



Livingstone's 'lives': A metabiography of a Victorian icon (Studies in Imperialism MUP)

Justin D. Livingstone

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Dr. David Livingstone, the Victorian 'missionary-explorer', has attracted more written commentary than nearly any other heroic figure of the nineteenth century. In the years following his death, as numerous biographers took up the pen, he rapidly became the subject of a major biographical tradition. Even today, new volumes and new perspectives continue to be produced with regularity. Yet out of this extensive discourse, no single or unified image of Livingstone emerges. Rather, he has been represented in diverse ways and put to work in a variety of socio-political contexts.

Until now, no one has explored Livingstone's posthumous reputation in full. This book meets the challenge, interrogating his complex legacy and the plurality of identities that he has acquired. In approaching Livingstone's 'lives', it adopts a metabiographical perspective: in other words, this book is a biography of biographies. Rather than trying to uncover the true nature of the subject, metabiography is concerned with the malleability and ideological embeddedness of biographical representation. It does not aim to uncover Livingstone's 'real' identity, but instead asks: what has he been made to mean? Covering the terrain from Livingstone's self-representation to his Victorian reputation, and from his imperial and Scottish legacies to his postcolonial revision, Livingstone emerges as a site of competing meanings: the Victorian hero has himself becomes a colonised space.

Crossing disciplinary boundaries, Livingstone's lives will be of interest to scholars of imperial history, postcolonialism, life-writing, travel-writing and Victorian studies.

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