Introduction

Before-and-After

Vanishing and Visibility in Native American Images

During location shooting in Monument Valley for the 1925 Paramount film *The Vanishing American*, based on the Zane Grey novel of the same title, a photographer shot a promotional photograph of the film's non-Native star, Richard Dix (see figure I.1; see also figure 2.12). Dix plays a Navajo (Diné) man in the film, and in this photograph he is in "redface"—bronze makeup and full costume—surrounded by the children of local Diné families (some of whom served as amateur actors and crew for the film). The image turned up in a Bureau of Census file in the U.S. National Archives—perhaps inadvertently misfiled there by government officials because it appeared to be an authentic photograph from the 1930 census or perhaps placed there deliberately for the images of the children—with a caption that presumably referred to the many children in the photograph: "Each one of these bear individual names."

The captioner's withholding the children's names, like the frequent practice of withholding Native actors' names from film credits, suggests an unwillingness to engage with Native personhood, relationships, and epistemologies. The original photographer's appropriation of Native children's images to authenticate Hollywood's Western star results in an implied scenario, one that imagines a reconstituted family organized around Euro-American custody. This amalgamated, staged family supports a visual narrative privileging the power of white racial transformation, a theatrical "passing" in a constructed "West" that would undergird the soon-to-burgeon tourist development of the southwest. Long after it was archived in the records

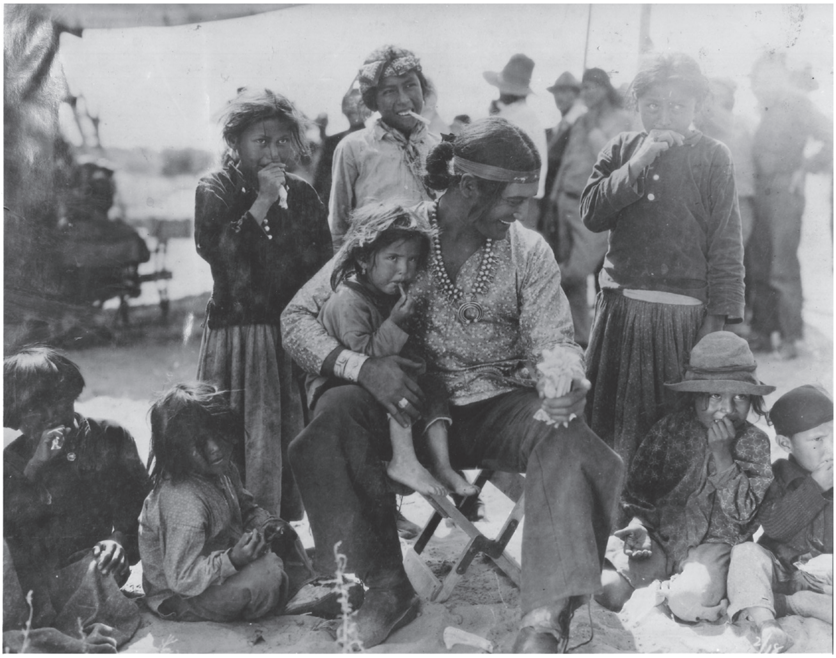

Figure I.1. Hollywood star Richard Dix with Diné children. NA/RG29 NR. Bureau of Census. Prints: Navajo Indians. 1930. Box 1. No. 29–NR–31. National Archives.

of the Bureau of Census, the photograph was included in James C. Faris's 2003 book *Navajo and Photography* as a census image, with Faris's additional explanation that it was "probably taken by a weary census taker" (104–05). Faris argues that such photographs reduce "all histories . . . to those of the West" (19), a reading I discuss in later chapters of this book. Yet the case of mistaken identity (Dix is not Diné) and hidden identity (the Diné children are unnamed in the caption, but would of course be recognizable to relatives who knew them) suggest not just the foreclosure of Native history but also its potential retrieval. Embedded in the politics of seeing and being seen are the possibilities of recognition and repatriation. The critical uptake of this image in scholarly studies of cross-cultural photography and image stereotypes such as Faris's book illustrates the intricacy of archival retrieval in the face of the complex histories of Native presence in the film industry and in film audiences across the span of the twentieth century. The photograph's shifting categorization as fiction and nonfiction suggests the slipperiness of images—their tendency to escape their makers' intended signification—and at the same time the stickiness of the attached scenarios that inform the way contemporary viewers understand images from the past.

