

Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide

a journal of nineteenth-century visual culture

R. Tess Korobkin

The Greek Slave and Materialities of Reproduction

Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide 15, no. 2 (Summer 2016)

Citation: R. Tess Korobkin, “*The Greek Slave* and Materialities of Reproduction,” *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 15, no. 2 (Summer 2016), <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/summer16/korobkin-on-the-greek-slave-and-materialities-of-reproduction>.

Published by: [Association of Historians of Nineteenth-Century Art](#)

Notes:

This PDF is provided for reference purposes only and may not contain all the functionality or features of the original, online publication.

License:

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#) [Creative Commons License](#).

Abstract:

As one of the most widely reproduced sculptures of the nineteenth century, Hiram Powers’s *Greek Slave* was a landmark statue defined in relation to its own reproduction. This article considers how the popularity of *The Greek Slave* at exhibition turned the statue into a ubiquitous subject for a wide range of reproductive media including prints, calotypes, daguerreotypes, stereoviews, statuettes, and even textiles. It explores these reproductive representations as sites of sculptural display that shaped the experience of the statue for vast and varied audiences and as self-reflexive and interpretative responses to the dissemination of a shackled nude across the transatlantic Victorian world.

The Greek Slave and Materialities of Reproduction

by R. Tess Korobkin

In August 1851, three months after the opening of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations at the Crystal Palace in London, the *Illustrated London News* declared that “*The Greek Slave*, by Powers, has attracted so much attention, and received so much eulogy from the multitude, that we are induced to give a representation of it from two distinct points of view.”^[1] This double representation is telling (fig. 1). First, it evokes the statue itself being turned on its rotating base at the end of the main avenue of the Crystal Palace. Second, it demonstrates how the popularity of the single sculptural body demands multiple views in reproduction: one exposing the distinctive shackles of the slave and the other featuring the figure’s celebrated back. Finally, the double portrayal resonates with the scholarly consensus that *The Greek Slave*, a statue produced in multiple marble versions by the American sculptor Hiram Powers (1805–73), activates a series of binaries at the heart of Victorian culture: it is classical and modern, sensual and chaste, Eastern and Western. For some, it withdraws from the squalor of the nineteenth century into a realm of aesthetic purity; for others, it stands at the crux of the most urgent political crisis of the era, the conflict over transatlantic slavery and emancipation.^[2]

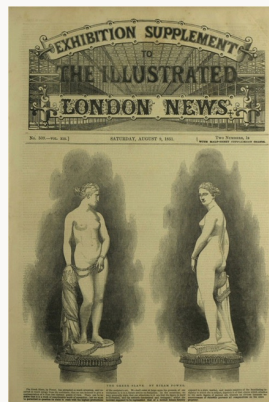


Fig. 1, “*The Greek Slave*, by Hiram Power [sic],” *Illustrated London News*, August 9, 1851: 185. [\[larger image\]](#)

This essay investigates the intersection of the discursive multiplicity through which *The Greek Slave* was interpreted and the material multiplicity through which it was reproduced in an astonishing array of forms, including prints, calotypes, daguerreotypes, stereoviews, statuettes, ceramics, and even textiles. As one of the most widely reproduced sculptures of the nineteenth century, *The Greek Slave* was a landmark statue defined in relation to its own reproduction. Enabled by technological developments in a range of media, these reproductions disseminated the lauded figure and, at the same time, constituted independent objects of widely varying size, material, and degree of fidelity to Powers’s originals. I begin by considering representations of the statue on public display at two international exhibitions, London’s Great Exhibition of 1851 and the Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations at the New York Crystal Palace in 1853, exploring how notions of progress and replication were attached to Powers’s sculpture. I then turn to reproductions in ceramics and photography meant for private, domestic display in

parlors and in hand-held objects, examining how these objects shaped the experience of the statue for vast and varied audiences and commented on the phenomenon of sculptural replication. Throughout, American slavery and emancipation provide the broader historical context for considering reproductions of *The Greek Slave* not simply as copies, but as self-reflexive and interpretative responses to the dissemination of a shackled nude figure across the transatlantic Victorian world.

“A specimen of progress”: Reproducing *The Greek Slave* at International Exhibitions

At international exhibitions, *The Greek Slave* became an iconic work, inflected by the parade of nations exhibiting their place in industrial modernity. At the same time, it emerged as a kind of juggernaut of reproduction—a single object proliferating in meaning, materiality, and cultural ubiquity.^[3] Representations of the statue as an exhibition object in London in 1851 and New York in 1853 provide insight into the meanings attached to *The Greek Slave*’s public display. As was widely known, the figure represents a Christian woman captured during the Greek War of Independence (1821–32) and displayed for sale in a Turkish slave market. Scholars have explored *The Greek Slave*’s resonance in Victorian Britain and America as an abolitionist icon and symbol of American barbarity; however, less attention has been paid to the statue’s celebration as a “specimen of progress” for the United States.^[4]

A calotype by Hugh Owen (1804–81) of *The Greek Slave* (1844, first version, Raby Castle, Staindrop) at the Great Exhibition presents the figure as an aesthetic achievement of the highest order (fig. 2). Produced as one of 154 photographic illustrations for the royally commissioned *Reports by the Juries*, a luxurious and official four-volume catalogue, the image and accompanying description position Powers’s statue within a narrative of national industrial progress. In Owen’s photograph, the pale marble figure floats in an opaque, dark background where even the pedestal is obscured. The tones articulating the carved form emphasize both the accomplishment of the American sculptor and the skillful exposure and printing by Owen of the calotype, a paper-based photographic process invented by the Englishman William Henry Fox Talbot.^[5] This idealizing image asserts an iconic view of the statue, defined by the head captured in perfect profile.

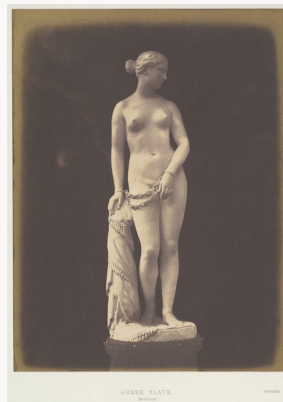


Fig. 2, Hugh Owen, *Greek Slave*, 1851. Salted paper print from paper negative. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/263305>. [\[larger image\]](#)

The authoritative and exalted visual rhetoric of Owen's representation takes on particular cultural import in relation to the accompanying text. Preceding the photograph is the following celebration of American progress:

The American States . . . have attained to great perfection in many branches of industry, and are now beginning to turn their attention to the sciences and also to those arts which minister to the spiritual rather than the animal wants of man, and which have for their high purpose the investigation of truth, and the expression of beauty through form. All who have truly at heart the advancement of civilization, and regard it as the common good of mankind, must sincerely rejoice at the success which has attended this new movement of the American mind.[\[6\]](#)

In the *Reports*, *The Greek Slave* is not merely a symbol of artistic achievement but also evidence of the former colony's maturation as a nation. As a symbol of the United States in London, the statue was assessed by and for a British audience, at the Great Exhibition, through the royally commissioned *Reports*, and under the gaze of the British photographer. As a document of the statue in this context, Owen's photograph helped to situate *The Greek Slave* as a step in the ascendance of American civilization under explicitly British stewardship.

