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The Man Behind the Art: An Abolitionist's Role in *Crania Americana*

From 1837 to 1839, John Collins (1814-1902), a prominent nineteenth-century printmaker from Philadelphia, made seventy-eight lithographs of North and South American Indigenous skulls for Samuel Morton's (1792-1851) *Crania Americana* (1839), one of the most influential works of scientific racism. A few of these lithographs were drawn by other artists and then sent to Collins to print. Some of the skulls belonged to other collectors; neither Morton nor Collins ever saw them in person. Rather, they were adapted from measurements provided by their collectors. For the majority of the skulls, though, Collins studied them in person, most likely in Morton's office. He would have studied them closely, measuring and taking in every crevice and detail, redrawing them when Morton deemed them inaccurate.

What makes Collins such a surprising figure is his background: He was the grandson of Isaac Collins, a prominent 18th century Quaker abolitionist. John Collins' family – and his work as an abolitionist poet in the latter half of his life – would suggest that he, too, likely opposed slavery. Yet, through doing the work for *Crania Americana*, he helped with one of the most influential and popular contributions to phrenology – a pseudoscience that used cranial measurement to draw conclusions about character and ability – during the nineteenth century. How did an abolitionist from an antislavery Quaker family reconcile his contribution to the work of the Penn doctor who would become a leading figure in racist science?

Summary of Research Journey

Our preliminary exploration of materials to brainstorm topic ideas during the first week of class sparked my interest in John Collins. I was looking at the lithographs included in the copy of *Crania Americana* held at the Kislak Center when Professor Brown mentioned that the artist, John Collins, also wrote an abolitionist poem called "The Slave Mother" later in his career. This seemed like a contradiction given Morton's use of racist science, and I was intrigued to learn more about why he decided to participate as well as what his work as an artist, scholar and activist looked like.

I started by visiting the Library Company of Philadelphia, which holds an extensive collection on Collins. Through this visit, I learned a lot more about Collins' life and career. All of the Collins lithographs in the Library Company's collection are of landscapes and buildings – there are no lithographs of skulls or anything else of a phrenological nature. In addition to the lithographs, there is a collection of obituaries and other newspaper articles that provide details about Collins' life as well as address records that reveal when and where he owned his print shop. Finally, I read several of Collins' poems and essays from throughout his life. One poem: "The Vision of the Coming of Age," included a segment with abolitionist themes.

I next visited the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, which houses a collection of Collins' poetry and art. I found several of the same prints I saw at the Library Company and another abolitionist poem – "The Slave Mother." I also observed many of the same landscape artworks I'd seen in the Library Company of Philadelphia collection. Through reading the sections of Samuel Morton's *Crania Americana* that mention Collins, I learned more about what Morton thought of the engraver.

Next, I looked at genealogical records on ancestry.com. Through these records, I learned that Morton had a family connection to Collins. Moreover, Collins and Thomas Morton, who was Samuel Morton's grandson, worked together to write "A Genealogy of the Collins Family" in 1892, which includes biographical details and anecdotes about many members of the Collins family, including Samuel Morton. Through some of my secondary source reading, I have learned more about Collins' and Morton's relationship.

The next step in my research process involved visiting the Burlington Historical Society in Burlington, New Jersey, where Collins was born. The Burlington Historical Society holds an archival collection that features Collins' work and details about his life. The collection includes a copy of his address book from 1830, which featured names and quotes from several of his friends from that decade in his life. I tried to learn more about these people through the Quaker Meeting Notes on ancestry.com, but unfortunately the lack of birth and death information and location information about the people made it impossible to find concrete details.

I returned to the Philadelphia Library Company to learn more about Thomas Sinclair, the Scottish lithographer based in Philadelphia who completed the art for *Crania Aegyptiaca* (1844), Morton's second publication in racist cranialogical science; building on Morton's prior work, *Crania Aegyptiaca* builds on the racist assertions formulated in *Crania Americana*. Through learning about Sinclair, I hoped to learn more about why Collins was not involved in *Crania Aegyptiaca* as well as to learn more about whether Collins and Sinclair had any kind of friendship. Through an obituary, I found that Sinclair worked at – and eventually bought – Collins' print shop on South Third Street.

