John M. Coward, *The Newspaper Indian: Native American Identity in the Press, 1820-90* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1998).

The Invented Indian, The Imaginary Indian, Hollywood's Indian, and now *The Newspaper Indian* and *Playing Indian*, are all agreed: "Indians" (and "whites," for that matter) are cultural fictions. They are ideological stereotypes which homogenize and debase real Native peoples, who are never fully available to "us," but always remain beyond "our" grasp. These texts all grapple with different facets of the representations of Indians which non-Indians have constructed in accordance with changing historical circumstances. John M. Coward's approach in *The Newspaper Indian: Native American Identity in the Press, 1820-90* is the more straightforward of the two books under review, making the familiar argument that Indian identities constructed in the press were the product of interaction between "the major ideologies of nineteenth century American life — individualism, capitalism, Protestantism, Manifest Destiny, and social progress," (20) and were largely variations on the good/noble, evil/barbarous dichotomy. However, the author adds to this argument the effects of changes in the technology and infrastructure of news-gathering set in motion by the invention of the telegraph.

This text would be ideal for an undergraduate class since it is written in an informed and up-to-date, but very accessible style. Chapter 1, for instance, is a particularly useful introduction to post-colonial literature which touches lightly on all the major secondary texts. Coward's discussion of changing press technology appears to be drawn from secondary sources, but he claims that his work on the press's role in creating Indian identities is unique. His primary sources are a variety of influential eastern dailies from New York, Philadelphia and Washington, and along with these he considers the usually overlooked midwestern papers from Chicago and Cincinnati, and small weeklies from the rural South and the frontier West.

The study is arranged chronologically, beginning with a look at the antebellum press, which was not particularly interested in Indians, except in the border areas of the South and West where they were seen as a political and economic problem. He briefly discusses three contemporary manifestations: the romantic vanishing Indian, the anecdotal Indian used as a social critic, and the evil Indian. He explains that in this period news gathering was largely done by mail. Newspapers exchanged reports by this means, and also published public and private letters, government proclamations, military correspondence, business and commercial news, and so on. Hearsay and rumour were frequently included in this mix, for there was no clear delimitation of what constituted news, and relatively little concern for its truth value. This meant

that there was much diversity of news and opinions, and Indians were more likely to be represented in a variety of positive and negative ways than they would be later when the use of the telegraph tended to standardize news reports.

By 1846 telegraph lines linked the major eastern cities, but it was expensive technology and newspapers quickly banded together to form what would later be the Associated Press. Over the telegraph, news had to be reported in small bulletins, necessarily limited to bare facts rather than opinions and explanations. The effect of this on the representation of Indians was to emphasize the sensational and the violent, and Coward contends that an Indian "news frame," or formula, developed for writing about Indians. He demonstrates this process in a detailed analysis of accounts of the Sand Creek and Fetterman massacres, which he then compares to reports of Custer's defeat at Bighorn. Common features of these stories included the "lone survivor" myth of the eyewitness who lived to tell the tale of the last heroic moments of the battle; the "death-before-capture" story, where the leading officer preferred suicide to the ignominy of death at the hands of a "savage"; and the post-battle demand for a scapegoat, since it was inconceivable that Indians might have won victory without a major mistake on the part of the army. Also affecting the construction of these stories were pressures on reporters to produce dramatic and exciting stories, and the political and business affiliations of editors and publishers.

In the last two chapters Coward illustrates the ways in which historical circumstances affected press coverage through analysis of the changing image of Sitting Bull from Custer's killer to popular Wild West Show attraction, and back again. Similarly, Coward uses discussion of the reform movement which grew up around the removal of the Ponca tribe in Omaha, to show how harmful the oversimplified, one-dimensional portrayals of the "newspaper Indian" could be to their real counterparts.

While *The Newspaper Indian* is an engaging read, Philip J. Deloria's *Playing Indian* is a much more challenging text which interrogates the complexities and contradictions inherent in the construction of cultural fictions and performances. According to Deloria, "to be American is to be unfinished," (191) which may come as something of a surprise to those of us who thought national insecurity was distinctively Canadian! The key to this sense of incompleteness, he claims, is that American identity remained unfinished after the Revolution, it was not-British and not-Indian, and never effectively developed a distinct American identity which relied on neither. Throughout their history, Americans have repeatedly dressed up as Indians and engaged in Indian play in attempts to identify and define the national Self.

Deloria identifies the Revolution and modernism as the two paradigmatic moments in this quest. The British colonists who dressed up as Indians and threw tea into Boston harbour, were acting on European traditions of misrule

and carnival transformed through the use of Indian Others. They were playing Indian to appropriate for themselves the natural liberty of the "lords of the forest," thus justifying rebellion as a defence of natural customs and a critique of British tyranny. For these increasingly rebellious colonists, the "noble savage" imagined by Europeans, was positioned on the *inside* of the boundary between proto-American and Other national identities. The real Natives, conflated with the stereotype of the "barbarous savage," were *outside* the nation, delimiting the boundary and defining through opposition the civilized and ordered character of American society.

