elaboration into animal nutriment; as if the fruits and grains from that soil and sun, yielded a less rich chyle, gave less extension to the solids and fluids of the body, or produced sooner in the cartilages, membranes, and fibres, that rigidity which restrains all further extension, and terminates animal growth. The truth is, that a Pigmy and a Patagonian, a Mouse and a Mammoth, derive their dimensions from the same nutritive juices. The difference of increment depends on circumstances unsearchable to beings with our capacities. Every race of animals seems to have received from their Maker certain laws of extension at the time of their formation. Their elaborative organs were formed to produce this, while proper obstacles were opposed to its further progress. Below these limits they cannot fall, nor rise above them. What intermediate station they shall take may depend on soil, on climate, on food, on a careful choice of breeders. But all the manna of heaven would never raise the Mouse to the bulk of the Mammoth«. <sup>564</sup>

Given that the precise mechanisms of life were »inscrutable to us by reasonings a priori«, because »nature has hidden from us her modus agenda«, Jefferson argued that »our only appeal on such questions is to experience; and I think that experience is against the supposition«. <sup>565</sup>

As a counterpoint to Buffon's allegedly unreliable information about American species, Jefferson took pains to rest his own assessment on precise observations and first-hand evidence, with his scientific jargon distracting from the political intentions of his remarks. <sup>566</sup> He systematically compared weights and sizes of European

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<sup>563</sup> Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, pp. 184 (›defective‹), 185 (›vivacity‹, ›affections‹), 187 (›allowance‹, ›probably‹).

<sup>564</sup> Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>565</sup> Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>566</sup> As Susan Manning has it, »Jefferson transformed what appeared to be the neutral task of documentation into an intellectual and patriotic discovery of the emergent nation«, id., Naming of Parts; or, The Comforts of Classification. Thomas Jefferson's Construction of America as Fact and Myth, in: Journal of American Studies, 30, 1996, 3, pp. 345-364, here p. 348. On the deficiencies of Buffon's sources, Jefferson wrote: »It does not appear that Messrs. de Buffon and D'Aubenton have measured, weighed, or seen those [animals] of America. It is said of some of them, by some travellers, that they are smaller than the European. But who were these travellers? Have they not been

and American animals, meticulously explaining the deviations to one or the other side. When Jefferson was sent to Paris, he complemented his detailed theoretical refutation with tangible proof, like the skin of a cougar that he presented to Buffon on the occasion of a joint dinner and the specimen of a giant moose he had shipped across the Atlantic and erected in his hotel's foyer.<sup>567</sup> When the »notion that Europeans looked down on America spread widely across the new nation«, Jefferson remained busy collecting evidence for its natural abundance and accordingly instructed Lewis and Clark to especially observe the »soil and face of the country, its growth and vegetable productions, especially those not of the U.S., the animals of the country generally, and especially those not known in the U.S., the remains and accounts of any which may be deemed rare or extinct«. <sup>568</sup> The explorers consequently provided the president with all kinds of natural productions, objects he exhibited to his visitors in Monticello's entrance hall. Besides bones, skins and plants, however, it was particularly the Native American artifacts that served to illustrate the natural potential of the continent.<sup>569</sup>

Against the backdrop of the contested degeneration theories, it has been noted that »when Jefferson defended the American Indian, he also defended America itself«. <sup>570</sup> A close reading of the respective elaborations confirms that his alleged plea for Native American equality rather contributed to the defense of their environmental conditions than to their recognition as a »degraded yet basically noble brand of white man«. <sup>571</sup> Jefferson was explicit in stating that he does not »mean to deny, that there are varieties in the race of man, distinguished by their powers both of body and mind«. His intention was only to »suggest a doubt, whether the bulk and faculties of animals depend on the side of the Atlantic on which their food happens to

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men of a very different description from those who have laid open to us the other three quarters of the world? Was natural history the object of their travels? Did they measure or weigh the animals they speak of? Or did they not judge of them by sight, or perhaps even from report only? Were they acquainted with the animals of their own country, with which they undertake to compare them? Have they not been so ignorant as often to mistake the species? A true answer to these questions would probably lighten their authority, so as to render it insufficient for the foundation of an hypothesis«, Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, p. 177.

<sup>567</sup> Cf. Thomson, Jefferson's Shadow, p. 13.

<sup>568</sup> Guyatt, Bind Us Apart, p. 25 (notion); TJ, IV. Instructions for Meriwether Lewis, Jun. 20, 1803.

<sup>569</sup> Cf. Paul Russell Cutright, Lewis and Clark. Pioneering Naturalists, Lincoln etc.: University of Nebraska Press 1989 [1969], pp. 350 f.; McLaughlin, Jefferson and Monticello, p. 358.

<sup>570</sup> David Hurst Thomas, Thomas Jefferson's Conflicted Legacy in American Archaeology, in: Douglas Seefeldt, Jeffrey L. Hantman, Peter S. Onuf (eds.), Across the Continent. Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, and the Making of America, Charlottesville etc.: University of Virginia Press 2005, pp. 84-131, here p. 88.

<sup>571</sup> Jordan, White On Black, p. 477.

grow«. That the ›bulk and faculties‹ of Native Americans were theoretically equal to those of the Europeans was especially important to Jefferson, because the colonists were nourished by the same natural resources. Consequently, he attacked particularly Abbé Raynal, and his »application [of Buffon’s theory of degeneration] to the race of whites«. <sup>572</sup> As Nicholas Guyatt has held, it is possible that »Jefferson would have become fascinated by Native Americans« regardless of the transatlantic controversies, »but Buffon and Raynal made the defense of Indian ability a patriotic imperative«. <sup>573</sup>

Representing a diverse society that had successfully challenged the almost natural order of empire, Jefferson and some of his American contemporaries laid the ground for attacking the fortified kingdoms of taxonomy in their advocacy of transatlantic gradations as opposed to absolute hierarchizations, but at the same time permeated the culturalistic degradation of Native Americans. <sup>574</sup> The claims for environmental equality were in fact not merely Jefferson’s obsession, but of political importance also for other founding fathers, who amidst the vivid debates about the new nation and its constitution found the time to discuss at length the physical peculiarities of mammals. Thus, James Madison informed Jefferson, when he served as minister to France in 1786, about his measurement of a weasel that »certainly contradicts [Buffon’s] assertion that of the animals common to the two continents, those of the new are in every instance smaller than those of the old«. <sup>575</sup> In connection with the demographic and political observations of the contrasting conditions in Europe and America, which Jefferson certainly deemed favorable in his native continent, the recognition of its fertility and natural riches was a crucial part in the new nation’s leaders’ national narrative of progress and opportunity. <sup>576</sup> Native Americans played an important part in scientifically undergirding the environmental potential of the New World, albeit they were not in any way perceived as equals. As additionally exemplified by his infamous ›suspicion‹ about ›blacks‹ elsewhere in

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<sup>572</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, pp. 189 (›deny‹, ›doubt‹), 190 (›application‹).

<sup>573</sup> Guyatt, *Bind Us Apart*, p. 25.

<sup>574</sup> At the same time, the American Revolution removed the »divinely ordained natural order« with »slaves as the unfortunates in the lowest ranks«, but gave way to a ›racialized‹ justification of slavery, Jonathan M. Atkins, *From Confederation to Nation. The Early American Republic, 1789-1848*, New York etc.: Routledge 2016, p. 10.

<sup>575</sup> James Madison to TJ, Jun. 19, 1786. For a discussion of Madison’s letter, see Dugatkin, Mr. Jefferson and the Giant Moose, pp. 47 ff.

<sup>576</sup> Moreover, as Katy Chiles argues, environmentalism proved a valuable source for distinction as the »American environment made [U. S. citizens] truly different from their English ancestors«, id., *Transformable Race*, p. 16.

the *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson's application of (›racial‹) taxonomy was hardly emancipative for oppressed groups.

In his refutation of Buffon's theory of American degeneration, Jefferson »drew on Linné to establish the relative fixity of species, but in so doing argued that the concept of the variety of nature that Buffon used against Linné could just as easily be used as an argument against Buffon.«.<sup>577</sup> Although, in the *Notes*, »Jefferson had made no theoretical pronouncements on natural classification«, his elaborations feature taxonomical talk of the »Homo sapiens Europaeus« as well as speculations about »varieties in the race of man« and observations about the different »races« of ›white‹, ›black‹ and ›red‹ in America.<sup>578</sup> It has been noted that »only with the rise of racial science«, following the spadework of Linnaeus, Buffon and, possibly, Jefferson, »could ›racism‹ take the form of an ›objective‹ and self-conscious conviction in the radical inferiority of certain visibly different groups«. The example of Jefferson's ›racial‹ thought, however, exemplifies that seemingly scientific assessments of ›racial‹ difference neither had to rest on ›objective‹ standards of investigation nor had to consistently assume the same ›radical‹ difference between all alleged ›races‹. Thus, ›race‹ did not uniformly stand for a »biological division created by environment or originally established by God«, but also comprised cultural markers of alterity.<sup>579</sup> Even if Jefferson's ›racial‹ thought to some degree resembled a »synthesis of the ideas of Linnaeus and Buffon, a combination of order and change« and therewith anticipated later developments in scientific racism, it is important to note that he weighted the parameters unequally with regard to the different ›races‹ he described.<sup>580</sup>

Evoking both Buffon's concept of gradual varieties (with regard to Native Americans) and Linnaeus' framework of essentialized distinctions between species (with regard to African Americans), Jefferson's notion of ›race‹ reflected the general flexibility of eighteenth-century ›racial‹ thought. At the same time, the two strands represent the two contrasting racist logics that Goldberg heuristically divided into a historicist and a naturalist modality. While the former classification of developmental stages will be closely examined in the following chapter, Jefferson's naturalism

<sup>577</sup> B. Ricardo Brown, *Until Darwin, Science, Human Variety and the Origins of Race*, London etc.: Routledge 2016 [2010], p. 39.

<sup>578</sup> Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind*, p. 27 (›theoretical‹); Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, pp. 187 (›Homo sapiens‹), 189 (›varieties‹).

<sup>579</sup> Hudson, *From ›Nation‹ to ›Race‹*, p. 252 (›rise‹, ›form‹), 257 (›biological‹).

<sup>580</sup> Boulton, *The American Paradox*, p. 484.

itself contained a complex combination of cultural and biological ascriptions and occupies an ambivalent position in the history of ›racial‹ thought. On the one hand, Jefferson's postulate of ›black‹ slaves as a ›blot‹ threatening to ›stain‹ the purity of ›white‹ America mirrored the religious logics of an eternally cursed people that had earlier served to construct Africans as divinely ordained for slavery.<sup>581</sup> On the other hand, his scientific rhetoric inspired secular concepts of polygenism such as the one that Charles White suggested in 1799.<sup>582</sup> Whereas Jefferson reflected about the possible mating of apes and ›black‹ women and therewith seemed to abandon the most fundamental assumptions of human unity, even his classification of Africans and African Americans was not as settled as his absolute terms implied.

To some degree, the discrepancies between Jefferson's environmentalist ideal and his evaluation of Africans and African Americans in the *Notes* can be attributed to the fact that he discussed African Americans predominantly in the section of law, signaling his »understanding of slavery as a legal condition as opposed to a natural condition« and a primary »interest in blacks only in terms of their legal condition«. <sup>583</sup> Consequently, his statements are based on secondary ›information‹ rather than systematic research, which was early on addressed by contemporaries who doubted the scientific standards underlying his derogatory assessment. Among the early critics of Jefferson's remarks on African Americans was historian David Ramsay, who congratulated the author for a »decent but a merited correction« of Buffon, but noted that he had »depressed the negroes too low«. Contrary to Jefferson's observations, Ramsay claimed »all mankind to be originally the same and only diversified by accidental circumstances«. This can be observed with »our back country people [who] are as much savage as the Cherokees« and will eventually ensure that »in a few centuries the negroes will lose their black color«. <sup>584</sup> Similarly, Jefferson's fourteenth query was challenged by contemporary ›race‹ theorists such as Benjamin

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<sup>581</sup> At the same time that his biologist speculations about natural differences earned him accusations of polygenism and blasphemy, Jefferson contemplated divine origins of the distinction when he reflected upon the »rank in the scale of beings which their Creator« had given to ›blacks‹ and evoked the language of divine providence when he described the slaves in America as »that portion whose color has condemned them [...] to a subjection to the will of others«, Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 270 (›rank‹); TJ to Thomas Cooper, Sep. 10, 1814 (›portion‹).

<sup>582</sup> For Charles White's references to Jefferson in proving that the »African differs from the European« and is »nearer to the ape«, see id., *An Account of the Regular Gradation in Man [...]*, London: C. Dilly 1799, pp. 66 f. Jefferson's influence on White is discussed in Jordan, *White Over Black*, p. 501. Cf. also Gossett, *Race*, pp. 47 ff.; Ceaser, *Natural Rights and Scientific Racism*, pp. 170 ff.; Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind*, pp. 74 f.

<sup>583</sup> Brown, *Until Darwin*, p. 41.

<sup>584</sup> David Ramsay to TJ, May 3, 1786.

Rush and Samuel Stanhope Smith, while an attack of it, some decades later, served as the starting point for the African American environmentalism of James McCune Smith.<sup>585</sup> At the same time, Jefferson was not alone in the essentialization of ›black‹ characteristics, but was part of a transatlantic discourse dealing with the relation between physical and mental features, and their respective implications for both the natural order of mankind and the socio-economic structure of the new-found settler state.

