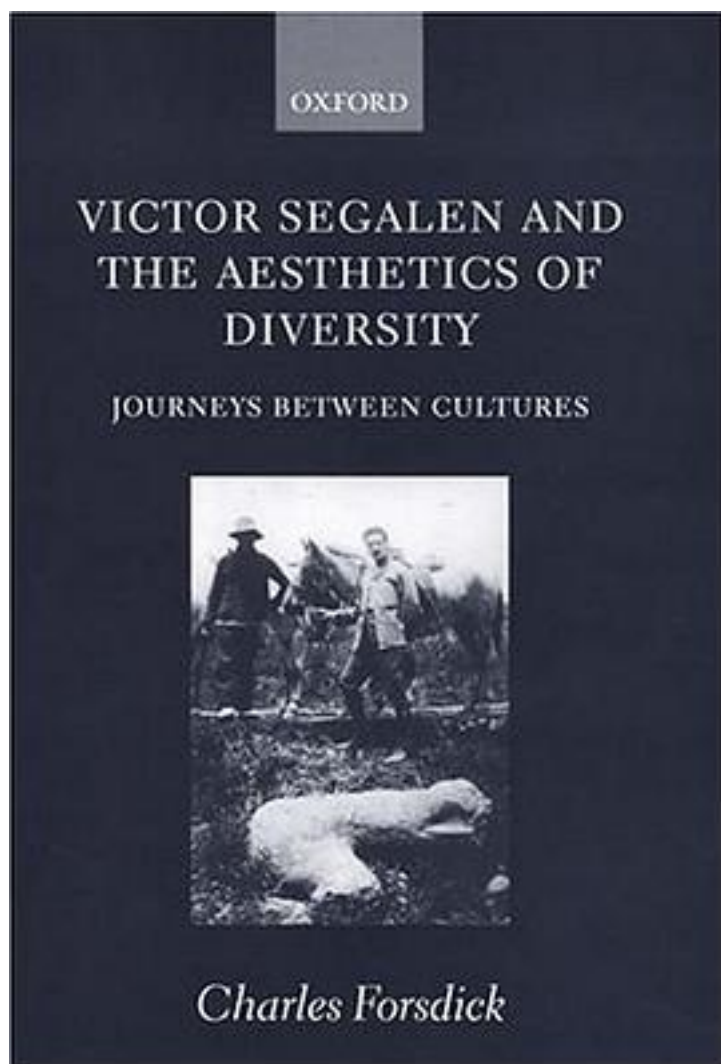


Victor Segalen and the Aesthetics of Diversity



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From his premature death in 1919 until the final decades of the twentieth century, the French traveller, author, and naval doctor Victor Segalen remained relatively obscure, his extensive work on exoticism largely unavailable. With the appearance of the Complete Works in 1995, the dramatic scope and wide-ranging implications of his reflections on diversity were at last fully apparent. Segalen's understanding of the exotic is radically different from that of his colonial contemporaries. His exoticism - or Aesthetics of Diversity - focuses on the instability of contact between different cultures and represents a unique response to the decline of diversity triggered by colonialism and Westernization. Recent attention to Segalen in a variety of fields - post-modern sociology, post-colonialism, literary criticism, anthropology - indicates his role as a precursory theorist of the exotic whose work is of increasing contemporary relevance. At a moment when exoticism is rapidly emerging as a term of critical currency, this study of the genesis of Segalen's aesthetics is a timely contribution to work in this area.

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