Unsettled Imaginings:
Australian Novels of Asian Invasion

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines novels that depict an imaginary invasion of Australia by an Asian country. It argues that novels of Asian invasion constitute a distinct body of formulaic literature - a subgenre - within the field of Australian popular fiction. This study undertakes a formative mapping of the subgenre of Asian invasion novels in three ways. It assembles the corpus of texts and provides an annotated bibliography. It delineates the generic form and content of the novels and monitors the resilience and evolution of the subgenre through changing historical and cultural contexts. It considers the ideological implications of the Asian invasion narrative through readings of race, nation and gender.

The first novels of Asian invasion, which established the conventions of the subgenre, were produced during the period of intense nation building immediately before and after the federation of Australia in 1901. The explicit ideological project of these novels was to awaken white Australia to the threat Asia posed to its fledgling nationhood. This initial anxious literary production activated a detailed set of discourses centring on Australian vulnerability and Asian menace that endure to the present day. Generic invasion novels are alarmist, didactic texts that call for a massive strengthening of national defence by illustrating the ease with which Australia could be invaded under the present circumstances. In order to fulfil this pedagogic agenda the texts are often meticulously realist, but are at the same time complete fantasy, for they document not an actual but an imaginary war. This study contends that invasion novels bring together science fiction narrative structures, adventurous plots and realist literary strategies to construct a vehicle for the political ideology of Asian threat.

The thesis charts the development of the subgenre from its inception in 1888 to the present time and locates thirty novels in all. A survey of the subgenre as a whole complements the detailed analysis of specific novels. It argues that these novels are primarily the same dystopian tale of the loss of white Australia told time and time again. On a subtextual level, Australia's very fixation with the fiction of Asian invasion generates a cultural significance of its own. This study explores how the compulsive retelling of the generic prophesy of Asian invasion implicitly suggests specifically white cultural anxieties stemming from Australia's status as a relatively new settler society, itself born of invasion.
Acknowledgements

First of all I wish to thank my supervisor, Dr. Anna Johnston, for her generous engagement with, and guidance of, this research project from beginning to end. I am especially grateful to her for the scrupulous reading of many drafts and constructive criticism which has helped immeasurably to refine this thesis. Amongst others whom I wish to acknowledge as being instrumental during the process of this endeavour are, Dr. Philip Mead, who has maintained an encouraging interest in my progress from undergraduate student to PhD candidate, and Dr. Jenna Mead, in her role as postgraduate coordinator and facilitator of fortnightly postgraduate meetings which were a continuing source of encouragement, support, conviviality and productive discussion. I am grateful for the friendliness and collegiality of the literary studies postgraduate community at the University of Tasmania, particularly to Jo Richardson, Jane McGenniskin, Eleni Pavlides and Michael Christie. I am also very appreciative of the activities of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature, in particular the holding of the annual conferences which provided much inspiration for my continuing research. I am particularly grateful to have been the recipient of the A.D. Hope postgraduate prize in 2006 and for the subsequent opportunity to be published in the journal JASAL. I would also like to acknowledge that this thesis was written with the assistance of an Australian Postgraduate Award. Finally, I would like to recognise and thank, Andrew Harwood for his encouragement; Skye Targett for her assistance with the arrangement of images; my parents Margaret and Alan for their unending support and help in day to day matters during the writing of this thesis, and for their final proofreading of drafts for typographical errors; Julian for his understanding and invaluable technical support and Prudence for her companionship.
Illustrations

Figure 1. Cover of the Bulletin, 9 October 2007.
Figure 2. Cover of The Battle of Mordialloc by Edward Maitland, 1888.
Figure 3. Cover of The Awakening by G.D. Mitchell, 1937.
Figure 4. Cover of Fools' Harvest by Erle Cox, 1939.
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Figure 14. Tall Ship/Boat People image.
Figure 15. Cover of Northern Approaches by Colin Mason, 2001.
Figure 16. Cover of Sword of Allah by David Rollins, 2004.
Figure 17. Cover of Crescent Moon Rising by Kerry B. Collison, 2005.
Pretty interesting concept for a novel. Just imagining on the reactions and events that will resulted from the "cultural invasion" that the Mc's planning really piqued my interest to read this novel. Ps: I know that the chapters are still few but I still decided to make a review since some people might be discourage to read it due to the publisher or something and they might miss an interesting novel.

It's a different sort of empire-rebuilding novel, combining the entertainment world with real war in the demons vs humans setting of the stereotypical isekai. Unlike more generic novels, the MC is clued in to the possibility of reconciliation right from the start without being a naive optimist. The twist is his use of culture/soft power to achieve this.