In American history and throughout the Western world, the subjugation perpetuated by slavery has created a unique ‘culture of slavery’. That culture exists as a metaphorical, artistic, and literary tradition attached to the enslaved – human beings whose lives are ‘owed’ to another, who are used as instruments by another, and who must endure suffering in silence. Tim Armstrong explores the metaphorical legacy of slavery in American culture by investigating debt, technology, and pain in African-American literature and a range of other writings and artworks. Armstrong’s careful analysis reveals how notions of the slave as a debtor lie hidden in our accounts of the commodified self and how writers like Nathaniel Hawthorne, Rebecca Harding Davis, Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, Ralph Ellison, and Toni Morrison grapple with the pervasive view that slaves are akin to machines. Finally, Armstrong examines how conceptions of the slave as a container of suppressed pain are reflected in disciplines as diverse as art, sculpture, music, and psychology.

This book is dedicated to my three brothers, Rick, Bill, and Roger Armstrong, and to the memory of Harry Bruhns, 1951–2011
THE LOGIC OF SLAVERY

Debt, Technology, and Pain in American Literature

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3. ‘Copulation Fetich by Impotent Negro Paranoic’, from Edward Kempf, *Psychopathology* (1921)  89
Any work in this field is indebted to a range of recent research on the cultural ramifications and inheritance of slavery and race, and alongside historians of slavery like Ira Berlin, Eric Foner, Eugene G. Genovese, Thomas D. Morris, and Judith Kelleher Schafer, I would like to acknowledge a community of critics, among them Ian Baucom, Stephen Best, Malcolm Bull, Hazel Carby, Henry Louis Gates, Paul Gilroy, Saidiya Hartman, Sharon Patricia Holland, Walter Benn Michaels, T oni Morrison, Orlando Patterson, Ross Posnock, Eric Sundquist, and Marcus Wood. In different ways these scholars ask how the category of ‘race’ has been constructed historically, and trace its legacy of violence and troubling residue within the Atlantic world.


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