



China and the Victorian Imagination (Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture)

Ross Forman

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What happens to our understanding of 'orientalism' and imperialism when we consider British-Chinese relations during the nineteenth century, rather than focusing on India, Africa or the Caribbean? This book explores China's centrality to British imperial aspirations and literary production, underscoring the heterogeneous, interconnected nature of Britain's formal and informal empire. To British eyes, China promised unlimited economic possibilities, but also posed an ominous threat to global hegemony. Surveying anglophone literary production about China across high and low cultures, as well as across time, space and genres, this book demonstrates how important location was to the production, circulation and reception of received ideas about China and the Chinese. In this account, treaty ports matter more than opium. Ross Forman challenges our preconceptions about British imperialism, reconceptualizes anglophone literary production in the global and local contexts, and excavates the little-known Victorian history so germane to contemporary debates about China's 'rise'.

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