The sense of Anglo-American fellowship around the statue in 1851 was supported through the story of its patronage. As was widely reported, an Englishman, Captain John Grant, commissioned the marble statue from Powers and arranged its first exhibition in London in 1845. While Powers produced two additional full-scale marble versions (1846, second version, Corcoran Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; 1847, third version, Newark Museum, Newark, NJ), which toured the United States between 1847 and 1849, the first statue remained in Grant's possession in England.[\[7\]](#) It was this version that he loaned to the American display at the Great Exhibition in 1851. Thus, while *The Greek Slave* symbolically "arrived" in London after a successful American tour, published correspondence between Grant and Edward Riddle, commissioner to the Industrial Exhibition, and N. S. Dodge, the United States Commissioner, revealed that the statue was British property, and British magnanimity enabled its presence in the American display.[\[8\]](#) It is not surprising that at the heart of this demonstration of Anglo-American cultural alliance is an enslaved figure, indicative of the inextricable histories of the white and black Atlantic.[\[9\]](#)

A picture of *The Greek Slave* on display in John Cassell's *Illustrated Exhibitor* suggests the multiple values that could be attached to the statue's public exhibition (fig. 3). The image includes a rare representation of the railing that protected the figure from the hands of admirers.[\[10\]](#) In doing so, it juxtaposes two forms of confinement visible to exhibition visitors: the slave in her shackles and the statue in its railed enclosure. This illustration reminds us that the public display of *The Greek Slave* made the viewer's position ambiguous as a beholder of a lauded artwork and of a denigrated human for sale. It depicts the public display of the statue as a site of convergence, bringing together the elevated, ideal body in sculpture and the commodified body in slavery.

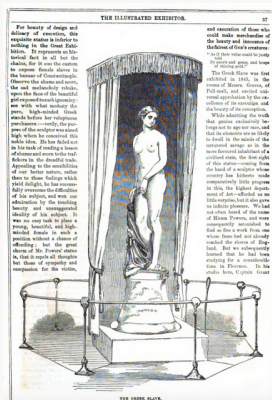


Fig. 3, “The Greek Slave,” *The Illustrated Exhibitor, a Tribute to the World’s Industrial Jubilee; Comprising Sketches by Pen and Pencil, of the Principal Objects in the Great Exhibition of the Industry of all Nations* (London) no. 1, June 7, 1851: 37. [\[larger image\]](#)

Taking a different approach to evoking the displays of international exhibitions, a nineteenth-century coverlet by an unknown maker in Kent provides a powerful representation of *The Greek Slave* at the center of a matrix of commodities, including the statue’s own reproduction (fig. 4). Two silhouettes of *The Greek Slave* flank the printed floral centerpiece, and are surrounded by a large central field decorated with applied motifs of myriad common and exotic items. Like many Victorian objects meant for domestic use, the coverlet works to identify the middle-class home with the cultured space of the exhibition, and perhaps invokes the specific value of Christian modesty associated with the statue.^[11]



Fig. 4, Unknown maker, Coverlet, ca. 1851. Cotton appliqué on cotton ground. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photo: Victoria and Albert Museum. [\[larger image\]](#)

By reproducing the sculpture as a pair of mirror images, the coverlet addresses sculptural reproduction. The symmetrical silhouettes indicate the use of a flat template that could be flipped over. Such a template might have been obtained from the many iconic images of the sculpture in journals and newspapers. In this way, the textile design engages sculptural display

beyond the exhibition, specifically in print media.^[12] Unlike the double representation of the statue on display in the *Illustrated London News*, the doubling in this composition does not provide multiple views of a single object. Rather, it presents the statue as multiple. Here, *The Greek Slave* is a recognizable and reproducible shape. The fabric silhouettes function less as copies of a unique sculptural object, and more as playful riffs on a dematerialized image available for reproduction in any material imaginable.

At the New York Crystal Palace in 1853, the display of at least three versions of *The Greek Slave* affirmed that the iconic statue was an object defined in relation to its own reproduction. In the fine arts court, a life-size marble, the third that Powers produced, stood alongside several other works by the sculptor. As in London, this statue was celebrated in the press as an American artistic achievement that could hold its own alongside the impressive European works.^[13] At the same time, a purveyor of stearine, a hard, waxy substance integral to the production of candles, displayed a replica of *The Greek Slave* made out of this utilitarian material in a different section of the exhibition. A guide described the exhibit: “With questionable appreciation of *high art*, the exhibitor has *done* the Greek Slave in this exceedingly plastic material, thus ambitiously displaying both his wares and his artistic *powers*.”^[14] The stearine *Greek Slave* suggests that the statue’s popularity and fame made it an ideal subject for replication in unconventional new materials.^[15] In this case, the spectacle of its reproduction worked as a humorous advertisement for the exhibitor.

A further version of *The Greek Slave* on view at the New York Crystal Palace was a Parian statuette designed and manufactured by the British ceramic firm W. T. Copeland and Sons.^[16] Parian porcelain, developed by English manufacturers in the early 1840s, was celebrated for its similarities to marble and soon became the most popular new medium for statuette replicas.^[17] Copeland manufactured its first Parian version in 1852, aiming to capitalize on the statue’s popularity at the Great Exhibition in London, as well as its proven success as Parian ware for the rival firm Minton and Company, which had begun producing its own models in 1848.^[18] In New York, the Copeland statuette was an example of British technological and manufacturing prowess. It was also a desirable commodity for a fashionable New York elite.^[19] At a closing auction hosted at the New York Crystal Palace in 1854, the *New York Daily Times* reported that “the anxiety to possess Alderman Copeland of London’s Parian Statuette of Power’s [*sic*] ‘Greek Slave,’ by the bidders, advanced that embryo piece of statuary to \$63.”^[20] In comparison to the usual price of five or six dollars for statuary porcelain, this was an exceptional amount, revealing the appeal of imported *Greek Slave* statuettes for an American market in the early 1850s.^[21]

In the years before the Civil War, reproductions of *The Greek Slave*, as well as full-scale marble versions produced by Powers, circulated as commodities for sale in the United States. At the same time, in the American South, people continued to buy and sell enslaved people at auction. In December 1854, only a month after the closing auction at the New York Crystal Palace, the *Annapolis Gazette* advertised *The Greek Slave* as a raffle prize for subscribers to the Cosmopolitan Art Association at the top of page three, and at the bottom, announced the sale on “Friday, the 12th day of January next” of a “Negro Woman named Nelly, about 20 years of age, a slave for life” (fig. 5).^[22] In 1850s America, slavery constituted an inevitable part of *The Greek Slave*’s cultural import in every situation.



