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Maurice S. Lee

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SLAVERY, PHILOSOPHY, AND AMERICAN LITERATURE, 1830–1860

Examining the literature of slavery and race before the Civil War, Maurice Lee demonstrates for the first time exactly how the slavery crisis became a crisis of philosophy that exposed the breakdown of national consensus and the limits of rational authority. Poe, Stowe, Douglass, Melville, and Emerson were among the antebellum authors who tried – and failed – to find rational solutions to the slavery conflict. Unable to mediate the slavery controversy as the nation moved toward war, their writings form an uneasy transition between the confident rationalism of the American Enlightenment and the more skeptical thought of the pragmatists. Lee draws on antebellum moral philosophy, political theory, and metaphysics, bringing a fresh perspective to the literature of slavery – one that synthesizes cultural studies and intellectual history to argue that romantic, sentimental, and black Atlantic writers all struggled with modernity when facing the slavery crisis.

MAURICE LEE is an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Missouri. His work has appeared in *American Literature*, *PMLA*, *ESQ*, and *African American Review*.

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To Marisa and Nico

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Acknowledgments

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