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Race, nose, truth: dystopian odours of the Other in American antebellum consciousness

ANDREW KETTLER

ABSTRACT It was in 1835, in the wake of the Nullification Crisis that shook the United States with the threat of civil war over federal law, state's rights and the Slave Power, that Jerome Holgate, under the pseudonym 'Oliver Bolokitten', published his dystopian fiction *A Sojourn in the City of Amalgamation*. It posited the existence of an African body smell that would make anti-odour machines essential if American societies fell prey to the potential ravages of racial miscegenation. Two decades after Holgate offered his dystopian world-view of smell and race, 'Cephas Broadluck', a pseudonym for the American author Allen Gazlay, published *Races of Mankind: With Travels in Grubland* (1856), an allegorical attack on comparable forms of sensory and sexual 'amalgamation', also proposing olfactory detection as a racial protection for the white body politic. The antebellum era dystopias of Holgate and Gazlay combined ideas of truth and race through the sensory experiences of the nose, which had previously been socially conditioned to sense racial Others through a false consciousness about the smell of Africans throughout the Atlantic World. Despite the efforts of academics to deconstruct such absurd beliefs and experiences in the modern world, olfactory racism continues in the languages of both current political leaders and within the bowels of the Internet. Because these prejudicial perceptions continue through what seems for many racists to be biological experiences of truth, scholars must focus much more on analysing embodied perceptions of Othering if academic arguments about the social construction of race are to make any inroads against the return of racist, technologized and fascist modernity in the contemporary West.

KEYWORDS American literature, antebellum era, Critical Race Theory, nose, olfactory racism, race, sensory studies, smell

It was in 1835, in the wake of the Nullification Crisis of 1832–3, an event that shook both North and South in the United States with the threat of civil war over federal law, state's rights and the legitimacy of the Slave Power,¹ that

The author would like to thank the anonymous reviewers at *Patterns of Prejudice* for their detailed readings of this essay. In addition, he offers heartfelt thanks to Helen Carr, Professor Emeritus at Goldsmiths, University of London, for editorial assistance.

1 The Nullification Crisis is an important aspect of American historiography regarding the long-term causes of the Civil War and involved an attempt by the state of South Carolina to nullify federal law through the assertion of state's rights doctrine meant

2 Patterns of Prejudice

Jerome Holgate published his dystopian fiction, *A Sojourn in the City of Amalgamation, in the Year of Our Lord 19*—. This racist tract posited the existence of an African body smell that would make anti-odour machines essential if American societies fell prey to the potential ravages of racial miscegenation.² In Holgate's tale of social degeneration in a future Northern city, the corrupt practice of interracial union included the compulsory breeding of white women and African men, the latter often portrayed in this nightmarish text as brutes and primates, with sensory and craniometric characteristics that were historically used to define savagery. The representation of 'amalgamation', as miscegenation was then called, that Holgate depicted under his pseudonym 'Oliver Bolokitten', used this olfactory racism, applied within a formulaic novel, to critique the abolitionist cause and imply it was sexually motivated.³

Two decades after Holgate offered his dystopian world-view of smell and race that would supposedly come in the wake of emancipation, the American author Allen Gazlay, under the alias of 'Cephas Broadluck', published *Races of Mankind: With Travels in Grubland* (1856). This was an allegorical attack on comparable forms of sensory and sexual amalgamation, also insisting on the detection of smell as a racial protection for the white body politic. These two dystopian authors insisted that racial differences existed because they sensed and felt olfactory disgust. They participated in the construction of whiteness prior to the Civil War by providing a literary tradition of olfactory dystopias

to void the tariffs of 1828 and 1832 within South Carolina boundaries. The crisis nearly led to violence, before the Compromise Tariff of 1833 met South Carolina's demands. Although not directly about race and slavery, the implications of the crisis were obvious at the time, as a strong federal government threatened the Slave Power, the 'concurrent majority' of regional political influence that worked to keep slavery supported both in the halls of Congress and the westward expansion across the continent.

- 2 Oliver Bolokitten [pseud., i.e. Jerome B. Holgate], *A Sojourn in the City of Amalgamation, in the Year of Our Lord 19*— (New York: Oliver Bolokitten 1835), 17–25.
- 3 See also Tavia Amolo Ochieng' Nyongó, *The Amalgamation Waltz: Race, Performance and the Ruses of Memory* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press 2009), 14–15. For works on miscegenation in nineteenth-century American literature, see Patricia Roberts-Miller, *Fanatical Schemes: Proslavery Rhetoric and the Tragedy of Consensus* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press 2010), 11–16, 94–6, 131–6; James Kinney, *Amalgamation! Race, Sex, and Rhetoric in the Nineteenth-Century American Novel* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press 1985); Debra J. Rosenthal, *Race Mixture in Nineteenth-Century U.S. and Spanish American Fictions: Gender, Culture, and Nation Building* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press 2004), 1–17; Cassandra Jackson, *Barriers between Us: Interracial Sex in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2004), 30–47; Elise Virginia Lemire, *Miscegenation: Making Race in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2002), 68–88; Leonard Cassuto, *The Inhuman Race: The Racial Grotesque in American Literature and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press 1999); Patricia Ventura, 'Introduction: Race and utopian desire', in Patricia Ventura and Edward K. Chan (eds), *Race and Utopian Desire in American Literature and Society* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2019), 1–22.

that they believed would emerge if black and white bodies were allowed to mix in what racist sensationalists imagined as pungent and monstrous hybridity.⁴

Literary utopias and dystopias frequently contain ideological frameworks that create categories of the Other and the Same, as well as designs for social progress or warnings of cultural decline.⁵ As part of this critical discourse of Othering, Holgate's and Gazlay's dystopian texts illustrate the fact that, during the American nineteenth century, racism towards Africans and African Americans increasingly did not need to be justified among racist white populations. Racial Otherness became linked to specific sensory understandings, rather than an idea that constantly needed to be reinforced through scientific or religious narratives. As part of this cultural patterning, odour became truth, sensed through the nose and bypassing previous concerns with logic. Smells became part of an unconscious racism in the cultural habitus, penetrating the individual racist body through texts both written and socially experienced.⁶

Especially after the end of slavery in North America during the Civil War, racism became more virulent as belief in these bodily experiences of the Other increased. Ever recurrent in racist cultures, such prejudices about the Other's body expanded during the Reconstruction era and persisted well into the twentieth century. A variety of racial categorizations, horrific and sexualized lynchings that frequently involved castration, and newly developed scientific racisms were used to uphold the legal structures of Jim Crow. The perceived truth of this knowledge about the racial body continues today in the falsely conscious modern West of late capitalism, in which statements like not 'having a racist bone' are used to defend racists who in fact often retain sensory feelings of disgust. These multifarious forms of sensory prejudice that pull racism into modernity are evidenced by the threatening racist forces of the Internet, and are consistently heard in the

- 4 Cephas Broadluck [*pseud.*, i.e. Allen Gazlay], *Races of Mankind: With Travels in Grubland* (Cincinnati: Longley Brothers 1856), 138–46. For more on the senses, race and nation-building, see Francine R. Masiello, *The Senses of Democracy: Perception, Politics, and Culture in Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press 2018), 19–70; and Andrew J. Rotter, 'Empires of the senses: how seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching shaped imperial encounters', *Diplomatic History*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2011, 3–19.
- 5 For major works defining the categories of utopian literature, see Marina Leslie, *Renaissance Utopias and the Problem of History* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press 1998), 53–8; Patrick Parrinder, *Utopian Literature and Science: From the Scientific Revolution to Brave New World and Beyond* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2015), 1–13; and Frank E. Manuel (ed.), *Utopias and Utopian Thought* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1966).
- 6 Mark M. Smith, *How Race Is Made: Slavery, Segregation, and the Senses* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2006), 93–145. For more on embodied experience and historical methodology concerning race, see Elizabeth Freeman, *Beside You in Time: Sense Methods and Queer Sociabilities in the American 19th Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2019), 52–86.

modern anti-immigrant, xenophobic and anti-globalist languages that multiply in increasingly abusive and intellectually vacuous political discourses.⁷

Embodied racism, miscegenation and the ‘fancy trade’

Different patterns of knowledge of the racial Other existed during earlier periods of western history, marking time and space through tactics for the coding of Othered bodies. For the Atlantic World and antebellum era, these racial regimes generally consisted of monogenetic, polygenetic or climatological theories that ebbed and flowed with changes in popular pseudoscience and literary discourse. All these three broad theories included ideas about the pregnant signifiers of olfactory inferiority within African and African American bodies.

