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## The Science of Freedom: Counterarchives of Racial Science on the Antebellum Stage

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The history of American racial science shares an important genealogy with the history of performance. Throughout the antebellum period, the popular stage doubled as a scientific laboratory, where theories of race were produced and disseminated to a mass audience. Race science was not an academic or state science, nor was it monolithic. It was, rather, a popular and diverse field of inquiry, composed of investigations in a number of different fields, including craniology, ethnology, physiology, mesmerism, and phrenology. Indeed, the cultural power of racial science derived not from its status as a hegemonic or institutional science, but from its widespread popularization through print and performance.<sup>1</sup> For example, Samuel George Morton's 1839 *Crania Americana*, routinely cited as a central text in the history of scientific racism, was a huge and expensive book: Morton struggled to secure subscriptions for the volume and eventually resigned himself to distributing complimentary copies to friends, colleagues and various learned societies.<sup>2</sup> Despite the limited circulation of Morton's original text, his theories—and skulls—were widely disseminated through more popular forums throughout the 1840s and after Morton's death in 1851. The public could view Morton's skull collection at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, and the craniologist's friends and allies presented his work in print and on stage, most notably in George Gliddon and Josiah Nott's 1854 publication *Types of Mankind*, and through Gliddon's wildly popular mummy lectures, in which the ethnologist-adventurer would showcase skulls, offer theories on the polygenic origins of the races and the Caucasian roots of Egyptian civilization, and unwrap mummies ransacked from Egyptian tombs before a public audience.

Indeed, American race scientists often doubled as scientific showmen, traveling with ethnological charts, human skulls, and other comparative specimens in tow. Other nineteenth-century entertainments, from the minstrel show to the freak show, contributed to the popular dissemination of racial science through the representation of black and other nonwhite peoples as evolutionarily degenerate and inferior beings. Operating in the same cultural milieu, and in many cases, on the same performance circuits as race scientists, quack doctors, and scientific showmen with questionable credentials, black performers and lecturers regularly forged creative responses to the popular performance of antebellum race science. In fact, scientists often had to compete for audiences with abolitionist lectures and various forms of black performance. This essay rethinks the history of racial science through the lens of performance, chronicling how African American performers and lecturers rejected racial science's attempts to categorize and fix their bodies through a counterarchive of black performance. It also begins the work of retrieving an important history that has been too little recognized: the history of exchange between the abolitionist and scientific lecture circuits in both the United States and Britain.

Because of the ephemeral nature of performance as well as the invisibility of African American science before the Civil War, this essay takes a necessarily creative approach to the archive. Following the bold leaps and experimental engagements with history that characterize the field of performance studies, this essay stitches together a genealogy of early black performances and lectures from what is a partial and elusive history. Following a paper trail of ticket stubs, pamphlets, newspaper

articles, announcements, broadsides, and other ephemera, I chronicle how Henry “Box” Brown, Frederick Douglass, and some lesser-known figures, countered the widespread circulation of racist science in popular entertainment and print culture through dynamic performances of what I call fugitive science. Far from rejecting science as a whole, these figures sought to link “scientific revolution” to race revolution by incorporating phrenology, mesmerism, physiology, and other fields of popular science into their acts and lectures. Furthermore, African American interlocutors exploited the thoroughly transatlantic dimensions of popular science to forge alliances with subjugated groups outside the United States, including the British working class.

Fugitive science names a dynamic genealogy of black critiques of, engagements with, and responses to antebellum racial science. Under this umbrella I include a wide variety of practices and actors: professional and nonprofessional scientists, enthusiastic amateurs, eccentric experimenters, performers, popular lecturers, and wayward dabblers in a number of fields. Fugitive science simultaneously illuminates a subterranean history of experiments and practices that mobilized popular science for the struggle against slavery as well as for more fleeting acts of resistance. Excluded from the ranks of professional science, the popular stage became a key space upon which African Americans challenged the ascendancy of racial science, while enacting a fugitive science—a furtive science and praxis—that suggested ways that a wide array of popular sciences might be linked to emancipation struggles. This essay also considers what may be gained by thinking about race and science through performativity. Approaching science as a performative domain not only helps to excavate the various ways in which racial science constructed and hailed populations of color, but also illuminates the dynamic fugitive sciences that have shaped African American print and performance cultures since the eighteenth century.

## Performing Science, Performing Race

As a long historiography on the rise of American race science has detailed, the late eighteenth-century shift from natural history to comparative anatomy had a dramatic impact on the study of human difference, helping to usher in increasingly biological theories of race in the antebellum period, theories rooted in the physiology and morphology of the body.<sup>3</sup> Natural history was a science of surfaces and skin, driven by the belief that racial differences were produced by varying climatic conditions in different geographies. Comparative anatomy went deeper, seeking to locate human differences and inequalities in the internal structures of the body. In *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault argues that the nineteenth century witnessed the creation of depth in the natural sciences, which moved from taxonomic systems of natural history that sought to make animal and vegetable species wholly visible to the human eye to a comparative anatomy that increasingly understood living beings to be composed of “dark, hidden, and interior forces” (268). In other words, Foucault marks the transition between the ages of natural history and comparative anatomy as a transition from regimes of visibility to invisibility.

Since both were invested in making the invisible visible, comparative anatomy found a convenient ally in the theater and other forms of popular spectacle. Mass entertainments regularly played upon the drama of appearance (including stage tricks and magic performances that made objects appear and disappear), and shows, especially the freak show and the minstrel show, were staging grounds for exhibiting human difference and making the supposedly deep and essential differences of African American bodies hypervisible on the antebellum stage. Jayna Brown notes

that nineteenth-century racial theories were themselves popular theories and “from their inception, decidedly spectacular” (77):

Racial theories circulated regularly in the popular press through a visual language of photographs and etchings. Lectures were a common form of delivery, but they were only part of the performance. Embodiments and bodily differences were enacted through particularly grisly and carnal stagings. Body parts were dissected in hospital theaters; live specimens, skeletons, and preserved organs were displayed at fairs, museums, and zoos. (77)<sup>4</sup>

On the antebellum stage, the line between science and entertainment was constantly blurred: curious audiences may have gone to public dissections and other morbid displays of human difference in order to gain knowledge, but they were also clearly drawn to these exhibitions for their entertainment and shock value.<sup>5</sup>

