

**RACE AND ETHNICITY: SLAVERY AND THE GERMAN RADICAL TRADITION**  
Talk given by Hartmut Keil in Madison, Wisconsin on February 3, 1999 and sponsored by  
the Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies and the Center for the History of  
Print Culture.

Traditionally racial and ethnic relations in mid-nineteenth century America have been described as dominated by antagonism, hatred, and violence that often erupted into mob action, lynchings, and murders of black Americans. The standard explanation for this hostile record has been that these ethnic groups had similar socio-economic status and competed for the same jobs in the labor market. Previous research<sup>1</sup> implies that this stereotypical view was largely shaped by studying the Irish as the largest and most visible immigrant group. It has raised substantial doubt, however, as to the applicability of this model to the second largest immigrant group, i.e. the Germans, arriving before the Civil War. Although German immigrants also subscribed to the ideology of nineteenth-century racism, it often found different and less confrontational expression among them than among the Irish.

The larger project that I have been pursuing for some time now intends to take a closer look at the kinds of relationship that developed between African Americans and German immigrants. My talk today will isolate the specific issue of mutual intellectual traditions and a common philosophical heritage that may account for sympathy for abolitionism and antislavery sentiment among parts of the German immigrant population. I suggest that European and American Enlightenment thought evolved not in isolation, but through an intense exchange of ideas that crossed the Atlantic in both directions. Between the German states and North America a transatlantic intellectual network evolved in the process of emigration from Germany from the 1820s onward that was nourished by personal contact, travel, intellectual exchange of letters, books, and the leading contemporary German-language journals and papers in both the United States and in Germany so that a sophisticated level of information on the United States emerged. I will pay close attention to Alexander von Humboldt as an embodiment of the enlightened scholar and humanist in Germany who had a significant impact on German immigrants; and to Otilie Assing as a journalist intellectual closely involved in the abolitionist cause who influenced through her reports important intellectual circles in Germany.

### **European Enlightenment Thought and the American Example**

The European and American Enlightenment were connected in a mutually reinforcing way.<sup>2</sup> Paradoxically, it was on the North American continent that the Enlightenment tradition first assumed an immediately practical impact. Europeans saw the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution as a victory of Enlightenment thought as it had emerged on the old continent. In the case of the German states<sup>3</sup> public discussion in addition quickly assigned to the American Revolution an idealistic and utopian quality, interpreting it as an ideological symbol of the universal aspirations of humanity<sup>4</sup> and appropriating the new nation as the model for those in search of a better world.

The emerging political liberalism in the repressive restoration period centered its attention on the American Constitution. In the opinion of German liberals, the American Constitution had transformed their own as yet unattained ideals of personal and political rights into a practical

reality. The United States, therefore, became the symbol of political freedom. Thus a general and basically uncritical enthusiasm for America's "great democracy"<sup>5</sup> prevailed among radical democrats as well as among liberals during the revolution of 1848/49. At democrats' and workers' mass meetings the Stars and Stripes was always displayed alongside the tricolore and the revolutionary red flag.<sup>6</sup> It was especially the democratic left that pointed to the American federal system as an example to be followed, asking for a new German federal state with a "constitution along the lines of North America with accompanying republican institutions."<sup>7</sup>

Parallel to this liberal-republican debate ran a current of popular enthusiasm for the American Republic, grounded less in constitutional and political ideals than in hopes of material reward. Surpassing idealistic motives in importance in its longterm consequences, material ambition led to mass emigration from Germany in the middle of the century at the very moment when liberal aspirations had been shattered. In this situation other types of literature began to appear which took more realistic note of American society. These were the burgeoning travel literature and immigration guidebooks which after the 1820s kept appearing in rapid succession.<sup>8</sup> Between 1842 and 1852 alone, 308 guidebooks were published for German emigrants.

Since precise information and practical advice were essential to fulfill the basic needs these guidebooks were supposed to serve, they included critical evaluations of the American political system and social institutions. A more realistic perception of the United States thus became more widespread in the German states, helping emigrants to cope pragmatically with new circumstances and to channel their expectations and preparations accordingly.