Finally, I sought to learn more details about some of the travel and specific activism work that Collins did throughout his life. In the Burlington Historical Society archives, I found a

lithograph Collins made of the Friends' Meeting House in New Garden, North Carolina in 1869. I contacted the library at Guilford College – a Quaker school in Greensboro, North Carolina near New Garden – and was able to obtain notes Collins made from his trip that describe the work he did there and include his observations throughout the trip. I also saw in one of the biographical accounts of Collins that he was heavily involved with the Pennsylvania Peace Society throughout the latter half of his life, so I went to the archives at Swarthmore College to learn more about the kind of activism for which the Peace Society advocated.

Background Information

Samuel Morton was a physician and writer who graduated from Penn Medical School in 1820. He contributed to phrenology – a pseudoscience focused on mapping the brain's functions and mental capacities based on the shape of the skull – and later craniology, based on his collection of human skulls. In *Crania Americana,* he divided mankind into five races, linking each race to purported differences in skull configuration. The lithographs of skulls in *Crania Americana,* produced by John Collins, played an important role in developing his arguments about race. As a result, understanding the man behind the art – how Collins thought about his work, as well as his relationship with Morton – is essential for the development of a comprehensive understanding of *Crania Americana* and the pseudo-intellectual tradition of which it was part.

John Collins was an artist who lived from 1814 to 1902 and spent much of his life working in Philadelphia. He specialized in lithography, a form of print-making that consists of applying ink to a grease-treated image and then printing the image on paper. Lithography, a flat-surface printing process, was first used in 1798, just 16 years before Collins was born. To create a lithograph, an artist drew an illustration, and a printer ran the stone with printing paper

through a lithographic press to create the lithograph. Lithography allowed for more versatile design styles, faster execution, and longer print runs than engraving.[1]

Born in Burlington, New Jersey, Collins entered the lithography profession across the river in Philadelphia in 1836, opening his own print shop on South Third Street. The only connection between Collins and Penn that I found is the lithographs of skulls he made for Morton in 1839. In addition to his work as an artist, Collins advocated for several social justice causes. He was active in the Philadelphia Prison Society as well as the Pennsylvania Peace Society and Temperance Society until he died in 1902. He was also a writer and wrote several poems and essays with abolitionist themes, including "The Slave Mother" (1855) and "A Vision of the Coming of Age" (1870).

Although Collins produced the lithographs for *Crania Americana*, he had no involvement in Morton's second book, *Crania Aegyptiaca*, published in 1844, five years after Collins did the initial lithographs for Morton. In *Crania Aegyptiaca*, Morton argued that human racial hierarchies supposedly in place since the ancient Egyptian period had not changed up until the time he was writing. Thomas Sinclair, a lithographer who immigrated from Scotland in 1830, took on the job in Collins' stead. Sinclair created a variety of lithograph genres throughout his career, including landscape, maps, sheet music covers, portraits and political cartoons. He also worked in Collins' South Third Street print shop starting in 1839 and assumed it as his own in 1840.

[1]Erika Piola, "The Philadelphia on Stone Collaboration," Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America 29, 3.

Research Findings

Collins' Work Before Morton

The lithographs Collins made for Morton were among his first notable artistic works. Three years before he worked with Morton, Collins had moved to Philadelphia from Burlington, N.J. and was operating his print shop on S. Third Street.[2] There are minimal records of Collins' work pre-*Crania Americana*, but the records that do exist indicate that he was largely focused on drawing and creating lithographs of landscapes and architectural works. In 1837, for example, he created a lithograph of the Haverford School (now Haverford College), his alma mater. The lithograph depicts a campus scene which includes the school's Founder's Hall in the background; trees line the school in front of it, with individuals wandering around the campus.