Generally, monogenetic traditions defined race through culture or alterations in the body after humanity was first born from Adam and Eve. They often defined race through religion, as in the racialized tales of the Sons of Noah or the Mark of Cain, which frequently included references to the odour of tarnished sinful bodies. Traditions of climatology also became dominant in different racial discourses. These narratives generally defined race through ideas of skin darkening that occurred due to time spent under the scorching suns of the Torrid Zone, which were sometimes also thought to give black bodies intense odours related to diseases like leprosy, larger than normal skin bumps or specifically coiled hair follicles.⁸

By the late eighteenth century, polygenetic traditions and associated early forms of scientific racism emerged from deep within the emerging canon of whiteness. These virulent pseudosciences came to dominate racial knowing during the nineteenth century as scholars asserted that there were different lines of humanity and subhumanity beyond the singular descent from Adam and Eve central to earlier traditions of racial knowledge. In line with these multidisciplinary polygenetic narratives that later influenced Social Darwinism, a belief in the biological odours of supposedly inferior races grew during the mid-nineteenth century. Racist scholars like Julien-Joseph Virey, Josiah Priest, and Charles Van Allen expanded established

7 For more on literature and race in Reconstruction, see LaRose T. Parris, *Being Apart: Theoretical and Existential Resistance in Africana Literature* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press 2015); and Sharon D. Kennedy-Nolle, *Writing Reconstruction: Race, Gender, and Citizenship in the Postwar South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2015).

8 For examples of olfactory polygenism, see Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man*, Book 1 (Edinburgh: W. Creech 1774), 12–13. See also general summaries of these different racial narratives in Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (London and New York: Verso 2016); Francisco Bethencourt, *Racisms: From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2013); and Brian Niro, *Race* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2003).

theories about the smell of African bodies as a justification for keeping Africans and African Americans in the open fields, hewing wood and drawing water for the master's profit.⁹ These olfactory ideologies provided fresh medically sanctioned arguments for why slaves were predestined to live in the stinking outdoors of the cane, tobacco and cotton fields.¹⁰

Many of these sensory understandings of race and nation in the American nineteenth century emerged out of earlier transatlantic discourses about the senses, sensibility and fellow feeling that united a form of differential whiteness against those deemed unable to access forms of citizenship reserved for white bodies and minds.¹¹ These smolders of Enlightenment racial knowledge informed the inflammatory spirit of polygenism, which hardened into firmer forms of emotional disgust and fears of medical contagion during the antebellum era.¹² Such fears of material pollution frequently moved from a concern with sensory distress to an anxiety that moral contagion could also travel like a germ from slave to free populations. Black sailors and their sense of freedom and mobility were specifically feared as possible routes of infection that might reach supposedly peaceful

- 9 Julien-Joseph Virey, *Natural History of the Negro Race*, trans. from the French by J. H. Guenebault (Charleston, SC: D. J. Dowling 1837), 44–54; Josiah Priest, *Slavery, As It Relates to the Negro, or African Race* (Louisville, KY: W. S. Brown 1849), 228–9; Charles Van Allen, 'Suggestions upon animal odor', *Southern Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 12, no. 6, 1856, 360–6. See also Melanie A. Kiechle, *Smell Detectives: An Olfactory History of Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press 2017), 130–5; and Craig Koslofsky, 'Knowing skin in early modern Europe, c. 1450–1750', *History Compass*, vol. 12, no. 10, 2014, 794–806.
- 10 For medicine and the black body in the Atlantic World, see Suman Seth, *Difference and Disease: Medicine, Race, and the Eighteenth-Century British Empire* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 2018), 1–24; Emily Senior, *The Caribbean and the Medical Imagination, 1764–1834: Slavery, Disease and Colonial Modernity* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 2018); Andrew S. Curran, *The Anatomy of Blackness: Science & Slavery in an Age of Enlightenment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 2011); Rana A. Hogarth, *Medicalizing Blackness: Making Racial Differences in the Atlantic World, 1780–1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2017); and Ikuko Asaka, *Tropical Freedom: Climate, Settler Colonialism, and Black Exclusion in the Age of Emancipation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2017), 139–66. See also justifications of slavery through racial science in Lundy Braun, *Breathing Race into the Machine: The Surprising Career of the Spirometer from Plantation to Genetics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2014), 27–54, 109–37.
- 11 Richard Cullen Rath, *How Early America Sounded* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press 2003), 173–84; Lauren F. Klein, 'Dinner-table bargains: Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and the senses of taste', *Early American Literature*, vol. 49, no. 2, 2014, 403–33; Jay Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence: Jefferson, Natural Language, & the Culture of Performance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 1993); Sarah Knott, *Sensibility and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2009).
- 12 For an introduction to the increasing assertion of whiteness on the eve of the Civil War, see Walter Johnson, 'The slave trader, the white slave, and the politics of racial determination in the 1850s', *Journal of American History*, vol. 87, no. 1, 2000, 13–38.

slaves.¹³ Many of these racialized tropes of odour, disease, moral contagion and religious pestilence are still commonly expressed in current descriptions of segregation and immigration, and in public representations of the pungent Other emerging from shitholes or dirty caravans.¹⁴

As discourses of contagion, smell and Othering filled the pages of popular literature during the antebellum era, the historical reality of miscegenation contained vastly different experiences for black bodies in both the North and South. Historically, African American men and women experienced what was deemed ‘amalgamation’ in incredibly diverse ways that ranged from the most violent and oppressive forms of rape to the deepest embraces of love and marriage.¹⁵ Many of these forms of socially despised

- 13 Michael A. Schoeppner, *Moral Contagion: Black Atlantic Sailors, Citizenship, and Diplomacy in Antebellum America* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 2019), 31–63. See also Elizabeth Stordeur Pryor, *Colored Travelers: Mobility and the Fight for Citizenship before the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2016), 44–75; and Gerald V. O’Brien, *Contagion and the National Body: The Organism Metaphor in American Thought* (London and New York: Routledge 2018). For more on the idea that race created inherited behavioral conditions, see Sharon Block, *Colonial Complexions: Race and Bodies in Eighteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2018), 110–18; for fears of amalgamation and the idea of moral improvement in Bruce Dain, *Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press 2009), 64–79, 226–63.
- 14 Helen Ngo, *The Habits of Racism: A Phenomenology of Racism and Racialized Embodiment* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books 2017), 135–74; Alexis Shotwell, *Knowing Otherwise: Race, Gender, and Implicit Understanding* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press 2011), 14–15, 34–6. For more on olfactory history, which focuses often on aromatic decline, see Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination*, trans. from the French by Aubier Montaigne (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1986); Holly Dugan, *The Ephemeral History of Perfume: Scent and Sense in Early Modern England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 2011); Mark S. R. Jenner, ‘Follow your nose? Smell, smelling, and their histories’, *American Historical Review*, vol. 116, no. 2, 2011 335–51; Dominique Laporte, *History of Shit* [1978], trans. from the French by Nadia Benabid and Rodolphe el-Khoury (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press 2000); Constance Classen, David Howes and Anthony Synnott, *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell* (London: Routledge 1994); Keith Thomas, ‘Cleanliness and godliness in early modern England’, in Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts (eds), *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain: Essays in Honour of Patrick Collinson* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 1994), 56–83; and Mark S. R. Jenner, ‘Civilization and deodorization? Smell in early modern English culture’, in Peter Burke, Brian Howard Harrison, Paul Slack and Keith Thomas (eds), *Civil Histories: Essays Presented to Sir Keith Thomas* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press 2000), 127–44.
- 15 For sexuality, rape and skin colour in the Atlantic World, see Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2009); Sasha Turner, *Contested Bodies: Pregnancy, Childrearing, and Slavery in Jamaica* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2017), 215–18; Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2016), 100–23; Rachel A. Feinstein, *When Rape Was Legal: The Untold History of Sexual Violence*