The American institution that received the harshest criticism in the guidebooks (and in the travel literature most of the time as well) was slavery. Its condemnation coincided with the emergence of a more sombre view of American society in the literature of the prerevolutionary *Vormärz* period that contrasted America's idealistic principles as embodied in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution with existing shortcomings and injustices. Thus Heinrich Heine, poignant critic of German social and political conditions, also directed his scorn at the "peculiar institution" and the treatment accorded black people. He ridiculed German immigrants with his ironic advice: "You good German farmers! Go to America! Everyone there is equal ... with, of course, the exception of several million slaves... The brutality used in dealing with the latter is more than just shocking." Heine then substantiated this statement by recounting a heinous example of racial prejudice.<sup>9</sup>

Whereas Heine's judgment was motivated by humanistic idealism, prospective emigrants were not necessarily of the same mind. They were primarily interested in acquiring farms and finding jobs where they could apply and utilize their own labor.

Of course guidebooks were aware of this dominant incentive for emigration; they strongly advised immigrants against choosing the slave states as region of settlement, assuming that free workers and farmers could not possibly compete against bound labor. It was often out of selfinterest, then, that immigrants were opposed to slavery, that they adhered to the Jeffersonian notion of the yeoman farmer as the pillar of a democratic society, and that they came to support the freesoilers, the Republican party's effort at preventing slavery's expansion, and certain attractive features of that party's program, like the Homestead Act. Humanitarian concerns were

well served when they could be allied with practical considerations. But this peculiar alliance also demonstrates the limits of the support for political action that needed more than motivation based on self-interest alone. Alexander von Humboldt's views can serve as a telling example of how a principled humanism could have an enormous impact upon social attitudes and political action.

### **Alexander von Humboldt's Practical Humanism**

Alexander von Humboldt's name is usually associated with his great achievements as explorer and natural scientist and with his deep commitment to liberal and humanitarian thought. Less is known of the direct effect that this Enlightenment tradition had on Humboldt's perception of American society, of the impact of his views on the American political debate of slavery during the 1850s, and on the German-American community's political outlook.<sup>10</sup>

Humboldt's extensive travels through South America, which were the basis for his lifelong research and publications, also influenced his attitudes toward the institution of slavery and toward the United States, since upon the conclusion of his travels in 1804 he visited the island of Cuba a second time<sup>11</sup>) where he observed the practical consequences of slavery, before he sailed on to Philadelphia, from where he travelled to Washington, D.C. to meet important political figures including Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Albert Gallatin.<sup>12</sup> As Benjamin Franklin had symbolized for Europeans the enlightened American, universal scholar and public figure in the second half of the eighteenth century, now, i.e. in the first half of the nineteenth century, the European Alexander von Humboldt assumed a similar role for Americans. He became the authoritative voice not only in his proper field but in any matters including European public affairs, politics, culture, and the arts. American intellectuals travelled to Berlin in the 1840s and 1850s only in order to meet Humboldt.<sup>13</sup> Artists arranged sessions to paint or sculpture the venerated scholar.<sup>14</sup> And the historian William Prescott expressed his hope that the work which he presented to Humboldt "may receive your approbation".<sup>15</sup>

It was Humboldt's book on Cuba, however, that was to have the most lasting impact on the American political debate in the 1850s. The *Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba* was published in Paris in 1826. Chapter seven contained Humboldt's scathing condemnation of slavery when he attacked the brutality of the institution even under the supposedly less harsh Spanish conditions.

Thirty years later, in 1856, J.S. Thrasher, a Southerner who held commercial interests in Cuba, and who was intimately involved in efforts to annex the island, published an English translation in New York City under the title *The Island of Cuba by Alexander Humboldt* without Humboldt's authorization. Significantly, this publication omitted chapter 7, i.e. Humboldt's views on slavery, which included statements like the following: "Without doubt, slavery is the greatest of all the evils which have afflicted mankind."<sup>16</sup> Humboldt wrote an angry letter protesting the mutilation of his work. He pointed out, among other things, that thirty years before he had written that legislation of Spain relating to slavery "was less inhuman and less atrocious to slaves" than in the United States.<sup>17</sup> His letter, first published in Berlin, was printed in an English translation in the *New York Times*, the *New York Tribune*, the *New York Herald* and other papers. German-language papers in the United States reprinted the original letter as well. Thus Humboldt's indignation received widest publicity.