One notable artistic partner of Collins' before Morton was John Casper Wild, who hired Collins in 1838. Wild was a Swiss artist known for his work documenting early American cities, including Philadelphia. Wild came to Philadelphia in 1837 with plans to publish a series of 20 lithographs alongside his partner J.B. Chevalier depicting the city. Wild used watercolor to depict the buildings, while the pair hired Collins to make the lithographs.[3] Wild's initial watercolors depicted panoramic scenes of the city's skyline as well as notable landmarks including Fairmount Park, Eastern State Penitentiary, and the State House. Collins' skills as a lithographer played an important role in the success of the final version of *The Views of Philadelphia (*1838). Lithography, and the unique chemical reaction that occurred throughout the process, gave Wild a unique advantage compared to his predecessors who made comparable collections of Philadelphia views. It allowed Wild and Collins together to produce many copies of the works

[2] Henry H. Bisbee and Rebecca Bisbee Colesar, John Collins, Artist, 1814-1902 (P.H. Bisbee, 1979), 19.
[3] J. B. Chevalier and Martin P. Snyder, "J. C. Wild and His Philadelphia Views," The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, January 1953, 32–75, 32.

without the lines of the work becoming dull or blurred as they would through the older copper plate engraving printing technique. As a result, with the help of Collins, Wild was able to produce a higher number of better quality lithographs to be sold at lower prices, increasing the popularity of *The Views of Philadelphia.*[4]

Collins' lithographs of Wild's work helped him get other commissioned works later in his career. These included, most notably, his depiction of the Burning of Pennsylvania Hall in 1838. Throughout the 1830s, the abolitionist movement in Pennsylvania was growing, and abolitionists were finding it increasingly difficult to locate churches and meeting halls that were large enough and had the availability to accommodate their needs. As a result, they built their own auditorium through an organization called the Pennsylvania Hall Association. Construction began in the summer of 1837 and was complete by spring of 1838.[5] On May 17, 1838, a mob stormed and burned the building down. Wild, who witnessed the attack, drew the scene. Though Collins did not print the lithographs—they were instead printed by John T. Bowen, another notable Philadelphia-based lithographer of the era—Collins played an indirect role in this visual memorial to a major blow to abolitionist efforts by helping Wild establish himself.

Collins' and Morton's work and relationship

A Haverford School graduate, Collins had no specialized training in scientific art when Morton hired him. Morton's decision to hire Collins may have been driven by their familial connection – Morton's wife, Rebecca Grellet, was Collins' cousin. Morton's correspondence with Dr. John Warren, a Boston-based surgeon, reveals much about the work Collins was doing, the expectations Morton set for him, and how he contributed to Morton's arguments.

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[4] Chevalier and Snyder, "J. C. Wild and His Philadelphia Views," 36.
[5] 1. Ira V. Brown, "Racism and Sexism: The Case of Pennsylvania Hall," Phylon 37, no. 2 (October 2, 1976): 126–36, https://doi.org/10.2307/274764, 127.

The first letter in the correspondence from Morton to Warren is dated February 7, 1837. Morton started by thanking Warren for allowing him to have the "privilege" of creating "drawings of such of your crania as may serve my purpose." He asked Warren if he owned a Guanche skull – a group that is indigenous to the Canary Islands – while offering to allow Warren to utilize a Menonemee skull— an indigenous tribe native to Wisconsin—in exchange.[6] In the letter, Morton also mentioned that Collins had just completed the first plate for the work. He outlined the strict schedule he expects Collins to follow: "for the future he will complete one every week: each plate will contain two crania of the style you shall judge for yourself."[7]