Theories of racial science were also thoroughly transatlantic. While scientific theories of black inferiority and degeneration conveniently contributed to proslavery arguments in the South, antebellum race science was by no means a Southern science. Rather, scientific knowledges about the black body were produced and circulated through channels of expertise, collaboration, and exchange that flowed between the North and the South, especially between the scientific metropolises of Philadelphia and Charleston. These North-South exchanges were embedded in a larger transatlantic network, which linked Philadelphia, Charleston, Boston, and even Mobile, Alabama to the major scientific metropolises in Britain: Edinburgh and London. Even a brief glance at the nationalities of major figures associated with nineteenth-century race science challenge the idea that racial science was a regional, provincial science. Louis Agassiz, the famed Harvard zoologist and convert to polygenesis, was a Swiss immigrant who came to the U. S. by way of France, and George Gliddon, Samuel George Morton’s collaborator and popular advocate of craniology, was born in Devonshire, England and raised in Egypt, where his father was United States consul. Antebellum race scientists drew from writings on comparative anatomy in French, British, and German contexts, and also traveled outside of the United States in order to flesh out their necessarily global theories of the descent of the races, Agassiz going to Brazil in the mid-1860s to compile data about black and indigenous populations there, and Morton’s friends and followers ransacking the American West, Latin America, and Egypt for skulls that would help support craniology’s hierarchal schema of the races. In addition to spreading through intellectual currents and physical movements of scientists across national spaces, racial science was also transatlantic because of its entrenchment in popular science and mass-entertainment lecture circuits that crisscrossed the U. S. and the UK. Theories of racial descent and evolution regularly made their way onto the transatlantic stage, both in scientific lectures and in various forms of mass entertainment, including popular theater, the circus, zoological exhibitions, minstrel shows, and the freak show.

Rather than understanding the transatlantic stage as a venue where racial science was simply represented (re-presented) to a mass audience and recycled into various popular entertainments, we might approach it as a kind of public laboratory, a vital space of experimentation where alternative theories of race were not only disseminated, but also produced and negotiated through performance. Indeed, the antebellum stage served as an important site for the production of experimental knowledge in a number of different fields, including phrenology, magnetism, astronomy, physiology and anatomy.

Drawing from, and contributing to the midcentury rise of popular anatomy, which made scientific and medical knowledge about the human body increasingly accessible to working- and middle-class people, the fields of anatomy and physiology were especially prominent on lecture and entertainment circuits. Michael Sappol traces the rise of popular anatomy in the early nineteenth century, and illuminates the various public spaces where anatomical knowledge was produced and exchanged

between professional anatomists and the American public: traveling surgeons and anatomists offered lectures to the public, audiences paid to witness public dissections, autopsies were routinely performed with members of the community in attendance, and doctors' published reports of postmortem dissections of criminals contributed to and extended the spectacle of criminal execution.<sup>6</sup> The theater of dissection was also an important part of medical education and professionalization, as medical students listened to anatomy lectures and observed dissections in large theaters that were commonly attached to medical colleges. Sappol shows that as early as the 1760s,

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the anatomical theater was already blurring the boundaries between professional science and public entertainment: "William Shippen, Jr. caused the first North American anatomical theater to be constructed in Philadelphia, for the instruction of his medical students, but his theater was also used to stage a dissection of Siamese twins for a public, ticket-buying audience" (91). Anatomical museums were also established in a number of major American cities throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. These museums walked a thin line between providing useful information about anatomy to working- and middle-class visitors, and serving as sensational exhibitions of freaks, oddities and curiosities. P. T. Barnum's famous American Museum on Broadway in New York, which featured human and nonhuman "oddities," wonders from the natural world, lectures, and performances, including minstrel shows, was an anatomical museum before Barnum purchased it in the early 1840s.<sup>7</sup> By the 1850s, it became increasingly difficult to disentangle professional anatomy from both popular anatomy and the nineteenth-century sideshow that Barnum made famous.

Freak shows and minstrel shows were also kinds of anatomical theaters. The theatrical display and spectacularization of black and blackfaced bodies was in part about locating blackness in the exceptional morphology and peculiar movements of racialized bodies. Paralleling the methods of comparative anatomists, freak shows and minstrel shows constructed a normative body ideal through the delineation of a series of abnormal types.<sup>8</sup> Showmen, anatomists, and white minstrel performers all worked hard to make the supposed "internal essence" of racial difference visible in the display and manipulation of animated bodies (both alive and deceased) onstage. The methodological alliances between comparative anatomy, minstrelsy and the freak show were solidified in 1836, when P. T. Barnum famously organized a public autopsy of Joice Heth, the supposed 161-year-old nurse of George Washington. Barnum contracted the respected New York surgeon David Rogers to perform the dissection in the amphitheater of the City Saloon, which sat next to Barnum's American Museum on Broadway. He sold admission tickets at fifty cents a head.<sup>9</sup> Before her death, Heth had been exhibited as a curiosity under the possession of R. W. Lindsay, and was sold to Barnum in 1835. Barnum transformed Lindsay's failing exhibit into a national sensation: he exhibited Heth, the "the most astonishing and interesting curiosity in the World" ("Great Attraction"), throughout the country, proved himself to be a masterful promoter, and used the success of the tour to kick start his career and entrance into the annals of American celebrity. While Heth's public autopsy still has the power to shock, it was surely an unsurprising development for antebellum audiences. Advertised as a "living skeleton" ("Great Attraction") and compared to the mummies that were beginning to circulate in the U. S. as part of the American obsession with Egypt, Heth was treated as if she were a postmortem

subject during her entire tenure with Barnum. When exhibited, spectators were encouraged to “play doctor” by meticulously surveying and studying her body to verify her old age. These scenes eerily echoed the slave auction block, where potential purchasers determined the “soundness” of enslaved bodies by conducting invasive, pseudomedical exams on the spot.<sup>10</sup> News reporters also visited Heth in order to verify her age and to provide readers with anatomical surveys of her body that were both extensively detailed, and at times, disturbingly grotesque. For example, the *New York Sun* reported, “From the length of her limbs and the size of the bones, it is probable that she was a large, stout woman, in her day; but now, she comes up exactly to one’s idea of an animated mummy. . . . [H]er feet have shrunk to mere skin and bone, and her long attenuated fingers more resemble the claws of a bird of prey than human appendages” (qtd. in *Life of Joice Heth* 10).<sup>11</sup> As these extensive anatomizations in print, in person, and onstage suggest, Heth’s body was regularly “dissected” by the penetrating clinical gaze of doctors, journalists, and a morbidly curious American public even before her death in 1836.

Despite such attempts at ocular mastery, the act of visually locating race in the body was a slippery and frustrating task.<sup>12</sup> We might wonder: at that final, gruesome exhibition, did spectators confirm the physiological difference and inferiority of black people by witnessing the brutal dismemberment of Heth’s body, or did the horrifying scene remind audience members of their shared mortality and similarity to the body before them? From minstrel shows to abolitionist lectures, talks on racial science, and public autopsies, as well as public executions of people of color, performances of racial difference were likely to raise more questions than they answered.

