



Chinese in Australian Fiction, 1888-1988

Ouyang Yu

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The first Chinese in Australia are said to have arrived as early as 1818, and since then, many more have made Australia their homeland--the current Chinese population is over half a million. It is therefore not surprising that the Chinese are featured in many Australian literary works. This book examines the representation of the Chinese in Australian fiction from 1888 to 1988, with an Author Commentary at the end that provides a brief update on the subsequent fictional representations of the Chinese. It begins with an overview of the Chinese in Australian and Chinese history, followed by a theoretical examination of how the Chinese are made the "Other" by Orientalism, racism, and ethnocentrism. It discusses literary texts written over a period of one hundred years from 1888 to 1988. The study is divided into three major periods of 1888-1901, 1902-1949, and 1950-1988. The first period (1888-1901) deals with the initial attempts to represent the Chinese in fiction as the bad Other by the early Bulletin writers, the Australian responses to the rise of the fear of "the Yellow Peril" in "invasion literature," and the imperialist will to power over the Chinese in writings set in China by Anglo-Australian writers. Apart from pursuing the issue of the continued fear and stereotyping of the Chinese in popular writing, the second period (1902-1949) introduces a new phenomenon of literary Sinophilism that dichotomizes the representation of the Chinese and examines the image of Chinese women. The third period (1950-1988) focuses on the problem of politicisation that polarizes literary attitudes towards the Chinese, and discusses Australia's "Asian writing" as an extension of colonial writing that continues to "Other" the Chinese and explores multicultural writing as an alternative means of representation. This is an important book that illustrates how the "Other" is represented and will be a valuable book for those in Australian studies, Asian studies, and literary studies.

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