Humboldt's condemnation of slavery was grounded in his basic humanist and natural rights position, as he had expressed it in volume one of his major work, *Kosmos*, published in 1845. There he wrote: "In maintaining the unity of the human race we also reject the disagreeable assumption of superior and inferior peoples. Some peoples are more pliable, more highly educated and ennobled by intellectual culture, but there are no races which are more noble than others. All are equally entitled to freedom; to freedom which in the state of nature belongs to the individual and which in civilization belongs as a right to the entire citizenry through political institutions."<sup>18</sup> Humboldt applied these principles to American society, as he became concerned about the increasing political tensions over slavery in the 1850s. Commenting upon the war between the United States and Mexico, he voiced his dislike of the conquests of the United States Army. He wished the Americans all bad luck for he feared that they would "expand their devilish slave system."<sup>19</sup> In an interview for the *Evening Post* the then 85-year old Humboldt expressed his admiration for the American political system but then added: "In one respect, however, you are much worse off than when I was there... For 30 years you have not made any progress about slavery. You have gone backward, very far backward in every respect. I especially refer to the law of 1850, the Fugitive Slave Act... In Europe you will also find bad things. But I tell you you will not find anything half as bad as your system of slavery, and I know what slavery is like in your country."<sup>20</sup>

Republicans were quick to use Humboldt's views in the election campaigns of 1856 and 1860 especially to reach German-American voters. Humboldt obviously did not mind the use of his name and public utterances, since he had been in contact with the party's presidential candidate of 1856, John Frémont, admiring his achievements as an explorer and being instrumental in awarding him the Great Gold Medal of Progress in the Sciences by the King of Prussia in 1850; in the letter to Frémont congratulating him to the award, Humboldt had also added that as a result of Frémont's labors, "California... has so nobly resisted the introduction of Slavery."<sup>21</sup> This and other quotes were used in the 1856 campaign in newspapers and in leaflets. Frémont himself wrote Humboldt and emphasized the importance of using his views in the campaign: "In the history of your life and opinions we find abundant reasons for believing that in the struggle, in which the friends to liberal progress in this country find themselves engaged, we shall have with us the strength of your name."<sup>22</sup> After the election Humboldt regretted that "the shameful party which sells Negro children..., which says that all white workers should also be made slaves - has won. Shame upon them."<sup>23</sup> And shortly before his death in 1859, commenting on a publication by Julius Froebel on his experiences in America, Humboldt formulated his final legacy concerning the institution of slavery. He encouraged Froebel to "continue to brand the shameful devotion to slavery, the treacherous importation of negroes, under the pretense of their becoming free... What atrocities have been witnessed by one who has had the misfortune to live from 1789 to 1858. My book against slavery ... is not prohibited in Madrid, but cannot be purchased in the United States... except with the omission of everything that relates to the sufferings of our colored fellowmen who, according to my political views, are entitled to the enjoyment of the same freedom as ourselves."<sup>24</sup>

Upon his death Alexander von Humboldt was honored by the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* for his consistent antislavery views. It devoted two issues to Humboldt, in which his compiled opinions on slavery were reprinted.

## Otilie Assing's Radical Journalism

Otilie Assing partook of the same humanistic tradition as Alexander von Humboldt, growing up in liberal circles connected with him.<sup>25</sup> After her parents died in 1840 and 1842, she and her sister moved into their uncle Varnhagen von Ense's home in Berlin. Varnhagen had been married to Rahel Levin who had established a famous literary salon. Varnhagen himself was a liberal and critic of Prussian autocracy and repression, and he shared these views with his good friend Humboldt. In their correspondence which upon publication received wide publicity both in Germany and the United States the critical issue of slavery was also addressed. When Otilie Assing reviewed the book in 1860, she characterized its reception in the United States: "Humboldt's open liberalism and his opinions on slavery and American democracy are reason enough to make conservatives and Democrats furious."<sup>26</sup>

