GENERAL EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

The study of cultural imperialism, which this series helped to pioneer, continues to develop in remarkable ways. Nothing better illustrates the interactive character of imperial rule than the manner in which popular and elite cultures, both in Britain and overseas, became major arenas for contests between, negotiation among and sometimes the blending of competing traditions, invented and otherwise. Clearly, language was the major vehicle of such cultural grappling, expressing and enhancing the power relationships of empire, but at the same time conveying anxieties and ambiguities and offering weapons for response.

Since the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* the discourses of empire have been subjected to increasingly sophisticated analysis. In recent years scholarly activity has ranged over both the accepted canon of imperial literature and also popular materials of all sorts, pulp literature, travel accounts, cartoons (with their slogan-like captions), songs and all the other media in which language appears as an embodiment and manipulator of power. Said himself has paid very little attention to popular material and his recent re-working of the literary relations of empire in *Culture and Imperialism* is highly controversial, but his work remains the inevitable starting point and comparator of all such studies.

It has often been noted that historians have paid relatively little attention to these discussions. It is to be hoped that Robert H. MacDonald's study of the language of empire and the metaphors and myths which it implants into popular culture will help to rectify this omission. It is highly readable; it is secure in its historical allusions; and it builds upon the work of both historians and literary specialists. With the emergence of post-structuralism and the new historicism, these distinctions are in any case becoming increasingly blurred. I commend it to all those with an interest in the unavoidable cultural dimensions of imperialism.

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