

American Slavery, American Imperialism

Slavery casts a long shadow over American history; despite the cataclysmic changes of the Civil War and emancipation, the United States carried antebellum notions of slavery into its imperial expansion at the turn of the twentieth century. African American, Chinese and other immigrant labourers were exploited in the name of domestic economic development, and overseas, local populations were made into colonial subjects of America. How did the United States deal with the paradox of presenting itself as a global power which abhorred slavery, while at the same time failing to deal with forced labour at home? Catherine Armstrong argues that this was done with rhetorical manoeuvres around the definition of slavery. Drawing primarily on representations of slavery in American print culture, this study charts how definitions and depictions of slavery both changed and stayed the same as the nation became a prominent actor on the world stage. In doing so, Armstrong challenges the idea that slavery is a merely historical problem, and shows its relevance in the contemporary world.

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US Perceptions of Global Servitude, 1870–1914

CATHERINE ARMSTRONG

Loughborough University



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