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American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

The Fast Runner: Filming the Legend of Atanarjuat. By Michael Robert Evans.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4g05n50b>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 35(4)

ISSN

0161-6463

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Publication Date

2011-09-01

DOI

10.17953

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The Fast Runner: Filming the Legend of Atanarjuat. By Michael Robert Evans. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press. 2010. 176 pages. \$19.95 paper.

Zacharias Kunuk's *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* (2001), a screen adaptation of an Arctic legend, is one of the most successful indigenous films of all time. This complex film layers a story of resilience and ingenuity with Inuit lifeways, religious beliefs, and traditions. Michael Robert Evans's book inverts the focus of his previous study on the subject, *Isuma: Inuit Video Art* (2008), which includes a chapter on *The Fast Runner* but is ultimately dedicated to Isuma Productions, the company responsible for the film. Evans's latest book concentrates primarily on the film, providing the necessary context to understand the arcane world depicted in the film and its contemporary context of production. Moving back and forth between these two contexts effortlessly, the book offers key information that illuminates the multiple facets of this intricate film.

Evans approaches *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* as a case study of the intricacies of indigenous media production, which is caught between indigenous expression and community, national sovereignty, institutional policies, and the requirements of the festival circuit. As Evans explains, Kunuk and cinematographer Norman Cohn first conceived of the film in the context of the creation of Nunavut, the territory of the Canadian Arctic primarily occupied and run by the Inuit, in 1999. The film clearly participates in the Inuit project of self-identification and self-determination in the face of Ottawa's attempt to integrate the Inuit into mainstream Canadian culture.

The book also approaches *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* as an example of the tensions between indigenous communities and the modern world. Igloolik, home to Isuma Productions, was the last community in the Arctic to accept satellite television. Evans recounts how, despite this distrust, television has provided an important platform for the artistic and technical training of Inuit filmmakers. In response to an Inuit movement against television, the Canadian government created the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (IBC), which generates and distributes programming in Inuktitut. Kunuk joined the IBC, where he worked for nine years before forming Isuma along with Paul Apak, Pauloosie Qulitalik, and Cohn, the only non-Inuk partner in Isuma and the one in charge of the business aspect of the production company.

The case of Cohn offers Evans the opportunity to examine the role of outsiders in indigenous media production. Evans distinguishes between external authenticity (which deals with surface appearances) and internal authenticity (which refers to the artist's approach to her or his work). To the extent that Cohn's work reveals the rhythms and approaches of Inuit life, Evans maintains, his films are authentically representative of Inuit culture. As the example of

Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner shows, indigenous populations rarely create their media by themselves. Despite this dependence on Western technology and cultural institutions, Evans argues, the film exhibits its authenticity by creating an aesthetic true to the quotidian and spiritual dimensions of Inuit life.

In regard to the context of the events depicted, the book offers a detailed plot of the film, a chart explaining the family relations among the characters, and a pronunciation guide of the characters' names, all of which facilitate the comprehension of the film. Evans also explains the film's shifts between the terrestrial and spiritual realms, as well as the signification of shamanism, amulets, and talismans. Equally useful to understanding key events in the film are Evans's illuminating explanations about marriage customs, laws and leadership, cycles of nomadic life, labor division, and games in Inuit culture. Evans also provides information to understand the material world of the film, such as the materials used for clothing, resources of the area, and architecture and its effects on the Inuit lifestyle. Finally, in response to the criticism that the pacing of the film is slow, Evans argues that the film "reflects the pace of life in the Arctic, which is slow more often than it is fast" (98).

The book's only shortcoming might be its privileging of contextual information over the author's own analysis. Most of the facts provided by Evans serve mainly to facilitate the understanding of the plot and to convey the filmmakers' perspective on the film, rather than to support the author's own analysis and interpretation of the film. One case in point is Evans's discussion of the filmmakers' decision to alter the ending of the film. In the film, *Atanarjuat* does not kill Uqi—who has murdered *Atanarjuat*'s brother and raped his wife—and his sidekicks. Instead, *Atanarjuat* spares them and says, "The killing will stop. It ends here." In most other versions of the legend, *Atanarjuat* smashes his enemies' heads. In some versions, he even takes their wives as his own and enslaves their children.

Evans addresses Justin Shobuw's opinion piece "Cold Comfort" (*The American Prospect*, February 28, 2003), which criticizes the film for misrepresenting the Inuit legend. Shobuw argues that this alteration is at odds with the oral tradition that the film aims to preserve. Furthermore, he claims that the change betokens the influence of Christianity on modern Inuit culture. Supporting Cohn and Kunuk's decision to alter the ending, Evans argues that this alternation is not at odds with an authentic representation of Inuit culture. He writes, "The accuracy lies in the ways that the characters go about their lives [and] not in the unaltered presentation of a story line" (60).

What goes unexamined in Evans's defense of Kunuk and Cohn are the ideological implications of this alteration; the changes to the story clearly play a role in the film's project of self-presentation before international audiences. We should view the alteration of the ending in relation to other revisions to the oral

accounts of the legend, for instance, the introduction of a female character—Puja—as one of the main instigators of conflict among men. Why would the film be concerned with depicting the hero as violent but not with creating a female character to justify (partly) the violence among men? The melodramatic legibility of events might motivate both of these changes. Despite the intervention of spiritual forces, the film provides events with conventional psychological explanations (such as female duplicity). The pacifist ending of the film might have less to do with the concern of depicting the Inuit as violent—after all, the film shows graphic violent acts performed by Uqi—than with the demand of classical melodrama to identify characters clearly either with virtuous or evil forces. In this sense, the alterations illustrate the Inuit's ambivalent relation to their own traditions, a relation marked by deep respect and increasing moral estrangement. Rather than pursuing questions such as this one, Evans limits himself to offering the necessary background for understanding the film.

Despite this limitation, the book's contextual approach complements more analytic work on the film that has already appeared in book chapters and journal articles (for instance, Kerstin Knopf's "Atanarjuat: Fast Running and Electronic Storytelling in the Arctic" about the film's transcultural storytelling [in *Transcultural English Studies: Theories, Fictions, Realities*, ed. Frank Schulze-Engler et al., 2009, 201–20]; Arnold Krupat's "Atanarjuat, the Fast Runner and Its Audiences" about the communicative strategies of the film [*Critical Inquiry*, 2007, 606–31]; and Thomas Crosbie's "Critical Historiography in *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* and *Ten Canoes*" about the film's reworking of Western ethnographic tropes [*Journal of New Zealand Literature*, 2007, 135–54]).

The book's many virtues clearly outweigh its proclivity to offer contextual information. Evans provides a comprehensive and informed account of the film's inception, production, and reception. He has written an invaluable resource for scholars and practitioners who are interested in the film as well as in indigenous media in general.

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The Munsee Indians: A History. By Robert S. Grumet. Foreword by Daniel K. Richter. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009. 464 pages. \$45.00 cloth.

Most Americans can recite the Dutch tale of the purchase of Manhattan Island from the Indians for a handful of beads. Few can tell you who those Indians were. Robert Grumet can and does in this history of the people who sold the