In line with some other scholarship on the nexus of ›race‹ and the colonial experience, Ralph Bauer and José Antonio Mazzotti have recently hinted at the »dialectical relationship between an imperialist discourse of creolization and an emerging creole discourse of race«.<sup>586</sup> Building on the abolition of traditional social structures and responding to European theories of a degenerative effect of creolization, colonial societies witnessed a »rhetorical shift« towards a »modern discourse of race«. In the case of Jefferson and the logic he applied in the *Notes*, this meant that »if the American environment did not have a degenerative influence on human culture, [...] it must be that Africans had arrived in the New World already as a distinct race«. This view found powerful advocates in American discourses, for example through the work of Edward Long, a British born planter whose *History of Jamaica* was widely read throughout Europe and the Americas. In his notorious plea for the maintenance of slavery in the West Indies, Long presented Africans as a »different species of the same genus« and as so much inferior to ›whites‹ that their enslavement did not violate natural law, especially as they lacked »moral sensations«.<sup>587</sup> Adding to these the alleged capacity to bear drudgery and tropical climate, Africans

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<sup>585</sup> An account of the contrast between Jefferson's essentialist position and Rush's and Smith's environmentalism can be found in Miller, *Jefferson and Nature*, pp. 71 f. For an assessment of McCune Smith and his »stinging critique of the ›Fourteenth Query‹«, see Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind*, p. 62.

<sup>586</sup> Ralph Bauer, José Antonio Mazzotti, Introduction. *Creole Subjects in the Colonial Americas*, in: Ralph Bauer, José Antonio Mazzotti (eds.), *Creole Subjects in the Colonial Americas. Empires, Texts, Identities*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2009, pp. 1-57, here p. 38. For the following, see *ibid.*, pp. 37 ff. Cf. also Chiles, *Transformable Race*, pp. 16 ff.

<sup>587</sup> Long, *The History of Jamaica*, pp. 353 (›moral‹), 356 (›species‹). See also Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, 1988, p. 154, who argues that Long provided for the »first sustained attempt to supply a justification of slavery on the grounds that blacks were sub-human«. Similarly, George Fredrickson perceives Long as the »true father of biological racism« and discusses his claim of ›black‹ inferiority in comparison to Jefferson's *Notes*, whose assessment of African Americans »was far more equivocal«, *id.*, *White Supremacy. A Comparative Study in American and South African History*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 1981, p. 142.

were portrayed as natural slaves, tailor-made for the conditions in colonial plantation economies.

That these and similar claims were of great importance for the political and economic organization of the early republic, although anything but uncontroversial, can be exemplified with the Congress debates about the Louisiana territory, when its legal integration into the United States federal structure caused major arguments about the western expansion of slavery. Embedded in a general debate about the future of slavery in the Union, with most Southerners insisting on the constitutional right to slaveholding and Northerners hinting at its fundamental dissent with a liberal republic (and the threat of slave rebellions), speculations on the slaves' nature were of considerable interest for the political elites.<sup>588</sup> Thus, Senator Jonathan Dayton, as one of the few Northerners in the pro-slavery camp, claimed that the institution »must be established in that country, or it can never be inhabited«, since »white people cannot cultivate it [... or] bear the burning sun and the damp dews« of the region. Georgia Republican James Jackson, himself a rice planter, seconded that »white men cannot indure the heat of a vertical sun«, so that »negroes are necessary for that country«, adding with an environmentalist touch that »slaves directly from Africa are preferable to those who have been long in this country or even to those born here«. Their superior fitness for Louisiana's inhospitable conditions, others objected, could even prove dangerous for the ›white‹ population as the »country is full of swamps – negroes can retire to them after they have slain their masters«. In strict opposition to these statements, however, other congressmen believed that »white men [...] may by use, by long habit, be brought to bear heat and fatigue as well as blacks«, or even suggested in egalitarian tone that »slaves are men« and »if we were slaves, we should not be more docile, more submissive, or virtuous than the negroes are«. <sup>589</sup>

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<sup>588</sup> Cf., Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil*, pp. 106-111. The importance of the debates on Louisiana for the general antebellum controversies about slavery is outlined in Pdraig Riley, *Slavery and the Democratic Conscience. Political Life in Jeffersonian America*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2015, pp. 102-107. That the opposing factions were not always clear-cut is demonstrated by John Hammond with the example of the abolitionist Massachusetts Federalist Timothy Pickering, who was »aware of the importance of slavery to securing American control in the region« and initially opposed not only the emancipation of slaves in Louisiana, but also the so-called bona fide restriction, which limited property in slaves to actual settlers that did not engage in the slave trade, id., *Slavery, Freedom and Expansion in the Early American West*, pp. 44 f.

<sup>589</sup> Quotes in Brown, *The Senate Debate on the Breckinridge Bill for the Government of Louisiana*, pp. 345 (›established‹, ›cultivate‹), 346 (›swamps‹), 347 (›habit‹), 350 (›indure‹, ›necessary‹, ›preferable‹), 352 (›men‹, ›docile‹).

Thomas Jefferson was not unfamiliar with both lines of thought. Only a couple of years prior to the Louisiana Purchase, he had considered possible exiles for convict slaves in the northwest of the continent and expressed his doubts »whether that race of men could long exist in so rigorous a climate«. <sup>590</sup> Yet, Jefferson was aware of the degrading effects of slavery on people »probably of any colour«, as it »rendered [the enslaved] as incapable as children of taking care of themselves«. This, however, could safely be assumed only for »men [...] of this colour« and was additionally proven by »their amalgamation with the other colour [which] produces a degradation to which no lover of his country, no lover of excellence in the human character can innocently consent«. <sup>591</sup> Other than his contemporaries Rush and Smith, who unequivocally traced back the deficiencies of slaves to the depravity of their condition, Jefferson presumed a natural predisposition as the root cause of ›black‹ inferiority. This fundamental difference, he believed, was not merely one of complexion and could neither be overcome by intermixture with ›whites‹ nor by a natural ›whitening‹ through environmental circumstances or exceptional mutations.

Especially the latter cases of albinism or vitiligo were vividly discussed among naturalists on both sides of the Atlantic. Described since the sixteenth century, but initially perceived as just one of countless curiosities in a widely uncharted world, albinos of African descent were increasingly integrated in ethnological writings of the following centuries, especially as they seemed to subvert the prevalent skin-color categories. <sup>592</sup> When the French researcher Pierre-Louis Moreau de Maupertuis presented the first systematic account of the ›nègre blanc‹, he thus claimed that the »albino provided a type of ›empirical‹ proof for the era's vague belief in an essential sameness or shared human origin«. <sup>593</sup> Although Buffon rejected Maupertuis' claim that the ›white‹ offspring of ›black‹ parents resulted from some kind of natural backlash and revealed the common essence of humankind, he similarly believed that the »albino's whiteness represented an accidental vestige of an ideal proto-

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<sup>590</sup> TJ to James Monroe, Nov. 24, 1801.

<sup>591</sup> TJ to Edward Coles, Aug. 25, 1814. See also Spahn, *Thomas Jefferson, Time, and History*, p. 60. In this passage, Spahn finds an »ambiguity«, which »makes it difficult, if not impossible, to decide whether his remarks on black inferiority revealed an essentialist ›race‹ or (merely) an environmentalist ›class‹ prejudice«.

<sup>592</sup> Cf. Andrew Curran, *Rethinking Race History. The Role of the Albino in the French Enlightenment Life Sciences*, in: *History and Theory*, 48, 2009, pp. 151-179, here pp. 153-156.

<sup>593</sup> Id., *The Anatomy of Blackness. Science and Slavery in an Age of Enlightenment*, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press 2011, p. 22.

type«. <sup>594</sup> Accounting for the fact that albinism was a degenerative condition that occurred among humans and animals alike, its effects on complexion led him to believe that »white was ›the original color of nature« and confirmed »white Europeans [as] the normative standard for humanity, rather than but one of a great number of randomly produced variations on a common theme«. <sup>595</sup>

Even more than their European contemporaries, American observers could draw on first-hand accounts of albinism and early on described this and similar phenomena with regard to the nexus of color and status. Thus, William Byrd commented on the son of two »perfect Negroes« who »began to have several little white specks in his neck and upon his breast, which [...] are wonderfully white, at least equal to the skin of the fairest lady«. <sup>596</sup> During Jefferson's lifetime, a free African American named Henry Moss came to international publicity through the display of his spotted skin. <sup>597</sup> Witnessed by George Washington and other American notables, the case of Moss was intensely studied by a variety of researchers in the following decades and inspired scientists like Benjamin Smith Barton to discuss whether his spontaneous ›whitening‹ was the disease, or his initial darkness. <sup>598</sup> Men like Moss and other instances of ›whitening‹ confirmed Samuel Stanhope Smith in his assessment that the »African race is undergoing a favorable change« when located among ›whites«. <sup>599</sup> Similarly Benjamin Rush, who famously traced back the origin of ›black‹ skin color to a form of leprosy, »welcomed the various albinos, leucoethiops, and vitiligo-stricken ›white negroes‹ as ›hopeful monsters,‹ living proof that blacks could become healthily white«. <sup>600</sup> That these cases did not have to be limited to African

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<sup>594</sup> Julia V. Douthwaite, *The Wild Girl, Natural Man, and the Monster. Dangerous Experiments in the Age of Enlightenment*, Chicago etc.: The University of Chicago Press 2002, p. 207. For Maupertuis, as Andrew Curran reads him, albinos represented both the »missing link between white and black« and indicated the »black African's whiter and perhaps brighter past«, id., *Rethinking Race History*, p. 161.

<sup>595</sup> David Allen Harvey, *The French Enlightenment and its Others. The Mandarin, the Savage, and the Invention of the Human Sciences*, Houndmills etc.: Palgrave Macmillan 2012, p. 146.

<sup>596</sup> *The Commonplace Book of William Byrd II of Westover*, ed. by Kevin Berland, Jan Kirsten Gilliam, Kenneth A. Lockridge, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press 2001, pp. 48 f.

<sup>597</sup> For the case of Henry Moss, see Charles D. Martin, *The White African-American Body. A Cultural and Literary Exploration*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press 2002, pp. 34-41.

<sup>598</sup> Cf. Chiles, *Transformable Race*, pp. 169 ff. It has been stated that Jefferson would not have missed a demonstration like that, but on multiple occasions missed the opportunity to personally attend respective presentations, cf. Thomson, *Jefferson's Shadow*, p. 140.

<sup>599</sup> Smith, *An Essay on the Causes of the Variety of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species*, p. 255.

<sup>600</sup> Harriet A. Washington, *Medical Apartheid. The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present*, New York: Harlem Moon 2006, p. 80. For a closer look at Rush's theory of skin color, see Martin, *The White African-American Body*, pp. 41 ff.

Americans is illustrated by reverend James Madison, who reported to Thomas Jefferson in France about a Native American that »for near two years past, has been gradually whitening«. With his complexion turning into a »clear English white with English ruddiness« and »all the while in good health«, however, Madison puts this indigenous man in contrast to the »poor black«, whom »nature had absolutely denied [...] the possibility of ever acquiring the complexion of the whites«. <sup>601</sup>

Although no response of Jefferson is recorded, Madison could rest assured that the founder endorsed his speculation. As Jefferson had recently outlined, he did not conceive of albinism among ›blacks‹ as anything that could challenge the ›racial‹ division of humankind. In the *Notes on the State of Virginia*, he presented a »short account of an anomaly of nature, taking place sometimes in the race of negroes brought from Africa, who, though black themselves, have in rare instances, white children, called Albinos«. In this passage, the only one on ›blacks‹ in the naturalist section of the book, Jefferson emphasized that the »Albino white« was not to be confused with the »fine mixtures of red and white« he observed in the European skin. Resulting in a »pallid cadaverous white, untinged with red«, albinism was rather a »disease in the skin, or in its colouring matter« than an indicator of subdermal equality. This was evident also because the offspring of albinos could be »jet black«, bearing witness to the fact that the »immoveable veil of black which covers all the emotions« did not suddenly disappear. However, Jefferson seemed not entirely convinced that he could reject any correlation between albinism and ›whiteness‹, as he reported about two albino sisters, who were »uncommonly shrewd, quick in their apprehensions and in reply«. <sup>602</sup>

For Smith and Rush, ›black‹ was a condition (or disease) that could possibly be overcome (or cured) in contact with a ›white‹ society. As Jefferson, they conceived of ›whiteness‹ as an »indication of superiority« and a »hallmark of civilization«, but they did not endorse his essentialist assumption of natural distinctions, which, under the conditions of free cohabitation, made ›racial‹ mixture a sin against nature. <sup>603</sup>

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<sup>601</sup> Rev. James Madison to TJ, Dec. 28, 1786.

<sup>602</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, pp. 197 f. On the gradations of ›white‹ in Jefferson's and Buffon's accounts, see Holgersson-Shorter, *Authority's Shadowy Double*, pp. 54-59.

<sup>603</sup> Jordan, *White Over Black*, p. 515. Therewith, early republican thinkers like Rush, Smith and Jefferson followed in the footsteps of colonial observers of skin color differences such as John Mitchell, who examined the »causes of different colours of people in different climates« as early as 1744, but did not link these distinctions to innate differences of physical and mental qualities, id., *An Essay upon the Causes of the different Colours of People in different Climates*, in: *Philosophical Transactions*, 43, 1744, pp. 102-150. See also, Ned C. Landsman, *From Colonials to Provincials*.

Even Jefferson was aware, however, that the taxonomical classifications he applied were man-made and did not do justice to the complexity of natural varieties. Still, against his better judgement, he did not refrain from ideologically utilizing ›racial‹ hierarchizations in the controversies on slavery and held on to frameworks that essentialized phenotypical differences and linked them to alleged differences of body and mind.