Fig. 5, “The Greek Slave!” and “Collector’s Sale,” *Annapolis Gazette* (Maryland), December 28, 1854: 3.
[\[larger image\]](#)

“Very good copy this is”: Reproducing *The Greek Slave* in the Victorian Interior

As mementos of the statue at exhibition and prized aesthetic objects in their own right, statuettes of *The Greek Slave* were frequently displayed in Victorian homes on both sides of the Atlantic.^[23] Anticipating the appeal of English statuary porcelain for an American market, the *Report of the Commissioner of Patents For the Year 1851* called for the wide dispersal of small-scale reproductions of “statues of high order,” including *The Greek Slave*, to extend the “salutary influence of the popular cultivation of art, in a moral and social point of view.” The report continues, “especially in our own country, where works of art must necessarily be for many years to come confined to copies, we desire to see fine examples in statuary porcelain largely multiplied.”^[24] Recognizing the democratic potential of small-scale, industrially manufactured reproductions, the *Report* proposes that statuettes might provide access to sculpture for an American audience with limited exposure to original works produced in Europe.

As some of the most popular statuettes in mid-nineteenth-century America, the *Greek Slave* reproductions were made in a range of materials including plaster, alabaster, bronze, and Parian.^[25] This variety allowed for purchase at practically any price, from the plaster casts sold for a shilling to the more expensive bronze and alabaster versions. Writing in 1853, Annie Parker praised cheap plasters as an egalitarian product that would enable “the home of the laborer [to be] ornamented . . . as well as the palace of the millionaire.”^[26] Of course, not all reproductions were equal. Mrs. Merrifield, writing in *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, notes that while “small models of the ‘Greek Slave’” are “not unfrequently offered by the Italian image-venders for one shilling,” she recommends that “if possible, a sharper and better cast” of Powers’s figure “should be found on the toilette of every young lady.”^[27] The widespread dispersal of statuettes provided many consumers, across geography and class, with a sign of genteel refinement. At the same time, parsing the quality of reproductions allowed distinctions to be made among their purchasers in terms of class and taste, thereby reinstating a hierarchy of access to *The Greek Slave*.

In addition to statuette reproductions, new photographic technologies made *The Greek Slave* widely available for private, individual consumption. In doing so, they enhanced the qualities of access, intimacy, and even mastery over the figure, which might intensify the eroticism of any encounter with the shackled nude. The sensational victimization of the figure was central to its appeal in every medium. As Joy Kasson has argued, Powers's statue provided an acceptable occasion for Victorian viewers to consume titillating, sexually explicit imagery under the guise of moral outrage or pure aesthetic neutrality.^[28] By 1851, photography was rapidly emerging as the primary medium for representing sculpture, and the enormous popularity of *The Greek Slave* made it a key subject for photographic reproduction. A daguerreotype of *The Greek Slave* in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, presented in a leather case lined with red silk and framed in gold, is a sensuous, tactile object (fig. 6). Like all daguerreotypes, its polished silver surface is highly reflective. The best viewpoint is often achieved by cradling the case in one's hands. Viewing the daguerreotype inevitably becomes an intimate experience, and in this context, *The Greek Slave's* controversial nakedness easily kindles its erotic, even quasi-pornographic potential.^[29]

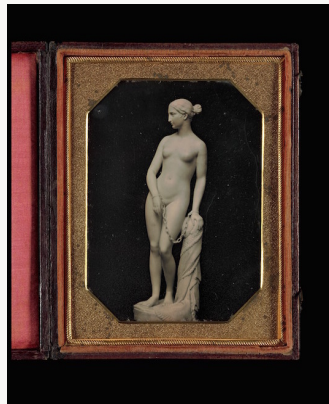


Fig. 6, Unknown maker, "Hiram Powers's Sculpture of the Greek Slave," ca. 1850. Daguerreotype. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/286313>.

[\[larger image\]](#)

Upon closer examination, however, it is clear that the daguerreotype does not depict one of the six full-scale marbles produced by Powers, but rather a statuette. Unlike Powers's versions, the wrists of this figure are linked by a long, single strand of chain, closely resembling the Parian statuette by Minton (1848, Parian ware on gilt-wood base and glass dome), now in the National Trust Collection at Arlington Court.^[30] In a kind of Pygmalion effect, the intimate experience of the photograph invites the viewer to endow the statuette with the life-size scale of the original statue. In spite of the availability of widely varying reproductions in multiple media, the daguerreotype nevertheless functions as a trigger for imaginative engagement with the marble original.

While access to one of the original marbles by Powers would have been difficult for photographers in American cities to arrange, small statuette versions were extremely popular and readily available as photographic subjects. The viewers of these photographs did not see

what they thought they saw, and this experience was typical rather than extraordinary—many reproductions varied significantly from the original, often poorly replicating or changing details of Powers’s design.^[31]

A humorous anecdote from 1858, published in *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, mocks just this kind of credulous gaze. Dropping in on a “gallery of daguerreotypes,” the narrator reports:

There I saw a picture, an Irish hod-carrier standing at the side of his hod, pipe in mouth. The poor fellow looked wearied enough with his tour, and I appreciated the fanciful title written underneath, “The Greek Slave By the Powers!”

Just then a dandified fellow happened to spy it, and taking out his eye-glass, gave it a critical examination and drawled out, “Ah, yes! Greek Slave! Powers’s Greek Slave: very fine, saw the original; very good copy this is; fine specimen of the art.” And being perfectly satisfied that he had seen a copy of the Greek Slave he walked on to study the next.^[32]

Like this pretentiously ignorant dandy, many American consumers believed in their experiences of photographic reproductions of *The Greek Slave*. Indeed, many nineteenth-century photographs of *The Greek Slave* depict sculptural reproductions of varying quality and accuracy, offering an under-examined record of the great variety of statuettes of the figure in circulation.^[33] While we can assume that sometimes such images “passed” as representations of the original, claims to authenticity betray a need to assuage doubts. The text on the back of a stereoscopic photograph of *The Greek Slave* in the Victoria and Albert Museum derides copies of the statue in “Plaster, Parian and Lithographs” for “bearing little or no resemblance to the great original.”^[34] The explicit conversations between reproductive media suggest a sphere of appropriation and market competition among representations produced for domestic viewing.