Black performers regularly trafficked in—and worked to emphasize—the ambiguity of race on stage, while resisting the public spectacularization and visual consumption of their bodies. When black musicians, dancers, lecturers, and other performers stepped onstage, they occupied a space that was routinely used to visually assess the physiological capabilities and limits of blackness through both “legitimate” performances of race science and various nonscientific dissections of black character and anatomy in popular entertainments, particularly on the minstrel stage. The practices of determining soundness and physiological fitness on the slave auction block also haunted public spaces of black performance. Daphne Brooks conceives of performative acts of veiling the body in the terms of the production of “spectacular opacities,” opaque performances that “confound and disrupt conventional constructions of the racialized and gendered bodies” while shrouding the body from the “imposition of transparency” produced through spectacularization:

[T]his cultural phenomenon [of spectacular opacity] emerges at varying times as a product of the performer’s will, at other times as a visual obstacle erupting as a result of the hostile spectator’s epistemological resistance to reading alternative racial and gender representations. From either standpoint, spectacular opacities contest the ‘dominative imposition of transparency’ systematically willed on to black figures. (8)

The contestation of imposed transparency through spectacular, yet opaque performances of and with the body simultaneously challenged racial science’s attempts to externalize and fix blackness within the evolutionary hierarchy of the races through the public exhibition of racialized bodies. Where racial science made bodies hyper-visible onstage, in visual images and in print, black performers challenged this regime of forced visibility, refusing racial science’s attempts to make race fully transparent—and knowable—through the display of black bodies. Spectacular opacity was a particularly important tool for black women, who were subjected to harsher regimes of forced visibility and exploitation on transatlantic stages. As the notorious case of Saartjie Baartman’s public exhibition and scientific exploitation even after her death signals, black women’s bodies were often used to prove the inferiority and pathologies of the entire race, male and female.<sup>13</sup>

Despite attempts to fix racialized and gendered bodies on stage—and more specifically, to fix race through the display of gender—race remained a wildly floating signifier across multiple and adjacent performance spaces. Black performers took advantage of the undecidability and ambiguity of race in antebellum performance cultures in order to produce alternative theories of race. Unhinging blackness from the “truth” of the body, they uncoupled race from an impoverished concept of the biological body. Both explicitly and implicitly, early black performance responded to emergent regimes of racist science linked to comparative anatomy through what Brooks calls “spectacular performances” of freedom. Rejecting the idea that the body could serve as a scientific proof that revealed an invisible and essential truth about race, these figures used their bodies as “instrument[s] of ontological deception” (Brooks 162). Unhinging blackness from the supposed truth of the body while challenging race science’s restrictive conception of the body as a mere prison or container, these figures transformed the body into a powerful site of liberation and transformation.

Early black performers loosed the body from the ossifying grip of antebellum racial science, while suggesting other meanings and purposes for their persons. While comparative anatomy sought to racialize the interiors and exteriors of bodies, situating racial difference not only on the skin, but also in internal structures and organs, the restive, flitting movements of early black performers continually rejected the interiorization of race by putting blackness on the move. Indeed, with its focus on the gestural and the ephemeral, there may be something radically antiessentialist about all genealogies of performance, even those that seek to naturalize race as biological.<sup>14</sup> Black performers, including dancers, lecturers, and actors, regularly opposed the popular science and performance of black morbidity by staging multiple fugitive sciences. Fugitive science here signifies both the robust counterarchives of science performed by African Americans onstage, as well as a wider repertoire of gestures, movements, and practices that challenged racial science’s attempts to make their bodies signify the essential truth of race.

## Opening the Black Box

While scientific lectures, minstrel shows, freak shows and a host of other popular performance genres attempted to fix the bodies of African Americans and other nonwhite peoples into static taxonomies, the complex choreographies of antebellum black performance on adjacent stages continually evaded such efforts. Some black performers and lecturers took an even more direct approach to emerging regimes of racist science, incorporating a wide array of popular sciences into their lectures, shows, and acts. Paradoxically, these figures drew inspiration from the wide diffusion of popular science in mass entertainment venues, including the problematic stagings of racial science. On the antebellum stage, fugitive science both drew from and exceeded the science of race.

Henry “Box” Brown is one figure who keenly understood the power and appeal of popular science, and sought to use it for his own ends. In her definitive analysis, Brooks argues that Brown used theater, performance, visual art and visual technology to disassemble dominant narratives of the black body and confining spectacles of slavery. Focusing on the transatlantic staging of his moving panorama, the *Mirror of Slavery*, Brooks shows how Brown manipulated “the corporeal to produce a renegade form of escape artistry” (11), an ongoing performance of freedom that “transcended the discursive restrictions of the slave narrative and redirected the uses of the transatlantic body toward politically insurgent ends” (68). Brooks brilliantly re-figures

Brown as a kind of antebellum performance artist who boldly worked in and across multiple kinds of media, “leaping” from “one art form into the next in his quest for emancipation” (69). Here, I would like to extend Brooks’s presentation of Brown as a renegade multimedia performance and escape artist by focusing on his particularly artful appropriations of popular science. In Brown’s hands, popular science was transformed into yet another tool and medium for emancipation. Rather than dismissing science as an always ideological, racist formation, Brown understood popular science to be an assemblage of different fields and practices that could be dismantled, reassembled and redirected toward the performance (art) of emancipation.

Brown became a celebrity, first in the U. S., and later in Britain, for his sensational, nearly unbelievable escape from slavery: on March 23, 1849, Brown mailed himself to freedom by traveling from Richmond to Philadelphia in a wooden box sent through the U. S. postal service. Brown’s fantastical tale of escape quickly captured the popular imaginary: Brown soon began his career onstage by speaking about and then replicating his dramatic escape on the abolitionist lecture circuit. In addition to delivering his personal testimony, Brown would jump out from inside the box used in his escape and then delight audiences with a rousing song. Brown’s story reached an even wider audience with the 1849 publication of his *Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown*, in which Brown’s story was heavily mediated—and “boxed” in—by his white amanuensis-editor, Charles Stearns. Stearns was a fiery evangelist, an archetypal figure of the Second Great Awakening, who used Brown’s narrative as an opportunity to link the struggle against slavery to the politics of millenarianism while advocating that the Union should be overthrown and replaced by a Christian government. Brown, who likely felt confined by the heavy editorial control of his life’s narrative by both Stearns and the American Anti-Slavery Society, soon split from mainstream abolitionism.<sup>15</sup> He began to organize various lectures and performances autonomously, in collaboration with James C. A. Smith, who helped organize Brown’s initial escape in Richmond. While science was not a key aspect of these early performances, Brown quickly found himself in direct competition with racial scientists and proponents of polygenesis on the antebellum lecture circuit. For example, Brown’s panorama circulated in Boston at the same time as George Gliddon’s own panorama on the hierarchy of the races of man, *Egyptian Collection and Grand Moving Transparent Panorama of the Nile*. As mentioned earlier, Gliddon would go on to coauthor *Types of Mankind* with Josiah Nott in 1854, a notorious and extremely popular text on polygenesis that was widely cited by proslavery advocates.

