



Missionary Positions: Evangelicalism and Empire in American Fiction

Albert H. Tricomi

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"Valuable for scholars across disciplines including American literature, cultural studies, religious studies, and more. *Missionary Positions* identifies a new sub-genre in American literature--the missionary novel--and then examines key works to gauge cultural debates over America's role in the world."--Tisa Wenger, Yale Divinity School

The central premise of *Missionary Positions* is that missionary evangelicalism has been an integral feature of American imperial ventures since the founding of the Republic. Albert Tricomi demonstrates that from the early nineteenth century to the present, American fiction writers have often sought to represent--and critique--America's missionary identity in their work. In the process he defines the missionary novel as a distinct sub-genre of fictional narrative, explains how it came into being, and identifies its primary characteristics.

From Melville's *Typee* and *Omoo* to Kingsolver's *Poisonwood Bible*, from Michener's *Hawaii* to LaHaye's *Left Behind* series, Tricomi traces the various manifestations of the missionary novel over time. His close readings of individual works also treat selected novels of Sedgwick, Cooper, Hobart, McKay, and Lewis, as well as several examples of Twain's short fiction.

Weaving together political, theological, and literary analyses, this original, thought-provoking investigation examines a broad range of works, featuring both those that celebrate and those that criticize American missionaries at home and abroad. Tricomi illuminates fascinating relationships between Christian evangelicalism and American destiny, including cultural and religious imperialism, and concludes with a disturbing judgment on the limitations of contemporary versions of the genre.

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