In a somewhat different context, this was revealed in his correspondence with John Manners in 1814. When the Philadelphian chemist asked Thomas Jefferson about the »comparative merits of the different methods of classification adopted by different writers on Natural history«, the retired president regretfully answered that »a life of continued occupation in civil concerns has so much withdrawn [him] from studies of that kind« that he could only respond »in a very general way«. His ›gen-eral‹ observations on the various classification schemes, however, demonstrate Jefferson's lasting fascination with zoology and natural history. Dealing particularly with the problem of typecast in the taxonomies of Linnaeus, Blumenbach and Cuvier, Jefferson also explained some of his basic assumptions about the natural world and its scientific measuring, thereby providing an indication of his respective attitudes towards human variety.<sup>604</sup>

Regardless of the applied scheme, Jefferson began his reflections, classificatory entities cannot be treated as natural phenomena. Nature's »creation is of individuals«, so that »no two animals are exactly alike; no two plants, nor even two leaves or blades of grass; no two crystallisations«. It is the resulting »infinite of Units«, which exceeded the »capacity of our memory« and inspired the tendency to »distribute them into masses, [...] until we have formed what we call a system of classes, orders, genera, and species«. Consequently, classifications are »arbitrarily« produced by humans, accounting for the fact that the »plan of creation is inscrutable to our limited faculties«. Given this objection, to which »every mode of classification must be liable«, Jefferson set out to praise the landmark achievement of Linnaeus, whose nomenclature deservedly »obtained the approbation of the learned of all nations«, was »accordingly adopted by all, and united all in a general language«. In

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American Thought and Culture 1680-1760, Ithaca etc.: Cornell University Press 2000 [1997], pp. 86-91.

<sup>604</sup> TJ to John Manners, Feb. 22, 1814. A discussion of the letter and Jefferson's taxonomical thought more generally can be found in Christopher Looby, *The Constitution of Nature. Taxonomy as Politics in Jefferson, Peale, and Bartram*, in: *Early American Literature*, 22, 1987, 3, pp. 252-273, here pp. 260 ff.

fact, Jefferson believed the unification of »all nations under one language, in Natural history« to be the Swedish botanist's principal merit and one that was put at risk by the emergence of new taxonomies. »However much [...] we are indebted to [Blumenbach and Cuvier,] they would have rendered greater service by holding fast to the system on which we had once all agreed«, rather than establishing a »confusion of the tongues of Babel«. <sup>605</sup>

Despite his endorsement of Linnaeus' classificatory system in order to aid the »memory to retain a knolege of the productions of nature«, Jefferson made clear that he generally doubted conceptions of fixed species. From his nominalist perspective, taxonomy was a man-made tool for reducing the infinite complexity of natural phenomena, albeit a necessary one. Although he had earlier referred to Buffon as the »best informed of any Naturalist who has ever written«, <sup>606</sup> Jefferson rejected the »no-system« of this »great advocate of individualism« as it »would carry us back to the days, and to the confusion of Aristotle and Pliny, [and] give up the improvements of twenty centuries«. He rather proposed to maintain the »Linnean [system] because it is sufficient as a groundwork; admits of supplementary insertions, [...] and mainly because it has got into so general use that it will not be easy to displace it«. Within this simple nomenclature, scientists could progressively gather information about natural varieties, whereat they were supposed to rely on comprehensible features. For Jefferson, it was another regrettable tendency in later classification schemes that they were »going too much into the province of anatomy«. With regard to natural history, he claimed, »it would certainly be better to adopt as much as possible such exterior and visible characteristics as every traveller is competent to observe, to ascertain, and to relate«. <sup>607</sup>

In light of the contemporary controversies, Jefferson was well aware of the implications of zoological classifications for social equality and civil rights. Although he suggested to conceive of the Linnaean scheme as a heuristic instrument to reduce the complexity of nature and did not oppose further research into the specifics of natural variety, the skin color categories it suggested for the division of humankind allowed for the suspicion that fundamental natural differences existed between the »races« and that their amalgamation »produces a degradation to which no lover

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<sup>605</sup> TJ to John Manners, Feb. 22, 1814.

<sup>606</sup> Ibid. (»memory«); Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, p. 179 (»best«).

<sup>607</sup> TJ to John Manners, Feb. 22, 1814.

of his country, no lover of excellence in the human character can innocently consent«. <sup>608</sup> Phrased only six months after his letter to Manners, this later statement explicitly revealed Jefferson's that his concern about the ›excellence in the human character‹ was constantly accompanied by the concern about the ›country‹ he had helped to found. From his closest social environment to the reports he received from the most distant parts of the nation, he had learned that it was getting increasingly different for the average ›traveler‹ to ›ascertain, and to relate‹ the human varieties according to ›exterior and visible characteristics‹. For the sake of a stable Union and social homogeneity, the so-constructed ›racial‹ outsiders were to be found not merely in positive but also in natural law. Accounting for the lack of physical distinctions, however, this difference had to be proved also with respect to the cultural features of the respective groups, adding a historicist element to the naturalistic division of humankind.

## 6.2 Racism and History

At the same time that scientists on both sides of the Atlantic searched for the appropriate classification of mankind according to physical attributes and inherent features, other scholars came up with culturalistic frameworks that divided humanity depending on the capacities for civilization and progress. In their endeavors to trace back the development of civil society, it was especially Scottish philosophy that analyzed the invisible mechanisms of progress, while claiming that ›white‹ Europeans alone had passed through all stadiums of development and therewith »reinforce[ing] existing hierarchies with [...] theories about stages of development, cultural property, and race«. <sup>609</sup> Whereas Kames and Hume explicitly linked their observations of societal progress to assessments of ›racial‹ difference, thinkers like Adam Smith »could dispose of the race concept«, but instead »made use of a culturalistic diction and referred to savage, barbarian or uncivilized others«. <sup>610</sup> Meanwhile in Germany, Immanuel Kant and Johann Gottfried Herder phrased competing theories of human development, but similarly focused on the cultural characteristics of the respective human varieties. In Kant, the »classical division between the civilized

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<sup>608</sup> TJ to Edward Coles, Aug. 25, 1814.

<sup>609</sup> Jonathan I. Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment. Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights, 1750-1790*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 2011, p. 245.

<sup>610</sup> Hund, *Racism in White Sociology*, p. 31. For Hume and Kames and their endorsement of polygenism, see Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races. Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000*, Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press 2006, pp. 93-100.

and the barbarian«, defined by the »shibboleth of historicity«, informed a ›racial‹ hierarchy that reserved the capacity for civilization to ›white‹ Europeans.<sup>611</sup> Herder, by contrast, embraced a cultural relativism and »explicitly disavowed biological theories of human variation«, but with his »contention that each ethnic group or nation possesses a unique and presumably eternal Volksgeist (or folk soul) laid the foundation for a culture-coded form of racism«. <sup>612</sup> Other than Fredrickson's interpretation of Herder implies, however, ›culture-coded forms of racism‹ predated the emergence of the concept of ›race‹ and were integral part of its various eighteenth-century formulations.

This becomes obvious not least in the example of Thomas Jefferson, whose ›racial‹ ideas amounted to more than the mere ascription of natural inferiority. He did »not mean to deny, that there are varieties in the race of man«, Jefferson wrote with regard to Native Americans, but their inferiority was based »not in a difference of nature, but of circumstance«. <sup>613</sup> The ›difference of circumstance‹, however, did not refer to their environmental conditions, but to the cultural and societal achievements of indigenous peoples. Therewith, Jefferson formulated a »part of the intellectual groundwork for the conquest of the continent [...] merely by situating [the Indians] in another generational and temporal context, without having to rely [...] on any ›racist‹ arguments«. <sup>614</sup> Native Americans, following this logic, appeared as imaginary ancestors of the colonists, representing not merely the pre-social condition of the natural state, but also the »infancy of mankind«. With reference to the four-stages-theory of the Scottish Enlightenment, Jefferson conceived of the American continent as the unique opportunity to observe the historical progress from the »earliest stage of association« to mankind's »most improved state in our seaport towns«. Reserving the two most backward stages to the »savages of the Rocky mountains« and »those on our frontiers in the pastoral state«, however, Jefferson linked the cultural hierarchy to a ›racial‹ division between the indigenous and the

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<sup>611</sup> Justin E. H. Smith, *Nature, Human Nature, and Human Difference. Race in Early Modern Philosophy*, Princeton etc.: Princeton University Press 2015, p. 246. On Kant's racism, see also Hund, ›It must come from Europe«. For Herder's idea of a »unique and eternal Volksgeist (or folk soul), [which] laid the foundation for a culture-coded form of racism«, see Fredrickson, *Racism*, p. 70. See also, Rattansi, *Racism*, p. 36, who assesses that there is only a »short distance between notions of Volk[s]geist and racial character« and Karin Priester, *Rassismus. Eine Sozialgeschichte*, Leipzig: Reclam 2003, p. 85.

<sup>612</sup> Fredrickson, *Racism*, p. 70.

<sup>613</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, pp. 186 (›difference‹), 189 (›deny‹).

<sup>614</sup> Spahn, *Thomas Jefferson, Time, and History*, p. 174.

settler population.<sup>615</sup> Consequently, Jefferson combined the taxonomical terms of continental European naturalism with the Scottish philosophy of history to advocate an American line of thought that later informed the doctrine of manifest destiny.<sup>616</sup>

But the ›racist arguments‹ contained in Jefferson's historicist assessment are not limited to the naturalist language he employed. On the contrary, Jefferson deliberate construction of Native Americans as physically potent, but culturally inferior follows the racist logic of essentializing alleged differences in order to exclude the out-group and symbolically homogenize a stratified society. Thus, Jefferson portrays the indigenous population as one of hunter-gatherers, depending on the »spontaneous production of nature«. He declared that there was »no such thing existing as an Indian monument« and »of labour on the large scale, [...] there is no remain as respectable as would be a common ditch for the draining of lands«. <sup>617</sup> In his »failure even to mention the massive earthworks reported by early travelers«, Jefferson accounted for the »white settler demand for uncivilized aborigines, who must be removed from the land they are wasting«. <sup>618</sup> At the same time, he contributed to the long tradition of denying indigenous cultures, which from the outset of colonial dispossession accompanied the characterizations of Native Americans. <sup>619</sup>

Against the first travel reports from the New World, which knew of agricultural practices throughout America and described the highly developed societies the continent inhabited, seventeenth-century thinkers like Montaigne and Bacon believed that there was »neither corn, nor wine [...] in that new corner of the world«, and that there was a visible difference between the »life of men in the most civilised province of Europe, and in the wildest and most barbarous districts of New In-

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<sup>615</sup> TJ to William Ludlow, Sep. 6, 1824.

<sup>616</sup> For the racist implications of the doctrine of manifest destiny (and for Jefferson's contribution to it), see Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*.

<sup>617</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, pp. 221 (›spontaneous‹), 223 (›thing‹, ›labour‹).

<sup>618</sup> Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, p. 133 (›failure‹); David Kazanjian, *The Colonizing Trick. National Culture and Imperial Citizenship in Early America*, Minneapolis, etc.: University of Minnesota Press 2003, p. 11 (›settler‹).

<sup>619</sup> Given the consistency of his references to Native American savagism, it seems questionable whether Jefferson's encouragement, as President of the American Philosophical Society, to undertake »research on ›ancient Fortifications, Tumuli, and other Indian works of art« really signaled that he »had caught the excitement about Indian monuments [...] and changed his mind«, cf. Gordon M. Sayre, *The Mound Builders and the Imagination of American Antiquity in Jefferson, Bartram, and Chateaubriand*, in: *Early American Literature*, 33, 1998, 3, pp. 225-249, here p. 226.

dia«. <sup>620</sup> This corresponded to the simultaneous construction of civilizational stages by Hugo Grotius, which Jefferson quoted almost verbatim in his later characterizations of Native Americans. Progress, Grotius held, was driven by people that »were not content to feed on the spontaneous products of the earth« or to be »clothed with the bark of trees or skins of wild animals« like the »first men«. <sup>621</sup> However, for Jefferson, as for Grotius, Locke and many other masterminds of colonialism, only Europeans carried the motivation and capacity to overcome this natural state of savagery, so that in 1824, Native Americans were allegedly still »subsisting and covering themselves with the flesh and skins of wild beasts«. <sup>622</sup>

Oblivious to the cultural heritage and diversity of Native Americans, Jefferson was vividly interested in the indigenous past as far as it served the »demand of America's emerging national culture for a history that could compete with that of Europe«, or at least demonstrate the continent's natural potency. <sup>623</sup> Thus, Jefferson was also involved in speculations about the original settlement of America and the geographical descent of the Native peoples. In his correspondence with Edward Rutledge for example, Jefferson claims that the »similarity of language« between indigenous Americans and North Africans can be seen as the »strongest of all proofs of consanguinity among nations«. In contrast to his European correspondents, however, this does not lead Jefferson to accept Africa as the spring of the Native American population. Finding »a much greater number of radical languages among those of America, than among those of the other hemisphere«, Jefferson linguistically argues for the »superior antiquity« of Americans and implies their ancient relocation to the African coast. Against this backdrop, Jefferson writes of the »red men of the Eastern and Western sides of the Atlantic«, to emphasize that Native Americans were unlikely to descend from the »black« continent. <sup>624</sup>

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<sup>620</sup> Quoted in Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage*, p. 13. For early evidence of cultural development and agriculture in America, see Camilla Townsend (ed.), *American Indian History. A Documentary Reader*, Malden etc.: Wiley-Blackwell 2009, pp. 9-25. The chapter includes early European depictions of Amerindian agriculture that are also discussed in Wulf D. Hund, *Der inszenierte Indianer. Auch eine Dialektik der Aufklärung*, in: Wulf D. Hund, *Rassismus. Die soziale Konstruktion natürlicher Ungleichheit*, Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot 1999, pp. 39-53, here pp. 47 f.