Looking to escape an increasingly hostile and dangerous environment in the U. S. following the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850, Brown took his act to England, where he turned to British popular science in order to transform his lectures into highly experimental and hybrid performances. Combining a performative, “Africanist” mysticism with the mysticism of mesmerism and other popular sciences, Brown dramatized his distance from the various abolitionist scripts that had limited him in the United States. In addition to increasing his autonomy and distancing himself from the liberal wing of mainstream abolitionism, where abolition meant reform, not revolution, popular science—which bore closer connections to labor and the working-class in Britain than in the U. S.—allowed Brown to forge alliances with the British proletariat, especially among workers in the cotton mills. After less than a full year touring in the U. S., Brown would go on to spend the next thirty-five touring the UK. Unleashed from the abolitionist framing of his body and editing of his narrative, what John Sekora helpfully refers to as the “white envelope” of the antebellum slave narrative, Brown obtained increasing creative control over his performances across the ocean. He also regained narrative control over his own story in print, republishing his narrative in Manchester in 1851. While the 1849 Boston edition downplayed Brown’s authorial control, the title page maintaining that the narrative consisted simply of a “statement of facts” dictated to an editor who fashioned



them into artful prose, the 1851 title insisted that the narrative was fully “Written by Himself.” During his tenure in Britain, Brown would become increasingly performative in declaring his independence and increasingly experimental in incorporating different media and content into his acts. While his narrative may have emphasized the power of “self-possession,” Brown’s performances simultaneously pointed to the limits of the discourse of self-possession. While slave narratives helped to establish the autonomy and personhood of formerly enslaved authors, early black performance routinely pushed self-possession to its limits, hailing a larger collectivity through dynamic, ecstatic performances that challenged liberal concepts of possessive individualism.<sup>16</sup>

Throughout the 1840s and ’50s, many former slaves and freemen and women visited and toured Great Britain. Their purposes were diverse: in addition to fugitive slaves traveling to Britain in order to avoid re-capture by former owners, travels that became more common after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850, others came to England in order to lecture on antislavery topics, to fundraise for black churches, schools and political organizations, and to help build international opinion against institutions of enslavement in the U. S.<sup>17</sup> The European travels of Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, and William and Ellen Craft, for example, occurred under the auspices of the American Anti-Slavery Society (AAAS), and their visits were intended to help strengthen networks of transatlantic abolitionism between the AAAS and the mainstream wing of British abolition.<sup>18</sup> However, other former slaves and freemen and women used their travels in the UK to forge transatlantic connections, not through the networks of the upper-class reform movement for abolition, but rather through the British labor movement. These figures also worked, more generally, to build solidarity among British factory workers who, like enslaved people in the U. S., were engaged in highly exploitative forms of unfree labor under industrial capital.<sup>19</sup>

Henry “Box” Brown’s travels were distinctive because of his lack of affiliation with any abolitionist or reform organization during his visit, and for the frequency with which he toured the rural regions of England and Scotland, where he routinely performed for factory laborers. In addition to touring with a number of different panoramas, including the *Mirror of Slavery*, a panorama of the Indian Mutiny of 1857, and one on the Civil War, Brown lectured, sang plantation melodies, and even performed a dramatic restaging of his 1849 escape, shipping himself in a box from Bradford to Leeds. He was hugely popular in the factory districts of rural England and worker’s guilds, and mechanics’ institutes often invited him to return for repeat performances. Low-paid, exploited factory and mill workers clearly saw their own exploitation reflected and amplified in the figure of a former slave from the American South; moreover, many of these workers were materially linked to American slaves through the thread of cotton itself, from cotton fields in the U. S. South to textile factories in the UK. Brown’s tour in the factory districts made a clear impact on those who saw his performances. In the 1887 autobiography of Samuel Fielden, a prominent socialist-turned-anarchist and immigrant from England who was involved with the 1886 Haymarket Riot and convicted for his involvement, Fielden recalled seeing Brown’s mesmerizing performances when he was a child laborer working in a cotton mill in Todmorton, Lancashire:

For some years before this time of which I now write there had appeared in my native town at different times, several colored lecturers who spoke on the slavery question in America. I went frequently to hear them describe the inhumanity of that horrible system, sometimes with my father, and at other times with my sister. One of these gentlemen called himself Henry Box Brown; the gentleman brought with him a panorama, by means of which he described places and incidents in his slave life, and also the means of his escape. . . . He claimed that he had been boxed up in a large box in which were stowed an amount of provisions, the box having holes bored in the top for air, and marked, ‘this side up with care.’ Thus he was shipped to Philadelphia via the underground railroad, to friends there, and this was

why he called himself Henry Box Brown. He was a very good speaker and his entertainment was very interesting. (142)

Fielden notes, “[t]hese lectures [by Brown and other ‘colored lecturers’] had a very great effect on my mind, and I could hardly divest myself of their impressions, and I used to frequently find myself among my playmates dilating much upon the horrors of slavery” (142). This powerful childhood scene, in which Fielden recalls being unable to “divest” himself of the impressions made by Brown and other fugitive lecturers, gives a clear sense of the significant impact Brown had on proletarian audiences in the factory districts. Fielden also singles out Brown’s performance as a formative moment in his own journey to becoming a transatlantic revolutionary.

It appears that Brown’s flashy Orientalist-Africanist costume and flare for the dramatic made his visit to Todmorton a particularly memorable one. Fielden recalls, “He used to march through the streets in front of a brass band, clad in a highly-colored and fantastic garb, with an immense drawn sword in his hand” (142). After ending his professional partnership with James C. A. Smith in the early 1850s, Brown’s act became increasingly spectacular and eccentric: it began to look less like a typical antislavery performance and more like other mass entertainments populating the British circuit. Dressed in a turban, brightly colored clothing dripping with jewelry, and brandishing a sword, Brown transformed himself into Henry “Box” Brown, the “African Prince” (qtd in Ruggles 151).<sup>20</sup> In yet another transformation, Brown began to incorporate experiments in mesmerism, animal magnetism, and biology into his Africanist-inflected stage performances. The “African Prince” was soon being billed as the “African biologist.”<sup>21</sup> As Fielden’s account suggests, Brown’s unique self-stylization as an “African biologist” made him extremely popular among his working-class audiences. Rather than allying himself with the bourgeois movement of mainstream abolitionism, as some other African American visitors did during their travels, Brown cast his lot with the industrial workers of Britain, performing and working among them for three decades before returning to the United States. Given the extreme popularity of staged science in Great Britain during the period, in both the urban metropolises and rural districts of England and Scotland, Brown’s turn to science made his act both recognizable and appealing to British audiences. Popular science also suggested a new politics and new political affiliations.

