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Review of *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* By Jacquelyn Kilpatrick

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Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film. By Jacquelyn Kilpatrick. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999. Photographs, notes, filmography, index. xviii + 261 pp. \$19.95 paper.

So far as I know, Jacquelyn Kilpatrick is the first person of American Indian heritage to write a book about the portrayal of Indians in film. Her special commitment to the American Indian community manifests itself in her careful analysis of American Indian historical issues in the chapters on film history and in her attention to parallel images in literature, especially literature by Native Americans. Complementing her unique perspective is a strong knowledge of contemporary film theory and criticism, which enables her to read selected films in ways that diverge from readings found in previous books on this topic.

Beginning with a discussion of the genesis of stereotypes in various media, the book then follows the history of film. "The Silent Scrim" focuses on films such as Cody's *The Indian Wars* and *The Vanishing American*, adapted from the fiction of Zane Grey. "The Cowboy Talkies of the 30s, 40s, and 50s" deals with such films as *Northwest Passage*, *They Died with Their Boot*

On, Broken Arrow, and *The Searchers*. "Win Some, Lose Some: The 60s and 70s" discusses *Tell Em Willie Boy Is Here*, *Soldier Blue*, *A Man Called Horse*, and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, among other films of those decades. "The Sympathetic 80s and 90s" covers in detail a greater number of films such as *War Party*, *1492-Conquest of America*, *Geronimo (An American Legend)*, *Pocahontas*, and *Last of the Dogmen*. These examinations summarize enough of each film's content to include those who haven't seen it, but also provide enough analysis of appropriate film techniques and historical contexts to be of interest to film critics and historians. A weakness I find in later chapters is the absence of significant family films such as *Three Warriors*, *Journey to Spirit Island*, *Squanto the Warrior*, *Indian in the Cupboard*, and probably the best recent film of all, *Grand Avenue*.

The last major chapter, "The American Indian Aesthetic," is for me the book's strongest. Using detailed explanations of individual films and numerous quotes from American Indian writers and filmmakers, Kilpatrick painstakingly explains how contemporary Indian writers and filmmakers—people like Gerald Vizenor, Thomas King, Victor Masayesva Jr., A. A. Carr, Chris Eyre, and Sherman Alexie—are finally, in her words, "talking back" by creating more complex Indian characters than those perpetuated by generations of white filmmakers.

Celluloid Indians is a valuable new take on how the traditional images of Native Americans have been encoded by films, and how contemporary Indian artists are giving audiences new ways to see beyond those images. Jacquelyn Kilpatrick's book may do for film criticism what the Indian people she writes about are doing for the art of film.

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