A cream-colored earthenware pitcher with brown Rockingham glaze offers an unusual representation of *The Greek Slave* on a functional vessel, one that reflects a multilayered response to the conventions of domestic statuette display (fig. 7).^[35] On either side of the pitcher, Powers’s statues *The Greek Slave* and *Eve Tempted* are rendered in relief and presented in shallow niches outlined with decorative arches. These niches are unusual, both because applied figures in ceramics of this period were often raised on the curved surface of the vessel and because the niches have been left white in contrast to most American Rockingham wares, which were dipped or splattered in all-over brown glaze before firing.^[36] Perhaps the design is a reference to exhibition displays such as the red canopy under which *The Greek Slave* was shown at the Great Exhibition in London. However, when both statues were displayed at the New York Crystal Palace in 1853 (where it is possible the unknown modeler of this pitcher saw them), neither had a covering.^[37]



Fig. 7, Detail of pitcher showing decoration after Hiram Powers's *Greek Slave*, ca. 1853. Earthenware with Rockingham glaze. Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven. Photo: Yale University Art Gallery. The other side of the pitcher has a decoration after Powers's *Eve Tempted*. [\[larger image\]](#)

The figures in their white domes surrounded by the mottled brown background are also evocative of Parian statuettes displayed under glass shades in Victorian parlors. These glass shades were a practical method of protecting white statuary porcelain from smoke, soot, and pollution, as well as providing aesthetic augmentation that marked these figures out as special. [\[38\]](#) The design underscores the importance of whiteness, suggesting not only notions of purity and protection, which were the explicit aim of the glass shades, but also racial connotations. Kirk Savage has argued that, in keeping with the aesthetic of neoclassicism, Powers rendered *The Greek Slave* to be the “very exemplar of whiteness,” including a profile that recalls the archetypes used by nineteenth-century racial theorists. For Savage, “Powers’s work thus becomes a phantasm of slavery: in it the degraded status of the slave is reversed and rendered ideal.” [\[39\]](#) Unconsciously, this rare ceramic design makes a similar connection, linking the convention of domestic statuette display—as a contrast of purity and pollution, of cream and dark brown—to the racial significance implied and disavowed by Powers’s representation of an enslaved Greek woman.

Looking back to the coverlet (fig. 4), we can see that it too is a domestic object that carries with it the context of American slavery. It is a cotton bedcover embedded in a transatlantic industry invested in slave labor. The rise of the cotton textile industry in eighteenth-century Britain was enabled, in large part, by the importation of cotton from the slave plantations in British colonies in the Caribbean and the American South. We can think of the hands of the coverlet’s maker, but also the hands of laborers in textile factories and cotton fields whose work is present in this object. The quilt reminds us that the question of slavery and modernity is not posed by the iconography of *The Greek Slave* alone. Slavery was fundamental to the rise of industrial modernity celebrated at the international exhibitions and imbricated in the culture of reproduction that made *The Greek Slave* a quintessential domestic object of the nineteenth century.

Such a connection was not lost on thinkers of the time. In a speech delivered in New York, on the twenty-third anniversary of West Indian Emancipation in 1857, Frederick Douglass (1818–95) laid out the connection between slavery and industrial development in the Atlantic world:

We hear and read much of the achievements of this nineteenth century, and much can be said, and truthfully said of them. The world has literally shot forward with the speed of steam and lightning. . . . Machinery of almost every conceivable description, and for almost every conceivable purpose, has been invented and applied; ten thousand discoveries and combinations have been made during these last fifty years, till the world has ceased to ask in astonishment “what next?” for there seems scarcely any margin left for a next. I am not here to disparage or underrate this physical and intellectual progress of the race. . . .

Men do not live by bread alone, so with nations. They are not saved by art, but by honesty. . . .

It is in this view that West India Emancipation becomes the most interesting and sublime event of the nineteenth century. It was the triumph of a great moral principle, a decisive victory, after a severe and protracted struggle, of freedom over slavery.[\[40\]](#)

Frederick Douglass never wrote about *The Greek Slave*, but when he died in his Cedar Hill home in Washington, DC, in 1895, a nineteen-inch statuette of Powers’s figure was among his belongings (fig. 8). A photograph of his home at the time of his death shows the statuette displayed on the piano in the informal west parlor (fig. 9). Another photograph of Douglass, from a few years earlier when he was consul-general to the republic of Haiti, shows him at his desk with the statuette behind him (fig. 10). These images suggest not only that Douglass owned the reproduction, but also that he kept it prominently visible in his homes in the United States and Haiti.[\[41\]](#)



Fig. 8, Unknown maker, *Greek Slave*, undated (after 1869). Ceramic with painted metal chains. Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, Washington, DC. Photo: National Parks Service. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 9, West Parlor (the informal or family parlor) at Cedar Hill, ca. 1895. Photograph. Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, Washington, DC. Photo: National Parks Service. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 10, Frederick Douglass at his Desk in Haiti, ca. 1889–91. Photograph. Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, Washington, DC. Photo: National Parks Service. [\[larger image\]](#)

We might assume that Douglass, perhaps the greatest reformer, orator, and writer of the American antislavery movement, purchased the statuette as an abolitionist statement. In 1850, he published a letter in his *North Star* paper from a fellow abolitionist who had seen *The Greek Slave* in Rochester, New York, and reported that it was a potent icon of injustice, one that condemned all slave mongers, “be their names Hassam, Salim, James, Judas or Henry, their country Algeiers or Alabama, Congo or Carolina, the same.”^[42] However, Douglass was also certainly aware of the protest by William Wells Brown and William and Ellen Craft at the site of the statue’s display in the Great Exhibition in London. This intervention, which [Lisa Volpe discusses in her article](#), highlighted the fact that, as an ideal representation of a white woman, the statue failed to represent the racial structure of slavery in the United States.^[43] It is likely, therefore, that Douglass understood both the utility and the deficiency of *The Greek Slave* as a symbol of the antislavery cause.^[44]

An examination of Douglass’s statuette suggests that he did not purchase it at the height of abolitionist responses to *The Greek Slave* in the early 1850s, but at least two decades later. Three long, straight, linked bars form the chain between the wrists of the figure, confirming that this

statuette is a reproduction of the last full-scale marble that Powers produced of *The Greek Slave* (1866, sixth version) and sold to Edwin W. Stoughton in 1869 (now in the Brooklyn Museum, New York). In a letter to Stoughton, Powers explained the substitution of “regular manacles for the rather ornamental than real chain in former repetitions of the ‘Greek Slave’” as “more to the purpose.”^[45] Charmaine Nelson and Vivien Green Fryd argue that the realistic manacles signaled a deliberate effort to make specific reference to American slavery and its abolition, reflecting Powers’s own increasing abolitionist sympathies in the late 1850s and through the Civil War.^[46] Douglass’s statuette, though neither a Minton nor Copeland design, is a porcelain ceramic. The miniature chain is made of metal, painted to match the figure, and attached to small loops on the wrists. Thus the piece could have been produced to replicate Powers’s altered design, or manufactured after an earlier version and refitted with a new chain to reflect the change.

The fact that Douglass owned this particular version indicates that he acquired the statuette in the 1870s, after abolition was an accomplished fact, and that he chose to own the version of *The Greek Slave* that was the most explicit in its reference to the slavery in America. We can only wonder whether for Douglass, who continued to fight for the civil rights of African Americans and women throughout his life, the statue served as a remembrance of the great triumph of emancipation, an emblem of the continuing struggle for full enfranchisement, or, at the end of a century of exhibitions, a reminder of the imbrication of exploitation and industrial modernity.

