
Brian Baker. *Masculinity in Fiction and Film: Representing Men in Popular Genres 1945-2000*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006. 176p.

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Brian Baker is a Senior Lecturer in Literature and Film for the Department of English at the University of Chester. Baker's *Masculinity in Fiction and Film* makes a contribution to the growing field of Men's Studies by examining the constructs of masculinity in popular fiction novels and films as reflections of changes in the political ideology of America, and to a lesser extent, Britain. Central to Baker's interdisciplinary analysis is the concept that a nation has a need to produce men who can fill certain roles and therefore generates a fictionalized masculine role model for men to emulate. Over time, as the needs of the nation evolve so too do these fictionalized models. This is seen in examination of such types as the "citizen-soldier," the "spy" and "double agent," "the man in the grey flannel suit," the "rogue cop," the "shootist," the "cowboy," and the "astronaut" (viii-ix).

In eight well-written chapters Baker examines these types in contrast with popular movies of different eras which are helpfully listed in the bibliography, as well as fictional works. In chapter one the 1950s era of the Cold Warrior is invoked as returning GIs from World War II adapt to the new corporate expectations. In making this change, they go from soldier to "citizen-soldier" which Baker illustrates by examining the book *Starship Troopers*, first published in 1959, which was later made into a movie in 1997 (16, 22). This Cold Warrior type is carried over into chapter two and examined from the British perspective of the "soldier, spy" transformation from a soldier fighting a public war to that of a spy fighting a concealed war as seen in works such as *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* and in the figure of James Bond. Chapter three continues the examination of the British spy type by taking it across the Atlantic for comparison with the American "operative" (49). The American who does not know he is an operative/assassin is seen in anxieties about Communism and its infiltration of America during the Cold War in the examination of conspiracy thrillers such as *The Manchurian Candidate*. One of Baker's greatest strengths is his ability to select popular movies and films and weave them together in a context that illustrates his point. In this way, a reader is likely to have familiarity with at least one of the books or movies mentioned and can then extrapolate to understand what points Baker is trying to make. "The Psycho in the Grey Flannel Suit" in chapter four is presented as the splitting of the male role between being a corporation man, "the man in the grey flannel suit," and a "real" man as a reflection of the fracturing of men's traditional roles in society in the late 1950s and early 1960s and the

psychological maladjustments that could result. In chapter five, “Rogue Cops,” Baker makes an insightful case for aligning Nixon’s actions and reasoning with that of Eastwood’s character in *Dirty Harry*. The theme of “rogue cops” is carried over into chapter six with *L.A. Confidential* and *Chinatown*. Chapter seven examines the “shootist” of “Old Age Westerns,” not the least of which is John Wayne’s final film *The Shootist*. The last chapter ties together the “cowboy” and the “astronaut” with the “citizen-soldier” and concepts of the frontier—in the old Western and in space. These comparisons are most notable in films from the last decade of the 20th century, the *Toy Story* films and *Space Cowboys*.

Baker’s work is a significant contribution to the field of Men’s Studies because in it he connects masculinities with men’s history and popular culture. This work aids in our understanding of the needs of America and Britain in the 20th century and how they created fictionalized masculinities to shape the lives of their men. ✱