While popular science flourished in both the United States and Britain in the 1850s, its politics diverged greatly. In the U. S., popular science was closely linked with mass spectacle and commodification and it helped to solidify the congealing divisions between the working class and the bourgeoisie. Popular spectacle, commodity culture, and popular science were also wedded in the UK, but movements also existed that sought to use the popularization of science to forge a genuine working-class science. Iwan Rhys Morus has detailed the establishment of galleries of practical science in London, where “those barred from entry into elite social institutions could witness, and even participate in, the productions of experiment” (70). Working people were encouraged to visit exhibitions and listen to lectures for education and elevation. Mechanics’ institutes fostered the production of both artisanal and scientific knowledge and sought to link these to workers’ struggles and efforts to organize.<sup>22</sup> Brown was routinely invited to perform by workers’ institutes and organizations. He was so popular that these groups frequently made requests for repeat visits. Ultimately, Brown’s eccentric and wildly popular experiments with an Africanist, supernaturally inflected popular science onstage helped to link the plight of African Americans to a radical abolitionism: a shared alliance forged not between former slaves and upper-class British abolitionists, but between black Americans and the British proletariat. In addition to emphasizing the solidarity between British industrial laborers and slaves of the American South, Brown’s performances meditated on the politics of labor in other ways. Having traveled the countryside for years in order to eke out an existence for he and his family, his

performances were clearly “work,” and hard work at that. At the same time, Brown’s self-stylization as an eccentric, flamboyantly dressed “African biologist” was also a defiant gesture of refusing work, especially the mundane, soul-crushing factory-work of his audiences. In this measure, Brown provided a model of worker’s resistance that reconfigured the relationship between science and labor, suggesting that popular science might be used to imagine and forge new models of worker resistance and emancipation from work itself.

In addition to other former slaves and abolitionists, Brown crossed paths with a number of different scientific lecturers in England as his travels corresponded with a growing popular obsession with science. While London remained the epicenter for such activity, scientific lecturers also frequently toured in England’s smaller cities and towns. Given the popular craze for all things scientific, it shouldn’t come as a surprise that Brown, a master showman and multi-media artist, would find a way to incorporate science into his act, transforming scientific experimentation into a praxis of cross-class solidarity and resistance. As Jeffrey Ruggles notes, Brown’s first “stage experiment” (156) was conducted on March 2, 1859 in Brentford, a suburb of London. Assisted on-stage by the American mesmerist Sheldon Chadwick, who billed himself as “Professor Chadwick,” *The West London Observer* reported that Brown’s stage science, consisting of experiments in “mesmerism and biology” were both “excellent” and “successful” (qtd. in Ruggles 156). Chadwick was one of a number of mesmerists who would have crossed paths with Brown in his travels, and Brown probably learned techniques from him and other traveling practitioners.

Brown continued to offer lectures on “electro-biology” (mesmerism onstage) throughout the 1860s. While we cannot be exactly sure of the content of Brown’s stage experiments, we can make some educated guesses. First, Brown’s famous box would have taken on new meanings in the context of his role as electro-biologist. In his study of electricity experiments and exhibitions in the nineteenth century, Morus gives us a vision of Victorian England where little electrical machines and apparatuses appeared virtually everywhere, in lecture theaters, galleries, museums, and other spaces of public experiment. In this context, Brown’s box was likely repurposed as a scientific cabinet, finding a comfortable home alongside the various electrical apparatuses and other mysterious “black boxes” that accompanied scientific showmen throughout the period. Since hypnosis stood at the center of most mesmerists’ repertoires, it is likely that hypnotic trances also figured prominently in Brown’s performances. In such acts, the mysterious, charismatic mesmerist would showcase his powers by inducing trances in audience members and displaying his control of their every action onstage. We should think seriously about the implications of a former slave controlling the every movement of bodies on the Victorian stage. The spectacle of Brown taking “possession” of audience members surely raised the specter of Brown’s former condition as a slave in the U. S. Exploiting the associations between mesmerism and mysticism, as well as between blackness and conjuring, Brown’s act provided a visceral study of the politics of captivity, while emphasizing his own agency and freedom from slavery and adjacent regimes of unfreedom.

Unfettered from the demands and constraints placed on him by the religious and moral-suasionist models of abolitionism in the U. S., the popular lecture circuit in England—composed of a wide and wild assortment of mass entertainments—allowed Brown to continually experiment with his routine, incorporating and melding together mesmerism and electro-biology with Africanist knowledge practices, rituals, and the occult. His billing as the “African Biologist,” as well as “Professor Henry Box Brown,” were neither derogatory nor derisive commentaries on his pretensions to authority and expertise, as such titles signified on the minstrel stage. Lecturers in both the U. S. and Britain regularly took on the title “doctor” or “professor,” even when they did not hold any professional or medical degree. The public

did not necessarily dismiss these figures as quacks or charlatans. Indeed, before the professionalization of science and medicine in the second half of the nineteenth century, scientific expertise was extended to a surprisingly broad set of practitioners. When Brown's son was born in Bristol in 1864, his birth certificate even listed his father's profession as a "lecturer in mesmerism" (Bibi and Foss). A "Scholar's Ticket" to one of Brown's shows further suggests that his performances were received seriously and with respect in the United States after he returned to the country in 1875.<sup>23</sup>