amalgamation involved rape and prostitution. Within the antebellum slave system, the so-called ‘fancy trade’, the buying and selling of mixed-race female slaves for sexual exploitation, often involved the forced breeding of certain slaves to create what were deemed more desirable mulatto, quadroon and octoroon women for prostitution and concubinage. Centred in New Orleans, this fancy trade spread increasingly light-skinned slave women throughout the South for the sexual gratification and profits of both male and female slave masters and brothel keepers, who eagerly played the role of pimps. The money earned in this way nearly always moved between white hands, bypassing the violated slave body in the customer’s boudoir.¹⁶

The fancy trade often included perfumed Dignity Balls, dances where white purchasers perused slave women. These celebratory performances of white power often disguised the imagined pungent odours of African and mulatto women through patchouli, oranges and magnolias. Many of these balls also involved the masking of African American women and their paying suitors as a further means of hiding the social sins of those committing nominally reprehensible but extremely common acts of interracial rape and prostitution.¹⁷ White women would often also be involved in forcing relationships between slaves in the brothels of the fancy trade and as part of the more common patterns of procreation necessary for the slave system to endure and profit on large plantations.¹⁸ Less purposeful or planned sexual acts were also common, as the rape of slave bodies by

during Slavery (London and New York: Routledge 2018); Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 2008), 63–96; Lisa Ze Winters, *The Mulatta Concubine: Terror, Intimacy, Freedom, and Desire in the Black Transatlantic* (Athens: University of Georgia Press 2018), 67–106; Wendy Anne Warren, ‘“The cause of her grief”: the rape of a slave in early New England’, *Journal of American History*, vol. 93, no. 4, 2007 1031–49; and Brooke N. Newman, *A Dark Inheritance: Blood, Race, and Sex in Colonial Jamaica* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press 2018), 108–44.

16 For the fancy trade, see Brenda E. Stevenson, ‘What’s love got to do with it? Concubinage and enslaved women and girls in the antebellum South’, in Daina Ramey Berry and Leslie M. Harris (eds), *Sexuality and Slavery: Reclaiming Intimate Histories in the Americas* (Athens: University of Georgia Press 2018), 159–88; and Edward E. Baptist, ‘“Cuffy,” “Fancy maids,” and “One-eyed men”: rape, commodification, and the domestic slave trade in the United States’, *American Historical Review*, vol. 106, no. 5, 2001, 1619–50.

17 Andrea Stuart, *Sugar in the Blood: A Family’s Story of Slavery and Empire* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf 2013), 210–12; Emily Clark, *The Strange History of the American Quadroon: Free Women of Color in the Revolutionary Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2013), 68–9, 174–5.

18 For the influence of white women in the rape of enslaved men, in causing sexual violence against female slaves and promoting forced rape among slaves, see Stephanie Jones-Rogers, ‘Rethinking sexual violence and the marketplace of slavery: white women, the slave market, and enslaved people’s sexualized bodies in the nineteenth-century South’, in Berry and Harris (eds), *Sexuality and Slavery*, 109–23; Sharony Andrews Green, *Remember Me to Miss Louisa: Hidden Black-White Intimacies in Antebellum America* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press 2015); and

white men was not considered a crime in the slave states, and these relatively frequent acts of self-gratification had little to do with the profits of creating mulatto bodies for the fancy trade or more labourers for the plantation fields.¹⁹

Even with this white use of miscegenation for pleasure or profit, slaves and free Blacks also often used mixed-race heritage to defend their children's legal rights in courtrooms throughout the North and South. These legal arguments regularly rested on lineages that tied some slave children to their master's bloodlines and the possible freedom and wealth that those pedigrees could potentially earn in a slave system in which children of slave women were generally considered property of the master. While it was more common for mixed-race children to emerge from violent acts of rape and forced breeding in slavery, they also frequently came from consensual relationships between white and black spouses, although such unions remained relatively scandalous for the entirety of the nineteenth century.²⁰ Despite these consensual acts and the loving families that could come from them, the slave system and the later structures of Jim Crow were often supported by the constructed idea that miscegenation generally came from the overwrought desires of stinking, contagious and aggressive black men and dark and perfumed women branded Jezebels.²¹

Emancipation, amalgamation, and scented certainty

Part of the hardening debate on sensory disgust, amalgamation and race in the American public sphere during the nineteenth century involved argu-

Stephanie Jones-Rogers, *They Were Her Property: White Women as Slave Owners in the American South* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press 2019), 123–50.

- 19 Dorothy Roberts, 'The paradox of silence and display: sexual violation of enslaved women and contemporary contradictions in black female sexuality', in Bernadette J. Brooten and Jacqueline L. Hazelton (eds), *Beyond Slavery: Overcoming Its Religious and Sexual Legacies* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2010), 41–60.
- 20 For background, see Karen Woods Weierman, *One Nation, One Blood: Interracial Marriage in American Fiction, Scandal, and Law, 1820–1870* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press 2010); and Martha Hodes, *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth-Century South* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press 1999), 19–38. For the role of genealogy in freedom petitions in North American slavery, see also Jessica Millward, 'Wombs of liberation: petitions, law, and the black woman's body in Maryland, 1780–1858', in Berry and Harris (eds), *Sexuality and Slavery*, 88–108.
- 21 George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny 1817–1914* (New York: Harper and Row 1971), 218–78. For general analysis of the rise of whiteness in the nineteenth century, see Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press 1998); and David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso 1991).

ments over the proper place for African Americans when emancipation would finally arrive in the United States, as it would in Britain and its colonies during the 1830s.²² Whether the arguments were for the transportation of Africans to Sierra Leone and Liberia, or for African Americans to be integrated into different spaces of American society, the debates on race and nation grew into a furore that became increasingly sexualized and violent. In their passionate justifications for slaveholding, pro-slavery advocates continued to insist on the racial, religious and sensory inferiority of African bodies.²³

Within this ideological struggle of the early years of the nineteenth century, the antebellum South reignited an extensive academic debate that elaborated many previous centuries of religious and pseudoscientific literatures about the signifying smells of the black body. Abolitionists occasionally pointed out the absurdity of these deliberations, and argued vigorously against the racialist declarations of African olfactory inferiority from scholars as renowned as Benjamin Rush and Thomas Jefferson.²⁴ For example, Massachusetts defender of free labour and newspaper editor Asa Greene's parodic *A Yankee among the Nullifiers* (1833) described a machine, created by a fictional industrialist, that emitted 'purifying and sweetening' agents throughout factories meant to cure the 'native smell' that emanated from the 'sooty skins' of African slaves. This machine, called the 'Anti-African-Odor-Gas-Generator', was meant to sweeten rooms in which industrial slaves laboured. In his satire, written as a response to the Nullification Crisis and Algernon Sidney Johnston's *Memoirs of a Nullifier* (1832), Greene created the idea of a machine that would prevent the noisome odours of black bodies from distressing delicate white nostrils, thus mocking the absurd arguments about the inherent smell of black bodies and the

22 For similarities between the racial conceptions of abolitionists and slaveholders, see the examples in Roxann Wheeler, "'Betrayed by some of my own complexion': Cugoano, abolition, and the contemporary language of racialism', in Vincent Carretta and Philip Gould (eds), *Genius in Bondage: Literature of the Early Black Atlantic* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky 2001), 17–38; and for an analysis of the impressible body and sentimentalism, see Kyla Schuller, *The Biopolitics of Feeling: Race, Sex, and Science in the Nineteenth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2018), 35–67, 76–80.

