

HEROISM IN THE FICTION OF LESLIE CHARTERIS

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ABSTRACT

The heroism of Leslie Charteris' gentleman vigilante, Simon Templar, known as "the Saint", is determined by a range of ideological, historical and social influences. The nature, origins and power of this heroism are addressed through an interdisciplinary analysis of his characterization and development over thirty-five years. Three fundamental elements – Charteris' personal identification with his creation, Templar's inclusion in the tradition of the Western warrior hero, and his reflection of the heroic quest figure – influence Charteris' representation of the Saint. Further, the character's varied literary origins, and contemporaneous ideologies in the prewar, wartime and postwar periods, generate five primary layers in Templar's heroic persona. Chapter I provides an overview of Charteris' Saint narratives, his readership, his other fiction and his distinctive writing style. Chapter II examines Charteris' personal identification with the Saint, and argues that the character is part of the wider Western warrior hero and heroic quest narratives. Chapters III and IV identify the origin of the Saint in the literary representations of the empire hero, an English gentleman with special skills who resembles the American frontier hero, as well as in those of non-official detectives, romantic and charismatic criminals, vigilantes, pirates and highwaymen. In Chapter V, it is argued that important changes in the Saint, that reveal further complexities in his heroism, were generated by major political and social ideologies in the different periods and countries in which Charteris wrote his narratives. The final chapter analyses two specific aspects of the Saint's heroism arising from his anti-war sentiment and his hostility to non-Western "others" in the 1930s and 1940s.

CERTIFICATION

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis and all sources used have been acknowledged in this thesis.

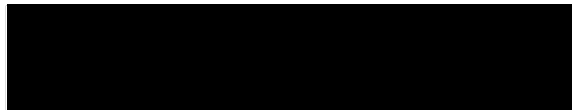


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