

Jefferson's Legacy, Race Science, and Righteous Violence in Jabez Hammond's Abolitionist Fiction

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ABSTRACT Jabez Delano Hammond published *The Life and Opinions of Julius Melbourn* in 1847, amid state debates over black suffrage and national debates over slavery's expansion. The white New Yorker wrote in the voice of a former slave, fooling some contemporaries and subsequent historians, seeking to link Thomas Jefferson's legacy to antislavery and racial equality. Placed in the context of Hammond's other public and private writings, *Julius Melbourn* represents the evolution, radicalization, and politicization of the antebellum abolition movement. Hammond began as an ardent Jeffersonian but came to advocate violence against the Slave Power before disavowing such tactics in favor of political mobilization before his death in 1855.

Thomas Jefferson's views on slavery were a hot topic in the spring of 1847 as Congress debated the Wilmot Proviso. Initially proposed the previous August by David Wilmot, a Pennsylvania Democrat, this proviso would

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have banned slavery in any territory the United States acquired during the War with Mexico. Supporters of the measure dubbed it the Jefferson Proviso, citing the principles of the Declaration of Independence and Jefferson's 1784 draft legislation banning slavery in western territories. By contrast, southern congressmen who opposed the proviso highlighted Jefferson's status as a lifelong slaveholder, his account of black inferiority in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, and his support for Missouri to enter the Union as a slave state in 1820.¹ In the midst of this heated debate, newspapers began printing excerpts from a recent memoir that promised new insights into Jefferson's views on slavery and race. Purportedly written by a former slave, *The Life and Opinions of Julius Melbourn* included a lengthy passage on Jefferson's antislavery sentiments during his retirement years.² Allegedly, Julius Melbourn, a light-skinned former slave from North Carolina who could pass as white, had attended a dinner party at Monticello in 1815 during which the former president forcefully supported emancipation and racial equality. Widely reprinted in newspapers, this story inspired a public debate in which most southern newspapers concluded—correctly—that the memoir was an antislavery hoax. Four years later, Jabez Delano Hammond, a white New York politician and author of a three-volume history of New York politics, revealed himself as the actual author in a second edition.³

In *The Life and Opinions of Julius Melbourn*, Hammond mixed various literary genres to advance the antislavery cause. In the first part of the book,

1. Merrill D. Peterson, *The Jefferson Image in the American Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 189–94.

2. [Jabez D. Hammond], *Life and Opinions of Julius Melbourn; with Sketches of the Lives and Characters of Thomas Jefferson, John Quincy Adams, John Randolph, and Several Other Eminent American Statesmen* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Hall & Dickson, 1847). Digital editions of the first edition are widely available online, including one at the University of North Carolina's "Documenting the American South," website, with an explanation that it is fictional: <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/hammond/menu.html> (accessed November 17, 2014). I thank Ellen Hickman of the Thomas Jefferson Papers: Retirement Series and Anna Berkes of the Jefferson Library for introducing me to the work of Jabez Hammond.

3. The first edition claimed that the narrative was true and was "edited by a late member of Congress." The second edition listed Jabez D. Hammond as the author and revealed the work as fictional in a new preface and appendix. All citations are to the second edition, although the pagination of the main text itself is the same in the two editions. Of the few surviving copies of the second edition, I have used copies held at the New-York Historical Society (NYHS) and the Beinecke Library at Yale University. Jabez D. Hammond, *Life and Opinions . . . Second Edition with Additional Notes* (Syracuse, N.Y.: L. W. Hall, 1851), x.

on Melbourn's youthful experiences as a slave who is manumitted by a kind slaveholder, Hammond employed many standard tropes and plot devices of the nineteenth-century sentimental novel—female virtue, evil suitors, sexual depredation, tragic deaths, faked deaths, improbable coincidences, and family reunions—in a fictionalized slave narrative. The second half of the book, about Melbourn's experiences and opinions as a free man, combines historical fiction, travelogues, and epistolary correspondence to critique American society and enlist Jefferson's legacy in behalf of racial equality. Hammond's book was an important precursor to more famous antislavery novels such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), though his literary talents were comparatively limited. Even sympathetic reviewers noted that the "contrivance of the book strikes us as clumsy," and that the author was "palpably ignorant of artistic storytelling."⁴ Thurlow Weed, who hesitantly accepted the work as genuine, pronounced: "As authentic history, if such it be, it excites equally your astonishment and admiration; while as Fiction, it would be a bungling discreditable imposition."⁵ Southern newspaper editors who were unsympathetic to abolitionism gleefully exposed the book's fictional nature.⁶

Several decades later, *Julius Melbourn* experienced a curious afterlife when readers who were unaware of the 1847 newspaper controversy (or the second edition) rediscovered the book. Well-meaning reformers and politicians seeking a usable past cited the Monticello dinner passage in support of biracial education in the 1890s and as a precedent to defend President Theodore Roosevelt's White House dinner with Booker T. Washington in 1901.⁷ In the mid-twentieth century historians and biographers cited it as evidence that Jefferson was "ahead of his time in his advocacy of freedom for

4. *Liberator* (Boston), November 26, 1847; *Boston Courier*, reprinted in *North Star* (Rochester, N.Y.), April 4, 1848.

5. "Life and Opinions of Julius Melbourn," *Albany Evening Journal*, July 26, 1847.

6. The newspaper controversy over the book is mentioned in the entry on Julius Melbourn by Elizabeth Davis Reid Murray in William S. Powell, ed., *The Dictionary of North Carolina Biography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), <http://ncpedia.org/biography/melbourn-julius> (accessed November 17, 2015).

7. John Cleves Henderson, *Thomas Jefferson's Views on Public Education* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1890), 224–41; United States Board of Education, *Report of the Commissioner of Education, for the Year 1893–1894*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1896), 732; "Recent Comments on the Negro Problem," *Harper's Weekly*, June 11, 1904, 892–93.

all men without regard to race, creed, or color.”⁸ Thomas Fleming informed readers that Jefferson “constantly sought for evidence to refute his earlier impression that the Negro was inferior to the white man. . . . In 1815, he invited to Monticello, a mulatto who had been born a slave. He greeted him with enthusiasm.”⁹ Other scholars used Melbourn as an example of a prosperous free person of color in a slave society. Since the 1990s most historians who have come across *Julius Melbourn* have realized that the protagonist was a fictitious character and that the book can tell us little about the real Jefferson.¹⁰ Formerly misused, *Julius Melbourn* is now largely forgotten. Yet it is unfortunate that the novel has been “unduly neglected,” as David Reynolds notes.¹¹

There is much to be gained by examining *Julius Melbourn* for what it

8. Carter G. Woodson, “Review: Jefferson Himself, by Bernard Mayo,” *Journal of Negro History* 28 (April 1943): 241. Merrill Peterson, one of the twentieth century’s foremost authorities on Jefferson, gave a level of skeptical acceptance to *Julius Melbourn*. He assumed Melbourn was a real person while doubting the accuracy of the dinner party anecdote: “Whether fictitious or not, Melbourne’s recollections pointedly showed that Jefferson could be regarded as the Apostle of Liberty by Negroes struggling for their rights”; Peterson, *The Jefferson Image*, 176.

9. Thomas J. Fleming, *The Man from Monticello: An Intimate Life of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: William Morrow, 1969), 369–70.

10. John Hope Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina, 1790–1860* (1943; repr., Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 157. By the time of his revised 1967 edition of *From Slavery to Freedom*, Franklin apparently had begun to have some doubts about *Julius Melbourn*, qualifying his original text by introducing Melbourn’s story as “an interesting account, though perhaps fictional”; Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*, 3rd ed. (New York: Knopf, 1967), 203. Yet others have persisted in referring to Melbourn as a real person: Loren Schweninger, “Prosperous Free Blacks in the South, 1790–1880,” *American Historical Review* 95 (February 1990): 41; Juliet E. K. Walker, *The History of Black Business in America: Capitalism, Race, Entrepreneurship*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 1:157.

11. David Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 97–98 (quotation on 98). Neither Hammond nor *Life and Opinions of Julius Melbourn* has received much attention from scholars, but for brief discussions see, in addition to Reynolds, Merton L. Dillon, *Slavery Attacked: Southern Slaves and Their Allies, 1619–1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 205–6; and Jordan Lewis Reed, “American Jacobins: Revolutionary Radicalism in the Civil War Era” (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 2009), 85–86. Some of Hammond’s correspondence with Gerrit Smith is excerpted and discussed in Ralph Volney Harlow, *Gerrit Smith: Philanthropist and Reformer* (New York: Henry Holt, 1939), 137, 177, 269, 277, 305.

is—a work of antislavery fiction, especially in light of scholarly interest in aggressive abolitionism and the Republican Party’s antislavery credentials. Hammond is little known today but was important in New York politics and connected to nationally prominent abolitionists such as Gerrit Smith and politicians such as Martin Van Buren and William Seward. Although hardly representative, Hammond’s career reflected the evolution, diversity, and growing radicalism of the antebellum abolition movement.¹² By the late 1830s he, like many followers of William Lloyd Garrison, called for immediate emancipation and racial equality, valuing these goals over sectional harmony. Unlike most Garrisonians, who were “nonresistant” pacifists, Hammond came to advocate violence in behalf of antislavery. Frustrated with the progress of “moral suasion” and pessimistic about the potential for a peaceful end to slavery through political means, Hammond began fantasizing about leading an army of former slaves and destroying the Slave Power (the political power wielded by slaveholders in the national government to protect and expand slavery) through righteous violence.

Reluctant to participate in actual violence, Hammond turned to fiction as his tactic for advancing antislavery. He had addressed slavery in some earlier publications, but *Julius Melbourn* represented his most elaborate indictment of slavery and the Slave Power. Hammond designed the book to expose slavery’s negative influences on the nation and advance his ideas of racial equality among the widest possible audience. “The mass of the reading people will not read what are strictly speaking abolition Books,” he told Gerrit Smith. “Possibly some of them will read this.”¹³ Through a fictional slave memoir, Hammond hoped to enlist the legacy of Thomas Jefferson on the side of antislavery and racial equality while also pitting white Northerners’ self-interest and sense of masculinity against the Slave Power. In *Julius Melbourn*, Hammond couched his support for slave resistance and antislavery violence in vague hints and equivocations, and the extent of his radicalism is apparent only when the novel is read in light of his private

12. On militant abolitionism see, for example, John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Stanley Harrold, *The Rise of Aggressive Abolitionism: Addresses to the Slaves* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2004). For a recent work emphasizing the extent of the Republicans’ antislavery commitments, see James Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861–1865* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2013).

13. Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, N.Y., August 16, 1847, Gerrit Smith Papers, Syracuse University, microfilm reel 11 (hereafter cited as Smith Papers SU).

correspondence. Although some of Hammond's ideas about race and violence were unusual, many northern voters came to share his conviction that the Slave Power had perverted Jefferson's vision of democracy and the Union, creating the conditions that ultimately made the Republican Party so successful after Hammond's death in 1855. Hammond himself retreated from some of his radicalism before his death, but his writings may have influenced Gerrit Smith's decision to support John Brown's violent antislavery tactics.

THE POLITICAL EVOLUTION OF A MILITANT ABOLITIONIST

Hammond was a lifelong Jeffersonian, and his transformation from a devout northern member of a southern-based political party into a radical abolitionist who endorsed violence and disunion was a gradual process over half a century. Late in his life, Hammond reflected on his partisan affiliation: "I chose my side in politics during the first Term of Mr. Jefferson's administration . . . and from that day to this I have been a Politician—and a Republican—but I have been several times, as they say 'out of the traces.'"¹⁴ The times when Hammond failed to toe the party line generally involved his growing opposition to slavery and slaveholders' political and economic dominance, but these tensions took several decades to emerge.

Born in 1778 in Vermont, Hammond set up shop as a young lawyer in New York's Otsego County in 1805 and quickly joined the Republican opposition to the Federalist land baron William Cooper.¹⁵ A firm partisan, in 1809 he published an oration denouncing Federalists as the "*British party*" and praising Jefferson's embargo.¹⁶ Serving in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1815 to 1817 and the New York Senate from 1817 to 1821, he was "actively engaged in the partizan wars" before returning to his law practice.¹⁷ Hammond regretted the Missouri Compromise of 1820 (which allowed slavery in federal territories south of 36°30' north latitude)

14. Hammond to Henry S. Randall, Cherry Valley, June 28, 1849, Miscellaneous Manuscripts—Jabez Delano Hammond, NYHS (hereafter cited as MM Hammond). For additional biographical information, see also Hammond to Henry S. Randall, Cherry Valley, January 21, 1850, MM Hammond.