23 For pro-slavery rhetoric, see Larry E. Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701–1840* (Athens: University of Georgia Press 1987); Lacy K. Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009); and Drew Gilpin Faust (ed.), *The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830–1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press 1981).

24 B[enjamin] Rush, 'Reasons for ascribing the colour of Negroes to leprosy', *Monthly Magazine and American Review*, vol. 2, no. 4, 1800, 298–301; John Mitchell, 'An essay upon causes of the different colours of people in different climates', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, vol. 43, no. 474, 1744, 102–50; Thomas Jefferson, 'Notes on the State of Virginia' [1785], in Susan Castillo and Ivy Schweitzer (eds), *The Literatures of Colonial America: An Anthology* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell 2001), 530–6.

justification of slavery that those smells provided in the minds of racist intellectuals.²⁵

In the emerging literary world of science fiction and utopian or dystopian literature, to be made famous during the later nineteenth century by Edward Bellamy and Samuel Butler, racial politics of the nose also became a vital ingress for tortuous and illogical racial distortions.²⁶ Implicitly denying that such a machine as Greene's would be humorous, Jerome Holgate's dystopian fiction *A Sojourn in the City of Amalgamation* insisted that such machines would be necessary if the United States emancipated the majority of Southern slaves. Holgate, who was from Vermont and lived most of his life as an author and social commentator near Utica in the state of New York, provided a detailed account of different technological innovations that would be required from American laboratories if black and white bodies began to breed in the open rather than behind the curtains of Southern homes and brothels. Holgate, who was twenty-two when he wrote the book, often participated in debates on the desired transportation of free African Americans to Liberia, and first circulated his racist dystopian fiction in the Utica Literary Club after abolitionists began to point out the more nefarious goals of the American Colonization Society during the early 1830s.²⁷

Holgate tapped into racial prejudices already familiar in the pseudoscientific literature of race and smell well known in the racist academies of the antebellum era. His dystopian society represented the fears of racist minds about the coming waves of emancipation, increasingly dreaded after the success of the Haitian rebellion and the arrival of freedom for British slaves throughout much of the Atlantic World. Illustrating the anxieties and sensory revulsion felt after debates on nullification nearly led to civil war, the most striking scene in his narrative involved a Northern preacher in the fictional 'City of Amalgamation' who stumbled through a sermon because he had to constantly reach for a flask of aromatic lavender beside his pulpit. The emancipationist church where the preacher celebrated his mixed congregation was furnished with large machines 'composed of fans and little vials, ingeniously intermingled' to prevent the odour of African bodies from invading the nostrils of the male visitors who prized the

25 Elnathan Elmwood [*pseud.* i.e. Asa Greene], *A Yankee among the Nullifiers: An Autobiography*, 2nd edn (New York: William Pearson 1833), 90–4 (92); Algernon Sidney Johnston and Thomas Cooper, *Memoirs of a Nullifier: Written by Himself* (Columbia, SC: Telescope Office 1832).

26 For background on dystopia, racial rebellion and the rise of capitalism, see Louis Chude-Sokei, *The Sound of Culture: Diaspora and Black Technopoetics* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press 2016), 21–49; and John Rieder, *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press 2008), 97–122.

27 Lemire, *Miscegenation*, 68–82. For more on olfactory aspects of literature, see Hans J. Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books: A Cultural-Historical Study of Olfactory Perception in Literature* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 1992); and Daniela Babilon, *The Power of Smell in American Literature: Odor, Affect, and Social Inequality* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang 2017).

visual beauty of their darker wives but still could not bear the smells of the 'evaporations' and 'offensive air' that emanated from their 'odoriferous' spouses. During a central scene early in the work, when the scent of a recently arrived African American woman spread through the church, the preacher began to choke violently. For another parishioner, the odour of the unperfumed dark women entering his nostrils forced him to vomit, copiously covering the processional rows of pews near other sickened congregants.²⁸

Like the dizzyed preacher and his flock, those who could not stand these repulsive natural odours were taken to a 'perfumery'. Therein white parishioners enthusiastically drank infused alcoholic spirits made from special 'boilers' meant to desensitize noses so they could encounter African smells more easily. In these olfactory laboratories, nearby machines removed the nasal hairs from the practitioners of miscegenation as physical evidence and medical measurement of a forced social patterning of anosmia. As this absurd fiction portrays, the truth of racism for Holgate was experienced within the body. The 'stomachal tide' gushing forth from the flock when they smelled still unperfumed Africans was an embodied form of racist revulsion that correctly told the American body to hate and fear possible contagion from the African Other. Overcoming these natural and proper forms of disgust through perfume machines that sprayed camphor and lavender scents would be against nature, akin to the unnatural and sexual integration of American society that Holgate believed was the aim of abolitionists during the early 1830s.²⁹

Holgate's attack on this belief in the unnatural intermarriage of white and black sets the central narrative of *A Sojourn in the City of Amalgamation*. He portrays the metropolis as a dystopian hellscape for the heroine, the helpless Julia Sternfast, who was expected to wed a black man to contribute to the progress of this Northern city of amalgamation. As part of this narrative of the white female threatened with black suitors and an arranged marriage, Julia attends a ball at which 'the most grim, uncouth, blear-eyed, distorted, outlandish monsters ... consorted with the loveliest damsels'.³⁰ At this soirée and in dealings with her father, Julia, in part through the clumsy portmanteau of her surname, is portrayed as a lost and disheartened young white

28 Bolokitten, *A Sojourn in the City of Amalgamation*, 17–24. For more on smell and the Other, see Constance Classen, 'The odor of the Other: olfactory symbolism and cultural categories', *Ethos*, vol. 20, no. 2, 1992, 133–66; Jonathan Reinartz, *Past Scents: Historical Perspectives on Smell* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press 2014), 85–112; Yadira Perez Hazel, 'Sensing difference: whiteness, national identity, and belonging in the Dominican Republic', *Transforming Anthropology*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2014, 78–91; Mark M. Smith, 'Transcending, Othering, detecting: smell, premodernity, modernity', *Post-medieval*, vol. 3, no. 4, 2012, 380–90; and William Tullett, 'Grease and sweat: race and smell in eighteenth-century English culture', *Cultural and Social History*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2016, 307–22.

29 Bolokitten, *A Sojourn in the City of Amalgamation*, 24–34.

30 *Ibid.*, 170–1.

woman caught in a dystopian world where she is to be unwillingly wedded to a black man whom Holgate considered an 'outlandish monster'. Guided by her father, who espoused the ideal of amalgamation as a 'duty' for his daughter to follow, Julia learns, in one telling metaphorical moment, not to turn her carriage away from a noisome 'pool of sluggish water' because all forms of prejudice were to be considered 'sinful'. In this crude metaphor equating the smell of stagnant water with black skin, Holgate depicts a falsely constructed emancipationist ideology of forced sexual congress to achieve the paternalistic goal of coercing Americans to 'accustom [themselves] to ... poisonous effluvia' that emanated from both dark bodies and stinking puddles.³¹

The desire to avoid the black body, metaphorically allied with dirtied water, became central to the romantic tale crucial to the latter part of Holgate's fiction. Because of her anticipated coerced marriage, 'the beautiful hues' of Julia's white cheeks 'faded fast' into pallid and ghostly fearfulness; her 'lips once eloquent with love's witchery, with dimples sweet, and soft smiles beaming over them, were now mute. Wo[e]'s mantle wrapped them all.'³² As part of this racialized motif of fear and virgin whiteness, Holgate formulated a fanciful escape story for Julia to flee her expected and dreaded future miscegenation with an African man. In the final scene of the novel, her apparently black paramour, whom Julia had been forced to marry after dodging the conceits of other possible dark-skinned husbands, dipped his black face into the 'foaming waters' of a large pail. Holgate poetically tells his reader that, when that face emerged from the tub, it was 'most wonderfully changed' as the deceptive blackface of her true love gently soaped away to uncover the 'sweet smile' and white face of her previous beau, gallant trickster and present white husband, Albert Ossleton. This heroic use of blackface provided Julia with freedom from the odours of blackness that would have pervaded her virginal body and infected her correctly positioned (in Holgate's view) racist perceptions.³³

Because of the racist force of works like *A Sojourn in the City of Amalgamation*, the ironic quality of abolitionist writers like Asa Greene took many decades to be appreciated and to convince the general American public of the absurdity of racial odours. Even within several progressive texts of the later antebellum era, the idea of Africans as a pungent Other was retained as an embodied marker of race. The famed supporter of freedmen and founder of Berea College, John Gregg Fee, argued in his *Anti-Slavery Manual* (1848): 'Africans of the present generation in our country, have far less of that smell that their forefathers had.'³⁴ Such a supposition suggests that even when the most progressive of emancipationists spoke of African

31 *Ibid.*, 138–40.

