Typical Men: The Representation of Masculinity in Popular British Cinema

Spicer, Andrew H.

Abstract

Typical Men's investigation of masculinity was conducted through wide-ranging primary research (including viewing over 1,000 films) and an innovative methodology that constructed various ‘cultural types’ as a way of understanding and mapping the complexities of masculinity, moving away from the narrow binary oppositions that had characterised previous studies. Typical Men was nominated for a 2000-2001 Kraszna-Krausz Moving Image Book Award (Category A: Culture and History) and has been reviewed in: Screening The Past (13 December 2001), MEDIENwissenschaft (4/2: 2001), Contemporary British History (16/2: Summer 2002) and the Journal of British Cinema and Television (2/1: 2005). It has been cited on numerous occasions in subsequent studies of British cinema (e.g. Harper and Porter, British Cinema of the 1950s, 2003; Amy Sargent, British cinema - A critical history, 2005) or studies of masculinity (e.g. Phil Powrie et al (eds), The Trouble with Men, 2004). It is recommended on numerous undergraduate and postgraduate courses (e.g. the British cinema module in MA Film at the University of East Anglia) and is included in the bibliography of standard reference books (e.g. Brian McFarlane (ed.), The Encyclopedia of British Film, 2003). The high-standing in which the book is held has led to numerous invitations to speak at conferences and to university staff and to contribute chapters and journal articles (e.g. ‘Masculinity and British Cinema’, Kwartalnik Filmowy (Film Quarterly), Poland Academy of Science, no. 52, December 2005 and to writing the contribution ‘Masculinity and Film’ to the prestigious International Encyclopedia of Men and Masculinities (Routledge, 2007).
Typical Men is the first book length study of masculinity in British cinema and offers a broad and lively overview from the Second World War to the present day. Spicer argues that masculinity in popular fiction can best be understood as a range of dynamic and competing cultural types which rise and fall in relation to shifting patterns of film production, audience taste and social change. Specific chapters are devoted to each of the major types: debonair gentlemen, civilian professionals, action adventurers, the Everyman, Fools and Rogues, criminals, rebels and damaged men — which trace their British national cinema.

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