

Gretchen M. Bataille and Charles L. P. Silet (Eds.).
*The Pretend Indians: Images of Native American in
the Movies.* (Ames: Iowa State University Press,
1980) 202 pp., \$9.95 paper, \$19.95 cloth.

Those of us concerned with mass media stereotyping are especially grateful for this well-edited reader, but all persons interested in Native Americans and their "popular" images will find it enjoyable and useful.

The editors (she chairs the American Indian Studies Program and he teaches film courses at Iowa State University) have assembled a volume that explores quite fully the contention that, "The treatment of the Indian in the movies is the final expression of white America's attempt to cope with its uneasiness in the face of a sense of cultural guilt." Even readers who take issue with that premise cannot fault the editors for their selections.

No collection can be all things for all readers. This one seems designed for the kinds of courses the editors teach, and for others in which students must be exposed to a critical introduction to film images. Some of the contributors are academicians and scholars, others are students of the film. All are readable.

Of particular value to "student" readers is the use of section introductions and of summary paragraphs, including a sentence about the author(s), at the beginning of each selection. The book is indexed and a seventeen-page annotated bibliography provides a starting point for those who wish to pursue the topic further.

But the strength of the book lies in its systematic development of its thesis, beginning with prefatory remarks by Vine Deloria. Section I includes essays intended to explore the origins of stereotypes and myths about Native Americans. Particularly interesting is an excerpt from Leslie Fiedler's *The Return of the Vanishing American*. The rest of the book discusses views of the Indian in film--from *Moving Picture World*, the first to deal with the new medium at the turn of the century, to reviews of such contemporary films as "A Man Called Horse," "Soldier Blue" and "Little Big Man." There is also a photographic essay using Hollywood "stills."

In one of the essays, Philip French remarks off-handedly that the subject of Indians in Western films is "admittedly trivial when set alongside what is happening in the slums and reservations of contemporary America." Perhaps. Yet until the stereotypes are broken down, until they are recognized for what they are--foolish fantasy--it is all the more easy to continue to neglect the slums and reservations. This book is a small step in the right direction; the editors acknowledge that the bigger and more important step is new films with new sensitivity.

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