<sup>621</sup> Quoted in Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage*, pp. 14 f.

<sup>622</sup> TJ to William Ludlow, Sep. 6, 1824.

<sup>623</sup> Kazanjian, *The Colonizing Trick*, p. 11.

<sup>624</sup> TJ to Edward Rutledge, Sep. 18, 1789. Jefferson explicitly refers to a letter by the Scottish diplomat Andrew Turnbull, which was forwarded to him by Rutledge (Apr. 1, 1789). Here, Turnbull concluded from the »resemblance between the inhabitants of the country formerly possessed by the

With regard to Asia and Europe, however, Jefferson was less reluctant to contemplate possible relations between the distinct populations. As a »passage from Europe to America was always practicable«, European origins of indigenous Americans had to be considered as one of the possible options. Given the »resemblance between the Indians of America and the Eastern inhabitants of Asia«, however, it seemed more likely that migration proceeded through the recently ›discovered‹ Bering Strait.<sup>625</sup> The latter theory was also the most common among European scientists, who overwhelmingly held that »native Amerindians were migrant Tartars in origin, who had come into the Americas by way of some landbridge or narrow crossing between Siberia and Alaska«. <sup>626</sup> Jefferson, by contrast, suspected that the American continent inhabited the original stock of the transpacific population. In a letter to Ezra Stiles, he suggests that the »similitude between [America's] inhabitants and those of the Eastern parts of Asia renders it probable that ours are descended from them, or they from ours«. Based on his linguistic studies demonstrating that the »settlement of our continent is of the most remote antiquity« and given that »among the red inhabitants of Asia there are but a few languages radically different«, Jefferson opts for the latter alternative.<sup>627</sup> His emphasis on the common ›redness‹ of the Asian and American populations, however, signaled that the recognition of cross-continental connections did not preclude assumptions of fundamental difference.

It has been noted that the »long-continued dominance« of the question of origin within the scientific discourses on Native Americans »can scarcely be understood apart from its bearing on the perennial controversy between monogenists and polygenists and on the Scriptural doctrine of the common descent of all men from Adam and Eve«. <sup>628</sup> Although his line of thought principally opposed the co-Adamite theories of the time, Jefferson's repeated speculation about the »greater antiquity« of Native Americans contained the possible implication that they »might have been

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Carthaginians and the Indians highest East Florida« that »America may have been peopled by one or more of the Carthaginian ships being driven to that continent«.

<sup>625</sup> Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, p. 226. On Jefferson's linguistic approach and his position within the wider discourse on Native American origins, cf. Lyle Campbell, *American Indian Languages. The Historical Linguistics of Native America*, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 1997, pp. 90-93.

<sup>626</sup> Kidd, *The Forging of Races*, p. 108.

<sup>627</sup> TJ to Ezra Stiles, Sep. 1, 1786.

<sup>628</sup> John C. Greene, *Early Scientific Interest in the American Indian. Comparative Linguistics*, in: *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 104, 1960, 5, pp. 511-517, here p. 511.

created separately from the peoples of the Old World«. <sup>629</sup> Although Jefferson not decidedly advocated the separate creation of mankind, neither with regard to African nor to Native Americans, he supposed that the ›racial‹ divisions went back to the early days of humanity.

Still in 1825, the study of Cherokee grammar convinced him that even »if man came from one stock, his languages did not«. The alleged unrelatedness of European and American tongues, which led Jefferson to deem it »impossible to translate our language into any of the Indian« corresponded to the fundamental differentiation between Native and European American populations. <sup>630</sup> Already with Jefferson, the study of indigenous languages had the dual function of proving the antiquity and fruitfulness of the American continent, but at the same time demonstrating the cultural incompatibility of the ›race‹ the settlers encountered. In the further course of the racialization and removal of Native Americans during the nineteenth century, a somewhat Jeffersonian »philology [...] promoted the extinction of Indian languages as a necessary precondition for assimilation into the American nation«. Against this background of culturalistic backing for ›racial‹ policies, Sean Harvey concludes that studies of early American »scientific definitions of race must come to terms with language«. <sup>631</sup> With regard to recent research into genocidal policies of deculturation, however, it can be assessed that historical cases of forced assimilation through the prohibition of native languages did not necessarily correspond to ›racial‹ discrimination, but were uniformly based on the racist essentialization of cultural differences. <sup>632</sup>

In fact, already Jefferson's interest in indigenous languages was inextricably linked to assumptions of difference and demands of assimilation. Consequently, his fascination with the Natives' past was accompanied by bad prospects for their future in America. As early as 1781, in his correspondence with the allied chief Jean Baptiste Ducoigne, Jefferson thanked him for some painted skins and declared that he will »keep them hanging on the walls in remembrance of you and your na-

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<sup>629</sup> Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, p. 227 (›greater‹); Kidd, The Forging of Races, p. 109 (›might‹).

<sup>630</sup> TJ to John Pickering, Feb. 20, 1825.

<sup>631</sup> Sean P. Harvey, ›Must Not Their Language Be Savage and Barbarous Like Them?‹. Philology, Indian Removal, and Race Science, in: *Journal of the Early Republic*, 30, 2010, 4, pp. 505-532, here p. 532.

<sup>632</sup> Cf., for example, Stuart Stein, *Culturecide*, in: Ellis Cashmore (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Race and Ethnic Studies*, London etc.: Routledge 2004, pp. 99-100.

tion«. <sup>633</sup> Thus, he defined the place of Native Americans in the showcase of natural history with the new republic keeping them in remembrance and loving memory as virtuous representatives of an outdated way of life. It was »to be lamented then, very much to be lamented«, Jefferson held, »that we have suffered so many of the Indian tribes already to extinguish, without our having previously collected and deposited in the records of literature, the general rudiments at least of the languages they spoke«, because such records would »would furnish opportunities [...] to construct the best evidence of the derivation of this part of the human race«. <sup>634</sup> The extinction of Native American was consequently a loss for the cultural and scientific self-positioning of the American republic, which »suffered« from the disappearance of indigenous peoples and their heritage that was politically employed in transatlantic controversies with European naturalists.

At the same time, however, Jefferson perceived the Natives' retreat as an inevitable consequence of cultural progress and was well aware of the death toll they paid for the expansion of the settler state that proceeded quickly during his lifetime. Although he frequently referred to Native American sites as if they were »remains« from a bygone era, he had first-hand experience of how indigenous ways of life suffered from the consequences of contemporary policies. In what had aptly been described as »one of the most striking or disturbing passages« in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson described how he exhumed an indigenous burial ground in his neighborhood, which he came to know as a child when it was still frequented by Native Americans parties for spiritual reasons. <sup>635</sup> Aware that the barrow, which he reluctantly admitted to constitute the only indigenous example of »labour on the large scale«, was »of considerable notoriety among the Indians«, who »went through the woods directly to it, without any instructions or enquiry«, Jefferson did not hesitate to revisit the sacred site to »satisfy myself« of the precise character of the monument. In irreverently opening the mound and examining the »collection of human bones«, Jefferson occupies a place in the long history of colonial desecration of graves. <sup>636</sup>

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<sup>633</sup> TJ to Jean Baptiste Ducoigne, Jun. 1, 1781. Hannah Spahn refers to this phrase as if Jefferson »already envisioned the visual remains of their culture displayed, long after its disappearance, in his entrance hall at Monticello«, id., *Thomas Jefferson, Time, and History*, p. 171.

<sup>634</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 227.

<sup>635</sup> Sayre, *Jefferson and Native Americans*, p. 61.

<sup>636</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, pp. 223 (»labour«, »satisfy«), 224 (»collection«), 225 (»considerable«), 226 (»woods«).

Although phrenology and scientific racism peaked only in the nineteenth century, the examination and dissection of corpses accompanied the emerging discourses of ›race‹ and human varieties at least since the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>637</sup> European scientists were eager to acquire living and deceased specimen of colonial populations to inform their anthropological studies. Throughout the age of imperialism, universities, museums and private collectors hoarded skeletons and skins, whose return remains a disputed issue in postcolonial diplomacy.<sup>638</sup> Treating these human remains as mere subjects of science, like Jefferson remorselessly estimating »that in this barrow might have been a thousand skeletons«, and denying their kinsmen the traditional mortuary and commemoration practices, anatomical racism was part of the dehumanization of so-constructed ›racial‹ groups.<sup>639</sup> Against the backdrop of Jefferson's construction of Native Americans as »degenerates on the verge of extinction« and of their supposed savagism as antithetical to an imperial concept of progress and civilization, it seems a pertinent observation that his »amateur archaeological exercise further underscores his sense that the Indians were not just doomed, but practically gone already«. <sup>640</sup> Beyond its theoretical implications, however, the history of desecration and scientific racism demonstrates that Jefferson's violation of the Native American graves, as an irreversible interference with their cultural heritage, contributed to the fortification of social hierarchies.

Whereas the »modern ›skin and bones‹ anthropology« of Blumenbach and other scientists, which Jefferson criticized for »going too much into the province of anatomy«, (mis-)measured human bones to prove the physical differences between human ›races‹, Jefferson was interested primarily in the cultural implications of indigenous burial customs.<sup>641</sup> Thus, the »utmost confusion« of the body parts led him to the »idea of bones emptied promiscuously from a bag or basket, and covered over

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<sup>637</sup> Thus, Andrew Curran demonstrates that early European discourses on human varieties and skin color differences were informed by the study of cadavers both in Europe and in the colonies, id., *The Anatomy of Blackness*, pp. 122 ff. See also Londa Schiebinger, *The Anatomy of Difference. Race and Sex in Eighteenth-Century Science*, in: *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 23, 1990, 4, pp. 387-405; Thomas Nutz, ›Varietäten des Menschengeschlechts‹. *Die Wissenschaften vom Menschen in der Zeit der Aufklärung*, Köln etc.: Böhlau 2009.

<sup>638</sup> A variety of cases is discussed in Wulf D. Hund (ed.), *Entfremdete Körper. Rassismus als Leichenschändung*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2009.

<sup>639</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 225.

<sup>640</sup> Peter Thompson, ›I have known‹. Thomas Jefferson, Experience, and Notes on the State of Virginia, in: Francis D. Cogliano (ed.), *A Companion to Thomas Jefferson*, Malden etc.: Wiley-Blackwell 2012, pp. 60-74, here p. 67 (›degenerates‹); Cheryl C. Boots, *Singing for Equality. Hymns in the American, Antislavery and Indian Rights Movements, 1640-1855*, Jefferson: McFarland 2013, p. 77 (›amateur‹).

<sup>641</sup> Hannaford, *Race*, p. 203 (›modern‹); TJ to John Manners, Feb. 22, 1814 (›going‹).

with earth, without any attention to their order«. This seemingly careless dealing with the deceased Jefferson contrasted with theories that the barrows »covered the bones only of persons fallen in battle« or constituted the »common sepulchre of a town, in which the bodies were placed upright, and touching each other«. From his observations, he concluded, the burial grounds resulted »from the accustomed collection of bones, and deposition of them together« with »a few stones put over it, and then a covering of earth«. <sup>642</sup> Although Jefferson eschewed anthropological examinations of the bones he found, these assessments of Native American cultural practices reproduced notions of backwardness and savagism. As one scholar put it, the barrow was »no monument but merely an ›accustomed collection of bones,‹ [...] because the ›custom‹ involved in such a ›collection ... and deposition‹ seems too rudimentary and unelaborated as commemorative impulse«. Consequently, the Native American gravesites appear in Jefferson's description as »no longer nature but not yet culture«, constituting evidence for the existence of basal social and cultural practices as well as fundamental backwardness. <sup>643</sup>

It could be speculated that Jefferson would have proceeded differently with a collection of African American bones, as he considered to verify his ›suspicion‹ of ›black‹ inferiority by submitting the subject »to the anatomical knife, to optical glasses, to analysis by fire, or by solvents«. <sup>644</sup> Thus to some degree endorsing the rise of scientific racism, this approach additionally represents the flexibility of Jefferson's racism, but does not mean that the founder's degradation of African Americans was based solely on naturalistic arguments. Quite the contrary, Jefferson neither undertook the anatomical investigations he encouraged nor refrained from culturalistic assessments of ›black‹ difference. In fact, the construction of African Americans' lack of culture and history was essential to his concept of their ›racial identity.

Without reference to Goldberg's theory of ›racial historicism‹, Catherine Holland has provided an interpretation of Jefferson's historicist approach to human diversi-

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<sup>642</sup> Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, pp. 224 (›utmost‹, ›idea‹), 225 (›covered‹, ›common‹, ›accustomed‹, ›stones‹).

<sup>643</sup> Jonathan Elmer, The Archive, the Native American, and Jefferson's Convulsions, in: Diacritic, 28, 1998, 4, pp. 5-24, here pp. 7 f.