Growing up as a young woman with liberal and feminist views, Otilie seems to have been especially sensitive to her uncle's patriarchal attitude and soon left his house when differences of opinion became too strong. She took up residence in Hamburg where, through the good offices of a friend, she began writing for the *Morgenblatt für gebildete Leser* (literal translation: "Morning paper for educated readers"). This assignment was to prove extremely important for her career in the United States. For the *Morgenblatt* was one of the highly respected journals in Germany, catering, as even its title suggested, to German intellectuals. It was published by the respected publishing house of Johann Friedrich Cotta who also owned the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, one of the leading liberal German newspapers. Time and again this paper had fallen under censorship because of its political views and forced Cotta to look for a more auspicious location where laws were less repressive. By the 1830s the *Allgemeine Zeitung* had become so well established in intellectual circles that subscription to it was a must. The weekly *Morgenblatt* contained the reports from abroad that were also printed in the *Allgemeine Zeitung*. Thus the two Cotta publications reached an important part of the German middle-class and intellectuals and had a tremendous impact among elites. In fact it is difficult to overestimate the influence especially of the *Allgemeine Zeitung*. Heinrich Heine, some of whose work was published in the paper, acknowledged that "it so truly deserves its worldwide renown as authoritative source that one could well call it the common newspaper of Europe."<sup>27</sup>

Assing therefore served an influential clientele after arriving in the United States in 1853, where she continued her assignment for both the journal and the paper. Initially she contributed only a few articles until she had settled down. She chose Hoboken across the Hudson River from New York as her place of residence and accepted a language teaching position. Hoboken at the time was the largest community of German liberals and radicals of various persuasion in North America including, for example, the educator and editor Adolf Douai who had published an abolitionist newspaper in San Antonio, Texas in the early 1850s until he had been forced to leave the city. Once Assing had become familiar with American conditions, she began to dominate the correspondence from the United States for the two publications so that her views became the standard interpretation at the height of the conflict over slavery and abolition from 1856 to 1865.<sup>28</sup> For her journalistic activities Assing was strategically placed. Already a fervent advocate of liberal causes and of feminism, she became a convinced abolitionist. She was introduced to leaders of the movement including Frederick Douglass with whom she developed a close friendship. There is now evidence that this friendship of the two like-minded persons lasted more

than twenty years, and that it evolved into a sexual relationship as well. For our purposes it is important to note the mutual intellectual impact they had on one another. Apparently Assing introduced Douglass to some of the liberal German authors and philosophers, whereas through Douglass she in turn gained first-hand knowledge of the abolitionist movement and its activities.<sup>29</sup>

Assing's reports were broad in scope.<sup>30</sup> After all she was commissioned to cover any matters in the United States of interest to curious intellectuals in Germany. Thus she presented a rich kaleidoscope of America's political, intellectual, social and cultural life.

All of the various topics that she took up paled, however, beside her tireless devotion to reform movements. The women's movement certainly received its considerable share in the pages of the *Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Morgenblatt*. Yet foremost in her mind and pen was the antislavery cause which informed her writing about national, state, and city politics, regional disputes, individual heroes and villains, and especially about black Americans both bound and free. The dominant *Leitmotif* of her reporting was that slavery and freedom were irreconcilable.<sup>31</sup>

Assing was morally outraged over the result of the presidential election of 1856, and with clear foresight she described it as the last time that the slavery party could display its arrogance of power on the national level.<sup>32</sup> To German readers she explained the two-thirds clause of the Constitution which gave the South the electoral majority. But she did not forget to elaborate that free blacks were kept from voting through property clauses in most northern and western states.<sup>33</sup>

In her reports Assing admirably conveyed her thorough grasp of the structural characteristics of the "slavocracy":<sup>34</sup> Its effects upon the national judicial system which was biased against blacks; the resulting lack of respect of whites for the rights of blacks; and the abomination of the fugitive slave law.<sup>35</sup> She accused the Southern states of using terror against antislavery advocates in their midst and of curtailing free speech by preventing published antislavery tracts from entering the South through the federal mail. At bottom lay the pervasive fear of slave insurrections surfacing in unjustified rumors of impending uprisings, like in Texas in the fall of 1860.<sup>36</sup>

In the years immediately preceding the Civil War, Assing perceived growing expansionist sentiment, as evidenced in William Walker's activities in 1857,<sup>37</sup> and she warned of efforts to revive the slave trade, pointing out that its legalization was discussed again in Southern circles, and that the practice had not been entirely abolished anyway, as the price of slaves had gone up and a fortune could be made through trading.