Indigenous filmmakers' engagement with archival images, genre conventions, and industrial film practices can alter the frame through which viewers see "images of Indians," actualizing dynamic visual processes of political and genealogical recognition. Contemporary Native American film directors have noted the importance of their relationships with the visual archives of popular images of Indians, while at the same time they have appropriated and renarrated these images in their films in ways that strengthen connections to ancestral homelands and reassert Indigenous ownership of images through processes of visual repatriation. Blackfeet filmmaker George Burdeau, for example, describes his first encounter with images of his tribe taken by Edward Curtis as having the effect of bringing him back to his own tribal lands and community. Burdeau specifies a turn-of-the-century photograph by Curtis, titled "The Three Chiefs—Piegan" (see figure I.2), as one of these meaningful images.

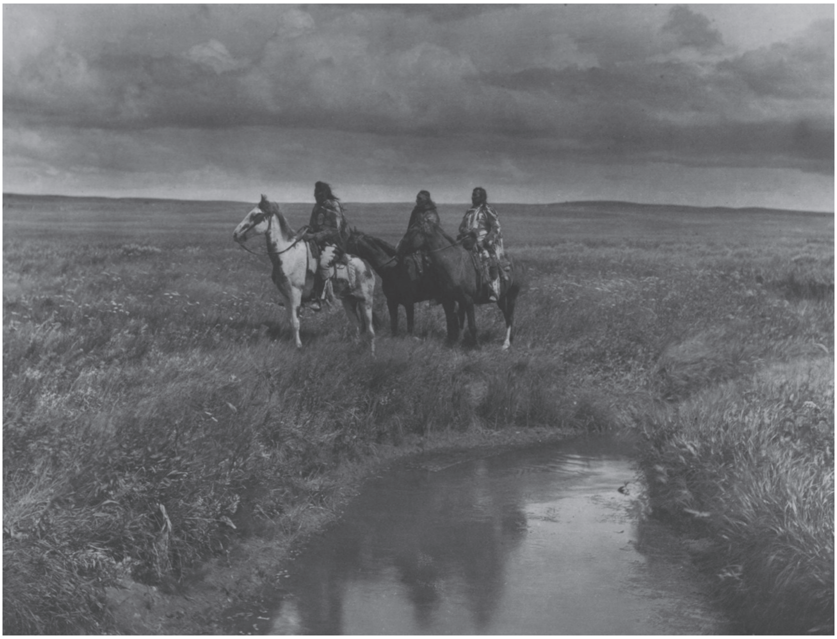

Figure I.2. "The Three Chiefs—Piegan." Edward S. Curtis. Image courtesy of the Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library, used with permission.

The photograph follows the pictorialist tradition in its intensely expressive composition; the use of long-shot, the stance of the men, their blurred reflections in a waterhole, and the wide horizon isolate the central figures, separating them from their community context, while suggesting for some viewers (in the caption as well as the image) a clichéd nobility and an elegiac sense of impending loss. Yet Burdeau describes viewing these images, as well as the act of filmmaking itself, in personal terms as part of an active process of "going home": "When I first discovered Curtis, I found this photograph of three Piegan chiefs out on the plains and I still hadn't come home yet, so for me, this was like—coming home . . . it allowed me to go on my own journey, and I knew that . . . I needed to come home."[1] In fact, in Burdeau's 1997 documentary *Backbone of the World: The Blackfeet* about the tribe's struggle to prevent gas and coal mining in the Badger-Two Medicine mountain range, he not only uses many of Curtis's images of the Blackfeet, but he also documents his own return to his tribe and the community filmmaking workshop he organized while directing the film. Both on camera and in voiceover, he describes this process early on in the film:

> It's really been an incredible experience for me to be able to actually come home as a result of this film project. . . . I've been making films for a long time and most of that time has been spent working with other Indian tribes. I always would have this sort of lingering thought in my head when I would be with the Pueblos in New Mexico or the Utes in Utah, I would always envy people who had some sort of connection to their homeland, and had the ability to connect to not only the community and their family . . . but also that cultural connection. Because I really didn't know much about my own heritage, and didn't know . . . what really belonged to me. I didn't even know what was Blackfeet. Now that I've had the opportunity to come back home, I'm beginning to . . . feel that I have a place.

