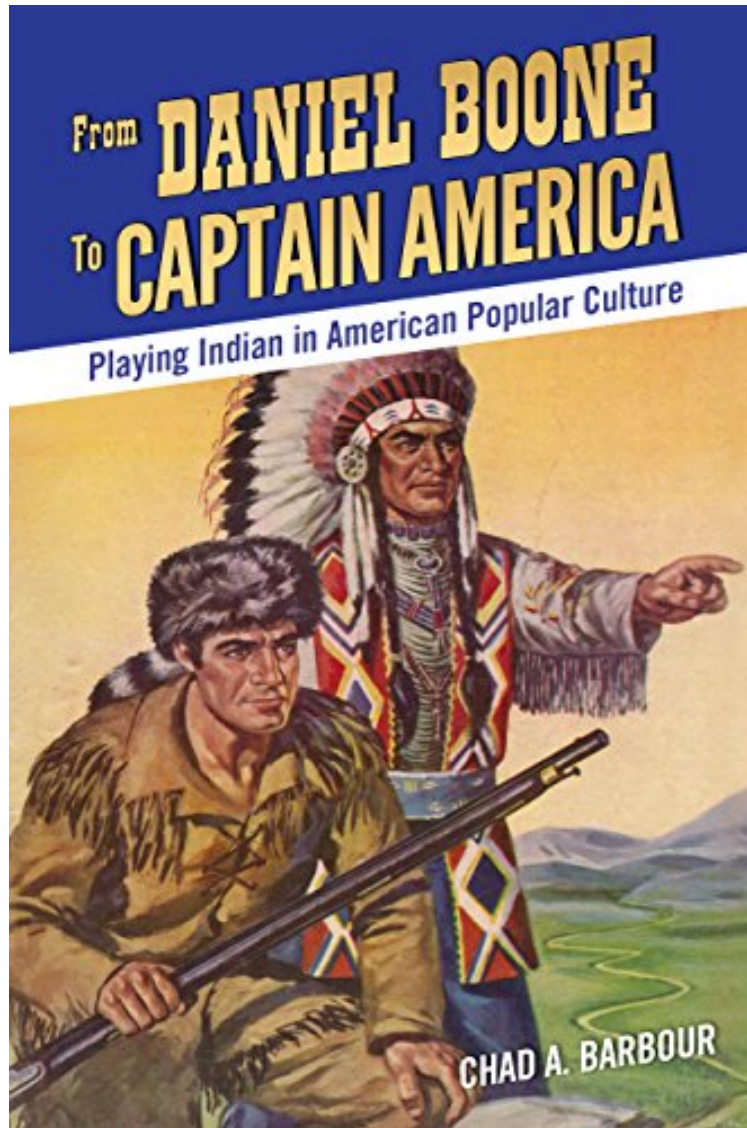


## From Daniel Boone to Captain America: Playing Indian in American Popular Culture

Chad A. Barbour

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before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised From Daniel Boone to Captain America: Playing Indian in American Popular Culture:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Timely, interesting, and...comics!By Second Ray LightVery timely book on how "Indianness" is conceived and created in a variety of forms, most notably comics and other popular

literatures. Those of us who study graphic novels and comics and work on critical readings of image and text, will really benefit from Barbour's research. Much appreciated. I only wish the author had included the word "comics" in the title to provide legitimacy to this growing subfield. Like many scholarly books on popular culture, it can fit into multiple disciplines. I will use this in my courses.

From nineteenth-century American art and literature to comic books of the twentieth century and afterwards, Chad A. Barbour examines in *From Daniel Boone to Captain America* the transmission of the ideals and myths of the frontier and playing Indian in American culture. In the nineteenth century, American art and literature developed images of the Indian and the frontiersman that exemplified ideals of heroism, bravery, and manhood, as well as embodying fears of betrayal, loss of civilization, and weakness. In the twentieth century, comic books, among other popular forms of media, would inherit these images. The Western genre of comic books participated fully in the common conventions, replicating and perpetuating the myths and ideals long associated with the frontier in the United States. A fascination with Native Americans also emerged in comic books devoted to depicting the Indian past of the US. In such stories, the Indian remains a figure of the past, romanticized as a lost segment of US history, ignoring contemporary and actual Native peoples. Playing Indian occupies a definite subgenre of Western comics, especially during the postwar period when a host of comics featuring a white Indian as the hero were being published. Playing Indian migrates into superhero comics, a phenomenon that heightens and amplifies the notions of heroism, bravery, and manhood already attached to the white Indian trope. Instances of superheroes like Batman and Superman playing Indian correspond with depictions found in the strictly Western comics. The superhero as Indian returned in the twenty-first century via Captain America, attesting to the continuing power of this ideal and image.

As a child, my father and I were members of the Indian Guides. We wore head feathers in the Maryland suburbs. As a teenager, I was a fan of the Redskins, and I never thought once about the implications. Somehow, I escaped the comic books that Chad Barbour covers here. It's refreshingly painful to gain more insight into how bizarrely screwed up it is to be raised white and male in America. Ryan Holmberg, editor and translator of Sugiura Shigeru's *The Last of the Mohicans*, Barbour skillfully analyzes the pervasive narrative of performing Indianness (while marginalizing Native peoples) that swells again and again in our most cherished American heroes, slipping cannily as he does so from national history to literary moment, genre to individual title, story to panel. His compelling argument, crafted through exhaustive research, fills a pressing need to examine the trembling, blustering, routinely dangerous nature of white paternalism. Joe Sutliff Sanders, associate professor in the English Department at Kansas State University and editor of *The Comics of Herg: When the Lines Are Not So Clear*. About the Author: Chad A. Barbour, Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan, is associate professor in the School of Arts and Letters at Lake Superior State University. He teaches courses in American studies, Native American studies, children's literature, and comics and graphic novels. His work has appeared in the *Journal of Popular Culture* and the *International Journal of Comic Art*.