Various emigration plans for blacks proffered by advocates in the North to solve racial antagonism met with Assing's scorn, since slavery would not be abolished by such measures; quite to the contrary, the abolitionist movement would be weakened, since free and intelligent blacks who were the movement's main pillars would thereby be withdrawn; thus these plans served in reality the slaveholders' interest. Assing did not forget to mention that Frederick Douglass himself was opposed to colonization projects. In the case of Maryland, where discussion revolved around the question of making free blacks emigrate as well, she warned that these people were badly needed to do the necessary work in the fields and factories.<sup>38</sup>

The political scene that Assing observed so closely was peopled by heroes and villains. She made no secret of her sympathy for Charles Sumner, Wendell Phillips, Horace Greeley, Horace Mann, and John Frémont, all of whom she saw guided by highly idealistic and moral convictions that translated into acts of courage. With Abraham Lincoln, however, Assing had not much patience. She saw him as an opportunistic compromiser who hesitated much too long with his decision to emancipate the slaves. She blamed him for disavowing Frémont when he had issued his proclamation for Missouri and for showing leniency toward slaveowners.<sup>39</sup> Lincoln in her opinion showed poor judgment by not using emancipation as a weapon early in the war,<sup>40</sup> and when he finally acted, he did so out of military and political "expediency."<sup>41</sup> It was not primarily an "act of justice to negroes."<sup>42</sup>

By contrast, Frederick Douglass was for her the epitome of abolitionists, the "lion" of the movement whose intellect, rhetorical mastery, and fine stature completely enthralled her. After she had heard him speak for the first time, she described him in glowing terms. He was "one of the most talented speakers in the United States," carried by "fire and passion." Douglass showed a "complete command of his topic and admirable balance of judgment," and he expressed his "richness of thought" through a "masterly use of language." She concluded her report by reflecting: "Sad to contemplate what elevated position such a man should hold, if the color of his skin were lighter by some shades, whereas now he is being excluded by so-called society as a 'nigger' despite belonging to the aristocracy of the intellect."<sup>43</sup>

Ottolie Assing also devoted her attention to ordinary black people, changing the tone of reporting in the journal's pages by showing a great sensitivity for their plight and setting the record straight against pervasive stereotypes among whites. The contrast between the reports in the *Morgenblatt* at the time when she arrived in the United States and those she wrote herself is revealing. In 1853, for example, one of her predecessors wrote: "Poor darkies: free when in the future it will be agreeable to the whites... but they will never reach the power and influence which they dream of; they will always be a backward, oppressed people, the pariahs of society, because, with few exceptions, they lack the higher intelligence and the spiritual force of the white race."<sup>44</sup> Witness by contrast Assing's following description: "The favorable impression that I have had of colored people from the very beginning has been confirmed and has increased upon closer acquaintance. Although there is hardly a people that has been more oppressed, mistreated and kicked around, excluded from educational influences and forcibly kept ignorant, still there is so much display of natural manners and dignified politeness."

She also argued against stereotypical views of black people, like their alleged laziness, pointing out that slaves were "absolutely justified" to show "a so-called aversion to work" and to tend "to do everything in a superficial manner, since they see no reason whatsoever to exert their energy more than they need to, since this is only to their oppressors' advantage."<sup>45</sup> Where slaves had been emancipated, however, as in Beaufort in South Carolina, only "the most favorable news about their conduct"<sup>46</sup> were reported. They proved to be "industrious workers and faithful allies".<sup>47</sup> "They are very industrious, orderly and reliable."<sup>48</sup> Assing expressed the highest praise for the black soldiers who fought valiantly, like the heroic 54th Regiment that involved "one of the most spectacular armed incidents."<sup>49</sup> "The black regiments ... developed a degree of bravery and discipline which would do honor to the best army in the civilized world. This is not surprising at bottom, on the contrary, it seems only natural that those who formerly had to work

under the lash to the advantage of their enemies and oppressors, are now especially industrious when they can work for themselves as freedmen, and that those who now fight for their own and their families' freedom and future will make brave soldiers."<sup>50</sup>

