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978-0-521-88458-7 - Colonies, Cults and Evolution: Literature, Science and Culture
in Nineteenth-Century Writing

David Amigoni

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COLONIES, CULTS AND EVOLUTION

The concept of culture, now such an important term within both the arts and the sciences, is a legacy of the nineteenth century. By closely analysing writings by evolutionary scientists such as Charles Darwin, Alfred Russel Wallace and Herbert Spencer, alongside those of literary figures including Wordsworth, Coleridge, Arnold, Butler and Gosse, David Amigoni shows how the modern concept of 'culture' developed out of the interdisciplinary interactions between literature, philosophy, anthropology, colonialism, and, in particular, Darwin's theories of evolution. He goes on to explore the relationship between literature and evolutionary science by arguing that culture was seen less as a singular idea or concept, and more as a field of debate and conflict. This timely and highly original book includes much new material on the history of evolutionary thought and its cultural impact, and will be of interest to scholars of intellectual and scientific history as well as of literature.

DAVID AMIGONI is Professor of Victorian Literature at Keele University.

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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.

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Nineteenth-Century Writing*

DAVID AMIGONI

Keele University



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For Barbara, Fiona and Tom

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