32 *Ibid.*, 169.

33 *Ibid.*, 189–90.

34 John G. Fee, *An Anti-Slavery Manual* (Maysville, KY: Herald Office 1848), 199.

and African American bodies, they often were also informed by a tacit American knowledge of embodied racism that began in the nose and found expression in both texts of racial disgust and those of abolitionist paternalism.³⁵

US Army Chaplain Stephen Alexander Hodgman, even while critiquing the hypocrisy of other abolitionists as falsely magnanimous during the Civil War, similarly noted:

Some of the very elite of American Society ... have been able, not only to dwell with them in the same country, and to tolerate their dark colour and their African odor, but they even had such a partiality and affection for them, that they could not do without their presence in the nursery, in the kitchen, in the parlor, and in every other department of domestic life.³⁶

Such a latent sentiment was also apparent in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), in which the paternalism of abolitionists who believed in African colonization was questioned through the figure of the reluctant slaveholder Augustine St Clare, who condemned colonizers who would simply send slaves back 'to Africa, out of your sight and smell, and then send a missionary or two to do up all the self-denial of elevating them compendiously'.³⁷

From a less honourable perspective than Stowe's abolitionism, Allen Gazlay, under the pseudonym 'Cephas Broadluck', published *Races of Mankind: With Travels in Grubland* (1856), an allegorical and frequently awkward attack, evoking comparable forms of sensory disgust to those in *A Sojourn in the City of Amalgamation*. Unlike the abolitionists who pursued African American freedom with a frequent and latent paternalism that included sensory language, Gazlay believed that violent forms of sexual amalgamation would arrive quickly if freedom were granted to black bodies in the United States. Much less direct and certainly more obscure than Holgate's earlier dystopia, Gazlay's religiously inspired work defended the right of the racist nose to be disgusted through a winding representation of the political force of those 'holding the black statue', namely the abolitionists, who desired that the Caucasians of his fictional world plug their noses and remove their sense of smell. At a central moment in this dystopian narrative, the 'Grubmaster of all Grubland' decreed that all those not holding the

35 For more on American abolitionism and racism, see John Wood Sweet, *Bodies Politic: Negotiating Race in the American North, 1730–1830* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press 2003), 271–311.

36 Stephen Alexander Hodgman, *The Nation's Sin and Punishment, or, The Hand of God Visible in the Overthrow of Slavery* (New York: American News Company 1864), 215–16.

37 Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Negro Life in the Slave States of American* (London: Clarke & Co. 1852), 151. For the senses and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, see Martha J. Cutter, *The Illustrated Slave: Empathy, Graphic Narrative, and the Visual Culture of the Transatlantic Abolition Movement, 1800–1852* (Athens: University of Georgia Press 2017), 190–2.

'black statue' would no longer be allowed to use their sense of smell. Gazlay's work implies that such controls were ridiculous, as the nose was the sensory organ that alerted all people to the visceral dangers of nearby environmental and racial threats.³⁸

The obscure metaphors of Gazlay's text point to an era directly before the Civil War when the belief in the odours of African bodies was so potent and widely debated that allegorical references to black smells in a future dystopia would have been easily understood by the common reader. For the metaphorical abolitionists 'holding the black statue', smell was not perceived as a racial problem. The Grubmaster, as a leader who aimed to create a society of 'puerile humors',³⁹ that is, childlike compliance, thus allowed those freedom-loving citizens to keep their biological sense of smell. However, because some inhabitants did not support the cause of black freedom, their sense of smell would be removed as evidence of their lack of social assimilation, a practice that was frequently enforced in Grubland through technologies that were able 'to make Deformity appear Lovely'.⁴⁰

Because of their incapacity to follow the five biological senses and the truth those perceptions provided, Gazlay defined the truly unfree and enslaved as those Grublanders who succumbed to the prejudice that denied their original perceptions of the Other. In more direct aspects of his work, Gazlay argued that 'varieties in the human race are not designed barely for display, as the ancients considered the starry heavens; on the contrary, when we embrace these varieties in connection with the diversities of the mind, they furnish the foundation of all science and progress'.⁴¹ For the racists that were defended in *Races of Mankind: With Travels in Grubland*, the smell of Africans was an important signifier of the inferiority of black bodies and minds; eradicating the right to smell would therefore remove protective mechanisms that Gazlay deemed essential to the protection of the American body politic.⁴²

Four years after Gazlay's abstruse, racist and smell-obsessed work, Holgate published *Noachidæ: Or, Noah, and His Descendants* (1860) as a similar, though less metaphorical, analysis of the importance of separating the races of mankind. Holgate's narrative of the tale of Noah and his sons repeats the customary racist description of Ham and his son Canaan as dark-skinned. In Holgate's version of the story, the character of Ham was unquestionably pessimistic and stubborn. His language was 'gruff', his gaze was 'dark' and the character Asia comments that 'he is so jealous and overbearing, and acts as though he wanted to rule us

38 Broadluck, *Races of Mankind*, 138–46. For sensory skills, see Mark S. R. Jenner, 'Tasting Lichfield, touching China: Sir John Floyer's senses', *Historical Journal*, vol. 53, no. 3, 2010, 647–70; and Sarah Maslen, 'Researching the senses as knowledge', *Senses and Society*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2015, 52–70.

39 Broadluck, *Races of Mankind*, 'Memorandum', iv.

40 *Ibid.*, 138.

41 *Ibid.*, 14.

42 *Ibid.*, 144–6, 255–66.

all'.⁴³ This overbearing nature is demonstrated when Ham was particularly insolent when first unloading animals from the ark, at one point merely flinging open a compartment of birds who were consequently 'left to manage for themselves'. Furthermore, Holgate depicted Ham as applying 'a rod to the animals' backs' when they were in distress. Consequently, with the culminating act of the Curse of Ham, whereby Canaan was cursed with dark skin because his father viewed Noah's naked body and spoke of that witnessing, the reader would not have been shocked to find Noah's proclamation that his 'descendants will enjoy the poorest portion of the earth ... You will seek to rule, but you will be slaves; for the Almighty humbles the proud.'⁴⁴

The men and women who prospered while living beneath the protective blanched umbrella of racial knowledge in the American nineteenth century preserved their conviction of racial superiority through the use of their sensory organs and a belief in the inferior moral and medical condition of African and African American peoples. For Holgate and Gazlay, discovering race through the sense of smell was a moral and biological imperative for a nation that was soon to face the ravages of amalgamation. These racists knew that the differences of racial superiority and inferiority existed because they sensed disgust as fact. The racist beliefs of the nineteenth century were simplified through the claim that Whites existed at the top of a social hierarchy of Othered bodies, a position asserted through greater and more encompassing languages of whiteness and the experience of the senses to justify this place atop orders of both civilization and aroma.⁴⁵

Legal and social implications of the olfactory dystopian imaginary

The uncanny racism of smell in the dystopias of Holgate and Gazlay grew out of literary fancy and medical debate into a political, social and legal

43 Jerome B. Holgate, *Noachidae, or, Noah, and His Descendants* (Buffalo, NY: Breed, Butler & Co. 1860), 24–6. For more on the curse of Ham and Atlantic slavery, see Benjamin Braude, 'The sons of Noah and the construction of ethnic and geographical identities in the medieval and early modern periods', *William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 54, no. 1, 1997, 103–42; David M. Whitford, *The Curse of Ham in the Early Modern Era: The Bible and the Justifications for Slavery* (Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate 2009); and William McKee Evans, 'From the land of Canaan to the land of Guinea: the strange odyssey of the "Sons of Ham"', *American Historical Review*, vol. 85, no. 1, 1980, 15–43.