<sup>644</sup> Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, p. 269. Jefferson also encouraged the establishment of an anatomy department at the University of Virginia and planned an »anatomical theatre« for dissections, which would provide an »advantageous view of the operation to those within«, TJ to Joseph Carrington Cabell, Jan. 11, 1825. See also, Burstein, Jefferson's Secrets, p. 61.

ty, demonstrating how he constructed both Native Americans and African Americans in opposition to the new era that begun with the founding of the United States. Highlighting the interrelations of naturalistic and culturalistic discourses in the founding period, she argues that Jefferson imagined a »naturalized past that makes an American nation appear to be its logical and chronological outcome«. Within this narrative of progress, the »aboriginal peoples of America [...] represented the living relics of an ancient past«, the imaginary forebears of the creole colonists, but at the same time »were transformed in the Creole imagination into their less developed children«. Jefferson's construction of African Americans, by contrast, is interpreted by Holland as essentially based on the assessment that they were »not contemporary ancients, but moderns whose presence in America was decidedly unnatural«. Representing »Creoles of a different color«, he perceived them as »culturally and politically (as well as biologically) incompatible with both whites and Indians«. Consequently, Holland supposes that Jefferson's »genealogical nationalism« informed his conviction of Native American backwardness as well as the assumption that »blacks« were of an »eternally unchanging nature that stands in sharp contrast to the timeliness he sees in American nature«. <sup>645</sup> The complex overlapping of time and nature in Jefferson's construction of »races« exemplifies the fundamental »tension between naturalism and historicism« that »can be traced back to the origins of racial thought«, or, more precisely, to the origin of racist exclusion. <sup>646</sup> This ambivalence is especially notable in Jefferson's assessment of African cultural capacities, which he allegedly wished to flourish, but whose achievements he denied, as they interfered with the assumption of natural difference.

For Jefferson, it has been noted, the »capacity for civilization among nonwhites depended upon the replication and reproduction of white culture«. <sup>647</sup> In fact, with respect to Native Americans it seemed to require mainly the tuition in agriculture and other allegedly »white« cultural practices to make them potential citizens of a

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<sup>645</sup> Holland, *Notes on the State of America*, pp. 191 (»naturalized«), 201 (»aboriginal«), 203 (»transformed«), 208 (»different color«), 209 (»culturally«), 210 (»ancients«, »genealogical«, »eternally«).

<sup>646</sup> Lentin, *Racism and Ethnic Discrimination*, p. 22.

<sup>647</sup> Eric Slauter, *The State as a Work of Art. The Cultural Origins of the Constitution*, Chicago etc.: University of Chicago Press 2009, p. 187. Slauter discusses Jefferson within the Enlightenment discourse on »blacks'« cultural capacity: »while Hume and Kant characterized black people as imitative, other writers questioned whether blacks were really capable of successful cultural imitation«, *ibid.*, p. 186. Classifying Jefferson among the latter group of thinkers with regard to African Americans and addressing similar approaches to Native American »savages«, he does not address the conflict within Jeffersonian conceptions of culture and »race«.

civilized society – albeit their incorporation ultimately also demanded physical amalgamation. As the peoples of Northern Europe prior to the Roman conquest, the Native Americans represented a savage state of pre-civilization, but were believed to possess a »germ in their minds which only wants cultivation«. Even without the blessings of ›white‹ European guidance, Jefferson argued, Native Americans proved capable to produce cultural expressions that reached the highest quality standards. Thus, he believed the oratory of Cayuga chief Logan to be of the same value as the »whole orations of Demosthenes and Cicero, and of any more eminent orator, if Europe has furnished more eminent«. <sup>648</sup> Undoubtedly, the ›white‹ Euro-American example remained the ideal that Native Americans had to aspire to, but at least Jefferson allowed for their potential adoption of respective cultural practices.

For African Americans, by contrast, Jefferson did not acknowledge the mere ›reproduction of white culture‹ or the adoption of settler practices as sufficient evidence for their cultural potential. This became obvious in the case of the African American mathematician and astronomer Benjamin Banneker, who sent Jefferson his almanac to refute the »almost general prejudice and prepossession which is so prevalent in the world against those of my complexion«. Aware of the racist discriminations that had underscored slavery and social exclusion long before explicit ›racial‹ theories elaborated on the alleged natural differences of ›blacks‹, Banneker addressed Jefferson as a »man far less inflexible in sentiments of this nature, than many others« and potentially »willing and ready to lend your aid and assistance to our relief from those many distresses and numerous calamities to which we are reduced«. <sup>649</sup> Taking Jefferson at his egalitarian words, Banneker initially seemed to succeed in finding the founder's support for his anti-slavery cause, as he responded by professing his hope to see »proofs [...] that nature has given to our black brethren, talents equal to those of the other colours of men«. Soon, Jefferson's sympathetic reaction, including the suspicion that the »appearance« of ›black‹ inferiority

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<sup>648</sup> Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, pp. 188 (›orations‹), 266 (›germ‹).

<sup>649</sup> Benjamin Banneker to TJ, Aug. 19, 1791. On the tradition of anti-black racism, Banneker writes that »we are a race of Beings who have long laboured under the abuse and censure of the world, that we have long been looked upon with an eye of contempt, and that we have long been considered rather as brutish than human, and Scarcely capable of mental endowments«. With respect to Banneker's letter, Mia Bay has noted that »even blacks who lived outside of bondage seemed fully aware that an ideology of black inferiority was being forged around them«, id., *The White Image in the Black Mind*, p. 17. Banneker, however, seemed to refer not primarily to the most recent discourses of ›racial‹ difference, but also to the previous modes of exclusion and stigmatization.

»is owing merely to the degraded condition of their existence both in Africa and America«, was used by abolitionists and southern federalists to demonstrate Jefferson's support of an »early system of emancipation in the southern states«. <sup>650</sup> In fact, Jefferson himself was willing to use the example of Banneker to cultivate his anti-slavery image among his abolitionist friends in France. Thus, he forwarded Banneker's almanac to Condorcet, taking »his very elegant solutions of Geometrical problems« as indicating that there was no »difference in the structure of the parts on which intellect depends«. <sup>651</sup>

In 1809, nearly twenty years after his brief correspondence with Banneker, Jefferson renewed his wish to »see a complete refutation of the doubts I have myself entertained and expressed on the grade of understanding allotted to [African Americans] by nature, and to find that in this respect they are on a par with ourselves« after the prominent abolitionist Henri Grégoire had sent him a copy of his pamphlet *De la littérature des nègres*. <sup>652</sup> This time, however, Jefferson was hardly convinced by the evidence Grégoire presented and also revealed the doubts he entertained with regard to Banneker's scientific achievements. As he wrote to Joel Barlow later in 1809, Grégoire's »credulity has made him gather up every story he could find of men of colour (without distinguishing whether black, or of what degree of mixture)«. That references to ›black‹ qualities always had to be challenged, Jefferson exemplified with the example of Banneker, whose letter had shown a »mind of very common stature indeed« and whose almanac would not have been possible »without the suspicion of aid from Ellicot, who was his neighbor and friend, and never missed an opportunity of puffing him«. Although Jefferson, once more, did not want to »enlist myself as the champion of a fixed opinion«, he put forward his ›doubt‹ about the originality and significance of African American cultural and intellectual productions with very little uncertainty. <sup>653</sup>

It has been justifiably argued that in his denial of African American mental capacities, Jefferson resorted to naturalist speculations, making sure that »black intel-

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<sup>650</sup> TJ to Benjamin Banneker, Aug. 30, 1791 (›proofs‹, ›appearance‹, ›owing‹); William Loughton Smith, *The Pretensions of Thomas Jefferson to the Presidency Examined*, Philadelphia: 1796, p. 11.

<sup>651</sup> TJ to Condorcet, Aug. 30, 1791.

<sup>652</sup> TJ to Henri Grégoire, Feb. 25, 1809.

<sup>653</sup> TJ to Joel Barlow, Oct. 8, 1809. The accusations contained in this letter suggest that Jefferson's rather than Grégoire's assessments have to be treated with great diffidence. Thus, Jefferson confused the mathematician Andrew Ellicott, who was not in touch with Banneker about his almanac, with Banneker's actual neighbor George Ellicott, who »had no experience of this kind«, Charles Cerami, *Benjamin Banneker. Surveyor, Astronomer, Publisher, Patriot*, New York: Wiley 2002, p. 173.

lectual inferiority be placed beyond the reach of environmental improvement, that it be reckoned an innate trait, one that no amount of conditioning could alter». <sup>654</sup> At the same time, however, Jefferson made clear that he considered the issue of cultural compatibility a social and political matter. Thus, he declared in his letter to Grégoire that »whatever be their degree of talent it is no measure of their rights«, with his emphasis implying that the assignment of rights was, in fact, associated with the recognition of natural and cultural equality. <sup>655</sup> Even more explicitly, Jefferson predicted to Joel Barlow, that »St. Domingo will, in time, throw light on the question« of ›black‹ faculties. <sup>656</sup> Only »where the blacks are established into a sovereignty de facto, and have organised themselves under regular laws and government«, as Jefferson described post-revolutionary Haiti to James Monroe, he considered the emergence of ›black‹ culture possible. <sup>657</sup> Under the conditions of American nation-building, by contrast, evidence for African genius posed a threat to a fragile social peace and had to be suppressed, if necessary, with reference to alleged natural distinctions. <sup>658</sup>

Nevertheless, Jefferson's equation of the ›degraded condition of their existence both in Africa and America‹ implies that, for him, the alleged inferiority was probably rooted in the environmental and cultural circumstances of their native continent rather than in immutable deficits. In the same vein, Jefferson wrote to Chastellux that although he had »supposed the blackman, in his present state, might not be [equal to the ›white‹ man ...], it would be hazardous to affirm that, equally cultivated for a few generations, he would not become so«. <sup>659</sup> One year prior to his death, Jefferson confirmed this stance in addressing an »opinion [which] is hasarded by some, but proved by none, that moral urgencies are not sufficient to induce [the man of colour] to labor; that nothing can do this but physical coercion«. In his letter to the Scottish-born feminist, reformer and abolitionist Frances Wright, he explained that »it would be a solecism to suppose a race of animals created, without

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<sup>654</sup> James Oakes, *Why Slaves Can't Read. The Political Significance of Jefferson's Racism*, in: James Gilreath (ed.), *Thomas Jefferson and the Education of a Citizen, Hanover etc.*: University Press of New England 1999, pp. 177-192, here p. 181.

<sup>655</sup> TJ to Henri Grégoire, Feb. 25, 1809.

<sup>656</sup> TJ to Joel Barlow, Oct. 8, 1809.

<sup>657</sup> TJ to James Monroe, Nov. 24, 1801.

<sup>658</sup> Cf., among others, Joyce E. Chaplin, *The Problem of Genius in the Age of Slavery*, in: Joyce E. Chaplin, Darrin M. McMahon, *Genealogies of Genius*, New York etc.: Palgrave Macmillan 2015, pp. 11-28.

<sup>659</sup> TJ to Chastellux, Jun. 7, 1785.

sufficient fore-sight and energy to preserve their own existence«. Being »not sufficiently acquainted with all the nations of Africa to say that there may not be some, in which habits of industry are established« and witnessing in its early stages the »experiment now in progress in St Domingo, those of Sierra Leone and Cape Mesurado«, the late Jefferson seemed open to include Africans within an environmentalist classification of mankind and allow for the possibility of ›black‹ civilization.<sup>660</sup>

Where others saw African American cultural progress realized within ›white‹ societies, however, Jefferson objected. Thus, he decidedly took a stand in the transatlantic debate on the literary achievements of Ignatius Sancho and Phillis Wheatley, whose »texts carried the burden of ›proving‹ that blacks shared the same intellectual capacities as whites«. <sup>661</sup> In contrast to contemporary literature critics, Jefferson perceived especially Wheatley's writings as »below the dignity of criticism« and as the product of mere religious sentimentality. Referring to her works as »compositions published under her name«, he also implied questions about her authorship, which had been raised since her first publications and resulted in her examination in front of a panel of Bostonian notables.<sup>662</sup> After she had proved the authenticity of her poetry in front of the »plenum of talent and privilege, cultivation and power«, however, Jefferson's comments on the issue revitalized debates about African American cultural potential and originality. In fact, as Henry Louis Gates put it, Jefferson's degradation of ›black‹ poetry »proved germinal in the history of the criticism of African-American writing« and gave weight to the notion that »a group, a ›race,‹ had to demonstrate its equality through the creation of literature«. When some two-hundred years after the *Notes* the government of Nigeria welcomed Wole Soyinka's Nobel Prize for Literature as evidence for ›racial‹ equality, Gates believes that the »specter of Thomas Jefferson haunts even there, in Africa in 1986, as does the shadow of Phillis Wheatley«. <sup>663</sup>

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<sup>660</sup> TJ to Frances Wright, Aug. 7, 1825. This corresponds to his earlier comments on the possible effects of colonization, which by »transplanting [emancipated slaves] among the inhabitants of Africa, [...] would thus carry back to the country of their origin the seeds of civilisation, which might render their sojournment and sufferings here a blessing in the end to that country«, TJ to John Lynch, Jan. 21, 1811. Similarly, Carl Zimring holds that »Jefferson both articulated white supremacy in the existing social order and offered hope it could be transcended«, id., *Clean and White*, p. 19.

<sup>661</sup> Sidbury, *Becoming African in America*, p. 18.

<sup>662</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, pp. 267.

<sup>663</sup> Gates, *The Trials of Phillis Wheatley*, pp. 14 (›plenum‹), 41 (›germinal‹), 65 (›specter‹, ›group‹). Gates' book is based on his 2002 ›Jefferson Lecture‹, which addressed Jefferson as an »essential ancestor« for »white and black alike«, id., *Mister Jefferson and the Trials of Phillis Wheatley*, <http://www.neh.gov/about/awards/jefferson-lecture/henry-louis-gates-jr-lecture>.