Illustrating this story of return and integrating it with oral histories from community members, Burdeau superimposes Curtis photographs of Blackfeet individuals over footage of the Badger-Two Medicine wilderness area during various seasons. Thus he essentially renarrates the photographic portraits cinematically in order to highlight the perspectives of the subjects' descendants, who reiterate in their stories both the decimation of the tribe from starvation in the 1880s, when many buffalo herds were destroyed, and their ongoing land claims in the Badger-Two Medicine area. The process of renarration and reflexive community self-representation also parallels the strong presence in the film of the young videographers in Burdeau's filmmaking workshop, who deliberately insert themselves into the cinematic frame as they discuss their goals for the film, technical problems encountered, and their views about the community and homeland.[2] This strategy of deploying past and present media images to revisit shattering events in the tribe's history—massacres and the loss of lands—becomes in Burdeau's film not only a memorial but also part of a testimony of contemporary presence that involves strategic and political claims to ongoing rights based in genealogy and cultural heritage. These reflexive filmmaking strategies register the power of active Native vision at all points across the arc of image production, text, and reception, to assert a Native presence and politics of seeing. Vanishing becomes visibility, absence becomes presence, when an image once symbolic of Indian finality instead elicits tribal recognition and supports discourses of contemporary political sovereignty.

Despite their differences, these two photographs—the 1900 portrait and the 1929 production still—and the changing narratives that inform them have some important qualities in common. Like many historical photographs, these were first narrated in one way and then renarrated in another. The photographs also function in different ways as extracinematic visual texts, both revealing and influencing film production practices. In both photographs, the Native subjects are excerpted from their family and community contexts for the purposes of illustrating an implied narrative. The original images are posed in ways that embed their subjects in preexisting Euro-American scenarios, which the images helped to reconstitute and to circulate into another sphere of signification. The Native subjects are not named or credited in the original images, yet their identities are crucial to shifting, politicized processes of staging and transmission: a Hollywood promotional still becomes a government document, and an artist's ethnographic photograph becomes a filmmaker's personal mnemonic.

The generic arena of the Western—especially the sympathetic Western and its precursor, the Indian drama—informs the constellation of popular representations from which a range of Native filmmakers have drawn a counterdiscourse advocating tribal autonomy in familial terms. *Native Recognition* is about these images of and by Native people in the cinema. Its chapters trace representational scenarios taken up in mainstream and independent cinema from the early silent-era "Indian dramas" of Cecil B. DeMille, D. W. Griffith, and Ho-Chunk director James Young Deer, to the "home dramas" of Cheyenne/Arapaho director Chris Eyre at the turn of the twenty-first century. Images of Native familial separation and reunion in sympathetic Westerns and Indigenous films provide an organizing principle for this book's exploration of the larger relationship between historical Western genre conventions and the emergence of Native American filmmaking. These filmed images of Native generational relationships encode political discourses about civic allegiance, custodial authority, land rights, and tribal futures. I argue that both silent-era and contemporary Native films have resignified cinematic images of familial rupture in order to catalyze family reunification both on and off the screen. My analyses focus on cinematically constructed "families" as contested public images rather than on actual Native family structures or domestic practices, and I combine this textual focus with attention to historical and contemporary Native participation in film production and reception.[3] Native and collaborative film productions have overturned long-accepted mass culture images of supposedly vanishing Indians, repurposing the commodity forms of Hollywood films to envision Native intergenerational continuity. In doing so, they have effectively marshaled the power of visual media to take part in national discussions of social justice and political sovereignty for North American Indigenous peoples.[4]

I ask several questions in this book about how Native writers, actors, and filmmakers have worked both within and against established American film genres and Hollywood production methods. How have films by and about Native people complicated the overdetermined frontier trope of the settler "family on the land"? And how have filmed stories of interrelated Indigenous and settler domesticities disturbed the linear, assimilationist narratives driving U.S. custodial transfers of Native children in institutional schooling and foster care? How have Native filmmakers navigated the power structures of Hollywood, speaking from within established genres, working outside of Hollywood's financial and generic demands, and modeling alternative relations with media? How have contemporary filmmakers responded to the historical archive of Western genre images, establishing Indigenous ways of seeing across film production and reception? To begin to answer these questions, *Native Recognition* explores historical, ongoing relationships between Native filmmaking and the Western genre by addressing the intersections of Indigenous expression, shifts in U.S. federal policy, and the history of visual representations. The project involves two related strands of historical recovery. First, I situate Native directors' strategic interventions in the cinema of their time by historicizing sympathetic forms of the Western in light of contemporaneous public discourses and government policies. Second, I recognize contemporary filmmakers' own historical work as they bridge temporal distances by returning our gaze to the Western and its influence across the twentieth century. Each chapter describes retrievals of Native images in the context of Western genre representations. These recovered texts—of extant silent and "orphan" films as well as contemporary Native perspectives on the Western genre cinematic archive—consistently reveal the cinema to be a site of public contestation over images of Native families.