When emancipation arrived in 1865, Assing declared the 31st of January "the greatest, most important day in this country's history since the Declaration of Independence." Only by shaking off forever "the curse of slavery" had the American people "finally entered the ranks of the civilized, enlightened nations of the world."<sup>51</sup> But her joy did not cloud her judgment of what lay ahead in the future. Repeating her conviction "that the abolition of slavery did not occur out of humanitarian considerations or for reasons of justice, but that it was solely an act of necessity forced upon the nation by conditions," she warned that "one must beware that the work of emancipation remain only fragmentary in the near future. The indifference toward the future of the freedmen and the remainder of the colored population of the Southern states and the aversion of the mass to grant them the civil rights so long withheld from them, are disquieting signs which point to the dark clouds at the horizon of our future. Abolition of slavery was the first step, but the great deed remains incomplete unless followed by other, equally necessary steps." But she still ended her critical evaluation on a more optimistic note, claiming that "there can be no doubt that we are approaching the great goal of total emancipation, the granting of equal citizenship to blacks... equal citizenship is the logic and necessary result of that first big step and despite all opposition it will sooner or later be the law of the land, because the spirit of this century, of civilization and progress demand it authoritatively, and because it is the prerequisite for this republic's greatness and permanence."<sup>52</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The above analysis of Humboldt's views and Assing's reports yields evidence that they shared a common philosophical tradition. Not only did they adhere to the same humanistic principles but they also nourished them in the same or similar circle of friends. In fact the personal linkages between Humboldt and Assing through their relationship to Varnhagen von Ense are noteworthy. The move from one side of the Atlantic to the other seems to have been relatively unproblematic, since a community of likeminded individuals with close ties did indeed exist on either side, as Humboldt had found out on his short visit to the United States almost fifty years before Otilie Assing set foot on American shores. And it is remarkable that Humboldt was able to influence American politics from Europe with opinions strikingly similar to those that Assing expressed in her correspondence from America that in turn had a considerable impact on intellectuals in Germany. These intellectuals were presented with a radical Republican perspective by a German compatriot who had had no difficulty identifying with such views upon her arrival in the United States, because they corresponded so closely with her European Enlightenment ideals. It would be a worthwhile task to find out if Assing's opinions as she conveyed them in her correspondence were in fact identical with those of Frederick Douglass so that German elites received a genuinely black abolitionist perspective as mediated by Otilie Assing's sympathetic reports.

The black abolitionist community in turn seems to have been considerably influenced by the circle of German-American liberals whom Douglass and black leaders met through Otilie Assing's contacts in that group. If this impression is correct, this would account for the favorable opinions that African Americans expressed about German immigrants. In his lecture on German

immigration in Rochester at the end of 1853 James McCune Smith gave a very favorable description of the character of German immigrants, describing them as hard working, intelligent, competent, and of higher skill levels than the average American population.<sup>53</sup> Frederick Douglass' views were even more positive. He noted the "many noble and high-minded men, most of whom, swept over by the tide of the revolution of 1848, have become our active allies against oppression and prejudice." And he overextended himself when he added: "A German has only to be a German to be utterly opposed to slavery. In feeling, as well as in conviction and principle, they are anti-slavery."<sup>54</sup> We know, of course, that this judgment was greatly exaggerated and biased but maybe not surprising, given the intimate collaboration between himself and Otilie Assing and hence his personal experience and contact with radical German immigrants.

The functioning intellectual network that I have tried to identify by concentrating my analysis on Humboldt and Assing informed parts of the enlightened public on both sides of the Atlantic and had important practical political consequences. Another level of analysis still needs to find out if and how this intellectual tradition translated into a pragmatic humanism in the daily lives and relationships of ordinary black Americans and German immigrants.

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<sup>1</sup> James O. Horton and Hartmut Keil, "African Americans and Germans in Mid-Nineteenth Century Buffalo," in *Free People of Color: Inside the African American Community*, James Oliver Horton (Washington and London, 1993), 170-183.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Robert R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760-1800*, Vol. 1: *The Challenge* (Princeton, 1959); Otto Vossler, *Die amerikanischen Revolutionsideale in ihrem Verhältnis zu den europäischen untersucht an Thomas Jefferson* (München und Berlin, 1929).

<sup>3</sup> For a general introduction to the literature, cf. Hildegard Meyer, *Nordamerika im Urteil des deutschen Schrifttums bis zur Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts. Eine Untersuchung über Kürnbergers "Amerika-Müden". Mit einer Bibliographie* (Hamburg, 1929); and Paul C. Weber, *America in Imaginative German Literature in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1929). Also Rolf Engelsing, "Deutschland und die Vereinigten Staaten im 19. Jahrhundert. Eine Periodisierung," in *Die Welt als Geschichte* 18 (Stuttgart, 1958), 139; and Günter Moltmann, *Atlantische Blockpolitik im 19. Jahrhundert. Die Vereinigten Staaten und der deutsche Liberalismus während der Revolution von 1848-49* (Düsseldorf, 1973), 39.