R. Tess Korobkin is a PhD candidate in art history at Yale University, where she specializes in American art and visual culture. Her dissertation examines how American figurative sculptors of the 1930s responded to the era’s societal turbulence and new aesthetic possibilities. Tess was recently a curatorial research assistant and contributing author to the catalogue for the exhibition *Sculpture Victorious: Art in an Age of Invention, 1837–1901* (Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, 2014; Tate Britain, London, 2015). Currently, she is a Joan Tisch Teaching Fellow at the Whitney Museum of American Art, and in September 2016, she will begin a yearlong predoctoral fellowship at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC.

Email the author: tess.korobkin[at]gmail.com

Notes

This essay evolved from my research concerning reproductions of *The Greek Slave* in nineteenth-century Britain for the exhibition and publication *Sculpture Victorious: Art in an Age of Invention, 1837–1901*. I am very grateful to Martina Droth and Michael Hatt for the opportunity to undertake and continue this work. The assistance of Ka’mal McClarin, curator of the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, was invaluable in learning about Frederick Douglass’s little-known statuette.

[1] “The Greek Slave. By Hiram Power [sic],” *Illustrated London News*, August 9, 1851.

[2] Joy Kasson, *Marble Queens and Captives: Women in Nineteenth-Century American Sculpture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 46–72; Vivien M. Green, “Hiram Powers’s *Greek Slave*: Emblem of Freedom,” *American Art Journal* 14, no. 4 (Autumn 1982): 31–39; Alexander Nemerov, “When Did Art Become Meaningless?,” *The Yale Review* 99, no. 2 (2011): 94–103; Sara Hackenberg,

"Alien Image, Ideal Beauty: The Orientalist Vision of American Slavery in Hiram Powers's 'The Greek Slave,'" *Victorian Newsletter* 114 (Fall 2008): 30–50; and Yopie Prins, "Classics for Victorians: Response," *Victorian Studies* 52, no. 1 (2009): 52–62.

[3] For more about *The Greek Slave* at the Great Exhibition and the phenomenon of its reproductions, see Martina Droth, Jason Edwards, and Michael Hatt, eds., *Sculpture Victorious: Art in an Age of Invention, 1837–1901*, exh. cat. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 244–51, 306–27.

[4] The phrase "specimen of progress" comes from a review in the *Times* of the first exhibition of *The Greek Slave* in London. "Mr. Power's [sic] 'Greek Slave,'" *Times* (London), May 28, 1845, 5. For *The Greek Slave* as a symbol of American barbarity at the Great Exhibition, see Richard Huzzey, *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 30–34.

[5] Droth, Edwards, and Hatt, eds., *Sculpture Victorious*, 308–11, cat. nos. 105, 106, 107.

[6] *Reports by the Juries on the Subjects in the Thirty Classes into which the Exhibition was Divided*, 4 vols. (London: Spicer Brothers and W. Clowes and Sons, 1852), 4:1585.

[7] Richard P. Wunder, *Hiram Powers: Vermont Sculptor, 1805–1873*, 2 vols. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1974), 2:157–61. Hiram Powers produced six full-scale marbles in his Florence studio between 1844 and 1869.

[8] Edward Riddle, N. S. Dodge, and John Grant, "Industrial Exhibition," *Times* (London), April 29, 1851, 5.

[9] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); and Tim Barringer, "A White Atlantic? The Idea of American Art in Nineteenth-Century Britain," *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 19 (2009), accessed May 16, 2016, <http://ntn.ubiquitypress.com/articles/10.16995/ntn.507/>.

[10] *The Illustrated Exhibitor, a Tribute to the World's Industrial Jubilee; Comprising Sketches by Pen and Pencil, of the Principal Objects in the Great Exhibition of the Industry of all Nations*, June 7, 1851, 37, accessed May 16, 2016, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=ucl.31175001860983;view=lup;seq=50>.

[11] Katherine Grier examines this relationship in Victorian America in *Culture and Comfort: Parlor Making and Middle-Class Identity, 1850–1930* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1997).

[12] Droth, Edwards, and Hatt, eds., *Sculpture Victorious*, 325–27, cat. no. 117.

[13] Catherine Hoover Voorsanger and John K. Howat, *Art and the Empire City: New York, 1825–1861* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), 160.

[14] William Carey Richards, *A Day in the New York Crystal Palace, and How to Make the Most of It, Etc.* (New York: Putnam, 1853), 34, accessed May 16, 2016, <https://archive.org/details/dayinnewyorkcrys00rich>.

[15] In another spectacle of experimental reproduction, the *Sacramento Daily Union* reported that Mrs. A. O. Cook exhibited "a statuette of Powers' *Greek Slave*, in wax, copied with as scrupulous exactness as the material and size will allow." "Eighteenth Annual State Fair," *Sacramento Daily Union*, September 21, 1871, 3.

[16] "Auction Sale at the Crystal Palace," *New York Daily Times*, November 9, 1854, 3.

[17] Along with Minton, Copeland was the major manufacturer of high-quality reductions of celebrated statues in Parian.

[18] Droth, Edwards, and Hatt, eds., *Sculpture Victorious*, 249–51, cat. nos. 82, 83.

[19] Voorsanger, *Art and the Empire City*, 160.

[20] "Auction Sale at the Crystal Palace."

[21] This price is quoted in Catharine Esther Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The American Woman's Home: or, Principles of Domestic Science: Being a Guide to the Formation and Maintenance of Economical, Healthful, Beautiful, and Christian Homes* (New York: J. B. Ford, 1869), 94, accessed May 16, 2016, <https://archive.org/stream/americanwomansh01stowgoog/page/n109/mode/2up>.

[22] "The Greek Slave!" and "Collector's Sale," *Annapolis (MD) Gazette*, December 28, 1854, 3.

[23] Ellen Paul Denker, "Parian Porcelain Statuary: American Sculptors and the Introduction of Art in American Ceramics," *Ceramics in America* (2002): 66–67, accessed May 16, 2016, <http://www.chipstone.org/article.php/38/Ceramics-in-America-2002/Parian-Porcelain-Statuary:-American-Sculptors-and-the-Introduction-of-Art-in-American-Ceramics>.

[24] "Arts and Manufactures," in *Report of the Commissioner of Patents For the Year 1851*, (Washington, DC: Robert Armstrong, 1852), 425, accessed May 16, 2016, <https://archive.org/stream/reportofcommissi1851lunit/page/424/mode/2up>.