In comparison to his assessment of Native American oratory and the aborigines' need for schooling, Jefferson's professed doubts about African American creativity and talent exemplify a flexibility of ›racial‹ constructions that resulted in different approaches to their social incorporation or segregation. With regard to education, he (theoretically) supported the alphabetization of Natives against the impression of »wanting genius«, but did not generally encourage the tuition of African American slaves.<sup>664</sup> Although Jefferson personally witnessed the schooling of African Americans at the Bray School of Williamsburg during his college years and despite considerable support for slave schools among American elites, he did not include ›blacks‹ in educational schemes for the new nation, unless in preparation of emancipation and colonization.<sup>665</sup> His opposition to the education of African American slaves was also manifested in his personal surrounding, where he received first-hand accounts of ›black‹ literacy, but did not endorse his slaves' training beyond the plantation's economic demands.

It remains uncertain whether Jefferson, as one of his slaves later recalled, »was in favor of teaching the slaves to learn to read print« but opposed »to teach them to write« because it »would enable them to forge papers«.<sup>666</sup> Certainly however, some Monticello slaves were literate and, although not formally educated by Thomas Jefferson, tried to improve their respective abilities. Carpenter John Hemings, for example, is known to have »read prayers to his wife« and even held correspondence with the Jefferson family at Monticello during his stays at Poplar Forest, Jefferson's retreat eighty miles from his mountaintop mansion.<sup>667</sup> Some of the half-siblings of Hemings, including Jefferson's butler James and Robert also knew how to read and write, which suggests that Sally Hemings possibly also »possessed at least functional literacy«.<sup>668</sup> Her (and Jefferson's) son Madison »learned to read by inducing the white children to teach me the letters«, which testifies that Jefferson himself »took

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<sup>664</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 189. Practically, Jefferson did not contribute much to the education of Native Americans, but instead, as Daniel Boorstin asserted, »blessed the Indians with his anthropologists and traders«, *id.*, *The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson*, p. 224.

<sup>665</sup> Cf. Myers, Benjamin Franklin, the College of William and Mary, and the Williamsburg Bray School. See also Monaghan, *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America*, pp. 241-272.

<sup>666</sup> Israel Jefferson, *The Memoirs of Israel Jefferson*, reprinted in Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*, pp. 249-253, here p. 252.

<sup>667</sup> Stanton, ›Those Who Labor for My Happiness‹, pp. 194 f. See also *ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>668</sup> Kerrison, *Sally Hemings*, p. 291.

no interest in his formal education«. <sup>669</sup> More generally, the denial and suppression even of his closest slaves' creative and intellectual education was in accordance with the unwritten rules of slavery. During his absence, Jefferson very rarely communicated directly with his literate slaves, but »preferred [...] sending word through others«. Preventing his »white intermediaries« from feeling »demeaned by being asked to deliver letters to a black person«, Annette Gordon-Reed supposes, »relaying a verbal order from a master better maintained Virginia's social and racial hierarchy«. <sup>670</sup>

Whereas, the education of slaves constituted a subversion of social hierarchy and a potential threat for the stability of the institution, Jefferson was generally in favor of schooling African Americans for colonization or tutoring Africans in Africa. In an elaboration of his initial colonization scheme, Jefferson emphasized that the establishment of an exile »colony on the coast of Africa« was meant to »introduce among the aborigines the arts of cultivated life, and the blessings of civilisation and science«. <sup>671</sup> Asked for his opinion on the African Institution in London, which was founded in 1807 to suppress the slave trade and support the »repatriation« and education of emancipated slaves in Sierra Leone, Jefferson praised the »sentiments it breathes«, the »eminent characters who compose the institution« and the »generous cares they propose to undertake«. With regard to »our experience with the Indians«, however, Jefferson advised the abolitionists to »begin their work at the right end«, since »letters are not the first, but the last step in the progression from barbarism to civilization«. <sup>672</sup> As in the Native American policies of the early United States, formal education was thus to be prepared by the introduction of agriculture and land enclosure, by private property and trade relations. Only within the slave society, however, Jefferson perceived the education of African Americans as dangerous to society and advocated its suppression on the basis of essentialist notions of mental inferiority.

In a slightly different way, Jefferson and his family revealed an ambivalent position towards African American cultural capacities also with regard to spirituality and traditional African medical practices that were ubiquitous features of plantation

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<sup>669</sup> Madison Hemings, *The Memoirs of Madison Hemings*, reprinted in Gordon-Reed, Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings, pp. 245-248, here p. 247 (»learned«); Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello*, p. 595 (»interest«).

<sup>670</sup> Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello*, p. 403.

<sup>671</sup> TJ to Jared Sparks, Feb. 4, 1824.

<sup>672</sup> TJ to James Pemberton, Jun. 21, 1808.

life especially in the eighteenth century.<sup>673</sup> In 1800, his daughter Martha informed the absent master about the decease of his former personal slave Jupiter after he had consulted a »negro doctor«, who gave him a treatment that »would kill or cure«. Ursula Granger, the head cook at the time, had also received »means« by the man who is identified as Perkins' Sam from a plantation in neighboring Buckingham County and was suffering from a declining physical condition. Consequently, Martha claimed that the slave practitioner's »murders sufficiently manifest to come under the cognizance of the law«. <sup>674</sup> Her verdict was confirmed by her husband, who informed Jefferson that the »poisons of the Buckingham Negroe conjurer« were responsible for the illness of Ursula and her family as well as for multiple »instances of death« in the area, concluding that the »poisons of the conjurer have the most astonishing effect in producing melancholy and despair«. <sup>675</sup>

Although Jefferson's reaction is not recorded, it is likely that he, in line with other members of the master class, perceived ›black‹ spirituality as threatening, because it symbolized the »hidden world of his slaves«, a secret culture to which he had no access.<sup>676</sup> Alleged knowledge of poison and magical power not only endangered the master's superior position (and well-being), but also corresponded to Jefferson's assumption of ›black‹ irrationality, suggesting that African Americans were more vulnerable to superstition and seduction. On the other hand, however, Jefferson and other masters were aware of the efficacy of the traditional cures by African and African American practitioners. Thus, Jefferson knew of Perkins' Sam because he had paid him for the treatment of other slaves only two years before Jupiter's and Ursula's therapy failed. With the approval of the master, the consulting of slave practitioners was a legitimate therapy for diseased slaves (and potentially also for ›whites‹).<sup>677</sup> Only when slaves consulted ›black‹ practitioners by their own choice, it was considered a transgression and justified accusations of sorcery and murder.

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<sup>673</sup> Cf., among others, Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, pp. 610-658; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, pp. 345-351. The following is also informed by Chelsea Berry of Georgetown University and her work on eighteenth-century poisoning cases in the Atlantic world.

<sup>674</sup> Martha Jefferson Randolph to TJ, Jan. 30, 1800.

<sup>675</sup> Thomas Mann Randolph to TJ, ca. Apr. 19, 1800.

<sup>676</sup> Stanton, ›Those Who Labor for My Happiness‹, p. 24. On medical practices among native African slaves and the widespread fears of sorcery and poisoning among the Virginia master class, see Douglas B. Chambers, *Murder at Montpelier. Igbo Africans in Virginia*, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi 2005, pp. 67-61.

<sup>677</sup> Jefferson, *Jefferson's Memorandum Books*, p. 992. See also Stanton, ›Those Who Labor for My Happiness‹, p. 130.

In light of slavery and the plantation complex, Jefferson's assessment of African American cultural capacities appears to be more complex than commonly asserted. His construction of ›black‹ natural difference, which included claims of mental inferiority and physical limits to cultural achievement, gave additional weight to his warnings against immediate abolition and the cohabitation of ›black‹ and ›white‹ in a post-emancipation Union. In hindsight, Jefferson appears like a ›modern‹ scientific racist, when Howard Winant recapitulates that »Jefferson's musings on black inferiority in Notes on the State of Virginia (1781) received a scientific imprimatur from the likes of Galton and Pearson in the turn-of-the-twentieth-century eugenics era, and then found more recent echoes in the biologicistic racism of *The Bell Curve* (1994)«. <sup>678</sup> The alleged linearity, however, obscures the fundamental flexibility of Jefferson's racism even with regard to African Americans. In fact, his general doubts about African American rationality, which made him, »like Kant«, assume that ›blacks‹ were »in reason much inferior« and »in imagination [...] dull, tasteless, and anomalous«, were not the essence of his scientific racism, but only one important facet of a more complex conception of difference and inferiority. <sup>679</sup> In his personal plantation management, Jefferson relied on faculties of his slaves that he denied them with regard to possible emancipation scenarios. The idea of innate and immutable inferiority of ›blacks‹ was thus employed by Jefferson as a powerful political instrument to bolster the notion of social homogeneity and suspend the issue of emancipation. Moreover, it differed widely from his scientific standards and his overall approach to human variety, which was largely defined by Buffon's concept of gradual distinctions.

Adding Jefferson's assessment of Native American difference to his conscious construction of African American identity, the scientific dimensions of Jeffersonian racism appear to challenge the common distinction between his naturalist essentialism (towards the former) and his environmentalist relativism (towards the latter).

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<sup>678</sup> Howard Winant, *The World is a Ghetto. Race and Democracy since World War II*, New York: Basic Books 2001, p. 297.

<sup>679</sup> Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave*, p. 143 (›Kant‹); Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 266 (›reason‹, ›imagination‹). The connection between Kant and Jefferson can also be found in Bernasconi, *Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism*, who perceives the German philosopher as the »more puzzling case«, because »he was neither under political pressure on this particular issue nor compromised by the self-interest of being a slave-owner«, p. 146. Elsewhere, the comparison is overstretched and flawed with ahistorical conceptions of ›race‹, when one commentator assesses that »in Kant's Prussia and Jefferson's America – race was morphological phenomenon, a matter of physical structure and appearance, not a matter of lineage as it had been in previous centuries«, McWorther, *Racism and Sexual Oppression*, p. 97.

Although he conceived of indigenous peoples as ›built on the same module‹ with Europeans, Jefferson did not claim their physical or mental equality. Their inferiority was only based on cultural backwardness and a lack of civilization. If this backlog was ever to be cleared remained highly doubtful to Jefferson. Eventually, physical amalgamation and the non-residual dissolution of Native Americans within the ›white‹ settler society constituted the only opportunity to escape extinction. Read against the context of European degeneration theories and American expansionism, which not least built on a Jeffersonian vision of agrarianism and democracy, this ›racial‹ conception also responded to socio-economic and political discourses of the time. The distinction of naturalist and historicist racisms is thus a helpful instrument to examine the ambivalent logics that are inherent to racist constructions of difference, but does not correspond to an often claimed break between (pre-modern) culturalism and scientific racism.



## IV.

### **Conclusion: Jeffersonian Racism and ›Presentism‹**

It is one of the most-cited quotes in the occasionally self-referential field of Jefferson studies: »If Jefferson was wrong, America is wrong. If America is right, Jefferson was right«.<sup>1</sup> These two phrases, penned by Jefferson's early biographer James Parton in 1874, illustrate the glorification of the founder in the second half of the nineteenth century, when Abraham Lincoln demanded »all honor to Jefferson« for the »coolness, forecast, and capacity to introduce [...] an abstract truth, applicable to all men and all times«.<sup>2</sup> Still in the twenty-first century, Jefferson has maintained this symbolic meaning for many Americans, although the awareness has long grown, as Gordon Wood put it in 1993, »that something was seriously wrong with America. And if something was wrong with America, then something has to be wrong with Jefferson«.<sup>3</sup>

With issues of ›race‹ and racism persistently dominating public discourses in the United States, and to a large degree codifying what is wrong with the nation, it is not surprising that Jefferson's legacy is increasingly discussed against the backdrop of ongoing ›racial‹ struggles. From his relationship with Sally Hemings, which some commentators rendered into a narrative of ›interracial‹ Americanness, to his suspicions of ›black‹ mental inferiority, that allegedly anticipated the present-day racism of *The Bell Curve*, various facets of the founder's thought and actions have been integrated into contemporary controversies on the role of ›race‹ and racism in the U.S. society and culture. In opposition to a long tradition of idolizing the founding fathers and the Enlightenment values they represent, the scrutiny of their (and especially Jefferson's) records on diversity and ›racial‹ identity resulted in much more

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<sup>1</sup> Parton, *Life of Thomas Jefferson*, p. iii.

<sup>2</sup> Abraham Lincoln to Henry L. Pierce, Apr. 6, 1859, in: Abraham Lincoln, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3, ed. by Roy P. Basler, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press 1953, pp. 374-376, here p. 376.

<sup>3</sup> Wood, *The Trials and Tribulations of Thomas Jefferson*, p. 395.

problematic portrayals and seemed to fundamentally challenge wide-spread notions of American identity. Thus, in one of the programs on Jefferson and his meaning for American ›race‹ relations, CNN host Don Lemon stated that ›there may come a day when we want to rethink Jefferson‹, but he was not sure ›if we should do that‹.<sup>4</sup>

The present study has argued that a reassessment of the founder's racism is not only worthwhile and long overdue but also expands beyond the ›racial‹ prejudices and violent practices commonly associated with Southern slave society. This is not because many uneasy truths about the founder's life remain to be raised to the surface and to irrevocably stain the legacy of a national icon, as many seem to fear. In fact, most of Jefferson's ›shady sides‹ are well known to the public and have been examined since the 1960s. Back then, William Cohen, Winthrop Jordan and Robert McColley sowed the seeds for critical scholarship by examining his relationship towards slavery and African Americans. Despite initial reservations, this reading of Jefferson as more or less ›racist‹ has become almost commonplace in scholarly discourse.