15. Alan Taylor, *William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic* (New York: Knopf, 1995), 360–62.

16. Jabez D. Hammond, *An Oration, Delivered on the Glorious Tenth of June, 1809, in the Court-House, in the Village of Otsego; at a Celebration of the Revocation of the British Orders in Council* (Otsego, N.Y.: E. Phinney, 1809), 17, 24.

17. Hammond to John Quincy Adams, Cherry Valley, February 23, 1840, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, reel 513.

but supported only African colonization rather than abolitionist agitation during the following decade.¹⁸ He subsequently served as a judge and school superintendent in Otsego County and as a regent of the University of the State of New York from 1845 until his death.¹⁹ Throughout much of his career Hammond was allied with Martin Van Buren, and his political-economic ideology often aligned with that of Jacksonian Democrats. Yet it was Andrew Jackson's election as president in 1828 that began eroding Hammond's alliance with his southern partisans.

Hammond doubted Jackson's qualifications for the presidency and believed that "the real ground of [southern] opposition to [John Quincy Adams] is on account of his being a Northern man." Dismissing the sincerity of southern rhetoric about states' rights, he noted that slaveholding presidents such as James Madison and James Monroe had expanded federal powers at least as much as Adams had. Expressing his partisan disillusionment to Van Buren, Hammond wrote, "If Republicanism is so far degenerated that it means nothing more nor less than a grant in perpetuity of the Executive authority to the Slave holding States I am not a Republican."²⁰ He traveled to Europe in 1831 to improve his health, bringing letters of introduction from Henry Clay.²¹ Upon his return, Hammond visited New Orleans and Virginia, experiences that informed his nascent abolitionism. In 1832, in the midst of a Fourth of July oration about the importance

18. Hammond was politically allied with Congressman James W. Taylor, who led the unsuccessful effort to require Missouri to initiate a program of gradual emancipation before entering the Union as a state. Hammond to J. W. Taylor, Albany, February 2, 1819, John W. Taylor Papers, NYHS (hereafter cited as Taylor Papers); Hammond to Taylor, Albany, November 20, 1820, Taylor Papers.

19. "Jabez Delano Hammond," Biographical Directory of United States Congress, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=H000127> (accessed November 17, 2015).

20. Hammond to Van Buren, Schenectady, May 23, 1827, Van Buren Papers, Library of Congress (hereafter cited as Van Buren Papers). On the growing disgust with the southern domination of politics, see also Hammond to Van Buren, Albany, June 7, 1829, Van Buren Papers; Hammond to Randall, Cherry Valley, June 28, 1849, MM Hammond. Believing that many other New York Bucktail Democrats "at heart oppose Jackson," he led an unsuccessful attempt to promote cooperation between New York's Bucktail and Clintonian supporters of Adams's reelection in 1827. Hammond to Taylor, Albany, April 14, 1828, Taylor Papers; Hammond to Taylor, Albany, February 5, 1827, Taylor Papers. See also Hammond to Taylor, Cherry Valley, June 18, 1830, Taylor Papers.

21. Henry Clay to Hammond, April 13, 1831, Papers of Henry Clay, University of Virginia Special Collections, box 1.

of an educated citizenry, Hammond went on a tangent warning of divine retribution if the nation did not end slavery.²² By the late 1830s he considered abolitionism “the greatest & most important cause of a political or social nature which ever engaged the attention of man,” but he refrained from joining an abolitionist society, believing he could “obtain a more attentive hearing” through his writing and political connections.²³ Alienated from the Jacksonian coalition, Hammond supported the National Republicans—and later claimed credit for coining the party name—until breaking with them over banking policy and returning to the Democratic fold to support Van Buren for the presidency in 1836 and 1840.²⁴

Hammond disliked the anti-abolitionist stance that Van Buren was forced to adopt as a national politician, and he was angered—though not surprised—when the southern Democrats replaced him with a slaveholding candidate in 1844.²⁵ “More than forty years experience proves that the more the Northern Democracy yields to the South the more she demands,” Hammond complained to Van Buren.²⁶ Eventually the issue of slavery overcame Hammond’s earlier opposition to “Whig Aristocrats.”²⁷ In 1841 he told Governor William H. Seward that he had previously voted against him “in consequence of the currency question,” but he admired Seward’s antislavery policies and would support him in the future.²⁸ Hammond refused to vote

22. Jabez D. Hammond, *An Address Delivered at Cherry-Valley, on the Fourth Day of July, 1832* (Utica, N.Y.: William Williams, 1832), 13–15.

23. Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, January 27, 1838, Gerrit Smith Papers, New York Public Library, box 1 (hereafter cited as Smith Papers NYPL).

24. Hammond claimed the National Republican name was taken from the pseudonym he used in a series of newspaper pieces he wrote during Adams’s reelection campaign; Hammond to Randall, Cherry Valley, June 28, 1849, MM Hammond; Hammond to Van Buren, Albany, June 7, 1829, Van Buren Papers.

25. Hammond discusses Van Buren’s anti-abolitionism in *The History of Political Parties in the State of New York, from the Ratification of the Federal Constitution to December 1840*, 2 vols. (Albany: C. Van Benthuyzen, 1842), 2:456, 466–67. On his earlier expectation that slaveholders would abandon Van Buren, see Hammond to William H. Seward, Cherry Valley, August 28, 1834, Seward Papers, University of Rochester, Rochester, N.Y., reel 2.

26. Hammond to Van Buren, Cherry Valley, April 7, 1844, Van Buren Papers; Hammond, *History of Political Parties*, 2:531; Richards, *Slave Power*, 121–28.

27. Hammond to Gerrit Smith, Cherry Valley, January 20, 1845, Smith Papers SU.

28. Hammond to William H. Seward, Cherry Valley, August 15, 1841, Seward Papers, reel 21. Hammond praised Seward’s steadfast position during the “Virginian Controversy,” in which he refused to extradite three black New Yorkers for helping a runaway slave (or committing “theft,” as the Virginia authorities called it). Ham-

in the presidential election of 1844 because he opposed the Democrats' desire to annex Texas, the Whigs' fiscal policies, and the Liberty Party's lack of an economic program.²⁹

Hammond's concern about Texas annexation dated back to 1836, when he had warned Gerrit Smith that slaveholders in the Upper South hoped to "extend the market & increase the demand for their slaves." Revealing his growing militancy, Hammond concluded: "*The project ought to be resisted unto blood.*"³⁰ Political considerations temporarily killed the Texas issue; when Democrats revived it in 1844, Hammond responded by publishing a pamphlet addressed to Senator John C. Calhoun. He argued that annexing Texas would be immoral, inexpedient, and unconstitutional. Returning to a theme from his 1832 Fourth of July oration, Hammond also linked the Declaration of Independence to his cause. It was "self-evident to every mind not biassed by education or rendered impalpable to truth by self interest, that slavery is an unmixed evil, and that its toleration is a sin against nature and nature's God."³¹ In private, Hammond also told Gerrit Smith he would prefer a "division of the Union" over Texas annexation.³² This issue radicalized other abolitionists as well. The Underground Railroad activist Charles Torrey hoped that Mexicans would respond by invading the southern United States and provoking a massive slave insurrection. Torrey imagined "50,000 colored troops, including 15,000 *fugitives from slavery*, from every Southern State, with the war cry of freedom to their fellow sufferers on their lips" sweeping "over the South, without even the possibility of serious resistance."³³ Torrey's letter, which appeared in the New York *Emancipator*

mond to Seward, Cherry Valley, April 26, 1841, Seward Papers, reel 20; Hammond to Seward, Cherry Valley, November 2, 1841, Seward Papers, reel 23; Jabez Delano Hammond, *Political History of the State of New York, from Jan. 1, 1841, to Jan. 1, 1847, including the Life of Silas Wright* (Syracuse: Hall & Dickinson, 1848), 194–206.

29. Hamden [Jabez Delano Hammond], *Letter to the Hon. John C. Calhoun on the Annexation of Texas* (Cooperstown, N.Y.: H. & E. Phinney 1844), 4.

30. Hammond to Gerrit Smith, Cherry Valley, March 15, 1836, Smith Papers SU; emphasis in original. See also his letter to Smith of March 31, 1836, Smith Papers SU.

31. Hamden [Hammond], *Letter to the Hon. John C. Calhoun*, 28.

32. Hammond to Gerrit Smith, Cherry Valley, January 20, 1845, Smith Papers SU.

33. Charles T. Torrey to [J. W.] Alden, Washington, March 19, 1842, in *Emancipator and Free American* (New York), March 31, 1842, cited in Harrold, *Rise of Aggressive Abolitionism*, 39; emphasis in original. See also Stanley Harrold, "On the Borders of Slavery and Race: Charles T. Torrey and the Underground Railroad," *Journal of the Early Republic* 20 (Summer 2000): 273–92; E. Fuller Torrey, *The*

in 1842, may have inspired Hammond; he later imagined similar events in his own correspondence and in *Julius Melbourn*.

In 1848, a year after publishing *Julius Melbourn*, Hammond was among the “Barnburner” Democrats who supported Van Buren as the Free Soil Party’s presidential candidate.³⁴ Whereas some contemporaries and historians have portrayed Van Buren’s move from a Jacksonian Democrat to an antislavery Free Soiler as evidence of his opportunism and lack of principles, Hammond followed a similar political trajectory and praised Van Buren for being “sincerely opposed to the extension of slavery.”³⁵ Much of Hammond’s criticism of slavery revolved around how slavery affected white Northerners, and scholars have long emphasized that opposition to the Slave Power was compatible with racism.³⁶ But Hammond combined his political-economic critique of slavery with a celebration of black equality—or at least African Americans’ potential for uplift and equality.

SENTIMENTALISM AND BLACK UPLIFT

Jabez Hammond wrote *Julius Melbourn* in the ventriloquized voice of a former slave. The historian John Stauffer has argued that other radical abolitionists in New York such as Gerrit Smith and John Brown sought to have “black hearts” and empathetic kinship with African Americans.³⁷ Hammond and Smith were friends and allies, and *Julius Melbourn* may in part

Martyrdom of Abolitionist Charles Torrey (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013).

34. For Hammond as a Free Soiler, see *Niles National Register* (Philadelphia), August 2, 1848, 69. Oddly, only one of Hammond’s letters from 1848 appears to be extant, and it contains no political material; Hammond to J[ames] W[ylie] Mandeville, Cherry Valley, April 5, 1848, loose Mss, Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.

35. Hammond to Van Buren, Cherry Valley, March 29, 1852, Van Buren Papers. Like the antislavery Jacksonians studied by Jonathan Earle, Hammond was committed to Jeffersonian political economy and suspicious of banks and corporate power, but he came to believe that the Slave Power was the greatest threat to the republican Union; Jonathan Earle, *Jacksonian Antislavery & the Politics of Free Soil, 1824–1854* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), esp. 169–80.

36. Russel B. Nye, *Fettered Freedom: Civil Liberties and the Slavery Controversy, 1830–1860*, 2nd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964); Leon Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790–1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961); Eugene Berwanger, *The Frontier against Slavery: Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967); Larry Gara, “Slavery and the Slave Power: A Crucial Distinction,” *Civil War History* 15 (March 1969): 5–18.

37. Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men*.

indicate a similar urge. But it was also important that Melbourn was of mixed—indeed, visually indiscernible—race. “I could not as I thought carry out my design,” Hammond later explained to Smith, “without creating an *ideal* Being who was an educated man but who did not belong either to the Caucasian or African race and therefore who should be a pure looker-on in the world.”³⁸ The fictional Melbourn could pass as white and became educated and wealthy but also had experienced the horrors of slavery firsthand. Hammond may have suspected that white readers would be more sympathetic to a mixed-race protagonist than one of purely African descent.³⁹ Hammond clearly lacked the literary talent of Harriet Beecher Stowe, but the first section of his book was intended to accomplish many of the goals that she later achieved in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. In addition to encouraging sentimental sympathy for enslaved people, both novels presented positive portrayals of individual slaveholders while demonstrating that abuses and evils were inherent in the system and that a simple twist of fate could quickly destroy the modicum of happiness that slaves and free people of color enjoyed.