44 Holgate, *Noachidae*, 40–2, 75, 160–2.

45 For an introduction to whiteness and the rise of Social Darwinism in Anglo-Atlantic literature, see Joseph Carroll, *Literary Darwinism: Evolution, Human Nature, and Literature* (New York and London: Routledge 2004); and Edward Beasley, *The Victorian Reinvention of Race: New Racisms and the Problem of Grouping in the Human Sciences* (New York and London: Routledge 2012), 97–111. See also Britt Rusert, *Fugitive Science: Empiricism and Freedom in Early African American Culture* (New York: New York University Press 2017), 65–112.

assertion throughout the later years of the American nineteenth century. For Southern physician Samuel Cartwright, creator of the ludicrous medical diagnosis of 'drapetomania',⁴⁶ the smell of African bodies justified more than simply the continuance of slavery or condemnation of the perversity of slaves wanting to escape bondage. As Cartwright argued in the 'Natural History of the Prognathous Species of Mankind', later to be applied as an informal brief for the court's decision in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857):

The skin of a happy, healthy negro is not only blacker and more oily than an unhappy, unhealthy one, but emits the strongest odor when the body is warmed by exercise and the soul is filled with the most pleasurable emotions. In the dance called *patting juber*, the odor emitted from the men, intoxicated with pleasure, is often so powerful as to throw the negro women into paroxysms of unconsciousness, vulgar hysterics.⁴⁷

The *Dred Scott* case set the precedent that citizenship was not available to African Americans. The arguments for African subhumanity that upheld the case were partly justified on aromatic grounds that linked sexuality and civilization in a pungent conceptual miasma based on centuries of false racial knowledge.⁴⁸

The use of blackface in minstrel shows of the late nineteenth century increasingly introduced these ridiculous representations of black odour, endorsed by high legal culture, to the fresh immigrant populations of the *Herrenvolk* Democracy. Many Americans came to believe these racial myths were sensory facts, often associating the absurd physical traits and sexual tones of the minstrel shows with actual black cultures. On the eve of the Civil War, the frequency of these minstrel shows increased as the nation faced difficult questions of race and future integration. These spectacles often included songs that would describe the sensory traits of African bodies in terms of stereotypical and fabricated racial narratives.⁴⁹

46 The mental illness that, according to Cartwright, was the cause of attempts by slaves to escape captivity.

47 Samuel A. Cartwright, 'Natural history of the prognathous species of mankind', *New York Day-Book*, 10 November 1857; reprinted as an appendix in *The Dred Scott Decision: Opinion of Chief Justice Taney* (New York: Van Evrie, Horton and Co. 1863), 45–8 (48), and in E. N. Elliot (ed.), *Cotton Is King, and Pro-Slavery Arguments* (Augusta, GA: Pritchard, Abbot and Loomis 1860), 707–16 (714).

48 For more on the *Dred Scott* decision, American racism and citizenship, see Martha Jones, *Birthright Citizens: A History of Race and Rights in Antebellum America* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 2018), 128–45.

49 For blackface minstrelsy, see Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press 1993), 38–62; Dale Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 1997); and John Hanners, *'It Was Play or Starve': Acting in the Nineteenth-Century American Popular Theatre* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press 1993).

The minstrel song ‘Who Will Care for Niggers Now?’ was distributed by the racist minstrel ballad publisher H. De Marsan of New York City. The song related the tale of a wayward freedman unable to care for himself after the loss of his master. Probably written directly after William Tecumseh Sherman’s march to free Southern cities from the continued yoke of the Confederacy, it told of a black voice searching for his master’s caring hands:

List to me, plantation niggers,
As I in dis mud-hole lie;
Though I feel starvation’s rigors,
Let me say a word, and die.
Niggers, does dis look like Freedom?
I can’t see it any how;
Blacks are fools, and white folks lead ‘em:
But who cares for niggers now?

Such a preposterously constructed figure, ‘relieved from his master’s corn-crib and bacon-stack’, was considered to be wholly imbued ‘wid de African scent’ and therefore unable to come to terms with the responsibilities of his newfound freedom.⁵⁰

In many other cases of scientific and popular dissemination, craniologists travelled throughout the technical lyceums of the Atlantic World to offer performances of their skull observations to adoring racist crowds.⁵¹ When discussing smell, these presentations often continued to make pseudoscientific links between sensing, the size of the nose and concerns with the moral aptitudes of different races.⁵² For some phrenologists, like the sculptor Ambrose Lewis Vago’s *Orthodox Phrenology* (1870), the shape and aptitude of the nose revealed the abilities of specific individuals. Certain nose shapes, for some believers of the pseudoscience, meant that the individuals possessing them were better at perceiving the character of those around

50 Anonymous, ‘Who will care for niggers now? A parody on: Who will care for mother now?’ (New York: H. De Marsan n.d.). Courtesy of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

51 Shawn Michelle Smith, *American Archives: Gender, Race, and Class in Visual Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1999), 29–50; Britt Rusert, ‘The science of freedom: counterarchives of racial science on the antebellum stage’, *African American Review*, vol. 45, no. 3, 2012, 291–308.

52 For phrenology, see J. G. Spurzheim, *Phrenology, or, The Doctrine of the Mental Phenomena*, Volume 1 (Boston: Marsh, Capen & Lyon 1832), 309–11; George Combe, *Elements of Phrenology* (Edinburgh: John Anderson/ London: Simpkin and Marshall 1824), 86–7; J. Stanley Grimes, *A New System of Phrenology* (Buffalo, NY: Oliver G. Steele/ New York: Wiley and Putnam 1839), 69–76; G. S. Weaver and J. Burns, *Lectures on Mental Science according to the Philosophy of Phrenology: Delivered before the Anthropological Society of the Western Liberal Institute of Marietta, Ohio, in the Autumn of 1851* (London: James Burns, Progressive Library 1876), 42–5; Frederick Bridges, *Phrenology Made Practical and Popularly Explained* (London and Liverpool: George Philip & Son 1860), 40–61.

them, making particular nasal shapes purportedly common among creative types and writers.⁵³ Many Americans and Europeans in these phrenological circles believed that these sensory abilities determined their own personal aptitude in judging civilization, character and class, an expectation of superiority they had learned from the racial falsities of the previous centuries and increasingly cultivated through this pre-Freudian form of psychoanalysis. These beliefs mirrored the white-aggrandizing dystopian literature that worked to educate sensory skills, flatter white minds and teach bodies how to smell the socially unacceptable.⁵⁴

