MISSIONARY WRITING AND EMPIRE, 1800–1860

Anna Johnston analyses missionary writing under the aegis of the British Empire. Johnston argues that missionaries occupied ambiguous positions in colonial cultures, caught between imperial and religious interests. She maps out this position through an examination of texts published by missionaries of the largest, most influential nineteenth-century evangelical institution, the London Missionary Society. These texts provide a fascinating commentary on nineteenth-century evangelism and colonialism, and illuminate complex relationships among white imperial subjects, white colonial subjects, and non-white colonial subjects. With their reformist and often prurient interest in sexual and familial relationships, missionary texts focussed imperial attention on gender and domesticity in colonial cultures. Johnston contends that in doing so, they re-wrote imperial expansion as a moral allegory and confronted British ideologies of gender, race, and class. Texts from Indian, Polynesian, and Australian missions are examined to highlight their representation of nineteenth-century evangelical activity in relation to gender, colonialism, and race.

Anna Johnston is Lecturer in Australian and Postcolonial Literature in the School of English, Journalism, and European Languages at the University of Tasmania. She is the co-editor of In Transit: Travel, Text, Empire (2002) with Helen Gilbert, and has published articles on missionary writing, postcolonial literature, and autobiography.
Nineteenth-century British literature and culture have been rich fields for interdisciplinary studies. Since the turn of the twentieth century, scholars and critics have tracked the intersections and tensions between Victorian literature and the visual arts, politics, social organisation, economic life, technical innovations, scientific thought – in short, culture in its broadest sense. In recent years, theoretical challenges and historiographical shifts have unsettled the assumptions of previous scholarly synthesis and called into question the terms of older debates. Whereas the tendency in much past literary critical interpretation was to use the metaphor of culture as ‘background’, feminist, Foucauldian, and other analyses have employed more dynamic models that raise questions of power and of circulation. Such developments have reanimated the field.

This series aims to accommodate and promote the most interesting work being undertaken on the frontiers of the field of nineteenth-century literary studies: work which intersects fruitfully with other fields of study such as history, or literary theory, or the history of science. Comparative as well as interdisciplinary approaches are welcomed.

A complete list of titles published will be found at the end of the book.
MISSIONARY WRITING
AND EMPIRE, 1800–1860

ANNA JOHNSTON
For Garth Tickle
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