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**848 Ideology and Cultural Production**

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attempt to understand its cultural underpinnings. But to join with an object is to give oneself to its ideology. While critical distance can lead to disapproval, it can also end up expressing fascination, admiration, or appreciation, all because the critic has opened him/herself to a range of responses that may illuminate contradictions in the work.

By avoiding critical distance, King has closed off any points of view in the films but the most immediate, surface-level ones. In effect, King does not perform film criticism; he recreates the films in a different form. His method finds in action films what film scholars David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson call the "literal" and "explicit" levels of meaning and tries to describe them from the inside, creating a narrative that has little to do with the films themselves. King might have been better able to achieve his ambitions had he dropped the pretense of scholarship and written a work of fiction that discoursed upon the "cop action" genre.

Clearly—or better, muddily—we are through the looking-glass in a film study that manages not to study the films, but to restate them. Films don't need to be "made to talk"; they do plenty of that in image and action. Films do need to be talked—and thought—about. In relinquishing the scholar's responsibility to do that, King has produced an ungainly monument to his own fandom.

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*American Culture in Europe: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, edited by **Mike-Frank G. Epitropoulos and Victor Roudometof**. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998. 212 pp. NPL cloth. ISBN: 0-275-95051-4.

**JEFFREY M. ROBERTS**  
*North Carolina State University*  
[jmrobert@server.sasw.ncsu.edu](mailto:jmrobert@server.sasw.ncsu.edu)

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From the ever-present demand for Levi's jeans to the recent events surrounding French farmers dumping apples in McDonalds, the influence of American culture in Europe, for better or worse, is undeniable. The theme of Americanization is not new in sociological literature, and with the increasing discussion of globalization, it is a topic of mounting contemporary relevance. This issue is addressed by Epitropoulos and Roudometof in their edited volume *American Culture in Europe: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. With contributions from sociologists, political scientists, and historians, this book addresses

several divergent topics about how American cultural influences have found their way into European social organization. Epitropoulos and Roudometof have pieced together works that investigate not only cultural imperialism, but also the active appropriation of elements of American culture, giving rise to what was referred to in the conclusion as *glocalization*. Additionally, it was refreshing to see that the editors took a broad approach to defining Europe, including not only Western Europe but also two pieces on Eastern Europe.

The chapters are loosely unified by an unstated theme of cultural synthesis: The process of Americanization is characterized not as cultural replacement, but as local redefinition via selective appropriation of certain elements of American culture. This point is most explicitly made in the conclusion by Victor Roudometof and Roland Robertson; here the authors argue for a reconceptualization of globalization in spatial-temporal terms. In an admitted first attempt at defining such an approach, the authors make an interesting case for this reconceptualization. Additional support for the theme of cultural synthesis is made in the chapter on Greek youth culture (by the editors), and in Peter Bergman's piece on duality of the German reaction to the process of Americanization.

The second half of the book far outweighs the first in both content and style. David Lempert's piece on the colonization of the Russian political and legal system dominates this section. Lempert fluidly mixes ethnographic research with recent historical events to explain the how the Russian system was remade in the image of the West. This rebirth was marked by the creation of a legal and political system designed to benefit capitalist interests, especially those of American multinationals interested in the emerging market of post-Soviet Russia. Lempert expertly explains how legal revision was undertaken via elite-to-elite interaction among American and Soviet attorneys and state officials, offering only the establishment of property rights without creation of laws assuring individual protection. Further supporting this piece, as well as Steve Fox's work on African-American images in German advertising, is a short photo spread. The inclusion of these brief visual works benefits both pieces tremendously. Other chapters that deserve mention are Greg Robinson's, concerning Richard Wright's self-imposed exile in Paris, and Steve Fox's, on the

use of blacks in German advertising. Both chapters are well written and nicely supported.

The second half of the book most clearly explicates the theme of cultural appropriation. The above-mentioned chapters are superior to those that preceded them. The first two chapters on American dominance of world science would have benefited from liberal line editing. The style employed by Schott et al. is cumbersome and generally unclear. The lack of stylistic grace is further clouded by the grand extrapolations made based on limited survey data. While it is interesting that American methods have been imitated by foreign programs, the authors fail to link these actions explicitly to the larger social structure and appear to rely too heavily on conjectures that could not be supported clearly by the data presented.

This book succeeds in its introduction of agency into the Americanization debate. The arguments advocate an understanding that the ascendancy of America and the subsequent cultural hegemony that it currently enjoys do not work like a steamroller, crushing local life in its unyielding expansion. While the theme of active agents fusing elements of American culture with their own is somewhat muted throughout, the prospect that globalization is an active endeavor is certainly timely. While the volume as a whole is loosely constructed, the issues presented, especially in the latter half, are interesting and engaging. Overall, this volume brings with it an absorbing, although not fully developed, thesis that reintroduces readers into the discussion of Americanization.

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*When Women Ask the Questions: Creating Women's Studies in America*, by **Marilyn Jacoby Boxer**. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998. 360 pp. NPL cloth. ISBN: 0-8018-5834-8.

**KATHRYN M. FELTEY**  
*University of Akron*  
*felteyk@uakron.edu*

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Like many, I came to women's studies through a "home" discipline (sociology) where my work was informed and guided by feminism as perspective and practice. When I became the director of the women's studies program at the University of Akron in 1997, I found there was much I did not know about women's studies as discipline, social movement, and organization.

One of the tasks that fell to me as director was to justify the continued existence of women's studies as an academic program and resource center for students and faculty on campus.

Gathering research to support my arguments, I found myself wishing for a comprehensive text on the history and current status of women's studies in the United States: If only there were a source that provided that type of overview with awareness of the complexity, diversity, and richness of women's studies. I found it the following year with the publication of Marilyn Jacoby Boxer's *When Women Ask the Questions: Creating Women's Studies in America*. This text is an invaluable resource for women's studies faculty, administrators, and students. Boxer does our homework for us, providing a comprehensive and theoretically grounded history of women's studies in the United States and addressing the major academic, administrative, and political issues in women's studies today.

Ambitiously, the book surveys the goals of women's studies practitioners, examines the status of women's studies programs, and traces the impact of feminist scholarship, teaching, and advocacy. Boxer traces the evolution of women's studies, weaving her own experiences throughout. She begins with the first integrated women's studies program at San Diego State, where she served as director in the early years. She provides data on the proliferation of programs throughout the United States, with attention to organizational structure, course content, political action, and feminist scholarship. In the following chapter she covers in detail how women's studies was constituted as a new academic field, reviewing texts written by women's studies scholars across disciplines, criteria for curriculum and course inclusion, and the issue of organizational structure (department status; research centers; graduate programs).

In the next two chapters, Boxer explores and critiques the feminist transformation of curriculum and classroom. She sums up the feminist rejection of positivism and objectivity, observing that "If women's studies does not have a singular method, it does have a pervasive attitude" (p. 73). This attitude is obvious in both feminist research methodology and teaching pedagogy, where research projects/academic courses are designed with the experiences and perspectives of the subjects/students at the center.

Moving from the center, she considers the issue of differences and divisions. Women in