The meaning and position of Indian Others changed, however, according to the social and political context. Struggling with fears that the American character was threatened with degeneration and effeminacy in modern, post-frontier urban America, Ernest Thompson Seton (who was an English-born Canadian — a further complexity Deloria does not attempt to unravel) founded the Woodcraft Indians in 1901 as a series of outdoor camps at which he offered boys the chance to learn Indian skills and act out the "savage" stage of their development in accordance with Stanley Hall's recapitulation theory. Indian play at Seton's summer camps provided young Americans with an authentic experience of national identity, for Seton believed that "Indians offered patriotic role models for American youth." (96) Thus, he reversed the meanings of interior and exterior Others: this time the exterior Indians represented positive qualities of authenticity, liberty, and natural purity which would provide what was lacking in modern American identity. Conversely, the "noble savages" had vanished, and real Native people were now officially assimilated within American social boundaries, but were stereotyped in the public imagination as drunken, lazy tramps. Hence, the interior Indians represented "the new savagery of the modern."

In this way, Deloria argues that playing Indian has been central to efforts to imagine and materialize distinctive American identities, and that this has always been complicated by the existence of real Native people. He traces these changes through four other particular moments, as well as examining the role of disguise and costume, Native peoples' reaction to Europeans "doing bad imitations of native dress, language, and custom," and the role they played in this performative tradition. Besides the Boston Tea Party and the Woodcraft Indians, Deloria examines the Philadelphia and New York Tammany Societies, which used Indian play to facilitate the creation of a powerful, republican political party. Other fraternal societies, such as the Society of Red Men, and its successor, the Improved Order of Red Men, are also examined. Largely shut out as they were from real political involvement, Deloria contends that the secret "mysteries" and initiation rituals of these benevolent societies provided working class men with the opportunity to act out their citizenship instead in a fraternal government in which they took on doubled identities as both Indians and republican citizens. The author then turns his attention to an elite literary

nationalist fraternal society formed by Lewis Henry Morgan with the initial aim of producing an American epic. In the quest for authentic material for this project, the group turned, however, to systematic ethnographic research. Thus, although for Morgan the authentic and real existence of Indians was located *outside* American society, he had to deal with the contradiction that Indians had not vanished as they were supposed to according to contemporary theory, but were actively assisting his research. Finally, the author turns to post-World War II Indian hobbyists, and their 1970s and '80s counterculture and New Age offspring.

This is a rich and sophisticated study, for Deloria excels in reading the activities of these different groups for underlying motivations, and the meanings they created in playing Indian. The footnotes alone are valuable as sources of up-to-date bibliographies on numerous topics, although, surprisingly, he does not situate his work within the literature on nationalism, except for a passing reference to Benedict Anderson. At times it would be nice to know more about particular rituals or parades, and the way they were received by contemporaries, however, many of the nineteenth century fraternal rituals were secret, and this may explain the occasional lack of detail. Deloria's emphasis on the transformative work of play and performance is instructive. He argues that engaging in Indian play not only made meanings, but made them real, so that "identity was not so much imagined as it was performed, materialized through one's body and through the witness and recognition of others." (184) Clearly, the role of the audience in setting the limits of identity was particularly noticeable in the nineteenth century, as witness the fact that anti-Indian rhetoric forced the Tammany societies to decanonize Tammany, and to keep their Indian play for secret rituals rather than for public display.

Although Deloria's subjects are predominantly white, middle class males, he is careful to acknowledge that identity also depends on contrasts between "their own citizenship and that denied to women, African Americans, Indians, and others." (8) Playing Indian was not available to women until the Camp Fire Girls program began at the turn of the century, and it was not a liberating activity for women since it deliberately perpetuated the stereotype of women as bearers of unpaid domestic responsibilities. In terms of power relations, the author points out that playing Indian perpetuated the asymmetrical power relationship between whites and Natives; but when Natives were sought out by whites for their knowledge of Native culture, it afforded them various opportunities to (re)shape white conceptions of Indians and to reclaim control of their own identity. However, this was a double-edged sword because when real Natives were drawn into white Indian play, new non-Indian *and* Indian identities were created. As Morgan's collaborator, Ely S. Parker, and other Native people crossed and recrossed cultural boundaries they "found themselves acting Indian, mimicking white mimickings of Indianness." (180) While they operate on two different levels, both these texts add to our

understanding of the role of the indigene in creating North American identities, although neither seem to be aware of similar work on other white settler societies. Nevertheless, it is often easy enough to spot cultural fictions, but explaining their purpose, meanings, and the way they functioned is a much more demanding exercise; both texts have much to offer in this regard.

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[1] James A. Clifton, ed., *The Invented Indian: Cultural Fictions & Government Policies* (New Brunswick, N.J. 1990); Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver 1992); Peter C. Rollins & John E. O'Connor, eds., *Hollywood's Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film*, (Lexington, Ky. 1998).

[2] For instance, Marilyn Lake, "Mission Impossible. How Men Gave Birth to the Australian Nation — Nationalism, Gender and other Seminal Acts," *Gender and History* 4.3 (Autumn 1992).