- [25] Michele Bogart, *Attitudes Toward Sculpture Reproductions in America: 1850–1880* (PhD Diss., University of Chicago, 1979), 138–49.
- [26] Annie Parker, “Letter from Annie Parker,” *Auburn (NY) Cayuga Chief*, January 4, 1853, 2.
- [27] Mrs. Merrifield, “*Dress as Fine Art*,” *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, July 1853, 20–22.
- [28] Kasson, *Marble Queens and Captives*, 50–55.
- [29] Droth, Edwards, and Hatt, eds., *Sculpture Victorious*, 308–11, cat. nos. 105, 106, 107.
- [30] *Ibid.*, 249–50, cat. nos. 82, 83.
- [31] William Bloor produced one such crude *Greek Slave* statuette in Trenton, New Jersey, between 1853 and 1856. Now in the collection of the Newark Museum, it shows the distortions of poor modeling and the traces of experimental manufacture in the firecracks that cover the surface. In spite of the roughness of the reproduction, in 1915, John Cotton Dana, the founding director of the Newark museum, made it a part of American ceramic history by including it in the “Historic Pottery” cases of the *Exhibition of the Clay Products of New Jersey*.
- [32] Quoted in Shirley Teresa Wajda, “The Commercial Photographic Parlor, 1839–1889,” in *Shaping Communities*, ed. Carter L. Hudgins and Elizabeth Collins Cromley (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 221.
- [33] In addition to the daguerreotype, the following nineteenth-century photographs can now be identified as images of statuettes of *The Greek Slave*: a stereoscopic photograph in the Amon Carter Museum (P1990.10), a stereoscopic photograph in the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History (YPM HIS 30021), and an ambrotype in the Yale University Art Gallery (2013.3.1).
- [34] Quoted in Droth, Edwards, and Hatt, eds., *Sculpture Victorious*, 314, cat. nos. 108, 109.
- [35] Jon Butler and Helen A. Cooper, eds., *Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness: American Art from the Yale University Art Gallery* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 2008), 147, cat. no. 85. Jane Perkins Claney, *Rockingham Ware in American Culture, 1830–1930: Reading Historical Artifacts* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2004), 32–58.
- [36] The difficulty of preserving a sharp color division in the kiln is suggested by the speckles of brown glaze in these areas.
- [37] For photographs of *Eve Tempted* and *The Greek Slave* on display at the New York Crystal Palace, see Voorsanger, *Art and the Empire City*, 160, 236.
- [38] Droth, Edwards, and Hatt, eds., *Sculpture Victorious*, 251, cat. nos. 82, 83.
- [39] Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 30.
- [40] Frederick Douglass, “West India Emancipation” (speech, Canandaigua, New York, August 3, 1857), University of Rochester Frederick Douglass Project, accessed May 16, 2016, <http://rbscp.lib.rochester.edu/4398>.
- [41] These photographs are in the collection of the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site in Washington, DC. “Frederick Douglass National Historic Site,” National Park Service, accessed May 16, 2016, <https://www.nps.gov/frdo/index.htm>.
- [42] S. F., “The Greek Slave,” *Rochester (NY) North Star*, October 3, 1850, 3.
- [43] Lisa Merrill, “Exhibiting Race ‘under the World’s Huge Glass Case’: William and Ellen Craft and William Wells Brown at the Great Exhibition in Crystal Palace, London, 1851,” *Slavery and Abolition* 33, no. 2 (2012): 321–36; and Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, 30–34.
- [44] Freeman Morris Murray, an early African American art historian, explained these racial implications of *The Greek Slave* this way: “then, as now, a ‘white’ slave would attract more attention and excite far more commiseration than a black one.” *Emancipation and the Freed in American Sculpture* (Washington, DC: published by the author, 1916), 2, accessed May 16, 2016, <https://archive.org/details/emancipationand00murrgoog>.
- [45] Charmaine A. Nelson, *The Color of Stone: Sculpting the Black Female Subject in Nineteenth-Century America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 105; and Green [Fryd], “Hiram Powers’s *Greek Slave*.”
- [46] Nelson, *The Color of Stone*, 105–11.

Illustrations



Fig. 1, "The Greek Slave, by Hiram Power [sic]," *Illustrated London News*, August 9, 1851: 185. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 2, Hugh Owen, *Greek Slave*, 1851. Salted paper print from paper negative. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/263305>. [\[return to text\]](#)

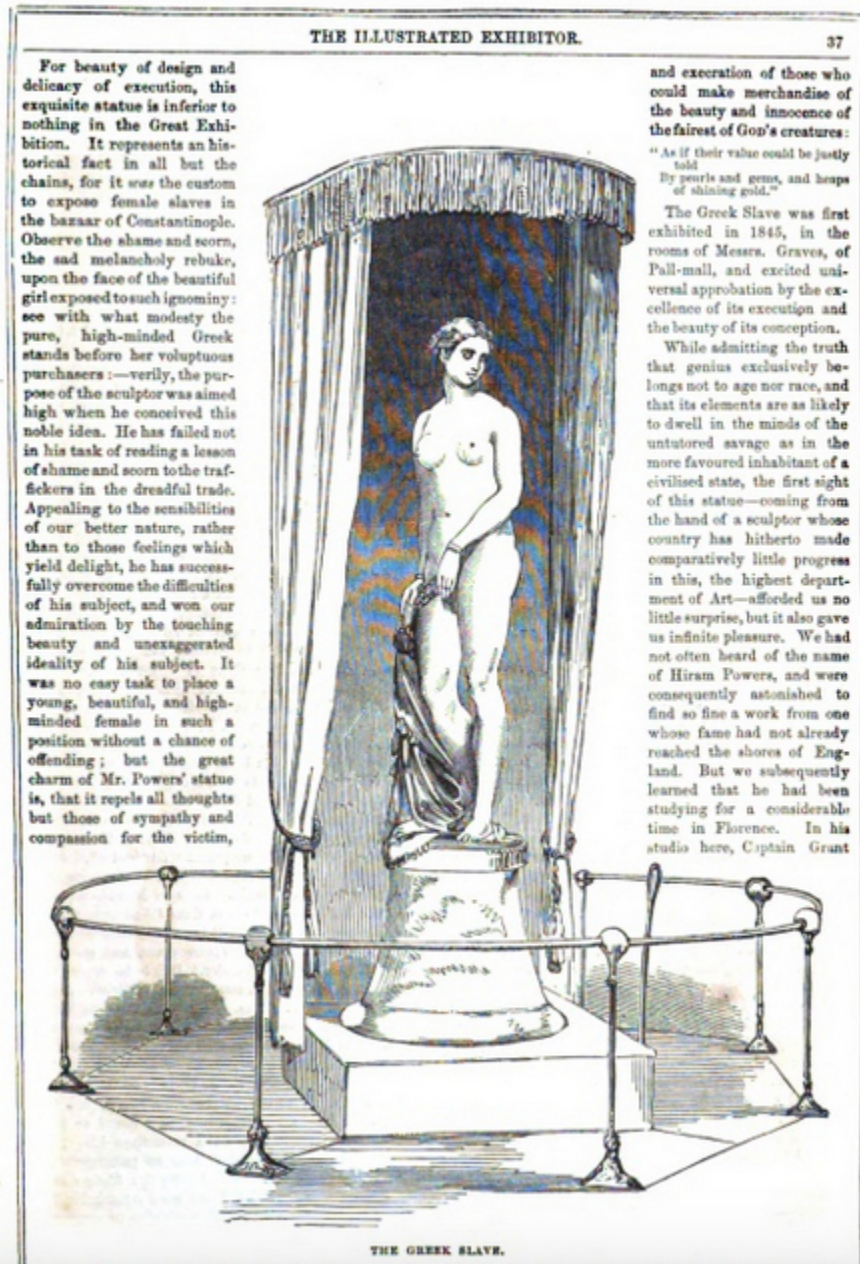


Fig. 3, "The Greek Slave," *The Illustrated Exhibitor*, a Tribute to the World's Industrial Jubilee; Comprising Sketches by Pen and Pencil, of the Principal Objects in the Great Exhibition of the Industry of all Nations (London) no. 1, June 7, 1851: 37. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 4, Unknown maker, Coverlet, ca. 1851. Cotton appliqué on cotton ground. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photo: Victoria and Albert Museum. [\[return to text\]](#)

New Advertisements.