Tangential to such racialized discourses, scatological theories also surfaced during the late nineteenth century. They defined those perceived as inferior through often belaboured analyses of shit-stained ritual cultures. Irish American and United States Army Captain John Gregory Bourke's *Scatologic Rites of All Nations* (1891) summarized the intense olfactory worlds of non-western peoples during this era of New Imperialism in which cleanliness and the lack of odour persisted as markers of civility. Although much of his fieldwork was spent with the Zuni nations of the American West, Bourke homogenized Othered populations in terms of developmental anthropology and through tales of excremental desires. The former soldier turned ethnographer made sweeping generalizations about Africans through collecting numerous oft-repeated tales of a naturally stinking people who defecated in the open, drank rhinoceros faeces in their nightly concoctions, slept on beds made of cow dung, tanned their animal skins with shit, and split their milk with cattle urine.⁵⁵ In these fresh narratives of civilization and odour that emerged during the late nineteenth century, tied often to the back of the beaten horse of scientific racism, smells were increasingly linked to primitive peoples, further placing all non-Europeans at an earlier stage of cultural evolution.⁵⁶

53 A. L. Vago, *Orthodox Phrenology*, 2nd edn (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co. 1871), 49–52.

54 For more on phrenology in the Atlantic World, see Ann Fabian, *The Skull Collectors: Race, Science, and America's Unburied Dead* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 2010); Tim Fulford, Debbie Lee and Peter J. Kitson, *Literature, Science and Exploration in the Romantic Era: Bodies of Knowledge* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 2004), 127–48; Stephen Tomlinson, *Head Masters: Phrenology, Secular Education, and Nineteenth-Century Social Thought* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press 2013), 286–345; and James Poskett, *Materials of the Mind: Phrenology, Race, and the Global History of Science, 1815–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2019).

55 John G. Bourke, *Scatologic Rites of All Nations: A Dissertation upon the Employment of Excrementitious Remedial Agents in Religion, Therapeutics, Divination, Witchcraft, Love-Philters, Etc., in All Parts of the Globe* (Washington, D.C.: W. H. Lowdermilk & Co 1891), 148, 30, 36, 180, 178, 39; Stephen Greenblatt, 'Filthy rites', *Daedalus*, vol. 111, no. 3, 1982, 1–16.

56 For example, see the 1835 description of former slave Joice Heth's purportedly wondrous ability to smell, quoted in Benjamin Reiss, *The Showman and the Slave: Race, Death, and Memory in Barnum's America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

The metropolitan centres in England and the newly imperial United States enlisted a transnational scientific and medical knowledge supported by these forms of virulent racism that increasingly used the perception of pungent bodies to mark categories of race and inferiority.⁵⁷ For instance, American doctors George Milbry Gould and Walter Lytle Pyle's *Anomalies and Curiosities of Medicine* (1896) asserted that certain races, especially after coitus, retained identifiable and specific biological odours. Following on from work by the French biologist Jean Louis Armand de Quatrefages de Bréau, and citing the famed German travelling anatomist Franz Pruner-Bey on the purported bumps on African skin, the American physicians declared: 'Negroes have a rank ammoniacal odor, unmitigated by cleanliness ... due to a volatile oil set free by the sebaceous follicles.'⁵⁸ Scientific accounts of smelly bumps and stinking hairs, reminiscent of earlier works from throughout the Atlantic World by scholars like John Mitchell of the Royal Society during the 1750s, were pseudoscientific truths that justified race as a hard category to be used to promote the growth of the West's dominance over Africa and the rest of the colonial world, where dark bodies were increasingly linked as racialized, temporally lagging and smelly forms of the Other.⁵⁹

These scientific theories about race often appeared in later American social discourses and legal texts that increasingly codified whiteness as a social category. The landmark case for defining the separate but equal clause of Jim Crow, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), specifically involved the accusation of blackness proved through the sense of smell. As Mark Smith has shown, because Homer Plessy looked so confusingly white, Southern jurists in this test case

2001), 87. For the importance of smell to works on civilization, see also Nicolas Joly, *Man before Metals* (New York: D. Appleton and Company 1891), 171–2; Gerald Massey, *The Natural Genesis*, Volume 1 (London: Williams and Norgate 1883), 77–83; J. Mount Bleyer, 'The "sense of smell"—in relation to medico-legal questions', *Journal of the Respiratory Organs*, vol. 1, no. 9, September 1889, 181–3; and Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* [1871] (London: John Murray 1899), 23–4, 114–15.

57 For more on racism in nineteenth-century medical traditions, see Tracy Teslow, *Constructing Race: The Science of Bodies and Cultures in American Anthropology* (New York: Cambridge University Press 2014), 32–73; Pat Shipman, *The Evolution of Racism: Human Differences and the Use and Abuse of Science* (New York: Simon & Schuster 1994); and Sari Altschuler, *The Medical Imagination: Literature and Health in the Early United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2018), 133–59.

58 George M. Gould and Walter L. Pyle, *Anomalies and Curiosities of Medicine* (New York: Bell Pub. Co. 1896), 398–400 (399); A. De Quatrefages, 'Physical characters of the human races', trans. from the French by Eliza A. Youmans, *Popular Science Monthly*, vol. 2, no. 33, 1873, 541–52 (546).

59 Mitchell, 'An essay upon causes of the different colours of people in different climates'. See also Robert Knox, *The Races of Men: A Philosophical Enquiry into the Influence of Race over the Destinies of Nations*, 2nd edn (London: Henry Renshaw 1862); and Jessica Blatt, *Race and the Making of American Political Science* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2018).

had difficulty in knowing how to categorize this activist, who could pass for white, as a black man. In their deliberations, Southerners in the courtroom drew on the science of smell to define Plessy as black.⁶⁰

In the broader United States after *Plessy*, the rise of Jim Crow laws increased the marking of black bodies as deeply pungent and provided new spaces for later American culture to perpetuate olfactory stereotypes of African Americans in the cinema, theatre and literature. Such transnational ideologies passed into the racial narratives of the twentieth century well beyond the era of the Civil Rights Movement, even though experiments, like those of Canadian psychologist Otto Klineberg during the 1930s, proved that no differences in smell could be traced across racial lines. Although tests showed black people had no material odours, racists persisted with the idea that dark bodies smelled in order to continue repressive policies in disciplinary contexts like the prison system, housing, schools and hospitals.⁶¹

Blackness, odour and genetic modernity

Even though most of the academy understands that race is not genetic, intellectuals in the West remain at a loss when most do not correctly understand the place of the body in the marking of race. The racist mind cannot simply be told that race does not exist, because racist knowledge is not entirely conscious. Rather, racial knowledge is embodied to such an extent in racialist perceptions that the experience of encountering the Other seems to be biological and verifiable. To deconstruct racism by educating the mind alone therefore creates a resistant body and a resilient body politic of racists and their embodied siege mentality. To deconstruct the way the sensory organs of the racist sense the Other, more attention must be paid to the subconscious experiences of disgust inculcated in the social habitus.⁶²

60 Smith, *How Race Is Made*, 66–110. For more on the body, language and sensory experience, see Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1966); George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* [1980] (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 2008), 57–8; Asifa Majid and Stephen C. Levinson, 'The senses in language and culture', *Senses & Society*, vol. 6, 2011, 5–18; and Thomas A. Sebeok, *Signs: An Introduction to Semiotics*, 2nd edn (Toronto, Buffalo, NY and London: University of Toronto Press 2001), 11–23, 124–6.

61 Smith, *How Race Is Made*, 115–40; Robert E. Park, 'The bases of race prejudice', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 140, no. 1, 1928, 11–20; Otto Klineberg, *Race Differences* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers 1935).

