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978-1-107-01315-5 - China and the Victorian Imagination: Empires Entwined

Ross G. Forman

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## CHINA AND THE VICTORIAN IMAGINATION

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 G. Forman challenges our preconceptions about British imperialism, reconceptualizes Anglophone literary production in global and local contexts, and excavates the little-known Victorian history so germane to contemporary debates about China’s “rise.”

ROSS G. FORMAN is Assistant Professor in the Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies at the University of Warwick.

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*For Richard Forman, with sky hooks*

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*Abbreviations*

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