<sup>4</sup> Ernst Fraenkel, ed. *Amerika im Spiegel des deutschen politischen Denkens. Äußerungen deutscher Staatsmänner und Staatsdenker über Staat und Gesellschaft in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika* (Köln/Opladen, 1959), 20; Meyer, *Nord-Amerika*, 10; Engelsing, "Deutschland und die Vereinigte Staaten," 141.

<sup>5</sup> The term was used by historian Friedrich von Raumer; it is quoted in Meyer, *Nord-Amerika*, 44.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Eckhart G. Franz, *Das Amerikabild der deutschen Revolution von 1848/49. Zum Problem der Übertragung gewachsener Verfassungsformen* (Heidelberg, 1958), 105.

<sup>7</sup> "Erster Bericht der demokratischen Partei der deutschen constituirenden National-Versammlung vom 1. August 1848," quoted in Franz, *Amerikabild*, 106.

<sup>8</sup> Thus, according to Rudolph Cronau, Gottfried's Dudens *Bericht über eine Reise nach den westlichen Staaten Nordamerikas und einem mehrjährigen Aufenthalt am Missouri (1824-1827)*, published in 1829, triggered an emigration fever; and Gustav Koerner, in his refutation *Beleuchtung des Dudenschen Berichtes über die westlichen Staaten*, published five years later, observed: "In many families it was read day by day on the eve embarking for the New World, and became an authoritative source for their information;" cf. Weber, *America*, 115-119; the quotation is from Weber, 117; cf. also Meyer, *Nord-Amerika*, 23f.

<sup>9</sup> "I believe it was in New York where a Protestant preacher was so outraged about the way the black people were being mistreated that he married his own daughter to a free Negro to spite the horrible prejudice. As soon as this true Christian deed became publicly known, the people stormed the preacher's house, and only by fleeing was he able to escape death; but his house was demolished, and the preacher's daughter, the hapless victim, was taken by the mob and forced to suffer the fury. She was ... stripped stark naked, painted with tar, rolled around in the feathers of a mattress which had been torn open for the occasion, and, thus tarred and feathered, was dragged through the town and ridiculed." Heinrich Heine, *Ludwig Börne. Eine Denkschrift*, in *Heinrich Heine. Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke*, ed. Manfred Windfuhr, 11 (Hamburg, 1978), 37-38; quoted in: *German Workers in Chicago. A Documentary History of Working-Class Culture from 1850 to World War I*, eds. Hartmut Keil and John B. Jentz (Urbana and Chicago, 1988), 349.

<sup>10</sup> Publications related to this issue are Helmut de Terra, "Studies of the Documentation of Alexander von Humboldt," in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 102 No. 2 (April 1958): 136-141; 102 No. 6 (December 1958): pp. 560-589; Helmut de Terra, "Alexander von Humboldt's Correspondence with Jefferson, Madison, and Gallatin," in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 103 No. 6 (December 1959): 783-806; Helmut de Terra, *Humboldt; the Life and Times of Alexander von Humboldt, 1769-1859* (New York, 1955); Richard Henry Stoddard, *The Life Travels and Books of Alexander von Humboldt*, with an introduction by Bayard Taylor (New York, 1854). I am especially indebted to *Alexander von Humboldt on Slavery in the United States*, ed., with intr. and notes Philip S. Foner (Berlin, [1981]).

<sup>11</sup> He spent three months in Cuba for the first time from December 1800 to March 1801, cf. De Terra, "Studies," 566.

<sup>12</sup> The correspondence is reprinted in De Terra, "Studies," 562-564; De Terra, "Alexander von Humboldt's Correspondence."

<sup>13</sup> Stoddard, 430-482.

<sup>14</sup> De Terra, "Studies," 572f.

<sup>15</sup> Letter to Humboldt, 23 December 1843.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Foner, *Alexander von Humboldt*, 19 and 51.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Foner, *Alexander von Humboldt*, 20.

<sup>18</sup> Alexander von Humboldt, *Kosmos*, Vol. 1 (Stuttgart and Tübingen, 1845), 385.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Foner, *Alexander von Humboldt*, 23.