The next correspondence from Morton to Warren was dated March 25, 1837. The letter states that Morton had arranged for Collins to visit Warren in Boston. The letter revealed that Collins played a key role as a messenger between the two doctors. Morton wrote that Collins would bring a "list drawn" of human remains in Morton's collection that would "convey to you [Warrens]" details on a Peruvian skull and a Menonome skull that Warren and Morton had discussed in previous correspondence. He also asked Warren to "put with the Suanoke head any memorandum you may hope is useful if Mr. Collins will take charge of it."[8] Morton also highlighted the importance he placed on Collins' work. He asked Warren to order a subscription of *Crania Americana,* praising him as an influential reference for Morton's ability to create "this kind of work." When requesting Warren subscribe, Morton brought up Collins' work, emphasizing that the "main value" of the book lay in the "fidelity" and "number" of illustrations.[9]

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[6] Samuel George Morton to John Warren (Boston, Massachusetts: Boston Historical Society, February 7, 1837).
[7] Morton to Warren, February 7, 1837.
[8] Samuel George Morton to John Warren (Boston, Massachusetts: Boston Historical Society, March 25, 1837).
[9] Morton to Warren, March 25, 1837.

Morton's letter to Warren of March 30, 1837 reveals Collins played an additional role as a carrier of human remains. He described Collins playing a role in the exchange of skulls – Morton told Warren that Collins will "hand you two Crania – one a Peruvian from Pachacamac near Lima" and the other a "Menomonee." He also told Warren that Morton will "take charge" of bringing a Schonoake skull back from Boston and drawing it.[10]

Two years later, however, Morton's feelings about Collins seemed to have changed. In a letter to Warren dated December 15, 1939, Morton wrote: "I regret that I could not make use of the drawings taken by my artist from skulls in your collection, but I found Mr. Collins made such inaccurate measurements in the outset of his labors that I have been required to have many of his drawings redrawn, and at a heavy expense. I could not be satisfied with any of his measurements which I could not rectify by personal inspection."[11] This correspondence reveals that Morton's earlier faith in Collins had been lost, possibly because the dimensions Collins obtained did not support the theories he was developing. Moving forward, he did not trust Collins' renditions of any skulls he had not seen himself.

By publication, however, Morton seemed to have forgiven Collins for his previous errors. His mention of Collins in *Crania Americana* indicates that he thought very highly of his work as a lithographer; he described Collins as "one of the most successful cultivators of his art in this country" in the preface.[12] Collins also left a note at the end of *Crania Americana*, calling for more subscribers of his art. In the note, he used the skills he developed throughout the process of working with Morton as a reason why others should hire him. He asserted he had skills in "close observation and measurements of all the various parts of the natural objects … Much care has

[10]Samuel George Morton to John Warren (Boston, Massachusetts: Boston Historical Society, March 30, 1837).
[11]Samuel George Morton to John Warren (Boston, Massachusetts: Boston Historical Society, December 12, 1839).
[12] Samuel George Morton, *Crania Americana* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: J. Dobson, 1839), iv.

been taken to obtain a high finish in the shading, as well as correctness in the drawing, in order to render this work at once pleasing to the eye of the professional man, the amateur, or the occasional reader."[13]

However, reflections from Collins' contemporaries suggest that Collins' mood was "somber" throughout his time making lithographs for Morton.[14] One acquaintance remembered him as deeply unhappy during this time. "Poor man, I pity him. A man of education and some talent, but wholly incapable to buffet the wars of adversity," the acquaintance wrote. [15] The identity of the person who wrote this is unknown, making it difficult to draw concrete conclusions about what "wars of adversity" means, but it seems likely that Collins' acquaintance was referring to the "adversity" of being an artist. Collins' was still a relatively new artist, without an established reputation, and Morton worked him extremely hard, as evidenced by his frustration at Collins' allegedly inaccurate drawings and the demanding production schedule he was accepted to adhere to.