In Hammond’s fictionalized slave narrative, Julius is born near Raleigh, North Carolina, in 1790 to an enslaved mulatto mother and an unknown white father, making him “one quarter African.” Despite blue eyes and skin light enough to pass as white, he shares the chattel status of his mother. At age three, Julius witnesses slave traders take his mother away to Georgia. Contemporaries considered the domestic slave trade the most reprehensible component of slavery, and Hammond describes the “dreadful sensations” Julius feels while watching his mother dragged away in chains. By contrast, Julius’s own sale, two years later, improves his life when he is purchased by a kindly widow, Mrs. Melbourn (whose surname he adopts).⁴⁰

38. Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, August 16, 1847, Smith Papers SU; emphasis in original.

39. Moreover, such a character implicitly drew attention to the connection between slavery and sexual exploitation, a common antislavery theme; Nancy Bentley, “White Slaves: The Mulatto Hero in Antebellum Fiction,” *American Literature* 65 (September 1993): 501–22. See also another fake slave narrative published by another historian-abolitionist: Richard Hildreth, *Archy Moore: The White Slave; or, Memoirs of a Fugitive*, 2nd ed. (New York: Miller, Orton, & Mulligan, 1856). (This work originally appeared in 1836 under the title *The Slave, or Memoirs of Archy Moore*.)

40. Hammond, *Julius Melbourn*, 9–10; Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 174–205.

A Methodist and an advocate of the “rights of man,” Mrs. Melbourn purchases Julius intending to educate and free him. She gives him the same opportunities, privileges, and inheritance as her own son, Edward. Once he is removed from the typical environment of slavery, Julius’s mind is nurtured rather than shackled, which allows him to cultivate an intellect “of the first order.”⁴¹ This development conformed to arguments that African Americans had long made about the capacity for black uplift. For example, the black church leaders Richard Allen and Absalom Jones had earlier proposed that “if you would try the experiment of taking a few black children, and cultivate their minds with the same care . . . as you would wish for your own children, you would find upon the trial, they were not inferior in mental endowments.”⁴² In *Julius Melbourn* Hammond appears to have taken the environmentalist conception of race a step further, suggesting that opportunities for intellectual uplift would also result in visible changes in facial physiognomy and perhaps an increased lightness of skin tone.⁴³

Julius Melbourn subsequently falls in love with, marries, and has a child with a beautiful mulatto slave named Maria, who is owned by Laura, Edward Melbourn’s fiancée. Laura is another benevolent slaveholder and treats Maria more as a friend than as property, which allows her intellect to develop. Tragically, Edward is slain in a duel (his opponent had insulted his mother for raising Julius like a white child), and then Laura is tricked into marrying a Mr. St. John, who turns out to be a cruel man of dissolute habits. Laura had always intended to free Maria, but St. John sells Maria to a New Orleans slave trader after she resists his sexual advances. Hammond implies

41. Hammond, *Julius Melbourn*, 77.

42. Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People during the Late Awful Calamity in Philadelphia, in the Year 1793* (Philadelphia: William W. Woodward, 1794), 24, quoted in Patrick Rael, *Black Identity & Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 245.

43. Hammond elaborates his belief that both intellectual capacity and head shape were linked and determined by external factors in the Monticello dinner scene, discussed below. On the variety of environmentalist conceptions of race during this era, see Winthrop Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968); George M. Frederickson, *Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971); Mia Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind: African-American Ideas about White People, 1830–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Bruce Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

that Maria, who was only one-sixteenth black, was destined to be a yellow fancy girl, a light-skinned sex slave.⁴⁴ Julius follows his enslaved wife to New Orleans in order to purchase her freedom (with money inherited from Mrs. Melbourn), but he is locked up as an alleged fugitive slave. By the time Julius is released, he learns that Maria has drowned herself to avoid her fate. Scholars have noted that resisting sexual deprecation, even at the expense of one's life, was the most common form of slave resistance portrayed in sentimentalized antislavery fiction. Such resistance demonstrated black virtue without threatening white readers.⁴⁵ *Julius Melbourn* fits the general trend but with a twist: the lovers are reunited years later when Julius discovers that some Quakers had saved Maria from drowning and adopted her into their community.⁴⁶ After this happy reunion, the remaining 181 pages of *Julius Melbourn* consist of miscellaneous "reminiscences" and "correspondence" about Melbourn's later life and opinions as he travels across the United States and Europe. Having worked to establish readers' empathy for Melbourn and other African Americans, Hammond proceeded to critique American racism.

THE JEFFERSON IMAGE AND RACE SCIENCE

Thomas Jefferson was Hammond's political idol, and he looms large in *Julius Melbourn*.⁴⁷ The book's frontispiece includes the Virginian's portrait, signature, and the phrase "all men are created equal," and Melbourn's birthday is—of course—the Fourth of July.⁴⁸ It is only natural that during his later travels Melbourn visits the Sage of Monticello, in what became the

44. Sexual slavery was a common theme in antislavery literature; see Jennifer Rae Greeson, "The 'Mysteries and Miseries' of North Carolina: New York City, Urban Gothic Fiction, and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*," *American Literature* 73 (June 2001): 277–309, esp. 282–84. On sexual predation and the domestic slave trade, see Edward E. Baptist, "'Cuffy,' 'Fancy Maids,' and 'One-Eyed Men': Rape, Commodification, and the Domestic Slave Trade in the United States," *American Historical Review* 106 (December 2001): 1619–50.

45. Melinda Lawson, "Imagining Slavery: Representations of the Peculiar Institution on the Northern Stage, 1776–1860," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 1 (March 2011), 43–46; Richard Bell, "Slave Suicide, Abolition, and the Problem of Resistance," *Slavery & Abolition* 33 (Winter 2012): 525–49.

46. Hammond, *Julius Melbourn*, 47–59.

47. Hammond was hardly alone among Northerners in idealizing Jefferson and exaggerating his antislavery sentiment; see Pdraig Riley, *Slavery and the Democratic Conscience: Political Life in Jeffersonian America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), esp. 47, 58, 93.

48. Hammond, *Julius Melbourn*, 7.

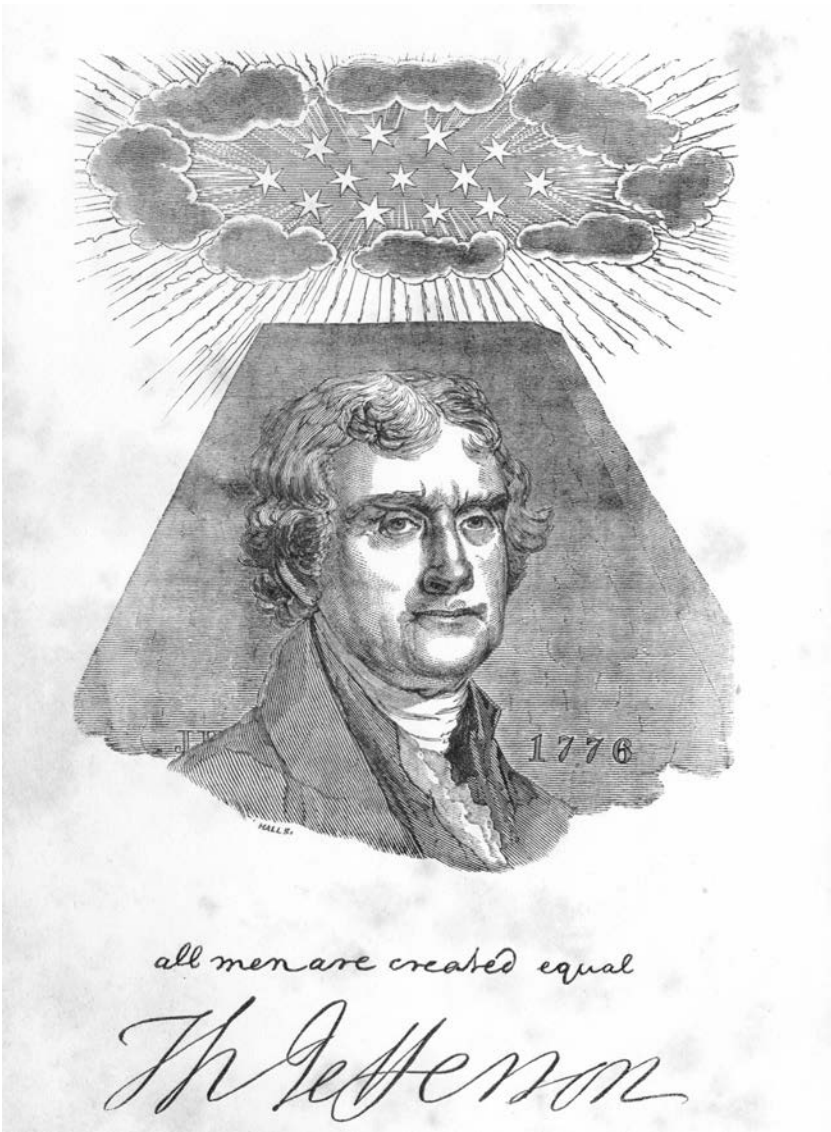


Figure 1. Frontispiece to *The Life and Opinions of Julius Melbourn* (1847). Courtesy of the Library Company of Philadelphia.

book's most widely read and controversial passage. "The writer of history exhibits to us the world as it is," Hammond later wrote; "he who composes fiction, shows us the world as it ought to be."⁴⁹ In *Julius Melbourn* Hammond portrayed a fictionalized Jefferson as he ought to have been: an advocate of emancipation and racial equality.

Hammond clearly wrote the Monticello dinner scene in reaction to the debates over black suffrage that had occurred at the 1846 New York constitutional convention. Most of the state's African Americans were disenfranchised by a race-based requirement that they own at least \$250 worth of property to vote (imposed in 1821), but in 1846 some politicians wanted to make black disenfranchisement complete.⁵⁰ During these debates, which Hammond followed closely, Jefferson's legacy had quickly become a point of contention.⁵¹ One delegate had cited the authority of "physiologists" as well as "Mr. Jefferson" to argue that black people were an inferior, "distinct race."⁵² Another delegate, with whom Hammond must have agreed, responded by invoking the Declaration of Independence to defend black

49. Jabez D. Hammond, *On the Evidence, Independent of Written Revelation, of the Immortality of the Soul: An Address Delivered before the Young Men's Association, of the City of Albany, February 28, 1850* (Albany: Joel Munsell, 1851), 21. See also Hammond to Van Buren, Cherry Valley, March 29, 1852, Van Buren Papers.

50. On black suffrage during this time, see Paul J. Polgar, "'Whenever They Judge It Expedient': The Politics of Partisanship in Black Voting Rights in Early National New York," *American Nineteenth Century History* 12 (April 2011): 1–23; Sarah Levine-Gronningsater, "Delivering Freedom: Gradual Emancipation, Black Legal Culture, and the Origins of Sectional Crisis in New York" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2014), chap. 5.

51. On Hammond's support for restoring equal black suffrage, see Hammond to Van Buren, Cherry Valley, November 24, 1842, Van Buren Papers; Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, December 17, 1845, Smith Papers SU; Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, October 30, 1846 (the second of two letters to Smith on this day), Smith Papers SU. Hammond was also critical of the constitutional convention's treatment of black suffrage in the third volume of his history of New York; see Hammond, *Political History of the State of New York, 1841 to 1847*, 657–61. The character and ambiguous racial status of Julius Melbourn may have been inspired by an anecdote from the constitutional convention. Isaac Burr of Dutchess County defended black suffrage and reported that he knew a mixed-race farmer whose skin "was not darker than that of many a sun-burnt farmer . . . but his hair had something of an African curl." He was a man "of intelligence, respectability, and moral worth," and Burr complained of the injustice of racial restrictions on voting; see S. Crosswell and R. Sutton, eds., *Debates and Proceedings in the New-York State Convention, for the Revision of the Constitution* (Albany: Office of the Albany Argus, 1846), 776.

52. Crosswell and Sutton, *Debates and Proceedings*, 783–84 (Kennedy).

suffrage and told the Democratic delegates who supported black disenfranchisement, "if Thomas Jefferson could only witness their conduct and hear their language, he would disown all such democrats."⁵³ But one of these advocates of racial disenfranchisement argued that Jefferson's emphasis on national determination allowed nations to decide who would and would not be included; African Americans were an "alien people" whom white New Yorkers could exclude from political participation in conformity with the Declaration of Independence.⁵⁴ Hammond used fiction as his means of attacking what he conceived to be a misuse of Jefferson's legacy.