Faced with the conundrum of Brown's enthusiastic turn to popular science, Jeffrey Ruggles strains to find an adequate political explanation for his dramatic transformation into a stage scientist. With no immediately apparent connection to slavery or to the science of race, Ruggles concludes that Brown's turn to mesmerism and electro-biology revealed his personal distance from slavery: "By the time of the Emancipation Proclamation, Brown had emancipated himself, in a sense, from his personal history of enslavement. When he presented electro-biology, it did not matter that he had been a slave, for mesmerism was an act with no particular connection to slavery" (159). For Ruggles, Brown's scientific performances marked his "emancipation" from both slavery and politics. But instead of viewing science as a nonpolitical domain, or as an escape from politics, we might consider how science as experiment and as social praxis helped to link mesmerism and electro-biology both to Brown's ongoing project of self-transformation and emancipation, and to the political and scientific experiments of the British working class. Here I understand praxis to be a form of politics, a form that Saidiya Hartman refers to as "politics without a proper locus" (61). Since enslaved and "free" people were regularly barred from the political as it was traditionally conceived, their acts and resistance "measured *against* notions of the political and its central features: the unencumbered self, the citizen, the self-possessed individual, and the volitional and autonomous subject," those activities often registered in seemingly apolitical domains. Hartman helpfully argues that the concept of practice "enables us to recognize the agency of the dominated and the limited and transient nature of that agency" (61).<sup>24</sup> Hartman's work helps to challenge the seemingly apolitical nature of Brown's turn to science by recalibrating the political itself in the terms of practice. Brown's eccentric performances of science, his experimentation with a number of different scientific fields—in short, his enactment of a dynamic, fugitive science—illuminated that science was itself a performative domain. As such, he cleared a space, through performance, for African Americans to both intervene into ongoing debates about the science of race, and to link popular science to ongoing emancipation and labor struggles in transatlantic spaces. By transforming the popular stage into a legitimate site of experimentation, his performances suggested material ways that natural science might link to the science of resistance, rather than to the science of domination.

## Black Phrenology

Regarded today as a pseudoscience, if not the pseudoscience *par excellence*, phrenology was a legitimate and respected field in the early-to-mid-nineteenth century. Indeed, phrenology's correlation of intellectual faculties with particular cranial zones influenced ideas about the localization of psychological function in early brain science. Far from its parodic presentation as the "science of bumps" or "bumpology," phrenology was rather, as Nathaniel Mackey notes, the premier "science of the mind" (n. pag.) in the nineteenth century. Founded by the German physiologist Franz Joseph Gall in the late 1700s, and rooted in his research on the anatomy of

the brain (not just the bumps on the surface of the head), phrenology was first popularized by Gall's assistant, Johann Spurzheim, in the early 1800s. He lectured throughout Great Britain in 1814 and set out on a grand lecture tour of the U. S. in 1832. Although he died just three months after his arrival, Spurzheim's visit clearly left its mark on America.<sup>25</sup> Phrenology continued to enjoy a meteoric rise throughout the 1830s, especially after the prominent Scottish phrenologist George Combe's 1838 lecture tour. Combe became something of a celebrity during his time in the U. S. His popular phrenology lectures reached a wider popular audience in 1839 when the Phrenological Society of New York transcribed, collated, and reprinted his American lectures under the title *Lectures on Phrenology, By George Combe, Esq., Including Its Application to the Present and Prospective Condition of the United States*. Combe further satiated the public's interest in both phrenology and his own magnanimous "character" with the 1841 publication of a memoir of his American travels, *Notes on the United States of North America: During a Phrenological Visit in 1838-9-40*. With phrenology firmly established in the United States, a number of practical phrenologists began to sprout up, as did several books offering novices instruction on examining heads and producing phrenology charts. Itinerant phrenologists crisscrossed the country giving readings in private homes and at public exhibitions.

Phrenology was a science deeply imbricated in antebellum performance cultures: popular among both the elite and working classes, phrenological readings of celebrities were widely reported in the press and readings were often performed by phrenologists in public. The dramatic "hands-on" element of phrenological examinations—in which a careful exploration of a patient's skull would reveal hidden aspects of one's personality and character—made them particularly amenable to stage performances. Phrenology also figured in the American minstrel show, which expertly absorbed and adapted from all spheres of popular culture, including popular science. An 1859 minstrel songbook printed in New York included a song titled "Phrenology," in which the prominent American phrenologist, Lorenzo Fowler, appears as "Massa Fowler." In it, the singer recounts his visit to Fowler's office "for to get my head examined":

He put his thumb upon a bump, an den begin to Quivery  
 He looked me deep in de eye, an it made this darkey shiver  
 He said de bump ob *eativeness* was very large developed;  
 Said de bumps war altogether like a jawbareilup. (Fox 24)

Poking fun at both the patient and the phrenologist, the rest of song details the singer's attack of Fowler after he dared to say that the patient's head, or "knowledge-box," was completely hollow. In addition to poking fun at the comic "darkey," the song makes phrenology itself an object of comic derision.

Fowler's virtual hailing on the minstrel stage is doubly significant given the fact that his and his brother-in-law's office, Fowler and Wells—which doubled as a museum and a publishing house for the *American Phrenological Journal* and other publications—was just blocks down the street from the Mechanic's Hall on Broadway, one of the main minstrel venues in New York. And there may have been other, more personal reasons for attacking "Massa Fowler," given the popular associations regularly made between phrenology and social reform, including abolition. Putting phrenology in blackface was a clear attempt to delegitimize and mock the field for its inclusivity and for its antislavery leanings. At the same time, the posing of mock-phrenologists in blackface simultaneously encoded a cultural anxiety that phrenology might be, or become, a black science.

Onstage, phrenology signified in myriad ways. The representation of African American interest in phrenology was part and parcel of the critiques of black education and elevation that were standard in antebellum minstrel shows. African Americans' strivings for professional expertise and expressions of scholarly knowledge

were persistent objects of mockery and parody on the minstrel stage. But the staging of phrenology-themed minstrel songs and sketches may have also registered and responded to the actual existence of black phrenologists traveling on adjacent performance circuits. In fact, references in the *North Star* suggest that black phrenologists were traveling the country as early as the 1840s. The December 22, 1848 edition of the newspaper reported that

During the month of October last, a series of scientific lectures was delivered in this city by DR. HENRY H. LEWIS, under the auspices of an association of colored citizens, who eagerly improved the opportunity of listening to one who, though not boasting of Anglo-Saxon blood, had by dint of application qualified himself to impart a knowledge of phrenology, mesmerism, and other interesting branches of science; with the two former he evinced a familiarity both in the lecture room and the social circle at once gratifying and instructive. (“Henry H. Lewis”)

Martin Delany reported in the July 7, 1848 edition of the *North Star* that his own head had been examined by a fourteen-year-old African American boy named Simon Foreman Laundry, whose “examinations compare well with experienced and competent professors of the science of phrenology.” Not only did Laundry “examine heads” and “read out the organs,” but he also delivered lectures on phrenology and was preparing a scientific work for publication titled the “Geography of the Brain.” According to Delany, Laundry “offered his services to examine my cranium, and passed his little hands over the organs, reading them with as much facility as Fowler or Melrose.” Referring to him as a “natural phrenologist” and comparing him to the best known and respected practitioners, Delany emphasized Laundry’s skill and expertise to readers of the *North Star*. He then noted his recommendation that the young man take to the road with his practice and use his performances to raise funds to attend a “literary institution” like Oberlin. Indeed, the public act of “reading organs” by a young freeman would have resonated for white and black audiences with the larger struggle of African Americans for elevation through education. More specifically, the performances of Laundry and other black phrenologists signified on mid-nineteenth-century narratives about literacy: “reading organs” allowed African American practitioners of phrenology to perform alternative modes of literacy. Moreover, such acts of autonomous, skillful “reading” in public spaces challenged regimes of literacy and education that sought to monitor and discipline black subjects.<sup>26</sup>

