**Review – *Imagining Slaves and Robots in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture[[1]](#footnote-1),* Gregory Jerome Hampton**

Book Review

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Professor of African-American Literature at Howard University, USA, Gregory Jerome

Hampton gives us an interdisciplinary study that investigates the relationship

between technology and human nature.[[2]](#footnote-2) It includes a detailed analysis of how slaves

of the past are being reimagined as robots of the future, in a clever and employed

analysis of artificial intelligence. He interrogates how the rhetoric used to persuade

America to become reliant on slavery will be used to promote the enslavement of

future technology using the intuitive concept of AI.

The book is divided into six chapters, focusing on different aspects of slavery and AI,

beginning with how the past informs the future with reference to this. He mentions

conversations with Douglas Taylor based around slavery and afro-futurism, which he

describes as ‘passionate and inspiring,’[[3]](#footnote-3) in the acknowledgements of the book.

The author succeeds in creating an engaging and informative set of chapters, with

chapter three being based on ‘the employment of racial and gender stereotypes in

the construction of robots in the American imagination.’[[4]](#footnote-4) This chapter is interesting in

terms of the parameters of humanity, and how humanoid machines can be used to

demonstrate how black women and female robots are imagined in the future.

Hampton explains this intellectually and gives us an insight into the strange future of

AI and sexuality, relating to the ‘Mammy, Sapphire, and the Jezebel, the three

images of female slaves.’[[5]](#footnote-5)

Dr. Hampton investigates examples in film, literature, and music to demonstrate what

AI does to interact with aspects of technology as if they were human slaves. It

touches on lots of work that could be interesting to develop with referral to this

concept, music albums and movies like that of Fritz Lang and Janelle Monàe. he

mentions that ‘if technology can provide an excuse to implement mechanical slaves

into the general population, it will undoubtedly do so,’[[6]](#footnote-6) which highlights how

Hampton believed, in 2015, that slavery would continue to be an issue into the

future. He wasn’t wrong in thinking this, and we could argue that robots that are

created to do jobs for people, and take away employment in the world today, are

some forms of mechanical slaves.

Throughout, the author continues to emphasise his views on the future of

mechanical slaves via the concept of artificial intelligence, and how this will affect

America specifically in the future. He concludes with a chapter titled ‘*When the*

*Revolution Comes,’[[7]](#footnote-7)* in which he states that ‘The social, political, racial, sexual, and

technological revolution is the evolution of human society.’[[8]](#footnote-8) This is an undeniable

fact in which it is obvious that how we choose to take this information is how far

humanity can go in the future. The abstract views that Dr. Hampton portrays

throughout this book are rounded up in the conclusion with his detailed expression of

his beliefs on the revolution, and how he has confidence in the discussion that robots

and technology will become an advantage for the economy, as well as how AI has

the potential to become a positive thing for humanity in preventing slavery. He gives

us hope and light for a new beginning that could grow from artificial intelligence, if we

look through a lens of the past to create an accurate and better future.

1. Gregory Jerome Hampton, *Imagining Slaves and Robots in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture: Reinventing Yesterday’s Slave with Tomorrow’s Robot* (London: Lexington Books, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Gregory Jerome Hampton, *Imagining Slaves and Robots in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture: Reinventing Yesterday’s Slave with Tomorrow’s Robot* (London: Lexington Books, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Gregory Jerome Hampton, *Imagining Slaves and Robots in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture: Reinventing Yesterday’s Slave with Tomorrow’s Robot* (London: Lexington Books, 2015). P.9. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Gregory Jerome Hampton, *Imagining Slaves and Robots in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture: Reinventing Yesterday’s Slave with Tomorrow’s Robot* (London: Lexington Books, 2015). P.11 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Gregory Jerome Hampton, *Imagining Slaves and Robots in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture: Reinventing Yesterday’s Slave with Tomorrow’s Robot* (London: Lexington Books, 2015). P.49. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Gregory Jerome Hampton, *Imagining Slaves and Robots in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture: Reinventing Yesterday’s Slave with Tomorrow’s Robot* (London: Lexington Books, 2015). P.89 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Gregory Jerome Hampton, *Imagining Slaves and Robots in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture: Reinventing Yesterday’s Slave with Tomorrow’s Robot* (London: Lexington Books, 2015). P.99. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Gregory Jerome Hampton, *Imagining Slaves and Robots in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture: Reinventing Yesterday’s Slave with Tomorrow’s Robot* (London: Lexington Books, 2015). P.99. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)