In the novel, Julius Melbourn arrives at Monticello in the summer of 1815 and presents a letter of introduction written by a mutual acquaintance, a Mr. Pendleton. The letter informs Jefferson that Melbourn had been born a slave and is part African, even though he appears white. Jefferson and Melbourn spend the afternoon discussing topics ranging from Scottish metaphysics to Jefferson's plan for biracial education at the University of Virginia. During the coming week Melbourn frequently visits Jefferson's library, and one day Jefferson invites him to a dinner party.⁵⁵ The other dinner guests form a colorful cast of characters: John Marshall, chief justice of the Supreme Court (and Jefferson's political enemy); Samuel Dexter, a Boston Federalist and former secretary of war; Samuel L. Mitchill (Mitchell in the novel), a New York congressman and scientist; the Elder John Leland, a Baptist minister from Massachusetts famous for sending a 1,200-pound "Mammoth Cheese" to President Jefferson; and William Wirt, a future attorney general from Maryland. Jefferson introduces Melbourn to the other guests simply as a gentleman from North Carolina, with no reference to his invisible African ancestry or past enslavement. Eventually the dinner conversation turns to slavery and race; Jefferson defends racial equality and predicts slavery will soon end. Marshall replies that although the races might be equal, too much money was invested in slavery for it ever to end.

At the dinner party, only the Northerners defend slavery on the grounds of race rather than economics. Samuel Mitchill claims to have done experiments on human skulls demonstrating the "difference in the development, size, and quality, between the brain of the negro and white man."⁵⁶ The real Mitchill did no such experiments, but Hammond was clearly using him

53. *Ibid.*, 786–87 (Young).

54. *Ibid.*, 904–5 (Cornell). See also *ibid.*, 787 (Stowe).

55. Hammond, *Julius Melbourn*, 63–66.

56. *Ibid.*, 74.

as a stand-in for the New York delegate who had cited the authority of “physiologists” to justify racial discrimination. Polygenic theories of distinct races had been gaining prominence since Samuel Morton published his 1839 treatise, *Crania Americana*, arguing that the skulls of Europeans were generally larger than those of “inferior” races.⁵⁷ In *Julius Melbourn*, Jefferson responds to Mitchill’s statement by accepting the assertion that black slaves had smaller brains than white people while arguing that the disparity resulted from environmental rather than biological factors. He proposes that “the diet and exercise, bodily and mentally of a child” determine the “size, shape, and quality of the brain.” Turning to Samuel Dexter, Jefferson outlines a hypothetical experiment in which one of Dexter’s two sons would be given the elite education typical for his class while the other would be “transferred to a rice plantation in South Carolina, placed in a negro cabin, and brought up with the field slaves, associating only with them.” He expected that when they reached maturity, the different developments of their “heads and faces” would lead a phrenologist to pass very different judgments “upon the *native* intellectual power of each.” Hammond clearly assumed that the difference in the shapes of their heads, resulting from environmental factors, “would be immense,” as he had Jefferson predict.⁵⁸

Jefferson’s reasoning fails to persuade John Leland, who argues that black people were “doomed to be the servants of servants” by the biblical Curse of Ham.⁵⁹ This theory alleged that slavery was divinely ordained punishment for the descendants of Ham, who had either gawked at or sodomized (depending on how the passage is interpreted) his father, Noah, who lay naked in a drunken slumber.⁶⁰ This type of scriptural justification for slavery and racism appealed to many devout Christians who rejected pseudoscientific racism because polygenesis contradicted the biblical account of Adam

57. Samuel Morton, *Crania Americana; or, A Comparative View of the Skulls of Various Aboriginal Nations of North and South America. To Which Is Prefixed an Essay on the Varieties of the Human Species* (Philadelphia: J. Dobson, 1839). On Morton see Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind*, 211–26; Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, rev. ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996); Bay, *White Image in the Black Mind*, 42–43. Morton did not personally use his polygenesis theory of distinct and unequal races to justify slavery, but others, such as the Alabama physician Josiah Nott, explicitly embraced the science of “niggerology” to do just that; Dain, *Hideous Monster of the Mind*, 225–26.

58. Hammond, *Julius Melbourn*, 74–75.

59. *Ibid.*, 76.

60. Genesis 9:20–27; Jordan, *White over Black*, 17–18.

and Eve.⁶¹ At the New York constitutional convention, Bishop Perkins had used such religious logic to defend black disenfranchisement, and Jabez Hammond later ridiculed his “curious” argument in his *Political History of New York*.⁶²

In *Julius Melbourn*, Mitchill and Leland represented two different theories of racial inferiority advanced by delegates at the New York constitutional convention that Hammond intended to refute with the aid of a fictionalized Jefferson. Turning to Leland, Jefferson announces, “I am happy to have it in my power at this moment to prove to you and Dr. Mitchell, by ocular demonstration, that the experience of one of you and the theory of the other, has led you to erroneous conclusions.” Jefferson then pauses to drink a glass of wine with Melbourn before declaring that his mysterious guest was “born a slave, and is of African descent, though he has considerable Saxon blood in his veins.” He explains that Melbourn was educated as a child, cultivating a mind “of the first order of human intellects.” Jefferson’s guests are dumbfounded by the revelation. Later, Wirt approaches Melbourn in the hall and clasps his hand, saying, “I am mortified and ashamed . . . that this glorious country sustains such laws as those under which you have suffered.”⁶³ Thus, the fictionalized Jefferson not only disavows his own past racism, but also converts other (fictionalized) statesmen to the cause of racial equality.

Jabez Hammond’s effort to link Jefferson to antislavery was especially poignant in the midst of the Wilmot Proviso controversy. Although the newspaper editors who debated the authenticity of *Julius Melbourn* (as discussed below) did not directly address the book’s potential relevance to the Wilmot Proviso, they examined Jefferson’s views on slavery in other articles. The *Albany Evening Journal* highlighted Jefferson’s 1784 antislavery proposal and described the Wilmot Proviso as its “legitimate offspring.”⁶⁴ Gamaliel Bailey’s *National Era* (formerly connected to the Liberty Party) defended the authenticity of *Julius Melbourn* and ran articles connecting Jefferson’s antislavery legacy to the Wilmot Proviso. In one article, the abolitionist John Greenleaf Whittier presented a history of the federal government’s relations with slavery in which he argued, “the fact stands out, clear

61. Charles Irons, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 207.

62. Hammond, *Political History of New York, 1841 to 1847*, 660. Crosswell and Sutton, *Debates and Proceedings*, 789 (Perkins), 789–90 (Harrison), 796 (Perkins).

63. Hammond, *Julius Melbourn*, 77–78.

64. *Albany Evening Journal*, November 12, 1847.

and unmistakable, that the noble policy of excluding slavery from all United States territory is to be ascribed to Thomas Jefferson.” Whittier’s historical memory was selective; he misrepresented or ignored Jefferson’s role in expanding slavery through the Louisiana Purchase and the Missouri Crisis.⁶⁵ But Whittier’s writings further indicate that abolitionists felt it was important to link their policies to the Founding Fathers, especially Jefferson.⁶⁶

REACTIONS AND THE ISSUE OF AUTHENTICITY

Jabez Hammond later acknowledged that sales of *Julius Melbourn* were “quite limited,” but the story of Melbourn’s dinner with Jefferson reached a wide audience in the form of newspaper extracts that were published throughout the nation and led to a debate on the book’s authenticity.⁶⁷ Hammond or his publisher apparently gave a copy of the book to the editor Thurlow Weed, who excerpted the dinner party scene in his *Albany Evening Journal* on July 26, 1847. Although Weed acknowledged having some initial doubts about the book’s veracity, he noted that it was “published under the auspices of a respected Citizen whose character is a pledge for its general accuracy.” Weed hoped the book would encourage opposition to slavery and the domestic slave trade, which he described as “those ‘peculiar institutions’ which darken and deform a large portion of our Country’s history.”⁶⁸ The excerpt attracted a level of publicity that ultimately exposed *Julius Melbourn*

65. Whittier acknowledged that a “great oversight was committed” when Congress forgot to ban slavery in the Louisiana Purchase territories during Jefferson’s presidency, but he attributed this to the “haste with which the transaction was effected.” He also failed to note that during the Missouri Crisis Jefferson had sided unequivocally with slaveholders who defended the right of Missouri to enter the Union as a slave state and believed the restriction of slavery above the Missouri Compromise line of 36°30’ was inexpedient; “Five Acts of the General Government,” *National Era*, September 16, 1847. For Jefferson’s views on the Missouri Crisis, see Peter S. Onuf, *Jefferson’s Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 109–46.

66. On abolitionists’ use of the Jefferson image, see Frank Cirillo, “Struggling over the Sage: The Jefferson Image in the Abolitionist Mind, 1826–1860” (M.A. thesis, University of Virginia, 2013).

67. Hammond, *Julius Melbourn*, x.

68. “Life and Opinions of Julius Melbourn,” *Albany Evening Journal*, July 26, 1847. Incidentally, in *Julius Melbourn* Hammond describes Weed as “doing much for the cause of universal emancipation, and for restoring the colored man to the station among men to which, by the laws of nature and nature’s God, he is entitled” (222).

as antislavery fiction rather than the memoir of a former slave. It was almost inevitable that the book's fictional nature would be revealed, and the controversy had the potential to damage the broader antislavery movement.

The extracts published in the *Albany Journal* caught the eye of Alexander Moseley, editor of the *Richmond Whig*, who doubted the truth of the dinner party story. Assuming that the dinner was supposed to have taken place at the White House, Moseley pointed out that Jefferson was no longer president in 1815, nor was he "on terms of great intimacy with Judge Marshall." Furthermore, Jefferson's friend Edmund Pendleton had died in 1803 and thus could not have given Melbourn a letter of introduction in 1815.⁶⁹ The *Albany Evening Journal* responded by clarifying that the excerpt had left out the context indicating the dinner occurred at Monticello during Jefferson's retirement, that Marshall was there in connection with the creation of the University of Virginia rather than on a social visit, and that Mr. Pendleton was never identified by first name and should not be assumed to be Edmund. Weed concluded: "The *Richmond Whig*, it will be perceived, does not yet discredit the work. Our doubts, therefore, remain to be resolved." He then printed other extracts from the book relating to people whom Melbourn allegedly knew in Raleigh, so that the details could be corroborated or disproved by others.⁷⁰ After the *Richmond Whig* reprinted these new excerpts, they came to the attention of the *Raleigh Register*. The *Register* declared: "we can state that no such persons . . . ever resided in either Raleigh, or its vicinity. It is a sheer fabrication from beginning to end."⁷¹ The *Richmond Whig* pronounced the "whole story a fabrication."⁷²

It was fortunate for abolitionists and actual African American writers that the controversy over *Julius Melbourn's* Monticello scene remained fairly circumscribed. At a time when there was a burgeoning African American print culture, Hammond's misrepresentation of himself as a former slave could have unintentionally cast doubt on authentic slave narratives. One of the central purposes of slave narratives was to dispel idealized notions of happy slaves by presenting northern readers with firsthand accounts of slavery's brutal reality. In response, slavery's defenders frequently sought to discredit slave narratives by alleging that they were fictitious abolitionist

69. "Life and Opinions of Julius Melbourn," *Richmond Whig*, July 30, 1847.

70. "Life and Opinions of Julius Melbourn," *Albany Evening Journal*, August 3, 1847.

71. "Julius Melbourne [*sic*] Again," *Raleigh Register*, August 18, 1847.

72. "Julius Melbourne [*sic*]," *Richmond Whig*, August 31, 1847. See also "Julius Melbourne [*sic*]," *Richmond Whig*, August 24, 1847; "Julius Melbourne [*sic*]," *Raleigh Register*, August 28, 1847.

propaganda full of exaggerations.⁷³ When slave narratives began appearing in the 1830s, they immediately provoked allegations of inauthenticity, and the problem was exacerbated by the existence of fictional accounts advertised as authentic. For example, Richard Hildreth's novel, *The Slave, or Memoirs of Archy Moore* (1836) increased suspicions that Charles Ball's *Slavery in the United States*, published the same year, was also fictional. Two years later, southern newspapers attacked the authenticity of the *Narrative of James Williams* (1838), which the American Anti-Slavery Society had vouched for. Although critics never proved that Williams's narrative was fraudulent—and modern scholars have determined it was largely accurate, though Williams changed names and places—the allegations were sufficient to discredit the work in the public eye.⁷⁴

In the 1840s fugitive slaves and free African Americans needed white allies—but not white people to speak for them. Hammond's state had an especially active black community; beginning in 1840, black New Yorkers held large conventions mobilizing for equal civil and political rights.⁷⁵ African American activists petitioned the state constitutional convention and sent a delegation to meet with the convention's committee on suffrage in 1846.⁷⁶ Hammond apparently never considered that his paternalistic efforts to speak for free and enslaved African Americans could have negative implications.⁷⁷ He claimed he had “not the slightest intention” of misleading the public about *Julius Melbourn*, and he was surprised to “learn that many people suppose it real history.”⁷⁸ Fortunately, critics focused on the Monticello

73. William L. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1769–1865* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Ann Fabian, *The Unvarnished Truth: Personal Narratives in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 79–116; Dickson D. Bruce Jr., *The Origins of African American Literature, 1680–1865* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), esp. 238–42.

74. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story*, 62–66, 81–89; Hank Trent, ed., *Narrative of James Williams, An American Slave: Annotated Edition* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013).

75. Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, *They Who Would Be Free: Blacks Search for Freedom, 1830–1861* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 182–88, 194–95; Levine-Gronningsater, “Delivering Freedom,” 291–302.

76. Crosswell and Sutton, *Proceedings and Debates*, 172, 785.

77. Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, December 17, 1845, Smith Papers SU; Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley October 30, 1846, Smith Papers SU.

78. Hammond informed Smith that following the newspaper controversy, he had sent a private note to Thurlow Weed acknowledging his authorship. He explained that his publishers told him this would boost sales, so he remained pub-

scene and did not use the book to disparage slave narratives as a genre or the abolitionist movement as a whole.

The “crisis of credibility” in the late 1830s may have motivated some abolitionists in the 1840s to quickly acknowledge *Julius Melbourn* as a work of fiction in order to preempt a controversy that could add fuel to allegations that Frederick Douglass’s recently published autobiography was inauthentic.⁷⁹ For example, in his review for the *Liberator*, Wendell Phillips reported matter-of-factly that the “work is a fiction,” although “the conscious truth and accuracy of the picture in some of its minute lines, would sometimes, perhaps, make you think it a true story.”⁸⁰ The *Emancipator* was more ambivalent, simply stating: “The book may be what it purports to be. It is certainly interesting and instructive.”⁸¹ The *North Star* reprinted a review from the *Boston Courier* that also described the book as fictional.⁸² It is unfortunate that neither of the *North Star*’s editors, Frederick Douglass and Martin Delaney—black writers themselves—undertook their own review of the book.

Although there is no record of African Americans’ reactions to *Julius Melbourn*, black intellectuals also grappled with the issues of race science and Jefferson’s legacy. Like Hammond’s, their results were ambiguous and at times contradictory. Hammond had privileged white features even as he rejected innate racial inferiority, assuming that the circumstances of one’s upbringing determined complexion, facial features, and the size and shape of the head and brain. Some African Americans, such as Hosea Easton of Massachusetts, expressed similar beliefs. In an 1837 treatise, Easton predicted that if enslaved blacks were freed and educated, they would undergo physical changes: “Their narrow foreheads, which have hitherto been contracted for want of mental exercise, would begin to broaden . . . indicative of deep and penetrating thought.”⁸³ By contrast, Dr. James McCune Smith

licly silent during the newspaper controversy. Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley August 16, 1847, Smith Papers SU.

79. On the “crisis of credibility” and controversy over Douglass’s narrative, see *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (1846), ed. John W. Blassingame (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), xviii–xix.

80. *Liberator*, November 26, 1847. Three months before, the *Liberator* had published the Monticello extract while expressing skepticism about its authenticity; *Liberator*, August 20, 1847.

81. *Emancipator* (New York), December 15, 1847.

82. *North Star* (Rochester), April 21, 1848.

83. Hosea Easton, *A Treatise on the Intellectual Character and Civil and Political Condition of the Colored People of the U. States* (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1837), 53; Bay, *White Image in the Black Mind*, 39, 46–48.

directly refuted phrenology and other pseudosciences that linked appearance and mental capacity. In public lectures in 1837, Smith “demonstrated the fallacy of the attempt to designate the developments of the brain, by external convexities upon the skull.”⁸⁴ In 1859, however, Smith modified some of his sentiments in an article responding directly to Jefferson’s racist aspersions in *Notes on the State of Virginia*. In this piece Smith essentially advanced the same position that Jabez Hammond had, taking environmental arguments about racial features to their logical extreme. He accepted the physical and mental inferiority of black people living in Africa, but he argued that those in the United States were undergoing both intellectual and physical changes as a result of better climate and cultural influences. Their improved mental capacity was accompanied by “osteological” changes that reduced the slope of their foreheads and the protrusion of their jaws. Their skin was also becoming lighter and their hair straighter, he believed.⁸⁵ Even as white and black abolitionists countered proslavery racism with the best intentions, contemporary understandings of science hindered their efforts.⁸⁶

Smith’s attempt to refute Jefferson’s racism was part of an ongoing effort among African Americans. In the 1790s Benjamin Banneker had sought to enlist Jefferson in behalf of equality, and David Walker had framed his 1829 *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World* largely as a refutation of Jefferson’s racist pronouncements.⁸⁷ Walker charged that Jefferson “has in truth injured us more, and has been as great a barrier to our emancipation as any thing

84. From the *Commercial Advertiser*, in *Colored American* (New York), September 30, 1837, cited in Stauffer, *Black Hearts of Men*, 125. See also Patrick Rael, “A Common Nature, a United Destiny: African American Responses to Racial Science from the Revolution to the Civil War,” in Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John Stauffer, eds., *Prophets of Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism* (New York: New Press, 2006), 183–99.

85. James McCune Smith, “On the Fourteenth Query of Thomas Jefferson’s *Notes on Virginia*” (1859), in *The Works of James McCune Smith: Black Intellectual and Abolitionist*, ed. John Stauffer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 264–81.

86. Bay, *White Image in the Black Mind*, 58–63.

87. Richard Newman, “‘Good Communications Correct Bad Manners’: The Banneker-Jefferson Dialogue and the Project of White Uplift,” in John Craig Hammond and Matthew Mason, eds., *Contesting Slavery: The Politics of Bondage and Freedom in the New American Nation* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 69–93; Gene Andrew Jarrett, “‘To Refute Mr. Jefferson’s Arguments Respecting Us’: Thomas Jefferson, David Walker, and the Politics of Early African American Literature,” *Early American Literature* 46, no. 2 (2011): 291–318.

that has ever been advanced against it," and he called on his black readers to "contradict" Jefferson's aspersions through their actions.⁸⁸ The black novelist (and former slave) William Wells Brown also chose to criticize rather than idealize Jefferson in *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter* (1853). Whereas scholars believe that Jefferson freed all his children born to his enslaved mistress, Sally Hemings (and that she was his only such mistress), Brown's novel describes a "negro sale, at which two daughters of Thomas Jefferson, the writer of the Declaration of American Independence, and one of the presidents of the great republic, were disposed of to the highest bidder!"⁸⁹ One of them, Clotel, eventually runs away and drowns herself to avoid recapture.⁹⁰ Clotel's nieces, Ellen and Jane, are sold for thousands of dollars in New Orleans, where the "fact that they were the grand-daughters of Thomas Jefferson, no doubt, increased their value." Ellen, knowing "for what purpose she had been bought," poisons herself that night.⁹¹ By having Clotel and Ellen choose death over slavery, Brown portrays them as more Jeffersonian than Jefferson himself.

Most white Northerners were more comfortable with Hammond's approach of emphasizing Jefferson's admirable qualities while ignoring his shortcomings. In the 1850s Salmon Chase and other leaders of the Republican Party stressed that their party, although sectional, represented the Founding Father's desire to put slavery on the road to extinction.⁹² Such

88. Sean Wilentz, ed., *David Walker's Appeal . . . to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America* (1829; repr., New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 27.

89. William Wells Brown, *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter* (1853), ed. Robert S. Levine, 2nd ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011), 88. On Jefferson's children with Hemings, see Annette Gordon Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008).

90. Brown, *Clotel*, 207. James McCune Smith similarly mocked Jefferson's hypocrisy as emblematic of a larger trend in which the "crocus colored products of unphilosophical lust, are now reared, and penned up, and branded, and sold, by slaveholding fathers in [the] Old Dominion"; [James McCune Smith], "Communi-paw," *Frederick Douglass's Paper*, March 25, 1852, reprinted in Brown, *Clotel*, 286–87.

91. Jane dies soon as well, of a "broken heart," after her lover is killed trying to rescue her from the "unprincipled profligate" who purchased her; Brown, *Clotel*, 197–99. See also Richard Bell, *We Shall Be No More: Suicide and Self-Government in the Newly United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 240–41.

92. Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 75–77, 84; Peterson, *The Jefferson Image*, 199–209; Oakes, *Freedom National*, 42–48.

efforts continued to trouble some African American activists. For example, Robert Purvis, born to an enslaved mother but manumitted and educated by his slaveholding father, rebuffed one Republican in 1860 who praised Jefferson as a “good antislavery man.” Purvis responded that Jefferson’s alleged sale of his own daughters indicated he was a “scoundrel as well as a traitor.”⁹³ Nonetheless, the efforts of Hammond and others to exaggerate a tradition of Jeffersonian antislavery helped legitimize the abolition movement and counter allegations that abolitionism represented British intrigue or sectionalism.⁹⁴

THE POLITICS OF DOUGHFACISM, SELF-INTEREST, AND MASCULINITY

The events in *Julius Melbourn* after the Monticello dinner party attracted less attention from contemporaries but had a greater basis in reality. As Hammond explained in the second edition, the anecdotes about politicians and Congress were drawn from his own experiences, and he could “personally vouch for the truth” of them.⁹⁵ These episodes include observations on many of the great statesmen of the era, as well as wide-ranging criticisms of American society. Hammond had a clear sectional agenda and hoped to unite Northerners against slavery, but he did so by heaping more scorn on Northerners than on Southerners. He denounced “doughfaces” (Northerners who supported the South politically) while appealing to white Northerners’ self-interest and conceptions of masculinity in hopes of mobilizing them against the Slave Power.

Hammond had a surprising degree of empathy and respect for individual slaveholders. He was a lifelong admirer of Henry Clay, even though the Kentuckian served the interests of a “slaveholding constituency.”⁹⁶ More surprisingly, Hammond also had great respect for staunch proslavery Southerners such as John C. Calhoun. His first draft of *Julius Melbourn* had actually included Calhoun as a close friend of Edward Melbourn, portraying him in a positive light. When Calhoun died in 1850, Hammond eulogized: “The great Southern statesman is no more. What a mind has gone out!

93. Purvis is quoted in Margaret Hope Bacon, *But One Race: The Life of Robert Purvis* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 138–39.

94. Cirillo, “Struggling over the Sage.”

95. Hammond, *Julius Melbourn*, xii.

96. *Ibid.*, 247. See also Hammond to Randall, Cherry Valley, November 20, 1851, MM Hammond; Hammond to Van Buren, Cherry Valley, March 29, 1852, Van Buren Papers.

John C. Calhoun! In the Senate we shall 'ne'r look upon his like again.'"⁹⁷ Although disagreeing with Calhoun's portrayal of slavery as a positive good, Hammond appreciated that the South Carolinian was "consistent" and advanced his position "openly and manfully."⁹⁸ The *New Yorker* could "readily believe that the force of long habit and education and the strong bias which pecuniary interest may produce on the purest minds may have led to the formation of those opinions consistent with sincerity and honesty of purpose."⁹⁹ Hammond's mixed-race alter ego also respected many slaveholders. Julius Melbourn travels to Washington, D.C., and observes Congress during the Missouri Crisis of 1819–20, expressing admiration for some slaveholding politicians, including William Lowndes of South Carolina and John Randolph of Virginia. He forgives their defense of slaveholding interests because it arose from the circumstances of their birth, not "an error of the heart."¹⁰⁰

On the other hand, Hammond and Melbourn had nothing but contempt for northern doughfaces who promoted the interests of slaveholders.¹⁰¹ Instead of serving their constituents, they acted out of selfish desire for "executive patronage." Melbourn laments that so long as such practices continue, "the poor slave has little to hope from the northern politicians."¹⁰² Hammond had long been concerned with the support Northerners lent slavery, as indicated in an 1835 letter he published pseudonymously in the *New York Emancipator*. He denounced opponents of abolition and dismissed their purported motives—such as concern for the Union and the Constitution, charging that they acted out of base self-interest. The North's merchants made money from slave-produced cotton, the clergy cared more about donations from slaveholders than about Christianizing slaves, and

97. Hammond, *Julius Melbourn*, 240–44; Hammond to Randall, Cherry Valley, April 3, 1850, MM Hammond (quotation); emphasis in original.