These brief references to traveling black phrenologists in the *North Star* appeared in the context of a larger pro-phrenology agenda in *The North Star* and later, in *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*. *The North Star* also ran a prospectus for the *American Phrenological Journal* and listed Fowler’s office as a subscriber to *The North Star*. Douglass’s support for phrenology was made explicit in his 1854 address at Western Reserve College in Ohio. In “The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered,” Douglass evoked Combe’s *Constitution of Man* as a pragmatic tool for African Americans to use to combat the dangerous scientific racism of Nott and Gliddon’s *Types of Mankind*. Douglass’s reclamation of phrenology is striking, especially given the close proximity between phrenology and craniology. Indeed, the “soft science” of head bumps and the “hard science” of skulls often overlapped. For example, Combe’s 1838 lectures looked and sounded extremely similar to contemporaneous lectures on craniology. Like Gliddon and other lecturers on polygenesis, Combe showcased a number of human skulls and used them to display the visual difference and inferiority of non-white groups across the country and the world. During Combe’s stay in the U. S., he visited and became friends with Morton, even contributing an essay and phrenology chart to *Crania Americana*. Combe’s contribution to the volume did much to cement phrenology to craniology, and by association, to the history of scientific racism.

While phrenology may be allied with craniology and scientific racism in our historical imaginary, African Americans, women, and others excluded from the national

body politic latched onto phrenology as a radically inclusive, if even democratic science throughout the antebellum period.<sup>27</sup> First, phrenology held that anyone could become a practitioner of the science. Furthermore, phrenology's focus on personal reform made a natural link to American social reform movements, including the abolitionist movement. And finally, phrenology's emphasis on physiological and psychological adaptability as well as the individual's power for self-transformation posed a serious challenge to racial science's attempts to make racial traits fixed and immutable.<sup>28</sup> Despite the powerful fraternity between racist craniology and phrenology, black abolitionists attempted to hold onto a phrenology that could not be subsumed by racial science. We see in Douglass's papers the emergence of what the minstrel stage seemed to fear, the transformation of phrenology into a black science, wresting phrenology from its association with craniology and orienting it, instead, to the politics of antislavery and social transformation. Through phrenology, Douglass imagined ways that the individual's power for self-transformation through phrenology might expand into larger political transformations. Across many of his publications—including *My Bondage and My Freedom*, the *North Star*, and *Frederick Douglass' Paper*—Douglass transformed phrenology into a fugitive science, a highly performative science, that through its appropriation and performance by black interlocutors, writers, and phrenologists, destabilized the racist science of craniology from within its own methodology. By uncoupling phrenology from craniology, Douglass, Delany, and the traveling African American phrenologists they mention, wrested phrenology from the science of race, mobilizing it instead for a set of experiments oriented toward black elevation and enfranchisement.

## Conclusion

Performance studies and attendant theories of performativity provide new perspectives for the study of race and science in the nineteenth century, a topic that scholars of literature and culture have long ceded to historians. While histories of American racial science have ably elucidated the rise of antebellum racial science, its political ideologies, and pernicious social effects, the dominance of this historical narrative has obscured alternative genealogies of resistance to and engagement with race science, genealogies that might be better understood through approaches outside of history.<sup>29</sup> By focusing on the performativity of science in the antebellum period, and by rethinking *science itself as a performative domain*, new light may be shed on the origins and contours of early African American cultural production, illuminating, for example, the permeable boundaries and surprising cross-fertilizations that occurred between what we today rigidly categorize as art and science.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, performativity helps to reveal the dynamic genealogies of fugitive science I have begun to trace here, those creative ways in which African Americans both resisted racist science and used science for other purposes. Excluded from the official ranks of science and without a legitimate, recognized space of experimentation, the popular stage and other spaces of black performativity were transformed into laboratories in which alternative experiments with and about the body were enacted, experiments which regularly loosed the black body from the static categories and rigid hierarchies of antebellum race science.

One final example: phrenology was not the only popular science to be targeted as an object of derision and curiosity on the minstrel stage. From sketches titled "The Inventor's Troubles" and "The Black Chemist," to mock lectures on astronomy and animal magnetism, an entire sub-genre of minstrel sketches and songs were devoted to scientific topics. Plays like *The Sham Doctor* and *The Quack Doctor* constituted a related genealogy of medical minstrelsy, what I call the medical minstrel

show. The medical minstrel show made extensive use of the grotesque, staging violent “experiments” and “operations” on black(faced) characters, while mocking African Americans’ pretensions to knowledge and authority by featuring ridiculous mock-doctors whose treatments usually did more harm than good. By putting medical practitioners in blackface, these performances simultaneously forwarded a biting critique of American medicine, discounting alternative and homeopathic medicine as “quackery.” By putting American medicine in blackface, the minstrel show mocked medicine’s own pretensions to professionalization in midcentury America, while suggesting that traveling physicians—which were extremely common at the time—were, like African American fugitives, figures of criminality and suspicion.

The medical minstrel show, it turns out, would go on to place an indelible imprint on the beginnings of African American theater, and black theater on it. In 1857, William Wells Brown published *The Escape; or, A Leap for Freedom*, the first known play to be published by an African American. The play’s main character Cato, who serves as his master’s medical assistant, staged and riffed on Brown’s own experiences serving as a medical assistant to his first owner, who was a physician. As a figure of medical competency, political agency, and practical subversion, Cato speaks back to racist arguments about black inferiority and midcentury fears about the training and practice of black doctors. But Brown simultaneously uses Cato to signify on and subvert the dominant tropes of the medical minstrel show itself. What is revealed here, perhaps surprisingly, is that the beginnings of African American drama were shaped by a sustained and subversive encounter with both the *practice* and *staging* of nineteenth-century medical science.

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## Notes

1. Throughout the essay, I understand “the popular” to be linked to the midcentury rise of mass culture in the United States and Great Britain. The popular refers to those forms of literature, science, and performance that reached a large and diverse audience through the increased democratization of the print sphere and the rise of mass entertainment venues, including the circus, the sideshow, the popular theater, and the fair. I take the term “state science” from Deleuze and Guattari’s discussion of minor science in *A Thousand Plateaus* (361-74).

2. See Ann Fabian, *The Skull Collectors: Race, Science, and America’s Unburied Dead* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2010), 81-91.