At a closer look, however, Jefferson's racism had already been an essential part of his legacy when he was made an American icon in the first place. This becomes especially obvious in Parton's adulatory portrait read together with another text, in which the famous biographer examines the history of *Antipathy to the Negro*. Despite its title, this largely forgotten article from 1878 is hardly a critical examination of anti-›black‹ sentiment, but an affirmation of – not least Jeffersonian – arguments against ›racial‹ equality in light of the Reconstruction controversies about the political rights of African Americans. Opposing the »cruellest stroke« of »hurling [emancipated slaves] all unprepared into politics« and arguing that »undeveloped races and immature individuals« should be »withdrawn from the reach of the politician with the glad consent of the industrious poor man«, Parton based the social cohesion of the United States on a segregation that guaranteed the »purity and dignity of both the races«.<sup>5</sup>

In effect, Parton's America was only ›right‹, if African Americans were denied full citizenship. From this perspective, he believed to have Jefferson on his side. It

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<sup>4</sup> Cited in Ng, Jefferson Memorial, Confederate statues enter national race debate.

<sup>5</sup> James Parton, *Antipathy to the Negro*, in: *The North American Review*, 127, 1878, 265, pp. 476-491, here p. 491.

was the founder's »low opinion of the negro's mental calibre« that shaped Southern minds for the century to come and proved the »weightiest argument [...] against any and every scheme of white and black living together as equals«. Elaborating especially on his dismissal of Phillis Wheatley, Parton said that he could »not deny the justice of Jefferson's remarks«, because »she was a poet very much as ›Blind Tom‹ is a musician«. More generally, he assessed:

»It is ninety years since Jefferson published his ›Notes,‹ and we cannot yet name one negro of pure blood who has taken the first, the second, the third, or the tenth rank in business, politics, art, literature, scholarship, science, or philosophy. To the present hour the negro has contributed nothing to the intellectual resources of man«. <sup>6</sup>

Parton's endorsement of Jefferson's racist claims of African American inferiority was undoubtedly shaped by the discourses of his time. This can also be exemplified with his subsequent remark that the African American »has shown himself capable of improvement«, something »we cannot positively assert of our red brother«. <sup>7</sup> Against the backdrop of the ever-increasing land claims of the United States and the failure of allegedly ›civilizing‹ policies, Jefferson's professed optimism with regard to at least some Native Americans' ›improvability‹ had given way to essentialist notions of their cultural backwardness. Exemplifying the excluding potential of culturalistic constructions of difference, Parton rearranged Jefferson's ›racial‹ hierarchy and suggested the inevitable extinction of unteachable indigenes, whereas naturally limited African American could achieve a status as inferior but dignified members of a segregated society. Long before critical reassessments in the second half of the twentieth century, according to Merrill Peterson, turned the idea of a racist Jefferson into a »theme beaten to pulp«, Jefferson's flexible constructions of difference served to justify racist policies of the Jim Crow era and were recognized as integral components of his political thought. <sup>8</sup>

Although Jefferson's racism never went unchallenged, it was widely acceptable in ›white‹ mainstream until antiracist movements made segregation politically untenable. <sup>9</sup> In the following decades, Jefferson's racism was frequently belittled as

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 487 f.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 488.

<sup>8</sup> Letters, in: *The Atlantic Monthly*, 279, 1997, 1, pp. 6-9.

<sup>9</sup> To some degree, Jefferson's racism was already neglected in earlier debates about slavery, when his abolitionist writings were frequently referenced under omission of the racist restrictions for emancipation. Most prominently, this can still be observed with the Jefferson Memorial of 1943, which cites his claim that » nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that these people are

echoing a racist zeitgeist that even the most progressive and egalitarian thinker could not easily escape. The increasing critique of Jefferson on the basis of his racism was debunked as ›presentist‹ and driven by political interests and contemporary morals, which were used to vilify the founders and their noble intents. In fact, many of the respective accounts represented Jefferson's racism as if it was part of a linear history of thought, in which the same naturalistic constructions of African American inferiority justified first slavery and later rationalized segregation. Looking almost exclusively at the relationship between ›black‹ and ›white‹, many scholars transfer racist ›knowledge‹ that was developed during the nineteenth century to Jeffersonian times and in this light interpret his elaborations on ›blacks‹ as a case of scientific racism.

To look at Jefferson's racism without a ›presentist‹ bias, however, demands not only to abstain from moral value judgements, but also to reflect on the concept of racism and its flexible logics. It is one of the results of this study that Jefferson's conception of free African Americans as threats to the homogeneity and purity of a society he conceived of as ›white‹ served as a blueprint for later segregationist thought. Nevertheless, at the time of his writings, his arguments were neither scientific nor otherwise self-evident. Especially the passages that are now frequently perceived as regrettably contaminated by contemporary racism have earned Jefferson the critique of many contemporaries. Against this backdrop, this study asserts that a specific Jeffersonian form of racism was to some degree constitutive of later ›racial‹ formations in the United States. But Jeffersonian racism amounted to more than the construction and popularization of immutable, almost metaphysical differences between ›white‹ and ›black‹. As part of a larger edifice of ideas, it responded not only to the problem of slavery in a nation built on individual natural rights, but also provided for notions of civilization and progress as the enlightened driving forces behind a violent westward expansion and postulated ›whiteness‹ as a positive collective identity that symbolically uplifted marginalized status groups of European ancestry.

Jefferson was among the first American thinkers to address all of these issues in ›racial‹ terms, but since only his characterization of African Americans seems to

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to be free«, but leaves out the telling continuation that it is not »less certain that the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government«. On how the »Jefferson Memorial Commission, who consulted President Roosevelt on the selection of texts for the engravings, sought to present Jefferson as a clear opponent of slavery«, see Cogliano, Thomas Jefferson, p. 205.

resemble the present-day understanding of ›race‹, the complexity of his ›racial‹ conceptions is widely overlooked. This tendency is by no means limited to early American or even Jefferson studies but mirrors the identification of ›racial‹ thought (in the sense of naturalistic assumptions about immutable differences between human ›races‹) with racism that is frequently found in racism studies. The analysis of Jeffersonian racism is therewith not merely a contribution to a better understanding of Jefferson's thought, but also hints at some shortcomings in prevalent ideas about ›race‹ and racism. Along the three discursive fields of slavery, nation and science, embedded in the material and political conditions of the early republic, this study examined the complexity of racism in Jefferson's thought and actions and challenged the ahistorical application of a present-day ›race‹ concept to the racist process of constructing ›racial‹ difference in the eighteenth century.

With regard to slavery, the case of Jefferson exemplifies how the natural rights rhetoric of the American Revolution changed the debates about the legitimacy of the institution and eventually facilitated its ›racialization‹. As Karen and Barbara Fields have argued, American anti-›black‹ racism originated when the nation's enlightened founders systematically denied African Americans their personhood at a time when individual natural and civic rights were established as the foundations of society. In fact, the hardening of ›racial‹ stereotypes in the aftermaths of the Revolutionary War proved a momentous step in the history of racism and marks the beginning of the firmly stratified ›race‹ relations that continue to dominate political discourses in the United States. The study of Jefferson demonstrates, however, that new rationalizations of the slaves' natural difference built on pre-›racial‹ conceptions of inferiority and were not necessarily intended to justify the maintenance of the institution, but could also serve some kind of racist abolitionism.

Instead of resting on the scientific survey of different ›races‹, Jefferson's conception of African American inferiority assumed a metaphysical impurity of ›blackness‹ that resembled more traditional religious ideas of condemnation. When he grew up in colonial Virginia, respective notions of heathenism justified distinctions between European indentured servants and slaves of different ethnic backgrounds. Phenotypical markers like skin color were secondary signifiers of difference and frequently perceived as religious stigmata. Only during the Revolutionary War, the growing number of African American slaves posed as an additional threat for a society di-

vided between patriots and loyalists, since the claims for liberty and independence had a great appeal with the disenfranchised. It was the British, however, who, in the form of Dunmore's Proclamation, held out freedom to loyal slaves, while Jefferson and his peers tried to include marginalized groups, like European immigrants, poor smallholders and religious dissenters into an allegedly homogeneous ›white‹ American society. African Americans, by contrast, were constructed as permanent outsiders on the basis of assumed immutable differences. Against the backdrop of natural rights discourses, the slave status was itself naturalized and increasingly linked to African ancestry and dark complexion. When the socio-economic order of the plantation society was challenged, racism served as a means to consolidate the hierarchy between masters and slaves and allowed hitherto excluded groups to accumulate racist symbolic capital. Shifting from religious to seemingly naturalistic discourses of difference, the category of ›race‹ constituted an important argument against the extension of rights on African Americans and seemed to justify the maintenance of the institution. This being said, the idea of innate and immutable differences remained highly controversial and was employed by Jefferson to advocate a strict segregation for post-emancipation scenarios.

In light of the social divisions between various status groups in the new nation, the racist construction of cultural and natural differences facilitated the maintenance of an egalitarian illusion. Unlike the European aristocracies, where economic inequality structured society, Jefferson conceived of ›white‹ America as a homogeneous society of free and independent citizens, which he contrasted with essentialized images of inferior ›blacks‹ and backward ›reds‹. These ›racial‹ tensions within the American nation, he argued, could not be overcome by a democratization of social relations but demanded more rigorous policies of colonization and expulsion. In fact, the ›racial‹ demarcation of ›white‹ America constituted a critical precondition for Jeffersonian policies of western expansion and the formation of a national identity.

In a striking departure from the British appeasement policies that had limited land speculation with the Royal Proclamation of 1763, Jefferson and other legislators of the founding period used Native American territories to address the economic inequalities within the settler society. Wealthy investors as well as poor smallholders were supposed to participate in the imperial land seizures that were passed off as reactions to indigenous aggression and ›racial‹ struggles on the frontier. How-

ever, just as the plantation with its complex interrelations between slaves of different rank and complexion, free hired laborers and the master families, the eighteenth-century frontier regions subverted clear-cut distinctions between ›white‹, ›red‹ and ›black‹. Only in the Jeffersonian vision of an agrarian settler state, these contact zones became the source of national prosperity and the location for the forced assimilation of uncivilized ›savages‹, or their violent displacement.

Whereas Native Americans appeared on the outside and on the margins of his imperial vision, African Americans were denied outright. Different from the British pioneers and other European settlers, who voluntarily populated the New World, Jefferson perceived them as unnaturally transplanted to America. In contrast to Native Americans, moreover, they already constituted an integral part of the settler society and had to be removed from within. To create the homogeneous ›Empire of Liberty‹ that Jefferson wanted, these African Americans could not simply be pushed westwards due to alleged cultural incompatibility. Consequently, African Americans had no place in Jefferson's idealized vision of America and in case of emancipation were to be deported to Africa or another destination of ›racial‹ homogeneity.

Jefferson rationalized the twofold racist exclusion of Native and African Americans, and the corresponding construction of a ›white‹ national identity, with recourse to scientific discourses of the time, which he adapted to the specific conditions of American nation building. His argument in defense of America's climatic conditions explicitly subscribed to contemporary environmentalism but had to include other reasons for Native American difference. Explaining the inferiority of indigenous peoples with their civilizational deficits, Jefferson thus endorsed theories of conjectural history that posited the cultural superiority of Europeans and to some degree essentialized the cultural backwardness of peoples that were concomitantly ›racialized‹ in naturalist hierarchies of mankind. Drawing on the ›racial‹ language applied in the science of man, Jefferson's construction of Native Americans exemplified the eighteenth-century linkage of cultural and biological ascriptions.

Strikingly different but also building on a combination of cultural and biological markers, Jefferson characterized African Americans as naturally limited in their cultural and mental development. Neglecting the scientific assessment of geographic conditions in Africa, he departed from his environmentalist methodology and assumed ›black‹ inferiority to be rooted in nature not in circumstance. This notion

of nature, however, was not informed by contemporary research into the varieties of mankind, but more closely resembled metaphysical concepts of immutable difference. Correspondingly, Jefferson evoked the African Americans' rank on a divine scale of beings and repeatedly referred to their alleged impurity that was threatening ›white‹ America. His discussion of ›black‹ and ›white‹ difference in the political chapter on ›Laws‹ in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, as opposed to the naturalist section that dealt with Native Americans, already signaled the ideological significance of the issue with regard to the contemporary controversies on slavery.

In the history of colonial encounters, Europeans came up with multiple attempts to rationalize and justify their policies of conquest and enslavement: ranging from religious notions of heathen depravation to secular concepts of ›savagery‹, from pre-evolutionary ideas of a great chain of beings to environmentalist explanations for human varieties. All of these theories informed the ›racial‹ thought of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and resulted in classifications of mankind that blended essentialized phenotypical characteristics with cultural features and moral valuations. To some degree, Jefferson was a typical representative of this flexibility in ›racial‹ thought. At the same time, however, he was exceptional (and exceptionally influential) in harnessing the various conceptions of human difference for the sake of what he believed to be the cause of the American republic. Consequently, some of the historical ›racial formations‹ that are commonly interpreted as specific American modalities of racism can also be understood as products of ›Jeffersonian‹ racism.

In the course of the study, the example of Jeffersonian racism has demonstrated the potential insights of various racism theories through their application to the historical case study, but also revealed the limitations of narrow definitions of racism in assessing flexible and overlapping logics inherent to racist constructions of difference. With respect to slavery, Orlando Patterson's concept of dehumanization and social death, which Theodore Allen transferred to racist oppression in general, remains a vital instrument to understand the social mechanisms of slavery. Regardless of the gradations between various instances of enslavement and the possible benevolence of individual slaveholders, the treatment of persons as property demanded the construction of their essential difference, be it on cultural, religious or ›racial‹ terms. Thus, Jefferson's efforts towards an amelioration of slavery as well as

the privileged positions of domestic slaves and enslaved overseers did not interfere with the fundamental distinctions between masters and slaves. These were continuously reinforced by social practices of dehumanization, such as the selling of allegedly defiant slaves, physical punishments for supposed misbehaviour and the collective infantilization of the enslaved population of Monticello.