Given that there is no record of abolitionist work by Collins made during this time, it seems less likely abolitionism would be the adversity to which the friend was referring. However, Collins' poor mood and dissatisfaction may not have been entirely caused by his working relationship with Morton. In 1838, Collins sold his print shop on South Third Street to Thomas Sinclair, a Scottish lithographer who had moved to Philadelphia in 1830.[16] Collins worked for Sinclair until 1840. Collins and his wife Anna Baily – whom he married in 1839 – spent the first three years of their marriage living part time in Philadelphia and part-time in New

[13] Morton, *Crania Americana*.
[14] Ann Fabian, *The Skull Collectors: Race, Science, and America's Unburied Dead,* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2020), 85.
[15] Henry H. Bisbee and Rebecca Bisbee Colesar, John Collins, Artist, 1814-1902 (P.H. Bisbee, 1979), 19.
[16] Peter C. Marzio, *The Democratic Art: Pictures for a 19th Century America* (London, UK: Scolar Press, 1980), 31.

York City.[17] Morton and Collins never worked together again. Instead, he hired Sinclair to make the lithographs for *Crania Aegyptiaca* in 1844. There are several possible explanations for why Morton and Collins ceased their working relationship: It is possible Collins had reckoned with the problematic nature of Morton's work, and declined the opportunity to work with him again. Alternatively, he may have found the fast-paced timeline set by Morton and his demands for re-draws to be too demanding. The number of lithographs in *Crania Aegyptiaca* were far fewer than in *Crania Americana*, suggesting Morton may have had a lower budget and could no longer afford Collins.

Collins' work as an activist and artist after Morton

In 1845, Collins moved back to Burlington, N.J. His mother, Ann Abit Collins, died in 1846. Her failing health may have been a contributing factor in his decision to move home. Throughout the rest of his career, Collins created no other known anatomical lithographs. The majority of his work was of landscapes and buildings. This included two collections of landscape and building prints. *Views of the City of Burlington* (1847), included 14 prints "taken from the original sketches made by John Collins."[18] *The City and Scenery of Newport* (1857) featured 14 plates of Newport, Rhode Island, including a map of the city. It is unclear when Collins made the trip to Rhode Island to draw the plates.[19] He also made at least one drawing book for children called *My First Drawing Book* (1871) that was designed to be a guide for aiding young artists in developing basic drawing skills.

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[17]Henry H. Bisbee and Rebecca Bisbee Colesar, John Collins, Artist, 1814-1902 (P.H. Bisbee, 1979), 19.
[18] Bisbee and Colesar, John Collins, Artist, 1814-1902 (P.H. Bisbee, 1979), 20.
[19] Bisbee and Colesar, John Collins, Artist, 1814-1902 (P.H. Bisbee, 1979), 20.

Several of the buildings Collins' drew had interesting abolitionist connections. *Views of Burlington, N.J.* included an 1847 lithograph of the boarding school St. Mary's Hall. Throughout the 1830s, abolitionists created a series of tunnels that ran through the basement of St. Mary's Hall. These tunnels served as hiding spots for runaway enslaved people, according to Burlington Historian Nicholas Kamaras.[20] Additionally, the *Views from Burlington* collection included a drawing of the House of Joseph Bloomfield (1803-1812). Bloomfield, who served as mayor of Burlington from 1795 to 1800 and the governor of New Jersey from 1801 to 1812, was a strong opponent of slavery and served as the first president of the New Jersey Society for the Abolition of Slavery, which was formed in 1793.

Collins also created several portraits, including one made in 1885 of a Black porter named Benny Jackson, who was well known in Burlington, N.J. at the time. Jackson, who is smiling in the lithograph, is depicted behind a trunk labeled "St. Mary's Hall" and several smaller bags, including one labeled with Collins' name. Jackson was born in 1820, and set up a business operation as the porter who met all trains that came into Burlington.[21] While the nature of their relationship could not be confirmed, it is likely that Jackson met Collins when he was coming into Burlington on a train, and Collins was inspired to make the portrait of Jackson as a result.

