



Victorian Writers and the Image of Empire: The Rose-Colored Vision (Contributions to the Study of World Literature)

Laurence Kitzan

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Writers of imperial fiction in the period 1840-1914 created a strong image of the British Empire that was often confused with the empire as it actually existed. Even in the 1940s, many people in Britain and the British Dominions still accepted the stereotypical view that the British Empire was a highly moral creation. This book studies the literature of imperialism in the Victorian and Edwardian periods to show how this image of empire was created and how it developed such strength. The volume concentrates on the works of major writers of imperialism, such as Rudyard Kipling, H. Rider Haggard, John Buchan, and G. A. Henty, but also looks extensively at the writings of less familiar figures, such as Robert Ballantyne and W.H.G. Kingston.

Many of the texts produced by these writers were books for boys, and they were very popular. They were often given as gifts and were awarded as prizes in schools. The books created a portrait of the British Empire as a place for settlement, the finding of treasure, the strengthening of religious beliefs and moral training, and the operation of codes of behavior for gentlemen. They emphasized courage and the willingness to face death in the service of Britain, and they suggested that the qualities of good citizens were the same as those of good imperialists. This was a comforting and influential concept during a period of imperial acquisition.

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