62 For race, taste and habitus, see R. C. Lewontin, Steven Rose and Leon J. Kamin, *Not in Our Genes: Biology, Ideology, and Human Nature* (New York: Pantheon 1984); Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. from the French by Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1984), 190–2; and William Ian Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press 1997). For the senses, disgust and Othering, see Chris Woolgar, 'The social life of the senses: experiencing the self, others, and

Race, in modern academic parlance, is a social construct, but materialist drives incentivize many still to consider it important to find race in the genetic code, as a space to be divined by computers that have partially replaced the five senses and their perceptions of the racial Other.⁶³ Racialization began with the body, was written as science and now is also read by computers through a genomic code and quantitative spectrum that retains traits of disgust, allowing historical correlation to mean racial causation in what should be outdated racial terms.⁶⁴ Such technology, as with earlier forms of ethnic categorization and with scientific racism, is not neutral. Rather, it is white and patriarchal, born of a history of racial oppression that began in an Enlightenment obsessed with cataloging information as a means of racial control and labour appropriation. That desire for racial classification continues today in the corporate algorithms of search engines that represent a white and neoliberal order that circulates racial knowledge to reap the ever-increasing profits of late capitalism from a demanding base of racists undergoing the social alterations of status shock.⁶⁵

This coding of race in genetics and computing pairs with the continuing racism in political and public spheres, in which the constant political attention to immigration and policing in Britain, France and the United States often relies on using the language of smell-versus-cleanliness to describe the shitholes and odours of the immigrant Other. These disturbing political

environments', in Richard G. Newhauser (eds), *A Cultural History of the Senses*, Volume 2 (London: Bloomsbury 2014), 23–44; Emily Walmsley, 'Race, place, and taste: making identities through sensory experience in Ecuador', *Etnofoor*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2005, 43–60; and Winfried Menninghaus, *Disgust: Theory and History of a Strong Sensation*, trans. from the German by Howard Eiland and Joel Golb (Albany: State University of New York Press 2003), 35–8, 104–11.

63 Ashley Montagu, *Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race* [1942] (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira 1997). For genetics and race in historical contexts, see Stephan Palmié, 'Genomics, divination, "racecraft"', *American Ethnologist*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2007, 205–22; Mark M. Smith, 'Finding deficiency: on eugenics, economics, and certainty', *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, vol. 64, no. 3, 2005, 887–900; and Mikuláš Teich, 'Mapping the human genome in the light of history', in Mikuláš Teich, Roy Porter and Bo Gustafsson (eds), *Nature and Society in Historical Context* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997), 308–31.

64 For problematic analyses of modern race science, see Gregory Cochran, Jason Hardy and Henry Harpending, 'Natural history of Ashkenazi intelligence', *Journal of Biosocial Science*, vol. 38, no. 5, 2006, 659–93; Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (New York: Free Press 1994); Michael Specter, *Denialism: How Irrational Thinking Hinders Scientific Progress, Harms the Planet, and Threatens Our Lives* (New York: Penguin 2009); and Nicholas Wade, *A Troublesome Inheritance: Genes, Race, and Human History* (New York: Penguin 2014).

65 For the analysis of the power of algorithms to consistently reproduce racial stereotypes in the digitized public sphere, see Safiya Umoja Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* (New York: New York University Press 2018), 1–14; and Lisa Nakamura, *Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures of the Internet* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press 2008), 171–201.

discourses have increasingly included many racialized observations, often coming in recent years from former US President Donald Trump. In addition, these racially and politically motivated comments may also remind many of the famous 'Le bruit et l'odeur' speech in 1991 from the Mayor of Paris and future French President Jacques Chirac. That telling oration highlighted western racial concerns about the 'noise and smell' of Northern African immigrant council tenants about whom French workers complained. Chirac, despite such latently Orientalist and prejudicial language, assured his listeners, as both earlier dystopian writers and current politicians defending racial prejudices have done, that 'it is not being racist to say this'. These specific immigrants from North Africa were portrayed as polygamists dependent on the social security safety net of the French state. For Chirac, if French workers were not allowed to be racist about those they perceived as stinking welfare frauds, they would become angry and resentful citizens who felt their national identity destroyed. Such simplistic embodied perceptions of ethnic nationalism are now common in narratives of the forgotten white man and white fears of loss of status proliferating in current British, French and American political spectrums. The current anti-racist movement understands these transnational bonds of whiteness that perpetuate the idea that dark bodies, regardless of nationality, are simply Other with many common traits.⁶⁶

These debates on race, nationalism, immigration, sexuality, smell and contagion cause western cultures to continue to dig into the body, as deep as the very genes at the root of the human form, to discover ethnicity and social causality. Definitions of skin colour were never enough, smell was deeply embodied but still not sufficient for racist progress. Now race is found encoded in the digital matrix of DNA as part of our increasingly technological lives.⁶⁷ The transnational disease of olfactory racism that infected western

66 Deepika Bahri, *Postcolonial Biology: Psyche and Flesh after Empire* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press 2018), 19–20; David Goodhart, *The British Dream: Successes and Failures of Post-War Immigration* (London: Atlantic Books 2014), 143–4; Michael Kimmel, *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era* (New York: Bold Type Books 2017); Liz Fekete, *Europe's Fault Lines: Racism and the Rise of the Right* (London and New York: Verso 2019); Desmond Manderson, 'Senses and symbols: the construction of drugs in historic and aesthetic perspective', in Lionel Bently and Leo Flynn (eds), *Law and the Senses: Sensational Jurisprudence* (London and Chicago: Pluto Press 1996), 199–216; and Toby Miller, 'The ragpicker-citizen', in D. Robert DeChaine (ed.), *Border Rhetorics: Citizenship and Identity on the US-Mexico Frontier* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press 2012), 212–26 (212–22).

67 For more background on DNA and racial codes in the neoliberal state, see Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose, 'Biopower today', in Vernon W. Cisney and Nicolae Morar (eds), *Biopower: Foucault and Beyond* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 2016), 297–325; Nikolas Rose, *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2009), 155–87; Naomi Zack, *Philosophy of Science and Race* (London and New York: Routledge 2002), 59–118; Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, revd edn (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company 2006); and Sarah

sensory consciousness during the early modern era involved the application of various aspects of medicine, science and literature that placed the western body in a space of purity while displacing the bodies of racial Others into what were defined as excremental and wasteful cultural spaces. These forms of western racism were often so virulent they could construct deeply embodied sensations. Mixing the sight of a black body with a vast cultural motif buried deep in the sensory membranes, many racist British people, Western Europeans and Americans smelled Africans as pungent regardless of the material reality.⁶⁸

Dystopian and racist authors in the United States of the nineteenth century borrowed from these ideas and later spread beliefs in olfactory racism more widely in the public sphere. These authors, and the racists who read their works and continued to print pseudoscience about the African body, believed that the nose was an important tool in detecting sensory and moral inferiority in Othered bodies. The dystopias of Holgate and Gazlay combined ideas of truth and race through the sensory experiences of the nose, inheriting earlier myths constructed through false consciousness of the smell of Africans throughout the Atlantic World. Despite the efforts of academics in deconstructing such absurd sensory beliefs and experiences, many aspects of olfactory racism continue in the languages of both current political leaders and in the bowels of the Internet. Because these perceptions continue today through what seems for many racists a biological experience, scholars must focus much more on analysing embodied perceptions of the Other if academic understanding of the social construction of race is to make any inroads in the face of the return of racist and fascist modernity throughout the contemporary West.⁶⁹

E. Chinn, *Technology and the Logic of American Racism: A Cultural History of the Body As Evidence* (New York and London: Continuum 2000), 141–67.

68 For more on race, the body and the senses, and the embodied defences of racists, see Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* (Boston: Beacon Press 2018). For the sensory analysis of race, masochism and the colour line, see Amber Jamilla Musser, *Sensational Flesh: Race, Power, and Masochism* (New York and London: New York University Press 2014), 88–117. And for the role of music and difference, see Jennifer Lynn Stoeber, *The Sonic Color Line: Race and the Cultural Politics of Listening* (New York and London: New York University Press 2016), 229–76.

69 For the persistence of racism, especially in American contexts, see Robert Wald Sussman, *The Myth of Race: The Troubling Persistence of an Unscientific Idea* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press 2014), 43–106; Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press 1997); Kimberly Juanita Brown, *The Repeating Body: Slavery's Visual Resonance in the Contemporary* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2015); and Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press 2012). For recent syntheses of racist traditions, see Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York: Nation Books 2016); and Jacqueline Jones, *A Dreadful Deceit: The Myth of Race from the Colonial Era to Obama's America* (New York: Basic Books 2015).

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