In 1855, Collins wrote an abolitionist poem called "The Slave Mother." The poem details the journey of a mother and her child escaping enslavement. They face challenges including hunger, wild animal attacks and persecution from slave hunters throughout their journey, but ultimately receive help from abolitionists who say "What fiend shall drive with curse and blow.

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[20] Karen Demasters, "An Apothecary with a Past, Including the Underground Railroad," The New York Times, March 8, 1998.
[21] John Collins, 1970. A Vision of the Coming Age (Burlington, NJ: Enterprise Print, 1870), 47

This childless mother?—Let her go!" [22] Collins also characterizes the enslavers as evil, describing their hands as "harsh" and "inhuman" and describes them as "savage men more fierce" than "savage beasts." [23]

Additionally, Collins made at least one trip to New Garden, North Carolina in 1869, where he made a lithograph of the Friends Meeting House there. The lithograph depicts lots of people conversing and gathering in front of the house, probably in preparation for a meeting. A journal entry written by Collins in November 1869 reveals that he traveled to New Garden to attend the North Carolina Yearly Meeting of Friends.[24] While the exterior of the meeting house is the only lithograph that was obtainable in this research, his journal indicates he made several additional watercolor paintings while he was there – including of the Friends' House interior and stove and meeting attendees with their dogs and wagons. In Collins' notes on the Yearly meeting, he expressed admiration for Samuel H. Jones, the superintendent of Freedmen's Schools in Virginia. Collins approved of Jones' declaration that prejudice was subsiding where "city authorities are disposed to place the schools for the blacks on the same basis as those for the whites."[25] Collins also approved of Jones' condemnation in the meeting of alcohol and tobacco as "the most insidious poison."[26]

At an 1870 Quaker meeting in Burlington, Collins and his wife Anna Baily were offered a teaching appointment at the newly established William Forster Home and School in East Tennessee. According to one acquaintance, the couple believed it was their religious duty to connect themselves with the newly established William Foster Home and School in East

[22]John Collins, The Slave Mother, 1855.
[23] John Collins, The Slave Mother, 1855.
[24]John Collins, *Among Friends in North Carolina*, 1869, 1.
[25]Collins, *Among Friends*, 1869, 3.
[26] Collins, *Among Friends*, 1869, 3.

Tennessee at Friendsville.[27] The couple stayed in Tennessee until 1879, at which time they moved back to Philadelphia. In 1890, Collins wrote: "It has been my aim while instructing thousands of children in scholastic knowledge not to lose sight of teaching sound principles of honesty and integrity, so essentially needed in after life."[28]

In 1870, Collins wrote a utopian poem called “Vision of the Coming of Age.” The poem depicts Collins’ vision for a perfect society, free of vices including alcohol, tobacco, dance halls and advertising. In the poem, Collins expressed approval that slavery had been eradicated, writing: “Tis past – all the horrors of war // Persecution and slavery, now are no more.” He also criticized the brutality of the institution, describing slavery as “chains and the whips to torment, maim and slay.”[29] He wrote that slavery is an “edifice, piled with mementos of sin,” expressing further disapproval by analogising slavery and sin.[30]

To the modern reader, Collins’ decision to work with Morton seems like a contradiction, antithetical to the abolitionist beliefs he expressed later in life. However, Morton was producing his work at a moment when racial science was a “diverse field of inquiry,” deriving power not from its status as an institutional science but from widespread popularity through print. In fact, many abolitionists latched onto phrenology to promote their own goals and reject racist narratives. Phrenology lent itself to these motives in several ways: It held that anyone could become a practitioner of science and had a focus on personal reform, which was a natural link to the abolitionist movement and other American social reform movements.[31]

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[27] Bisbee and Colesar, John Collins, Artist, 1814-1902 (P.H. Bisbee, 1979), 25.
[28]Collins, *Among Friends*, 1869,7.
[29]John Collins, 1970. A Vision of the Coming Age (Burlington, NJ: Enterprise Print, 1870), 12.
[30]Collins, A Vision, 13.
[31] Britt Rusert, "The Science of Freedom: Counterarchives of Racial Science on the Antebellum Stage," *African American Review* 45 (2012), 304.