<sup>20</sup> 24 March 1855; the above quote is taken from the German-language *Louisiana Staats-Zeitung*, 17 May 1855; translation by H.K.

<sup>21</sup> *New York Tribune*, 15 July 1856, quoted in Foner, *Alexander von Humboldt*, 22.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Foner, *Alexander von Humboldt*, 21f.

<sup>23</sup> Letter to Varnhagen, 21 Nov. 1856, *Briefe von Alexander von Humboldt an Varnhagen von Ense, 1827-1858* (Leipzig, 1860), 332.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Foner, *Alexander von Humboldt*, 23f.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Tamara Felden, "Frauen Reisen: Zur literarischen Repräsentation weiblicher Geschlechterrollenerfahrung im 19. Jahrhundert," Ph. dissertation, University of Alabama 1991; T.H. Pickett, "The Friendship of Frederick Douglass with the German, Otilie Assing," in *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* LXXIII No. 1 (Spring 1989): 87-105; T.H. Pickett, "Perspectives on a National Crisis: A German Correspondent Reports on America, 1853-1865," in *Tamkang Journal of American Studies* IV No. 3 (Spring 1988): 6-15; William S. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York, 1991), 183-186.

<sup>26</sup> *Morgenblatt für gebildete Leser*, 24 June 1860, 619. This and all following translations from the *Morgenblatt* by H.K.

<sup>27</sup> Heinrich Heine, *Werke und Briefe* 4, ed. Hans Kaufmann (Belin, 1961), 368, quoted in "Introduction" to *Reports from America in German Newspapers, 1828 to 1865*, ed. and transl. Maria Wagner (Stuttgart, 1985), X.

<sup>28</sup> Thus in 1854 only six of sixteen reports on the United States were written by Assing; by 1857 and 1858 twenty-four of twenty-eight articles were Assing's, and in 1859 and 1860 all but one were written by her.

<sup>29</sup> Thus she wrote a report on the Harper's Ferry raid that was full of inside information that she could only have received through Douglass and his associates, cf. Tamara Felden, 235f.

<sup>30</sup> The following analysis is based on all of her more than 130 reports in the *Morgenblatt*. General summaries are not explicitly documented here for reason of space. Cf. however Felden's (almost complete) list of Assing's reports, 251-265.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *Morgenblatt*, 4 June 1861; 3 July 1861; 10 September 1861.

<sup>32</sup> *Morgenblatt*, 1 April 1857, 22.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Morgenblatt*, 25 November 1869, 1149.

<sup>35</sup> *Morgenblatt*, 29 November 1857; 11 July 1858; 24 January 1858.

<sup>36</sup> *Morgenblatt*, 26 February 1860; 27 May 1860; 3 April 1860; 25 November 1860.

<sup>37</sup> *Morgenblatt*, 9 August 1857.

<sup>38</sup> 30 January 1859; 28 August 1859.

<sup>39</sup> *Morgenblatt*, 3 July 1861.

<sup>40</sup> *Morgenblatt*, 26 November 1861.

<sup>41</sup> *Morgenblatt*, 19 November 1862.

<sup>42</sup> *Morgenblatt*, 11 March 1865.

<sup>43</sup> *Morgenblatt*, 19 and 26 July 1857.

<sup>44</sup> *Morgenblatt*, 26 June 1853.

<sup>45</sup> *Morgenblatt*, 1 August 1858, 739.

<sup>46</sup> *Morgenblatt*, 2 April 1863, 334.

<sup>47</sup> *Morgenblatt*, 12 February 1862, 164.

<sup>48</sup> *Morgenblatt*, 2 April 1863.

<sup>49</sup> *Morgenblatt*, 24 December 1863, 1241.

<sup>50</sup> *Morgenblatt*, 2 April 1863, 334.

<sup>51</sup> *Morgenblatt*, 9 April 1865, 365.

<sup>52</sup> *Morgenblatt*, 24 September 1865, 930f.

<sup>53</sup> Reported in the *Tägliche Deutsche Zeitung*, New Orleans, 1 Jan. 1854. This lecture was later published: "The German Invasion," *Anglo-African Magazine* I (February 1859).

<sup>54</sup> "Adopted Citizens and Slavery," in *Douglass' Monthly* (August 1859).