In the political discourse on slavery and emancipation, these oppressive measures were supported by racist justifications, which in Jefferson's lifetime shifted from religious constructions of difference to ›racial‹ notions of identity. Essentialized conceptions of African Americans, however, were not applied solely to bolster the institution of slavery, but also featured prominently in Jefferson's conditional abolitionism, which postulated the persistent segregation of ›black‹ and ›white‹. This claim was based on a logic of contamination and purity, suggesting that the free cohabitation with emancipated slaves would ›stain the blood‹ of former masters. In contrast to the realities of slavery, in which physical contact and ›interracial‹ sexuality did not undermine the hierarchical plantation structure, the liberation of large numbers of disenfranchised individuals was perceived as tantamount to the destruction of social order and, thus, accompanied by a rhetoric of absolute incompatibility of the two ›races‹. Ironically, Jefferson seemed to realize that the institution of slavery enclosed the social tensions it was built on and, in case of its abolition, would unleash turmoil. His response, however, essentialized the opposition between the status groups of masters and slaves and theoretically prepared the latter's ongoing subordination.

The post-revolutionary discourses on slavery illuminate how Jeffersonian racism at once drew on long-established notions of impurity and condemnation, while also adapting this logic of exclusion to the new reality of a republic based on individual natural rights. Thus, he never openly denied African (or Native) Americans their rights to life and liberty but based the free execution of these rights on certain requirements for state and society. To some degree, this process can be accounted for with Charles Mills' theory of the ›racial contract‹, which explains how liberal ideas of society and citizenship contained subtle but powerful justifications for racist oppression and exclusion. Accordingly, Jefferson's vision of the United States as the spear head of progress and civilization can be interpreted as imperially imposing certain forms of socio-economic organization on Native American peoples. Their ›tuition‹, as well as the eventual emancipation of slaves, was thus a moral impera-

tive for the settler state and served the higher causes of humanism and Enlightenment. If the infantilized ›savages‹ proved unwilling or incapable of civilization, however, it was the natural course of history that they become extinct.

Beyond the theoretical dimension, the emergence of Jeffersonian racism in context of American nation building also demonstrated how marginalized groups of various status and national backgrounds could be incorporated into an imagined community of ›whiteness‹ through the exclusion of Native American and African American others. In a mechanism that Wulf D. Hund labelled ›negative societalization‹, the inclusion and symbolic uplifting of underprivileged parts of society contributes to mitigate conflicts between elites and underclasses and therewith stabilize hierarchically structured societies. In his legislative work, Jefferson often addressed hitherto excluded minorities, such as poor immigrants and religious dissenters, and more or less implicitly held out to them the benefits of racist oppression. The allocation of lands, or even of slaves, to unemployed, defectors or smallholders was a very concrete offer to participate in the racist policies of expulsion and enslavement, although it was never realized as Jefferson proposed. With the Louisiana Purchase and the diffusion of slavery, however, he bequeathed a political legacy that had expanded racism in geographical scope and social pervasion.

It is these social functions of inclusion and exclusion, which define Jeffersonian and any other modality of racism, rather than the postulation of biologicistic concepts of ›race‹. This becomes obvious in the ›racial‹ conceptions that underpinned Jeffersonian racism. Although he constructed Native American and African American identities in strikingly different ways, the contrast does not amount to a fundamental distinction between culturalistic discrimination and naturalistic (›race-‹)racism. Instead, Jefferson conceived of both groups as ›races‹ that were distinguished from the ›white‹ ›race‹ by physical and cultural inferiority. With regard to Native Americans, he argued, their deficiencies were primarily the result of lacking civilization, whereas African Americans were allegedly constrained by immutable and inherent characteristics. Nevertheless, the different ›racial‹ conceptions commonly built on the notion of European superiority and exemplify the inextricable connection between natural and cultural markers of difference.

Against this backdrop, David Goldberg's juxtaposition of ›racial historicism‹ and ›racial naturalism‹ serves to identify the overlapping logics inherent to the different ›racial‹ conceptions, but does not qualify to draw a line between Jefferson's con-

struction of Native and African American identity. In fact, even the ostensible preponderance of culturalistic arguments in the former and of naturalistic arguments in the latter case is by no means self-evident. Jefferson followed naturalist methodologies only in his assessment of indigenous peoples, while his controversial claims on ›blacks‹ were not clearly informed by systematic inquiries – albeit couched in anatomical vocabulary. Given the socio-economic and political contexts of his ambivalent elaborations, Jeffersonian racism illustrates how processes of inclusion and exclusion can be rationalized on various grounds.

In the further course of American history, racist exclusion has followed the terms of Jeffersonian racism in many ways. Native Americans were confronted with ever changing and effectively unrealizable demands for assimilation, with failure punished by expulsion and disenfranchisement. African Americans, by contrast, were increasingly essentialized as naturally incapable of civilization and their postbellum segregation was justified with recourse to the purity logics of the one-drop-rule. This later consolidation of different racist practices, however, should neither obscure their common role in the formation of ›white‹ American national identity nor inspire assessments of seemingly transhistorical ›races‹ that were only ›described‹ and ›discovered‹ by Enlightenment thinkers.

The case of Jeffersonian racism, by contrast, demonstrates how processes of racist societalization respond to discursive conditions and socio-economic structures. Drawing on the language of ›race‹ to update traditional patterns of exclusion, Jefferson's flexible construction of difference accounted for the social positions of Native and African Americans, and countered the social upheavals of the revolutionary era with a cross-class vision of ›white‹ America.



## *Acknowledgements*

This study was generously supported by multiple institutions and individuals. A PhD grant by the Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes enabled me to focus on my studies during the last three years and provided for fruitful exchange with other early career academics. Earlier stipends by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung as well as travel grants by the Graduate School of the Faculty for Economic and Social Sciences and the University of Hamburg have also facilitated the work on this dissertation. Eventually, a Peter-Nicolaisen-Fellowship at the International Center for Jefferson Studies gave me the chance to finish the manuscript in the most stimulating environment that any scholar writing about Jefferson and early America could hope for.

Conferences along the way have brought me to California and Virginia, Romania and Finland, Germany and the UK and allowed me a fair share of the pleasures of academic life. Most importantly, however, these travels got me in touch with scholars of different academic backgrounds and from all around the world, notably with Benjamin Fagan, Miles Grier, Jared Hardesty, Carsten Junker, Eric Otremba, Ousmane Power-Greene, Pia Wiegink and many others. Special thanks are due to Ari Helo, who invited me to the 2015 NAAS conference in Oulu, and Csaba Levai, who included me in his panel on ›Jefferson and Europe‹ at the 2016 EAAS meeting in Constanta. On these two occasions, I had the opportunity to discuss my research with distinguished scholars of Jefferson and early American history, including Annette Gordon-Reed, Daniel Howe, Annie Lechenet, Alan Taylor, Zoltán Vajda, Maurizio Valsania and Gordon Wood.

Like so many contemporary Jefferson scholars, I have also benefitted from the invaluable advice of Peter Onuf, from his welcoming character and his willingness to engage with my critical perspective on Jefferson and his time. He also put me in touch with the Jefferson community at Monticello and Charlottesville, where especially Niya Bates,

Anna Berkes, James Ceaser, Christa Dierksheide, Andrew O'Shaughnessy, Whitney Pippin, Gaye Wilson and my fellow fellows Holly Mayer and Chelsea Berry provided for inspiration and great company during two stays at the International Center for Jefferson Studies. In Germany, Hannah Spahn with her profound knowledge of Jefferson and his time was a great help in clarifying my argument.

At the University of Hamburg, it was once again my supervisor Wulf D. Hund, who guided me through the process of this project from its initial conception to its final drafts. Regular discussions with Stefanie Affeldt, Simone Borgstede, Malina Emmerink, Felix Lösing and Benjamin Opratko sharpened my understanding of racism. The discussions with Urs Stäheli and Olaf Asbach stimulated me to rethink my approach and added new perspectives on my research subject. At different stages, I also presented parts of my work in their respective colloquiums and received valuable comments by Andreas Busen, Daniela Caterina, Kerstin Kock, Sven Opitz, Clemens Reichold, Lydia Schmuck and many others.

Next to the teachers and mentors I am indebted to, I also want to thank the students of my ›Jefferson seminar‹, with whom I discussed some of the questions raised in this study. During the last year, the office community at MBA 60 was a great scholarly environment and allowed for intellectual discussions as well as distracting lunch breaks with Fernando de Almeida, Dennis Pauschinger, Stephanie Rose and others. In the months before that, my great friend Veronika Müller-Thederan was the best imaginable office neighbor.

Throughout the years, too many friends to mention here have helped me in various ways: You are the best! My parents and Anna are the cornerstones of my life. This book is dedicated to them.

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## *Appendix*

### **Summary**

The present study analyzes the racism in Thomas Jefferson's life and thought against the backdrop of some theoretical problems within the field of racism studies.

The first main part of the study provides a thick description of the discursive formations and socio-economic conditions during Jefferson's lifetime and therewith examines the breeding ground of Jeffersonian racism. Chronologically ordered and ranging from colonial Virginia to the presidency of John Quincy Adams, the historical narrative embraces material backgrounds, legal developments and scientific discourses concerning human varieties on the American continent. Drawing primarily on secondary sources, these first chapters also allow for a meta-analysis of the racism reception in the historiography of early America.

Building on the provided material, the second main part analyzes Jeffersonian racism along the subjects of slavery, nation and science. Against prevalent assessments of his inconsistency with regard to the institution of slavery, it is argued that Jeffersonian racism functioned as a doctrine that reconciled Jefferson's liberal opposition to slavery with the temporary maintenance of the institution. Linking the realization of liberty and equality to a notion of ›racial‹ homogeneity, segregation and colonization emerged as the preconditions of emancipation, which inhibited immediate abolition and rationalized the persistent exclusion of African Americans. His idea of a ›white‹ nation also excluded Native Americans and racistly constructed them as uncivilized savages. On the contrary, he aimed at the inclusion of marginalized groups of European ancestry and pursued their political integration as well as their uplifting through ›racist symbolic capital‹.

Jefferson's racist policies and actions were backed by scientific conceptions of ›racial difference, which built on overlapping ascriptions of cultural and natural inferiority. Although he developed different justifications for the exclusion of Native Americans and African Americans, it would be misleading to reduce the former to culturalistic relativism and the latter to scientific racism. In fact, the case of Jeffersonian racism exemplifies how racist discrimination can adapt to complex material and discursive conditions, constantly updates traditional logics of distinction and goes beyond the contemporary paradigm of ›race‹.

### **Zusammenfassung**

Vor dem Hintergrund theoretischer Probleme gegenwärtiger Rassismusforschung analysiert die vorliegende Arbeit den Rassismus in Thomas Jeffersons Denken und Handeln.

Der erste Hauptteil der Studie behandelt die historischen Kontexte des Forschungsgegenstandes und bietet eine dichte Beschreibung der sozioökonomischen und diskursiven Bedingungen für die Entstehung des Jeffersonschen Rassismus in den frühen Vereinigten Staaten. In chronologischer Abfolge, vom kolonialen Virginia bis zur Präsidentschaft John Quincy Adams', berücksichtigt die historiographische Betrachtung materielle Hintergründe, legislative Entwicklungen und wissenschaftliche Diskurse in Bezug auf die Konstruktion von verschiedenen Menschengruppen in Nordamerika. Die herangezogenen Sekundärquellen erlauben unterdessen eine Metaanalyse der Rassismusrezeption in der Forschungsliteratur zu Jefferson und den frühen Vereinigten Staaten.

Ausgehend von dem dargestellten Material analysiert der zweite Hauptteil der Arbeit Jeffersonschen Rassismus anhand der Themenfelder Sklaverei, Nation und Wissenschaft. Entgegen verbreiteter Darstellungen wird Jeffersons Haltung zur Sklaverei nicht als widersprüchlich deklariert, sondern sein Rassismus als Instrument interpretiert, mit dessen Hilfe er aufklärerische Naturrechtsvorstellungen und den Fortbestand der Institution in Einklang bringen konnte. Die Realisierung von Freiheit und Gleichheit knüpfte Jefferson an ›rassisch‹ verstandene Homogenität, eine Emanzipation der Sklaven hielt

er also nur bei anschließender Segregation für durchführbar. Sein Konzept einer ›weißen‹ Nation exkludierte außerdem amerikanische Ureinwohner, die er rassistisch als un-zivilisierte ›Wilde‹ konstruierte. Dementgegen wurden Unterklassen und marginalisierte Gruppen europäischer Abstammung eingeschlossen und durch ›rassistisches symbolisches Kapital‹ aufgewertet.

Jeffersons rassistische Politiken der Ausgrenzung beruhten auf wissenschaftlichen Konzeptionen von Menschenrassen, denen er jeweils kulturelle und natürliche Eigenschaften zuschrieb. Das Verhältnis von Naturalismus zu Kulturalismus war dabei in seinen jeweiligen Konstruktionen von Ureinwohnern und Afroamerikanern sehr unterschiedlich gewichtet, es ist dennoch irreführend nur die letztere Diskriminierung als rassistisch zu begreifen. Das Beispiel des Jeffersonschen Rassismus zeigt vielmehr, wie rassistische Konstruktionen sich an materielle und diskursive Bedingungen anpassen, wie sie traditionelle Ausgrenzungsmuster aktualisieren und über das häufig postulierte Paradigma der ›Rasse‹ hinausgehen.

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