THE GREEK SLAVE!
 Bacchante, Venus, Flora, Hebe, and the
 Dancing Girl!

THE above celebrated Statues, together with
FIFTEEN STATUETTES IN BRONZE, and
 several hundred Magnificent OIL PAINTINGS,
 form the collection of prizes to be distributed
 among the members of the Cosmopolitan Art As-
 sociation at the first annual distribution, in Janu-
 ary next.

**The Cosmopolitan Art and Literary
 Association,**
*Organized for the Encouragement and General Dis-
 fusion of Literature and the Fine Arts on
 a new and original plan.*

This popular Art Association is designed to en-
 courage and popularize the Fine Arts, and dis-
 seminate wholesome Literature throughout the
 country. A Gallery of Art is permanently found-
 ed, and will contain a valuable collection of Paint-
 ings and Statuary, for the annual distribution of
 each year. The best Literature of the day, will
 be issued to subscribers, consisting of the popular
 Monthly Magazines, Reviews, &c.

The Committee of Management have the plea-
 sure of announcing that the First Annual Dis-
 tribution will take place on the 30th January next, at
 which time will be distributed or allotted to mem-
 bers several hundred Works of Art, among which
 is the original and world-renowned statue of the
 GREEK SLAVE, by HIRSH POWERS, costing over
 five thousand dollars! together with the beautiful
 Statues of Venus, Bacchante, Hebe, Flora, and the
 Dancing Girl; and fifteen Statuettes in Bronze,
 imported from Paris; also, a large collection of
 Oil Paintings, comprising some of the best pro-
 ductions of celebrated American and Foreign
 Artists.

The Literature issued to subscribers consists of
 the following Monthly Magazines: Harper's, Put-
 nam's, Knickerbocker, Blackwood's, Graham's,
 Magazine of Art, and Godey's Lady's Book, and
 the Quarterly Reviews re-printed in New York:
 Edinburgh, Westminster, London Quarterly, and
 North British.

TRUSTEES:
OF A HOUSE AND
BY virtue of a de-
 Anne Arundel c
 November last, in a
 and others are comp
 others are defendan
 public sale on the pr
THURSDAY, the
 at 12 o'clock, M., the
 South East street, in
 by the residence of M
 Elizabeth Weems, an
 Bonnell.

The Terms of Sale
 chase money to be p
 or of the ratification
 two equal instalment
 the day of sale, the w
 of sale, and to be a
 purchaser, with secu
 Trustee.

This property will
 as may best suit thos
 Dec. 7, 1854. ts.

Three Story Br
A
BY virtue of a de
 Anne Arundel c
 December, instant, w
 and others are comp
 Blake and others de
 Trustee, will sell o
BRICK DWELLING
 street, where Rev. N
 years resided, at 12 o
MONDAY, the
 This Dwelling con
 There are on the prem
 Smoke-house, and o
 scription for a large l
 the block are the De
 Col. Nicholson, and a

... number
 ... there, who
 ... duced by
 ... XPECTO-
 ... constantly
 ... introduced
 ... and doubted
 ... and veraci-
 ... a moment
 ... excellent
 ... physicians
 ... t they are
 ... ary incli-
 ... ed, for the
 ... If you
 ... tor lungs,
 ... the result.
 ... ate in all
 ... cement of
 ... r column,
 ... tis of the
 ... ate the t.

... for the ensuing year.
B. T. B. WORTHINGTON,
 ec. 21, 1854 tmi. Clerk.

COLLECTOR'S SALE.

Y virtue of authority in me vested by law, I
 will offer at Public Sale, to the highest bidder,
 ash, at the residence of Washington Nutwell,
 the 5th Election District of Anne Arundel coun-
 ty.

FRIDAY, the 12th day of January next,
NEGRO WOMAN named Nelly, about 30
 years of age, a slave for life; levied on to satisfy
 e and County Taxes for the year 1852, assessed
 in the name of William N. Pindell.
 Sale to commence at 11 o'clock A. M.

JOHN B. NICHOLLS,
 ec. 21, 1854 ts. Collector.

JUST RECEIVED.

WARRANTS, at 20, 25 and 37½ cents a pound.
ALPINS, in whole, half and quarter boxes, at
 16 and 18½ cents a pound.

Fig. 5, "The Greek Slave!" and "Collector's Sale," *Annapolis Gazette* (Maryland), December 28, 1854: 3.
[\[return to text\]](#)

