Paranoia, power and male identity in John Buchan's Literary War


Abstract

This thesis explores some of the intersections between paranoia, power, and male identity in the first three Hannay novels – The Thirty-Nine Steps (1915), Greenmantle (1916), and Mr. Standfast (1919) – of John Buchan (1875-1940), and the close links between these intersections and the rhetoric and discourses surrounding World War One. It opens by arguing that Buchan's 'Literary War' can itself be thought of as a kind of 'paranoid imaginary' in which cultural fears (particularly fears relating to decadence and degeneration) are projected outwards to return in the romantic guise of hostile foreigners intent on destroying England, and in which the image of the 'strong' masculine self is promoted as a means of protecting the nation. Chapter One argues that The Thirty-Nine Steps functions as an extension of the invasion novel tradition in which a model of masculinity derived from the imperial pioneer is offered as such a gesture of self-defence. Chapter Two looks to Greenmantle's problematization of the strong masculine self along two axes of interference: homosexuality and homoerotic desire, and empowered femininity. Chapter Three argues that Mr. Standfast brings the Literary War to a close with an image of male power underpinned by the imagery and colours of chivalry. The thesis concludes with a short discussion of some of the innate problems and nuances of Buchan's recourse to the paranoid imaginary.

Type of Work: Thesis (Masters by Research > M.Phil.)

Award Type: Masters by Research > M.Phil.

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Licence:

College/Faculty: Schools (1998 to 2008) > School of Humanities

School or Department: School of English, Drama and American & Canadian Studies, Department of English Literature

Funders: Arts and Humanities Research Council

Subjects: P Language and Literature > PR English literature

URI: http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/68

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Paranoia (n) 1. Psychiatry. a mental disorder characterized by systematized delusions and the projection of personal conflicts, which are ascribed to the supposed hostility of others, sometimes progressing to disturbances of consciousness and aggressive acts believed to be performed in self-defense or as a mission. Our nation’s history is a colorful and frenzied state of paranoia. Jesse Walker, in his book “The United States of Paranoia: A Conspiracy Theory”, joyously documents the many wonderful, weird, and (in some cases) tragic examples of American paranoia, from our early Puritan settlers to the Founding Fathers to the Civil War to the Cold War to our paranoid present. Wars raged between U.S. soldiers and Native American warriors for centuries until Paranoia, power and male identity in John Buchan’s Literary War. 2007. Nathan Joseph Waddell. This thesis explores some of the intersections between paranoia, power, and male identity in the first three Hannay novels – The Thirty-Nine Steps (1915), Greenmantle (1916), and Mr. Standfast (1919) – of John Buchan (1875-1940), and the close links between these intersections and the rhetoric and discourses surrounding World War One. It opens by arguing that Buchan’s ‘Literary War’ can itself be thought of as a kind of ‘paranoid imaginary’ in which cultural fears (particularly fears relating to decadence and degeneration) are projected outwards to return in the romantic guise of hostile foreign