98. Jabez D. Hammond, *Letter to a Member of Congress [John G. Floyd]*, June 25, 1852, 1. Hammond enclosed a copy of this "printed but not published" pamphlet in his letter to Van Buren, Cherry Valley, August 11, 1852, Van Buren Papers.

99. [Jabez D. Hammond], *Letter to the Hon. Daniel Webster* (New York: New York Gazette Office, 1850), 6. Hammond made similar points about the influence of slavery on the morality of Southerners in his letter to Smith, Cherry Valley, February 28, 1852, Smith Papers SU.

100. Hammond, *Julius Melbourn*, 88.

101. On the role of doughfaces, see Richards, *Slave Power*; Michael Todd Landis, *Northern Men with Southern Loyalties: The Democratic Party and the Sectional Crisis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).

102. Hammond, *Julius Melbourn*, 104.

politicians of both major parties competed to “most abuse the abolitionists” to win southern votes.¹⁰³ The actions of elite Northerners with “mercenary motives” was regrettable, but the “political subservience” of larger numbers of ordinary white Northerners who had nothing to gain from allying with the South was in some ways even worse.¹⁰⁴ In contrast to his description of Calhoun “manfully” defending slavery, Hammond belittled the northern “men (if they may be so called)” who “never think for themselves, but think as they are directed by others.”¹⁰⁵

Hammond had a sophisticated understanding of the connections among economics, racism, and doughface politics, anticipating recent scholarship. Northern manufacturers and commercial firms not only depended on slave-grown cotton but had “millions of money due them from the South, secured solely by mortgages on slaves.”¹⁰⁶ Meanwhile, the “ignorant and vulgar white man” of the North supported a southern institution at odds with his economic interests partly because slavery and racism enabled him to feel superior to a black man.¹⁰⁷ And whereas scholars often point to the antebellum disenfranchisement of black voters as evidence of grass-roots racism, Hammond understood that slaveholders and their allies actively engineered these efforts from the top down. In his *History of Political Parties in New York*, Hammond suggested that in 1821 Republicans had supported curtailing black suffrage partly in response to the recognition that “the colored electors in New-York and Albany had generally voted the federal ticket.”¹⁰⁸

103. “Plain Truth,” “Reasons for the Excitement in New-England, N. York, and Pennsylvania against Anti-Slavery Societies,” *Emancipator*, October 20, 1835. For Hammond’s authorship, see Hammond to Gerrit Smith, Cherry Valley, February 5, 1836, Smith Papers SU.

104. Hammond, *Julius Melbourn*, 3.

105. “Plain Truth,” “Reasons for the Excitement.”

106. Hammond, *Julius Melbourn*, 250. Historians are still untangling the financial connections between northern capital and southern slavery that Hammond criticized. See, for example, Bonnie Martin, “Slavery’s Invisible Engine: Mortgaging Human Property,” *Journal of Southern History* 76 (November 2010): 817–66; Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2014); Calvin Schermerhorn, *The Business of Slavery and the Rise of American Capitalism, 1815–1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

107. Hammond, *Julius Melbourn*, 135. For a similar explanation of northern white working-class support for southern slavery and racism, see David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, rev. ed. (New York: Verso, 1999).

108. Hammond qualified this by observing that “it would, perhaps, be uncharitable and unjust to charge gentlemen . . . with having been influenced in any consider-

Later, in *Julius Melbourn*, his protagonist equates black disenfranchisement with “what the south most ardently desire, the degradation of the negro race in the free states.” Referring to anti-black suffrage sentiment at an 1845 meeting of New York Democrats, Melbourn concludes: “That the meeting at Tammany was induced to adopt the resolution with a view to afford a proof of their devotion to the slaveholding administration now in power, there can be no doubt.” Hammond recognized that southern slaveholders not only benefited from northern racism but also actively encouraged it.¹⁰⁹

Slavery, racism, and doughface politics hurt the interests of most white Northerners, Hammond argued. In an exaggerated calculation, he claimed that because of the Constitution's three-fifths clause, “a citizen in South Carolina possesses twice as much political power as a citizen of Massachusetts.” Congress protected slavery but refused to interfere against slaveholders who kidnapped black Northerners or fraudulently claimed them as fugitive slaves, thereby violating the sovereignty of northern states. By controlling the federal government, slaveholders forced Northerners to fight and fund wars that expanded the empire of slavery, although Southerners had no interest in acquiring “one foot of territory north of Mason and Dixon's line.” Slaveholders also hypocritically denounced a 40 percent tariff intended to protect northern manufacturers as unconstitutional while supporting a 50 percent tariff protecting slave-grown sugar in Louisiana. Aristocratic slaveholders pursued policies that hurt the North while increasing the danger of an “exterminating war” between the races, threatening the survival of the republican “experiment” begun in 1776. To prevent the further growth of slaveholders' political influence, Hammond concluded *Julius Melbourn* by calling on his readers to support the Wilmot Proviso against slavery's territorial expansion.¹¹⁰

Congress never adopted the Wilmot Proviso, and the Fugitive Slave Law

able degree by party considerations,” while offering no alternative explanation; Hammond, *History of Political Parties*, 2:15–21, quotation on 21. Paul Polgar emphasizes the role of partisan advantage in “Whenever They Judge It Expedient.”

109. Hammond, *Julius Melbourn*, 232. On the connection between the Slave Power and northern black disenfranchisement in an analogous case, see Nicholas Wood, “‘A Sacrifice on the Altar of Slavery’: Doughface Politics and Black Disenfranchisement in Pennsylvania, 1837–1838,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 31 (Spring 2011): 75–105.

110. Hammond, *Julius Melbourn*, 101–2 (first quote), 171, 184 (second quote), 188, 236–37 (third quote), 238.

of 1850 further demonstrated the Slave Power's political domination. In his second edition of *Julius Melbourn*, Hammond explained that the "solid slaveholding phalanx" could always find "a sufficient number of Northern dough-faces" to pass proslavery measures.¹¹¹ Hammond expected "nothing better" from well-known doughfaces like Michigan's Lewis Cass, but he was shocked at the apostasy of Massachusetts' Senator Daniel Webster in 1850, when he denounced abolitionists and supported the new Fugitive Slave Law.¹¹² Hammond published an open letter to Webster, attacking his "integrity as a Politician, and consistency as a Statesman." He pointed out that during the War of 1812 Webster had supported the New England Federalists' Hartford Convention and called for disunion, whereas in 1850 he joined slaveholders in alleging that abolitionists threatened the Union.¹¹³

Hammond also attacked doughfaces' masculinity. In the face of "southern chivalry" Webster had "manifest[ed] a most lame-like forbearance."¹¹⁴ By contrast, Hammond commended Senator William Seward for his "manly and bold" defense of northern rights.¹¹⁵ He could respect the masculinity of both Seward and John C. Calhoun, even though he opposed Calhoun's policies, but he reacted with disdain to seeing Webster "sell himself a Slave to the Southern Slave holders." Doughfaces sacrificed the rights and honor of the North, either from personal self-interest or feminine weakness.¹¹⁶

ANTISLAVERY ENDS AND MEANS

Hammond used *Julius Melbourn* to critique not only slaveholders and doughfaces but also his fellow abolitionists, chiding some for their hypocrisy and others for their tactics and timidity. During one of Melbourn's travels in the North, he shares a stagecoach ride with a female abolitionist and they

111. *Ibid.*, 250–51.

112. Hammond to Seward, Cherry Valley, March 30, 1850, Seward Papers, reel 37; Hammond to Randall, Cherry Valley, April 3, 1850, MM Hammond; David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848–1861*, ed. Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 90–104; Elizabeth R. Varon, *Disunion! The Coming of the American Civil War, 1789–1859* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 210–23.

113. [Hammond], *Letter to the Hon. Daniel Webster*, 1. Hammond published the letter anonymously but left his name with the printer for anyone who wanted to inquire, and he sent a copy to Webster himself.

114. *Ibid.*, 4, 1.

115. Hammond to Seward, Cherry Valley, March 19, 1850, Seward Papers, reel 36.

116. Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, April 29, 1850, Smith Papers SU; Hammond to Seward, Cherry Valley, March 19, 1850, Seward Papers, reel 36.

engage in pleasant conversation until he informs her of his African ancestry. At that point she “bridled up, appeared alarmed and offended, and remarked, with great solemnity, that it was highly improper for negroes, or those related to them, to attempt to associate with white people.”¹¹⁷ Later Melbourn has much longer conversations and correspondence with two other abolitionists who are free of such hypocritical racism: Benjamin Lundy of Baltimore and Tobias Thornton of New York. Lundy was a real person, editor of *The Genius of Universal Emancipation* and William Lloyd Garrison’s mentor. Thornton, whom Melbourn praises as “entirely a self-made man” and a “citizen of the world,” is clearly a stand-in for Hammond himself.¹¹⁸ Melbourn’s conversations and correspondence with them reflect Hammond’s own evolution in thinking during the preceding decades, as different characters express opinions he held at different times.

Like many who came to support immediate emancipation, Hammond had initially favored gradual emancipation and African colonization.¹¹⁹ In 1824 Hammond served as a manager of the Albany Colonization Society, which concluded that most manumitted slaves who remained in the United States “gain little, [and] in many instances they are great losers by emancipation.”¹²⁰ Five years later he and Gerrit Smith helped form the New York Colonization Society and proposed a resolution declaring African colonization “by far the most probable, if not the only means, of enlightening the benighted and savage tribes of that continent.”¹²¹ Implicitly linking colonization to Jefferson, Hammond also signed a circular letter to the state’s

117. Hammond, *Julius Melbourn*, 216.

118. *Ibid.*, 123, 125. The biographical background Hammond provides for Thornton is a dramatized version of his own, moving from Vermont to New York and setting up a law practice. In the preface to the second edition and in a later letter he also indicates that Thornton’s opinions correspond to his own (*ibid.*, xi); Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, March 7, 1853, Smith Papers SU.

119. James Brewer Stewart, *Holy Warriors: Abolitionists and American Slavery*, rev. ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997); Richard Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). On the complex relationship between colonization and abolitionism, see Beverly C. Tomek, *Colonization and Its Discontents: Emancipation, Emigration, and Antislavery in Antebellum Pennsylvania* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

120. *Address of the Albany Colonization Society; with an Appendix . . . Illustrating the Importance, Advantages, and Practicability of Colonizing the Free People of Colour of the United States* (Albany: Packard & Van Benthuysen, 1824), 4, 6 (quotation).

121. “Formation of Auxiliary Societies,” *African Repository and Colonial Journal* (Washington, D.C.), April 1829, 59.

clergy encouraging them to collect donations on “the 4th day of July, or on the preceding or following Sunday, for the benefit of the American Colonization Society.”¹²² In 1832 he was still combining calls for emancipation with support for voluntary black emigration.¹²³

Hammond’s opinion underwent a great change in later decades. “The Northern people never were more sadly deluded by the Slaveholders than by being gulled to pay their money to enable the Slave owners to send across the ocean a slave who on account of his spirit of revolution or vicious personality he dare not whip and could not sell,” he later wrote to Smith, who had also transitioned from advocating colonization to immediate emancipation.¹²⁴ In *Julius Melbourn*, Hammond’s protagonist concludes that African colonization is a proslavery scheme “calculated to drain the free states of their most intelligent, enterprising, and meritorious colored citizens.” Melbourn also reports that it is “universally unpopular with the colored people of America,” and he describes a conversation with a black coach driver who opposed the plan and who observed “that the negro loved the soil he was born on as well as the white man; and he could not endure the idea of banishment for life from his native country.”¹²⁵ It is possible that Hammond actually had such a conversation, and that it helped change his mind.

Although the characters of Melbourn, Lundy, and Thornton unite in opposing African colonization, they disagree on other abolitionist tactics. Representing views previously shared by Hammond, Lundy “would use moral suasion alone,” appealing “to the conscience of the slaveholder himself.” Thornton agrees with Lundy that emancipation must be gradual, but doubts that economic interests and prejudice could be overcome by reason and argument. He calls for political action; Northerners should elect only politicians who will “oppose the extension of the area of slavery” and “vote for the abolition of the slave-trade between the different states.”¹²⁶ Abolitionists had long been divided over the expediency of moral suasion versus political action. William Lloyd Garrison and his supporters believed that American politics had been too corrupted by slavery to be an effective means of combatting slavery (at least until a moral revolution had taken place

122. “Circular,” *Western Recorder*, June 16, 1829. See also “African Colonisation,” *Western Recorder*, June 8, 1830.