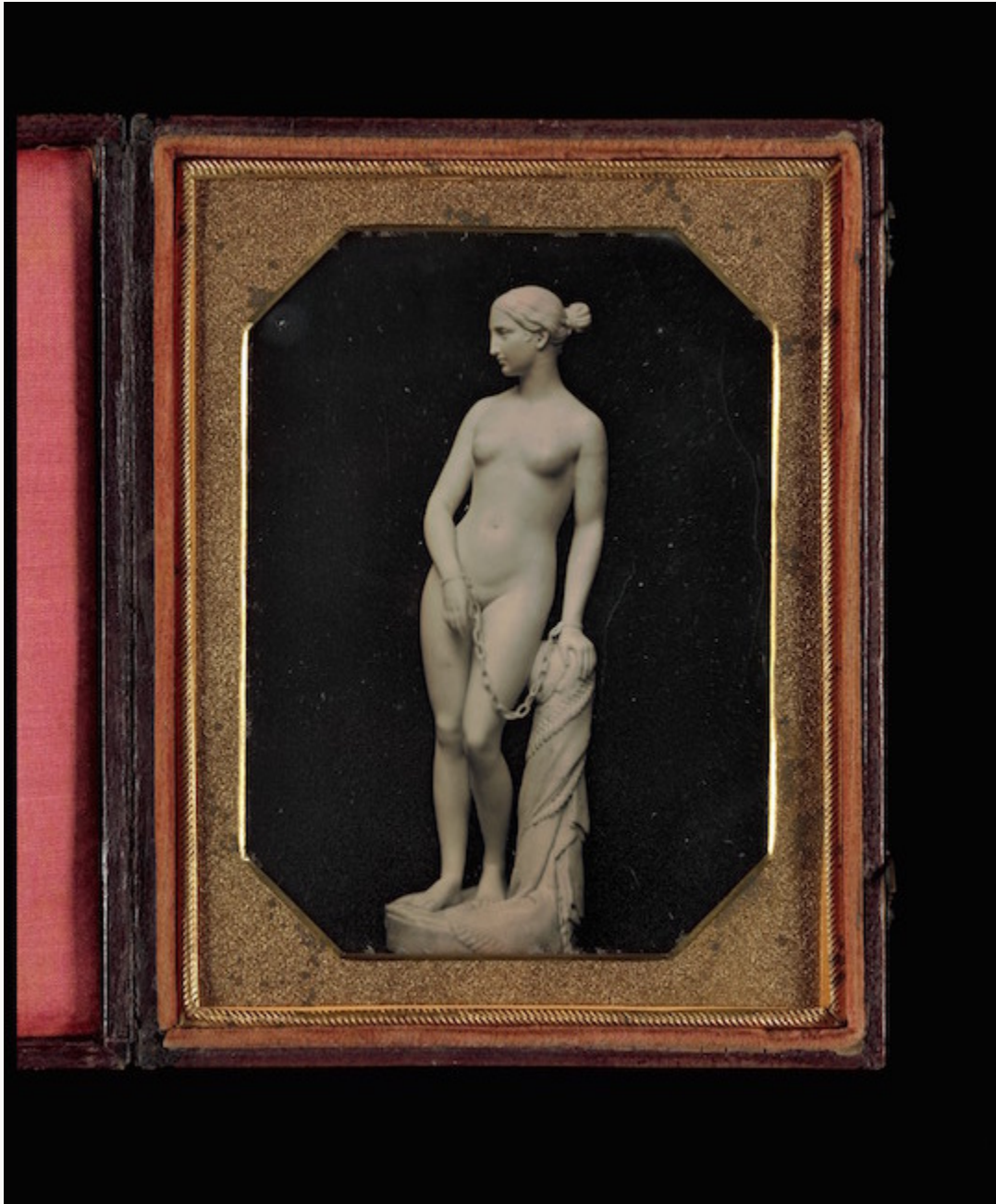


Fig. 6, Unknown maker, "Hiram Powers's Sculpture of the Greek Slave," ca. 1850. Daguerreotype. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/286313>.

[\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 7, Detail of pitcher showing decoration after Hiram Powers's *Greek Slave*, ca. 1853. Earthenware with Rockingham glaze. Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven. Photo: Yale University Art Gallery. The other side of the pitcher has a decoration after Powers's *Eve Tempted*. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 8, Unknown maker, *Greek Slave*, undated (after 1869). Ceramic with painted metal chains. Frederic Douglass National Historic Site, Washington, DC. Photo: National Parks Service. [\[return to text\]](#)

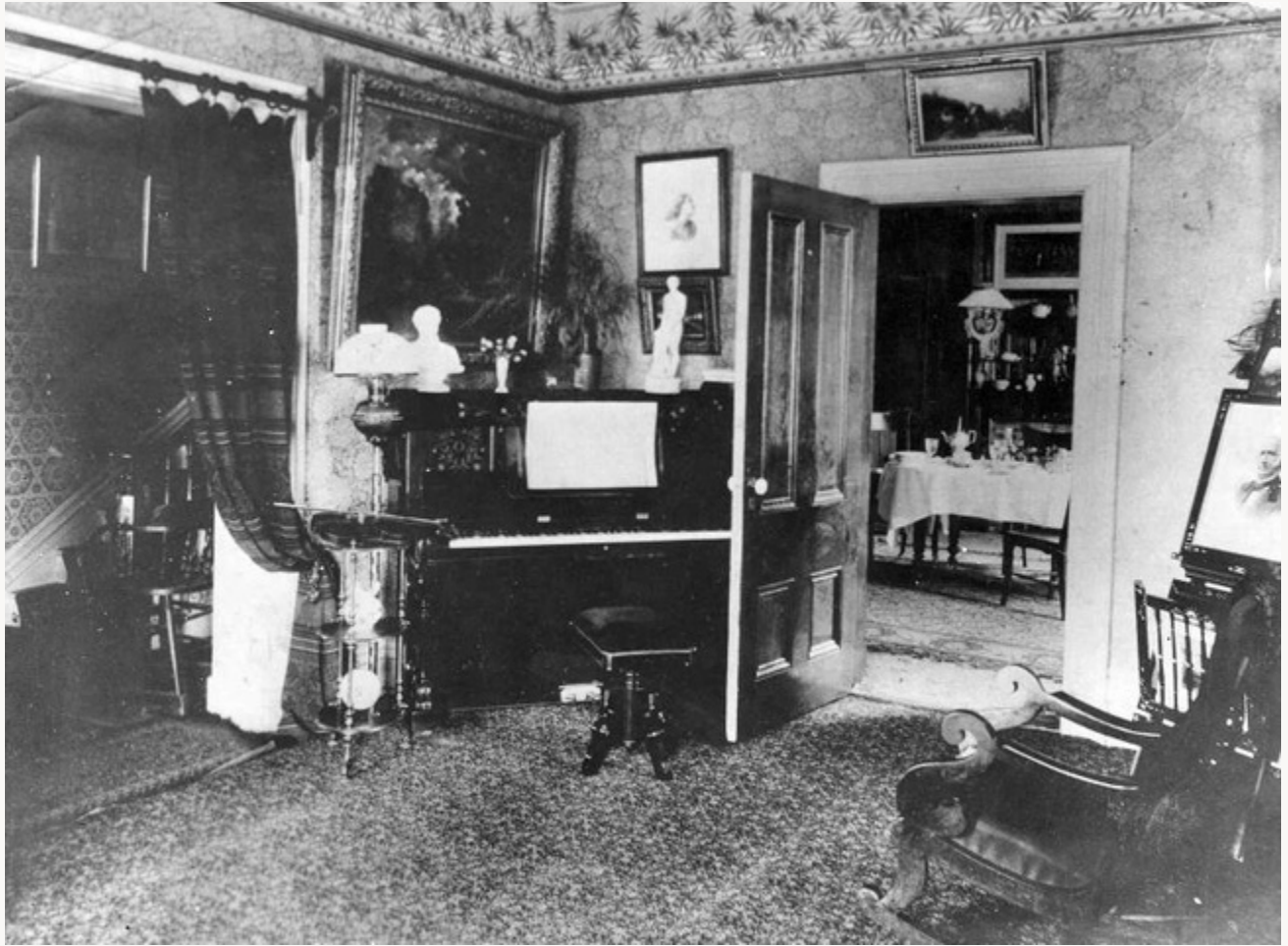


Fig. 9, West Parlor (the informal or family parlor) at Cedar Hill, ca. 1895. Photograph. Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, Washington, DC. Photo: National Parks Service. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 10, Frederick Douglass at his Desk in Haiti, ca. 1889–91. Photograph. Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, Washington, DC. Photo: National Parks Service. [\[return to text\]](#)