Despite his prolific abolitionist work, Collins still wrote highly of Morton, even after the physician died. In 1892, Collins wrote a book called *Reminiscences of Isaac and Rachel (Budd) Collins* (1892), which celebrated the accomplishments of members of his family, including Samuel Morton. In the book, Collins describes Morton in a very positive light, noting that both of his books were "favorably received."[32] Collins also seems to celebrate Morton's decision to collect human remains, writing that "he early began to make his celebrated collection of crania, and up to 1840 had, with great labor and cost, succeeded in collecting no less than fourteen hundred and sixty eight crania." [33] This account suggests that family ties ran deep, and, despite his abolitionist principles, Collins was never willing to fully condemn Morton for his racist work.

Significance of Work

Phrenology emphasized environmental explanations for brain development and left room for physiological and psychological adaptability, posing a real challenge to racial science's attempts to deem racial traits as fixed.[34] For example, in 1836 – just one year before Collins began his work for Morton – physiologist Frederick Tiedemann compared the weight, size and dimensions of Black, European and Orangu-tang brains to conclude that "there are no well-marked and essential differences between the brain of the Negro and European, we must conclude that no innate difference in the intellectual faculties can be admitted to exist between

[32] 1. John Collins et al., Reminiscences of Isaac and Rachel (Budd) Collins: (John Collins , 1893), 325.
[33]John Collins., Reminiscences of Isaac and Rachel, 325.
[34] Britt Rusert, "The Science of Freedom: Counterarchives of Racial Science on the Antebellum Stage," *African American Review* 45 (2012), 304.

them."[35] Collins likely viewed phrenology in this contemporary context, when it served to convey many narratives – including abolitionist ones.

Before Morton's work of racist science *Crania Aegiptiaca*, the racist interpretation of phrenology was not yet firmly established. Further, none of the remains Collins drew for *Crania Americana* actually belonged to Black people; Collins was never involved in activist work for Indigenous groups, only Black people, which also suggests he may not have seen the work as counter to his beliefs. As a result, it is likely that Collins may not have viewed Morton's work and motivations with the same lens as a modern viewer and may not have seen the work as antithetical to abolition.

Even if he did have moral qualms with the nature of the work – which involved handling and exploiting human remains – Collins had a number of other factors to weigh when participating. A primary factor was his familial tie to Morton. For one thing, Morton's frustration regarding alleged inaccuracies in Collins' measurements suggests that he did not have any formal training in drawing to scale or creating the kind of detailed anatomical drawings Morton expected. Collins' lack of training indicates that the familial tie was likely a primary factor in Morton's decision to hire him – and also explains Collins 'willingness to accept the job. Further, Collins' decision to write a 300+ page family history suggests he deeply valued familial ties. Collins' devotion to his family may have overpowered any objection he had to the work Morton was doing or the role he played in it as a contributor through drawing the lithographs.

Moreover, Collins' personal connection to Morton – and his lack of knowledge about craniology – would have likely had an impact on how Collins' contributed to Morton's reasoning and ideas. As a result of Collins' familial devotion to Morton, Collins may not have felt

[35] Frederick Tiedemann, "XXIII. on the Brain of the Negro, Compared with That of the European and the Orang-Outang," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* 126 (December 31, 1836): 497–527, https://doi.org/10.1098/rstl.1836.0025, 21.

comfortable pushing back on his thinking, reasoning or methods for gathering information, even if he did have moral qualms internally. Further, his lack of scientific expertise suggests that Collins would be unlikely to recognize when a request from Morton to remeasure or redraw a skull was derived from his own biases and beliefs instead of accurate measurements and scientific facts. An artistic partner without the personal investment in a relationship with Morton – or one with a scientific background – may have been more willing to challenge Morton or encourage him to think differently. In this way, Collins was complicit.