123. Hammond, *Address Delivered at Cherry-Valley*, 14–15.

124. Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, February 28, 1852, Smith Papers SU.

125. Hammond, *Julius Melbourn*, 142–43.

126. *Ibid.*, 128–29, 138.

among a majority of voters).¹²⁷ By contrast, Gerrit Smith supported the Liberty Party but refused to support antislavery Whigs or Democrats. Hammond was more pragmatic, dismissing the Liberty Party platform as “too narrow for a National political party to stand upon.”¹²⁸ Believing abolitionists could accomplish more by working within the existing political system, in 1845 he tried unsuccessfully to convince Smith to support Whigs or Democrats who promised to promote black suffrage at the state constitutional convention.¹²⁹ In *Julius Melbourn* he complained that the Liberty Party failed to understand that its adherents must deal with “society as it is,” and that a single-issue party could never attract a majority.¹³⁰

In sum, by 1847 Hammond had repudiated African colonization, doubted the efficacy of moral suasion, and supported pragmatic antislavery political involvement across party lines. He advocated racial equality while also appealing to white Northerners' self-interest, hoping his novel would inspire political action. Yet he clearly had doubts about the capacity of politics to end slavery and establish racial equality, especially considering that even his own northern state refused to sanction equal black suffrage. Garrisonians also doubted slavery would ever end through legislation, and they began advocating disunion in the 1840s. They predicted that if the North withdrew its support of slavery, slaveholders would not be able to prevent their human chattel from running away or rebelling, and necessity would force Southerners to abolish the institution.¹³¹ Hammond also became increasingly comfortable with the idea of disunion and agreed that white Southerners could not preserve slavery on their own. But he diverged from most Garrisonians in his acceptance of antislavery violence.¹³²

127. Aileen S. Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834–1850* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967), 119–68, 197–208, 274–76; W. Caleb McDaniel, *The Problem of Democracy in the Age of Slavery: Garrisonian Abolitionists and Transatlantic Reform* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 159–80.

128. Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, December 7, 1844, Smith Papers SU.

129. Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, December 17, 1845, Smith Papers SU; Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, October 30, 1846 (the second of two letters from that date), Smith Papers SU. Some African Americans made similar appeals to Smith; see Levine-Gronningsater, “Delivering Freedom,” 300.

130. Hammond, *Julius Melbourn*, 223.

131. Kraditor, *Means and Ends*, 197–208; McDaniel, *Problem of Democracy*, 168–80.

132. Hammond's evolving views on disunion can be traced in Hammond to Van Buren, Albany, June 7, 1829, Van Buren Papers; Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, January 23, 1836, Smith Papers SU; Hammond to Van Buren, Cherry Valley,

TOWARD ANTISLAVERY VIOLENCE

Thomas Jefferson and Jabez Hammond both believed that a just God would favor slaves in a contest against their masters.¹³³ But though slave revolt was the Virginian's nightmare, it came to be the New Yorker's fantasy—at least for a while. *Julius Melbourn* contains sporadic references to slave violence and concludes on an ominous note: “The day will come—the dreadful day will come, (may a merciful God put far away that day,) when the rich rice and cotton fields of the south will be drenched with human gore.”¹³⁴ Yet most of the book's discussion of slave violence is oblique, and Hammond's radical views are discernable only when *Julius Melbourn* is put in context with his private correspondence. Hammond believed large-scale slave revolt was morally justified on the basis of his religious views, necessary on the basis of his political experience, and feasible on the basis of his travels in Virginia after Nat Turner's revolt. He actively encouraged Gerrit Smith's willingness to support violence in behalf of antislavery, probably contributing to Smith's decision to back John Brown's actions in Bleeding Kansas and Harper's Ferry, Virginia.

In his novel Hammond used the characters of Julius Melbourn and Tobias Thornton to hint at his support for antislavery violence. Reflecting on the Haitian Revolution and the War of 1812, Melbourn notes that slavery rendered Southerners vulnerable and dependent on northern aid. He predicts that “a well-organized army of 10,000 men . . . with provisions, and arms and munitions of war sufficient for an army of 60,000 men” could conquer the South in six months by offering freedom to slaves. Later, while discussing the need to uplift the free black community, Tobias Thornton calls for the creation of “an academy for the instruction of colored youth, similar in all respects to that at West Point.” Students would be “selected from the most promising lads of the colored race” and instructed in “military and natural science.” The “Young men thus educated will be the best lecturers and missionaries to effect the abolition of slavery.”¹³⁵ On the surface, this proposal does not seem radically different from the Oneida Academy, a manual labor college for black New Yorkers.¹³⁶ Yet in *Julius Melbourn*,

November 24, 1842, Van Buren Papers; Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, December 17, 1845, Smith Papers SU. I discuss his celebration of violence below.

133. Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Query XVII: Manners), 162–63; Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, February 28, 1852, Smith Papers SU.

134. Hammond, *Julius Melbourn*, 237.

135. *Ibid.*, 105, 139.

136. Levine-Gronningsater, “Delivering Freedom,” 198.

Benjamin Lundy warns, “thee thyself must perceive that thy scheme of giving military education to colored boys, squints too much at wars and fighting to receive the approbation of an humble follower of George Fox [i.e., a Quaker].”¹³⁷

The implications behind these passages are revealed in Hammond’s correspondence with Gerrit Smith.¹³⁸ “I lament to confess to you I have changed in part my opinion in relation to the ultimate success of abolition Doctrines,” he wrote confidentially in 1839; “the only way in which Slavery at the South can be abolished is by force. It will never be done by peaceable means.”¹³⁹ His initial optimism was collapsing in the face of an anti-abolitionist backlash. Congress enacted the Gag Rule, refusing to read anti-slavery petitions, while southern postmasters burned abolitionist mailings and northern mobs attacked abolitionists and African Americans.¹⁴⁰ In this context, Hammond wrote that he “would cheerfully contribute to raise funds to establish two seminaries, the exercises to be the same as in the West Point Academy, for the education of Negro boys[,] one in upper Canada and the other at Metamora in Mexico. I believe that young men thus educated . . . would be the most successful Southern Missionaries.”¹⁴¹ Five years after the publication of *Julius Melbourn*, Hammond made his meaning explicit in another confidential letter to Smith:

I have long been of opinion that Slavery will never be abolished by moral suasion alone. I intimated as much in more than one paragraph in my *Julius Melbourn*. I lament to say that in my Judgment 4 millions of human beings now held by their fellow man as Brutes will never be restored to the rights of humanity unless by means of blood & Slaughter. . . . The Slave holders will not listen to your appeals to his interest or his conscience. He will mob you, he will supress you if you attempt to argue with him. What remedy remains but force. If that force should be resisted to—if blood & carnage should be the result it may be said of these Slave holders as Caesar said . . . after the Battle of Pharsalia and with more justice “*They would have it so.*”¹⁴²

137. Hammond, *Julius Melbourn*, 139–40.

138. This correspondence is also discussed in Dillon, *Slavery Attacked*, 205–6; Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist*, 97–98; and Reed, “American Jacobins,” 85–86.

139. Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, May 18, 1839, Smith Papers SU.

140. David Grimsted, *American Mobbing, 1828–1861: Toward Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 11–54; Varon, *Disunion!* 87–138.

141. Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, May 18, 1839, Smith Papers SU.

142. Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, February 28, 1852, Smith Papers SU; emphasis in original.

Citing the example of “St. Domingo” and the presence of “30,000 blacks in Canada,” Hammond reiterated his warning from *Julius Melbourn*: “An organized Army of 10,000 men with an able Commander, and arms munitions of war and provisions for 50,000 men would march through the Southern States and liberate every slave there in six months.”¹⁴³ Like Charles Torrey, Hammond was part of a radical branch of the abolitionist movement that concluded, in response to southern intransigence, that violence was the only means that could end slavery.¹⁴⁴

The second edition of *Julius Melbourn*, which Hammond sent to prominent antislavery advocates such as William Seward and Harriet Beecher Stowe, included an additional passage on black militancy that had been cut from the first printing.¹⁴⁵ The scene involves a dinner attended by Edward Melbourn, John C. Calhoun, and Mr. Danforth (the character who subsequently kills Edward in a duel). Calhoun fears that if the proportion of slaves in South Carolina continues to rise, it “may eventually produce a servile insurrection.” Danforth rejects such concerns: “Nonsense. . . . They are a sheepish race of animals, timid as a deer.” Edward responds by acknowledging that though “a long and continued state of degradation and slavery has deadened their native energies . . . it does not follow from this that circumstances may not call out from them resolution and courage which are now dormant, and a spirit of dire revenge.” Citing the “demonstrations made lately by the slaves of St. Domingue of courage as well as ferocity,” Edward asks, “Will not the slave, then, use physical force to regain his liberty, whenever he is convinced he can use such force successfully?”¹⁴⁶ Hammond clearly believed it would be the case.

Hammond thought not only that antislavery violence was morally justified but also that it would be an effective means of ending slavery. In this latter respect he differed from many of his abolitionist colleagues. Beginning in 1842, Gerrit Smith, William Lloyd Garrison, and Henry Highland

143. *Ibid.*

144. Harrold, *Rise of Aggressive Abolitionism*, 39.

145. Hammond to Seward, Cherry Valley, November 12, 1851, Seward Papers, reel 41. The copy of the second edition at Yale’s Beinecke Library is inscribed, “To Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, with the respects of The Author.”

146. Danforth interrupts Edward’s speech and criticizes his mother for her treatment of Julius: “bringing up and educating a brat who is to lead a gang of cut-throats.” This insult, along with a sexual insinuation about the widow Melbourn, leads to the duel in which Danforth slays Edward (who shoots into the air). Interestingly, Calhoun exerts great effort to prevent the duel and criticizes dueling in general; Hammond, *Julius Melbourn*, 241–44.

Garnet had publicly encouraged slaves to run away, but they all disavowed open violence. All three men—even the pacifist Garrison—agreed that if any people had a legitimate recourse to violence it was the American slaves, but they all also warned that rebellion would be ineffective.¹⁴⁷ Garrison cautioned slaves that “every attempt at insurrection would be attended with disaster and defeat, on your part, because you are not strong enough to contend with the military power of the nation.”¹⁴⁸ Garnet, a prominent black New York abolitionist, justified slave revolt and told slaves that death was preferable to enslavement, but he still equivocated: “We do not advise you to attempt a revolution with the sword, because it would be INEXPEDIENT.”¹⁴⁹ Gerrit Smith had made similar statements in 1842, but by 1850 he, like Hammond, was beginning to see massive slave revolt as inevitable “unless speedily prevented by voluntary emancipation.” Moreover, Smith told southern slaves that in such an event, “the great mass of the colored men of the North . . . will be found by your side, with deep-stored and long-accumulated revenge in their hearts, and with death-dealing weapons in their hands.”¹⁵⁰ Hammond welcomed Smith’s stance, declaring it “bold and manly.”¹⁵¹

Further encouraging Smith’s growing militancy, Hammond explained that his own confidence in the potential success of a large-scale slave revolt was based on having traveled through Virginia after Nat Turner’s revolt. In 1832 Hammond had spoken with a number of slaveholders, including a Mr. Whitehead, who had known Turner and met with the captured slave rebel in his prison cell. Whitehead related that when he asked Turner why he had included so few other slaves in his initial plot, Turner had confidently declared: “I knew so well the feelings of the Slaves that I was certain

147. Harrold, *Rise of Aggressive Abolitionism*, 9–10.

148. William Lloyd Garrison, “Address to the Slaves of the United States,” May 31, 1843, reprinted in Harrold, *Rise of Aggressive Abolitionism*, 169–78, quotation on 176.

149. Henry Highland Garnet, “An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America,” August 18, 1843, reprinted in Harrold, *Rise of Aggressive Abolitionism*, 179–88, quotation on 187–88; James Jasinski, “Constituting Antebellum African American Identity: Resistance, Violence, and Masculinity in Henry Highland Garnet’s (1843) ‘Address to the Slaves,’” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 93 (February 2007): 27–57.

150. Gerrit Smith, “A Letter to the American Slaves from those who have fled from American Slavery,” August 21, 1851, reprinted in Harrold, *Rise of Aggressive Abolitionism*, 189–96, quotation on 191.

151. Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, February 28, 1852, Smith Papers SU.

if I could erect a standard of freedom to which the Slaves could resort and be protected, and maintain it for 48 hours[,] I would have an army sufficiently numerous to resist any force which might or could be brought against me.”¹⁵² For Hammond this story indicated that Turner’s revolt could have been successful if only the white militia had not acted so promptly. More important, it signified that slaves would join future revolts almost spontaneously. Hammond had considered including this material in *Julius Melbourn*, but he had decided against publishing Whitehead’s narrative “without his consent.” Instead, he privately sent a transcript of the account to Smith.¹⁵³ Smith subsequently helped fund John Brown’s violent campaign against proslavery settlers in Kansas and his attempts to capture the federal arsenal in Harper’s Ferry, Virginia, and then distribute weapons to the local slaves and free African Americans who they believed would join the insurrection.¹⁵⁴

Hammond’s writings probably contributed to Smith’s willingness to embrace violence, and Smith may in turn have shared these materials with John Brown. Regardless of whether there was a direct connection, Brown ultimately used almost the same phrase attributed to Nat Turner in Hammond’s account. After his capture in 1859, Brown told his jailer: “I knew, of course, that the negroes would rally to my standard. If I had only got the thing fairly started . . .”¹⁵⁵ Brown embraced his role as a martyr and was willing to die for his beliefs, but his actions had been based on his confidence that slaves were also ready and willing to fight for their freedom.¹⁵⁶

Whereas Gerrit Smith and John Brown acted on their belief that anti-slavery violence was righteous (Smith through financial support, Brown through actual violence), Jabez Hammond’s militancy never extended beyond the theoretical. He died four years before Brown’s raid on Harper’s Ferry, and it appears Hammond had retreated from his radicalism by that time. At one level, Hammond had probably indulged in violent fantasies

152. Jabez Hammond, “Effect of Slavery on the Morals and Civilization of the People of Virginia,” April 13, 1832, copy enclosed in Hammond to Smith, March 11, 1852, Smith Papers SU.

153. Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, February 28, 1852, Smith Papers SU; Hammond to Smith, March 11, 1852, Smith Papers SU.

154. Stauffer, *Black Hearts of Men*, 177–207, 240–45; Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist*.

155. Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, ed., *The Life and Letters of John Brown: Liberator of Kansas, and Martyr of Virginia* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1885), 572, cited in Stauffer, *Black Hearts of Men*, 258.

156. Stauffer, *Black Hearts of Men*, 255–58.

about aiding slave revolt (writing, "I sometimes wish I were a young man" after describing a rebel slave army to Gerrit Smith) because they were just that—fantasies.¹⁵⁷ In a published address on the afterlife, he compared God's dispensation of rewards and punishments to the "poetical justice" wielded by authors of fiction. Hammond may have had Julius Melbourn's warnings of slave revolt in mind when he told his audience: "fiction enables us . . . to enjoy in anticipation the execution of that justice, which will be measured out to all intelligent beings in another state."¹⁵⁸

Hammond also hoped that there was enough virtue among white Southerners that they would initiate antislavery reforms themselves, fulfilling Jefferson's hopes and forestalling a race war. In addition to Jefferson, he pointed to St. George Tucker, who had authored a plan for gradual emancipation in 1796; John Randolph, who had denounced the Washington, D.C., slave trade in 1816; and Cassius M. Clay, who broke with many Kentuckians by embracing antislavery in the 1840s.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, although Hammond had long claimed to give antislavery priority over union, he was unwilling to break "the Covenant made by our Fathers."¹⁶⁰ He yearned to peacefully purify rather than destroy Jefferson's empire of liberty.

ANTISLAVERY MEANS IN THE 1850S

Political events in the early 1850s also renewed Hammond's faith in public opinion and the efficacy of antislavery politics. The Compromise of 1850 "disappointed and depressed" him, but he still hoped that William Seward could form an antislavery coalition of the "radical Whigs" and the "honest radical Democrats."¹⁶¹ Preston King, a New York congressman who would help establish the Republican Party, encouraged such hopes. Writing from Washington, he told Hammond that he could "see the sunshine beyond the clouds," predicting that outraged constituents would turn doughfaces out of

157. Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, February 28, 1852, Smith Papers SU.

158. Hammond, *On the Evidence, Independent of Written Revelation*, 21.

159. Hammond, *Julius Melbourn*, 162–63, 238–39. For Hammond's praise of Tucker, see Hammond, *Letter to a Member of Congress*, 4. Hammond was in Congress in 1816 and personally witnessed Randolph's speech against the domestic slave trade, which he described in *Julius Melbourn*. On the extent and limits of Randolph's antislavery, see Nicholas Wood, "John Randolph and the Politics of Slavery in the Early Republic," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 120 (Summer 2012): 106–43.

160. Hammond to Seward, Cherry Valley, November 12, 1851, Seward Papers, reel 41.

161. Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, April 29, 1850, Smith Papers SU.

office.¹⁶² Hammond believed that an “immense majority of the people” of New York and New England would support a moderate antislavery party committed to restricting slavery’s expansion while tolerating it in the states where it existed.¹⁶³ It is also likely that the popularity of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, first published serially in 1851, increased Hammond’s faith both in northern antislavery sentiment and in the power of fiction.¹⁶⁴ When Gerrit Smith decided to run for Congress in 1853, Hammond was thrilled but encouraged him not to be too “Ultra” and to pursue the “possible” rather than the ideal.¹⁶⁵ As a pragmatist, Hammond retreated from his militancy as northern antislavery opinion advanced.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 (which repealed the Missouri Compromise line restricting slavery) led Hammond to “despair of the Republic,” though he also hoped it would galvanize Northerners finally to “resist the Slave Power.”¹⁶⁶ In a letter to William Seward, Hammond argued that public opinion was on the right side but predicted “things must be worse before they are better.”¹⁶⁷ Seward agreed. He told the Senate that although the Slave Power might triumph during the “darkness and gloom of the present hour,” he was inspired with hope. Unlike the compromises of 1820 and 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska Act was fully a one-sided victory for slaveholders. With the “day of compromise . . . passed forever,” the Democratic Party would collapse, allowing the creation of a northern antislavery bloc. Moreover, he believed that the commercial and political ties of the Union were so strong that the South would submit to the North’s ascendancy “rather than yield the commercial advantages of this Union.”¹⁶⁸ Seward explained to Hammond that by denying the danger of disunion, he sought

162. Preston King to Hammond, Washington, April 30, 1850, Misc. Manuscripts: King, NYPL.

163. Hammond to Seward, Cherry Valley, August 16, 1852, Seward Papers, reel 44.

164. The ostensible reason Hammond gave for reissuing *Julius Melbourn* that year was his discovery that John Leland and Theodore Parker supported abolition, whereas he had portrayed them as slavery apologists. But Hammond may also have hoped to taken advantage of the heightened public interest in antislavery literature; Hammond, *Julius Melbourn*, x.

165. Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, March 7, 1853, Smith Papers SU.

166. Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, February 27, 1854, Smith Papers SU.

167. Hammond to Seward, Cherry Valley, February 28, 1854, Seward Papers, reel 48.

168. *Speech of William H. Seward, on the Kansas and Nebraska Bill: Senate of the United States, May 26, 1854* (Washington, D.C.: Buell & Blanchard, 1854), 6–7.

to “disarm them [Southerners] of that weapon which gave them the triumph in 1820 & 1850.”¹⁶⁹ Such faith in Southerners’ commitment to the Union, of course, ultimately proved misplaced.

Meanwhile, Gerrit Smith abandoned politics and became increasingly militant.¹⁷⁰ His final speech on the Kansas-Nebraska Act and his subsequent letters repudiated the political tactics and hopes of people like Hammond and Seward. In January 1854 Smith had initially joined with Salmon Chase and other antislavery congressmen who signed the *Appeal of the Independent Democrats* against the Nebraska bill. This manifesto of Free Soil principles appealed primarily to the economic interests of white Northerners, especially those who might emigrate west.¹⁷¹ But whereas Hammond and Seward pragmatically combined appeals to white self-interest with a commitment to African American rights, Smith regretted such compromises of principle. In his April speech on the Nebraska bill, Smith derided the Free Soil principles that would soon become the basis of the Republican Party. He credited the sincerity of their efforts to restrict slavery in the territories but dismissed their willingness to tolerate slavery where it existed as “folly and delusion” that would “out weigh all its endeavors against slavery.” Disavowing a desire for violence, Smith warned that if politicians did not soon peacefully abolish slavery, the nation’s four million slaves “will deliver themselves.”¹⁷² In a published letter to Frederick Douglass, Smith criticized efforts to enlist white northern self-interest against the Slave Power: “it is repentance, not indignation, which the North needs to feel, and to manifest.”¹⁷³ Hammond, like Smith, was committed to emancipation and racial equality, but he rejected Smith’s dogmatism. “What is the matter with our Friend Gerrit Smith?” he asked Seward. “Is he a monomaniac on the subject of Slavery or is he in pursuit of public notoriety?”¹⁷⁴ Whereas Smith (and some historians) saw the course of antislavery politics after the Liberty Party as one of declining ideological purity, Hammond believed

169. Seward to Hammond, Washington, July 27, 1854, William Henry Seward Collection, New York State Library, box 2.

170. Stauffer, *Black Hearts of Men*, 177.

171. Salmon P. Chase, Gerrit Smith, et al., *Appeal of the Independent Democrats in Congress, to the People of the United States: Shall Slavery Be Permitted in Nebraska?* ([Washington, D.C.]: Towers’ Printers, 1854); Varon, *Disunion!* 253.

172. Gerrit Smith, “Speech on the Nebraska Bill, April 6, 1854,” in *Speeches of Gerrit Smith in Congress* (New York: Mason Brothers, 1856), 197, 199.

173. Gerrit Smith to Frederick Douglass, Peterboro, August 28, 1854, in *Speeches of Gerrit Smith*, 401–2.

174. Hammond to Seward, Cherry Valley, April 2, 1855, Seward Papers, reel 49.

that expanding the popular base of antislavery politics was the most viable means of promoting the radical agendas of emancipation and racial equality.¹⁷⁵

Hammond died in the summer of 1855, as Seward was helping establish the Republican Party on the basis of the principle of restricting slavery in the territories. Meanwhile, Smith joined a biracial group of militant activists including Frederick Douglass, James McCune Smith, and John Brown in forming the Radical Abolition Party.¹⁷⁶ Disowning the assumptions and tactics of both the Garrisonians and the Republicans, the Radical Abolitionists portrayed the Constitution as an antislavery document and claimed that Congress had the right and duty to end slavery throughout the nation.¹⁷⁷ Moreover, the inaugural convention of the Radical Abolitionists voted to support the efforts of John Brown and others who intended to “defend freedom in Kansas” through any means necessary.¹⁷⁸ During the rest of the decade, Smith and Brown embraced antislavery violence in Bleeding Kansas and the raid on Harper’s Ferry. Republicans such as Seward and Abraham Lincoln disavowed violence and disunion while linking their own program of restricting slavery to Jefferson and the other Founders.¹⁷⁹ Although comparatively conservative, Republican antislavery was still too radical for slaveholders to tolerate, especially after John Brown’s raid, and so they embraced secession and civil war after Lincoln’s election.

Julius Melbourn had represented Jabez Hammond’s hope that Jefferson’s legacy and white northern self-interest could be enlisted in behalf of emancipation, as well as his fear that violence would be necessary. Although Hammond did not live to see it, the Republican Party and the Civil War

175. James Oakes challenges the declension interpretation of political antislavery in *Freedom National* and in *The Scorpion’s Sting: Antislavery and the Coming of the Civil War* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2014), 38–49.

176. Varon, *Disunion!* 262–64; Stauffer, *Black Hearts of Men*, 8–44.

177. Smith’s letters to Hammond have not been preserved, but in 1848 he apparently began trying to convince Hammond that the Constitution was antislavery, but he failed to persuade him; Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, September 3, 1848, Smith Papers SU; Hammond to Smith, Cherry Valley, April 5, 1850, Smith Papers SU. Stauffer suggests that Smith’s conviction that slavery violated the Constitution helped reconcile him to the use of violence; see Stauffer, *Black Hearts of Men*, 22–27. On divisions among abolitionists over the character of the Constitution, see Kraditor, *Means and Ends*, 185–217.

178. *Proceedings of the Convention of Radical Political Abolitionists, Held at Syracuse, N.Y., June 26th, 27th, and 28th, 1855* (New York: Central Abolition Board, 1855), 62.

179. Varon, *Disunion!* 280–82.

realized his hopes and fears. Hammond's belief in racial equality was premised in part on the assumption that African Americans would come to physically resemble white people when freed from slavery. The nation's commitment to racial equality after the Civil War was flawed and compromised in different ways.