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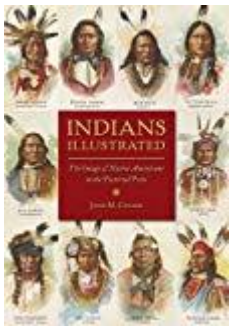

John M. Coward. *Indians Illustrated: The Image of Native Americans in the Pictorial Press.* History of Communication Series. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016. Illustrations. 240 pp. $95.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-252-04026-9.

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As photography moved into mainstream culture, Americans in the nineteenth century yearned for more realistic images in magazines and newspapers. Of particular interest were images of exotic peoples and the untamed American West. Since photojournalism was still in its early stages, the pictorial press depended on printed illustrations that were easier to produce and often passed off as "realistic" depictions of actual events or people (p. 9). However, these images too frequently relied on the imagination of the artist and were colored with nineteenth-century stereotypes. This phenomenon was especially true with images of Native Americans. In *Indians Illustrated: The Image of Native Americans in the Pictorial Press*, John M. Coward explores these portrayals of Native Americans in the pictorial press and how they represented nineteenth-century perceptions of Indian culture and characteristics.

Expanding on his earlier work, *The Newspaper Indian: Native American Identity in the Press, 1820–90* (1999), Coward mainly focuses on three popular illustrated newspapers: *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, *Harper's Weekly*, and *The Daily Graphic*. Since these illustrated newspapers were popular with white, middle-class families, they often appealed to and reflected the attitudes of their consumers toward Native Americans. While these mindsets were sometimes positive and sometimes negative, they almost always kept the image of Indian in a state of "otherness," or inherently different from white, middle-class, "civilized" people (p. 5). By investigating these printed illustrations, Coward argues that the nineteenth-century pictorial press played a major role in shaping and sustaining American perceptions of Native Americans in popular culture to this day.

Each chapter in *Indians Illustrated* approaches a particular kind of stereotypical image used in the pictorial press. In the first chapter, Coward focuses on Native American posed portraits. These portraits often depicted Indians as "noble savages," and they appealed to the white, middle-class desire to see Native Americans in a tame manner and in their ceremonial garb (p. 27). In a similar fashion to Robert F. Berkhofer's *The*

White Man's Indian, Coward argues that these illustrated portraits also served to reinforce ideas about "good" and "bad" Indian types, where the good Indian was drawn in a stoic and dignified manner and the bad Indian had more savage-like features (p. 36).[1] Coward reveals how illustrated portraits of Native Americans served to highlight cultural variations and bolster racial difference between whites and Indians.

In the second chapter, Coward studies how the pictorial press portrayed the daily lives of Native Americans. Both *Harper's* and *Leslie's* wanted their readers to see interesting pictures of Indians in their natural settings, but these images were often saturated with stereotypes about Native American drunkenness, domestic misconduct, or primitive rituals (p. 47). For instance, *Harper's* published a two-page illustration of the Sioux sun dance, but instead of an anthropological explanation of the sacred ritual, the event was portrayed as primitive and shocking, including captions that emphasized "savage" elements, such as eating dog meat and self-torture (p. 51). Images of death rituals, married life, or everyday work were often portrayed in stark contrast to Euro-American social norms, making the Native Americans seem lazy or foolish. Coward notes that these kinds of Indian pictures were intended to demonstrate "significant and visible differences between whites and Indians—ceremonies, customs, social practices, and other 'Indian' activities—all of which made clear that Indians were different than civilized Americans" (p. 70).

In the third chapter, Coward takes a look at how Native American women were depicted in the pictorial press. There were typically two kinds of the female Indian stereotype: the princess and the squaw, where the princess was beautiful, kind, and courageous, and the squaw was old, neglected, and forced to beg for food. Additionally, Indian men were usually shown mistreating Indian women by participating in wife swapping or beating them. Coward's study of these illustrated images echoes Janice Acoose's *Iskwewak Kah Ki Yaw Ni Wahkomakanak: Neither Indian Princesses nor Easy Squaws* as he observes, in a similar way as Acoose does with literature, how these images of women in Native American culture perpetuated the myth that it was a natural part of Indian men's nature to mistreat the women in their tribes.[2]

In the remaining chapters, Coward examines in great detail how Native Americans were portrayed on the frontier and in the Indian wars. Usually, these illustrations could be broken down into two categories: artists' renditions of actual events or artists' renditions of allegorical themes unconnected to real events. In the illustrated press during the nineteenth century, both actual events and imagined events were heavily biased in favor of white Americans or the US government, usually depicting Indians as thieving and brutally violent. Further, these images typically suggested that all Indians were Plains Indians, ignoring the vast cultural diversity among Indian tribes in exchange for a fairy-tale image of the American West. These visual representations of Indians have remained in the public consciousness through today, as evidenced in popular movies, television, advertisements, and consumer products.

At the end of *Indians Illustrated*, Coward reflects on the lasting consequences of the nineteenth-century illustrated press and the creation of mental conceptions of Native American culture that continue to persist in modern popular belief. Stereotypical notions of Indians, such as cultural homogeneity or an uncivilized nature, were illustrated so vividly in the pictorial press that they created a permanent perception of Native Americans as different than "normal" American society (p. 188). By analyzing dozens of images from this time, Coward provides a fascinating look at how powerful the visual image can be on the development of cultural attitudes. *Indians Illustrated* not only provides a crucial study for scholars of Native American culture but is also very useful as a

text for scholars of race, anthropology, popular culture, and visual studies.

Notes

[1]. Robert F. Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Random House, 1978), 71–104.

[2]. Janice Acoose, *Iskwewak Kah Ki Yaw Ni Wahkomakanak: Neither Indian Princesses nor Easy Squaws* (Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press, 1995), 31–76.

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