Another factor that likely played into Collins' decision to work with Morton was the potential career benefits it offered. Collins was only 23 when he started the work for Morton in 1837; he was a relatively new lithographer without an impressive portfolio. His business was struggling, and he likely saw the work for Morton as an opportunity to better establish himself, develop his artistic skills, and as a result and eventually gain more lucrative clients. His call for more subscribers at the end of *Crania Americana* reveals the new skills he deemed most valuable: "Close observation and measurements of all the various parts of the natural objects." It seems probable that Collins was willing to prioritize his craft and career development over any moral concerns he may have had with propagating racist ideas.

The power disparities between Morton and Collins further reflect the ability of institutions to draw a person who might otherwise be unlikely to contribute to a line of work. Morton was trained at Penn Medical School, among the most prestigious, influential and well endowed schools in the country. It is likely that Morton's degree from a university like Penn was a contributing factor to both his power and his reputation as a brilliant physician. In turn, these derivatives of Collins' Penn degree are likely to have influenced Collins' desire to work with

him. Institutional power from a University like Penn extends beyond just the period of time when a person is studying there.

Though it was antithetical to his later abolitionist work – and likely unintentional – Collins played a major role in the development of racist lines of scientific thinking worldwide. *Crania Americana* was the first American scientific work to include anatomical lithographs of such detail and precision, and Collins' groundbreaking drawings played a significant role in the reception the book received. When London's *The Monthly Review* debuted Collins' work in 1842, they described "admirable plates, drawn from skulls" that represent a "very valuable and curious contribution to the natural history of man."[36] James Cowel Prichard, Great Britain's "father of anthropology", was the first to present Collins' lithographs in the U.K. In August, 1839, he presented them at the annual British Association of Science meeting.[37]

Due to Collins' attention to detail, the skulls look "textured," giving Prichard and other scientists the groundwork to agree with Morton's assertions that Native American skulls were actually different from those of Europeans. [38] Additionally, participants at Collins' first show were struck by them: Physician Thomas Hodkin, who attended the meeting, wrote to Morton in the aftermath to compliment him for "the pleasure of seeing thy work." [39] For another leading phrenologist George Combe, who wrote a paper on the Phrenological development of the human race to accompany *Crania Americana,* the lithographs provided an introduction into a new "visual language" that would prove useful. Collins' plates allowed Combe to apply phrenological rules to each of the skulls Morton studied in *Crania Americana*, thus furthering the field of

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[36] James Poskett, "National Types: The Transatlantic Publication and Reception of Crania Americana (1839)," *History of Science* 53, no. 3 (September 2015): 264–95, https://doi.org/10.1177/0073275315580955, 264.
[37] Poskett, "National Types,"267.
[38] Poskett, "National Types," 265.
[39] Poskett, "National Types,".268.

phrenology.[40] Through traveling for Morton to collect and observe the skulls belonging to Warren and other collectors, Collins also played an indirect role in the evolution of other racist work by serving as a messenger and carrier of human remains. In this sense, the impact of Collins' work was longlasting and pervasive.

While Collins' evidently held abolitionist views, his work for Morton – and decision to continue to defend Morton's work even after he died – suggests that abolition was likely not his top priority. Rather, Collins reflects the way that abolitionists would be willing to prioritize their families and careers over their beliefs. As a result, sometimes even staunch abolitionists ended up contributing to racist lines of thinking like those held by Morton.

Further Research

There are several segments of Collins' life that I was unable to explore fully. It would be interesting to do a deeper dive into what Collins' life in the South was like – what he was teaching in Tennessee, who he was friends with, what kinds of causes he supported. This would allow the Penn Slavery Project to more fully flush out Collins' life, as well as discover more potential connections to abolitionist work. Further, a comparable investigation into the life of Thomas Sinclair – what his relationship with Morton was like and why he was hired – would also help to paint a more complete picture of how Morton operated and the role lithography played in the development of his arguments.

[40] Poskett, "National Types," 272.

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