3. For accounts of how the shift from natural history to comparative anatomy affected scientific investigations and cultural understandings of race, see Robyn Wiegman, *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender* (Durham: Duke UP, 1995), 21-42, and Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1968), 216-65, 429-541. Wiegman argues that natural history’s shift from geography to the body anticipated the rise of the human sciences, especially biology, in which the tethering of race to skin—or the epidermalization of racial difference—unequivocally tied race to economies of the visible and visual in modernity. Jordan’s study remains a helpful account of how Anglo-Americans used theories of race in natural science and natural philosophy in order to negotiate the threatening presence of African Americans and Native Americans in the early republic.

4. Brown’s observations on racial science as a popular science draw from Robert Young’s argument that scientific theories of race in the nineteenth century were “fundamentally populist in tone” (Brown 92). See Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

5. While there is a dearth of scholarship addressing science on the American stage during the period, a rich body of scholarship has addressed the importance of popular theater and public spectacle in the formation and dissemination of British popular science in the nineteenth century. See, for example, Morus; Bernard Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science: Designing Nature for New Audiences* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2010); and Alison Winter, *Mesmerized: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2000). James Delbourgo’s excellent study of electricity experiments and the performance of American Enlightenment on the transatlantic stage does offer a glimpse into the performative elements of early American science. See Delbourgo, *A Most Amazing Scene of Wonders: Electricity and Enlightenment in Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2006).



6. See Sappol 90-95, 168-75.
7. See Sappol's chronology of "Popular Anatomical Museums and Exhibitions in America, 1774-1930" (310-12).
8. On the freak show's role in establishing bodily normativity through the production of the abnormal, see Rosemarie Garland Thomson's edited collection, *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body* (New York: New York UP, 1996).
9. For a full account of Barnum's exhibition of Heth and her postmortem display, see Benjamin Reiss's study of Barnum and Heth, *The Showman and the Slave: Race, Death, and Memory in Barnum's America* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2001). Reiss notes that nearly 1,500 people showed up to witness Heth's autopsy, and that the audience was composed of medical students, along with editors, clergymen, and New York residents (135).
10. On the imperative of "soundness" in plantation medicine and slave management, see Sharla Fett, *Working Cures: Health, Healing, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2007), 15-35.
11. A copy of this rare biography is available at the American Antiquarian Society.
12. On the relationship between race and the visual, see Fanon's formative account of being racialized—and "crushed into objecthood"—by the white gaze in *Black Skin, White Masks* (109). On race, visuality, and the power of spectacle, see also, Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1994) and bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Cambridge, MA: South End, 1999). Here, I focus on the ways in which performances of race—by both race scientists and black performers—were just as likely to destabilize blackness and the location of its "essence" in or on the body being displayed.
13. On the key role that sexual difference—and black women's bodies—played in the construction of scientific theories of race, see Wiegman 21-78; Siobhan Somerville, *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture* (Durham: Duke UP, 2000), 26; and Nancy Leys Stepan's influential article, "Race and Gender: The Role of Analogy in Science," *Isis* 77.2 (June 1986): 261-77. On Baartman, see Deborah Willis's edited collection, *Black Venus 2010: They Call Her "Hottentot"* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2010), which focuses on the representational history of Baartman. In addition to articles that provide relevant nineteenth-century contexts and histories, the collection provides an overview to the myriad examples of contemporary art, film, poetry, prose, and theater that have focused on Baartman and her complicated legacies, particularly in the representation of black women's desire and sexuality.
14. Roach explores the various ways that genealogies of performance refuse origin stories, showing instead that, as Foucault writes in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," "what is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity" (qtd. in Roach 25). In other words, performance traffics in difference rather than identity and inviolable origins.
15. Sekora's paradigm for thinking antebellum slave narratives as "black messages" delivered in "white envelopes" is helpful here. Sekora argues that slave autobiographies double as institutional biographies since their white editorial framings register the power and control of black subjects by white antebellum institutions, particularly Northern abolitionism.
16. See Fred Moten's critique and complication of the concept of self-possession in *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2003), 1-24.
17. See Blackett 3-46.
18. It should be noted that their funding by the American Anti-Slavery Society (AAAS) did not prevent Douglass, the Crafts, and Brown from promoting agendas that did not neatly align with the beliefs of the AAAS. According to Blackett, black visitors would regularly use public platforms at reform gatherings that were not focused on the abolitionist question—including peace and temperance rallies as well as fairs and other public exhibitions—to attack slavery, condemn British sympathizers of U. S. slaveholding practices, and express their autonomy from the institutional frameworks of the AAAS (32-33).
19. See Blackett 195-208 on the enthusiastic reception of black lecturers and performers among British working-class audiences, as well as Jayna Brown 38-47 on the antagonisms between the upper-class abolitionist movement and labor struggles in England, as well as the bonds of solidarity that British labor activists and former slaves forged through shared discourses of unfree labor under industrial capital.
20. *West London Observer* 19 Mar. 1859.
21. *Cardiff Times* 11 Mar. 1864.
22. See Morus 70-98.
23. See "Scholar's Ticket," available in the collection at the American Antiquarian Society.
24. Throughout her study, Hartman challenges uncritical celebrations of agency that ignore the political, economic, legal, and other institutions that delimited the field of agency for enslaved and "free" people during slavery and Reconstruction.

25. Mackey notes that Spurzheim's highly public funeral at Harvard and burial in Boston helped to further popularize his and Gall's ideas (n. pag.).

26. On the insidious disciplinary functions of literacy movements and black education in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2000), 94-126, and Donald Spivey, *Schooling for the New Slavery: Black Industrial Education, 1868-1915* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1978).

27. On phrenology as a science that was practiced across social classes and by women, see Angela Willey, "'Christian Nations,' 'Polygamic Races' and Women's Rights: Toward A Genealogy of Non/Monogamy and Whiteness," *Sexualities* 9.5 (December 2006): 533-34.

28. On the affiliations between phrenology and antebellum social reform, as well as Walt Whitman's practical and poetic interests in phrenology, see Mackey. On the focus in phrenology on character-building as rejection of racial science's attempt to fix race to biology, see James Salazar, *Bodies of Reform: The Rhetoric of Character in Gilded Age America* (New York: New York UP, 2010), 24-25.

29. Two notable histories that account for African American resistance to racial science include Bruce Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002) and Mia Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind: African-American Ideas about White People, 1830-1925* (New York: Oxford UP, 2000).

30. Terry Kapsalis's study, *Public Privates*, is an exciting and innovative example of what a performance studies approach to the history of science might look like. See Kapsalis, *Public Privates: Performing Gynecology from Both Ends of the Speculum* (Durham: Duke UP, 1997).

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