While some of the relationships between Indigenous projects and mainstream Western genre forms are embedded in historical production cycles and practices, others span historical periods as contemporary directors take up the cinematic and photographic legacies of the past. Rehistoricizing cycles of sympathetic Westerns in light of U.S. Indian policies involves bringing the disciplines of cinema studies and Native studies into closer contact. Documents and social programs related to Native nations' relationships to the United States have gone unremarked in most book-length critical studies of Westerns, except in studies by scholars of Native film images such as Jacqueline Kilpatrick (Choctaw and Cherokee), Beverly Singer (Tewa and Diné), and Angela Aleiss. This book builds on their path-breaking work with a focused thematic study of individual films, historical production cycles, and strategies of remediation. Throughout I emphasize the interrelatedness of visual media: photography and film; documentary and feature films; studio and independent films; documentary "visible evidence" and generic fantasy features. As I discuss later in this introduction, cinematic scenes of familial separation both animate and destabilize the sequential "before-and-after" photographs of turn-of-the-century Native students at government boarding schools. These photographs convey both vanishing and visibility, both the costumed poses of assimilation and the recognizable faces of Indigenous youth. I argue that the before-and-after images represent a formative intertext for several kinds of film, from the Indian drama form of the early Western genre film to contemporary Native documentaries that reframe the photographs as historical documents. The following sections set up this discussion and situate images of familial separation and reunion within a larger schema of Native invisibility and visibility in the arena of popular culture.

The "Vanishing Indian" and the Western's Invasive Pedagogy

The "West" of the Western is a theatrical space in which family formation and the shaping of youth take place within a politicized mise-en-scène. The genre's legacy of intensive racial coding is a central target of many contemporary Indigenous activist reappropriations of screen tropes and performances. My focus in this book is not primarily on Hollywood's canonized body of sound-era A-Westerns, which have dominated the critical literature on the genre and have been the subject of detailed critical readings. Although I frequently refer to these films for comparative purposes, this study emphasizes little-known productions from a parallel, related tradition of representation that has both shaped and departed from mainstream Western genre conventions. By suggesting that the subgenre of sympathetic Westerns carries forward the early generic category of the Indian drama as an overtly didactic, sentimental, and racially discursive form, I am making an argument for the importance of this form's political work at key historical moments. At the same time, I do not wish to suggest a chronological narrative of Western genre evolution leading to a contemporary phase of Indigenous revisionism as a millennial development. Nor do the critical categories of revisionism or "post-Western" quite fit, for rather than contemporary films "ghosting" an old genre, Indigenous directors and performers participated and shaped this cinematic heritage from the beginning, working with and against the generic conventions of Hollywood.[5]

The first two chapters focus particularly on the category of the "Indian drama," which can be seen as an antecedent to what has variously been called the "sympathetic Western," "Indian Western" and "Pro-Indian Western." Indian dramas, I suggest, functioned as foundational yet also contrapuntal production cycles, embedded in the larger phenomenon of frontier representation in cinema.[6] These productions claimed authenticity yet partook of the mythos of frontier melodramas. They were rooted in emergent Hollywood practices, and like the classical Western's generic forms of looking and knowing, Indian dramas also imaginatively staked claims to territory. Yet at times these films also offered a space for Native directors, actors, and consultants to influence or alter the dominant representations of Native peoples on screen. Rhetorically persuasive narrative texts, Indian dramas responded to contemporary changes in public policy by situating cinematic "Indians" in modern and urban contexts, and in this way they sometimes counterweighted the limited historical horizons of the Western genre as a whole.

While these films are sympathetic to their Indian characters, especially by comparison to such silent and sound-era films as D. W. Griffith's *The Battle of Elderbush Gulch* (1913) or John Ford's *Stagecoach* (1939),[7] their stories of tragedy—of interrupted political and romantic relationships—nevertheless refuse to imagine the continuation of Native families. In that refusal, sympathetic Westerns constitute and repeat one of the dominant tropes in the history of both the Western and federal Indian policy rhetoric, the "vanishing Indian." This "vanishing" refers to the mistaken but widespread public belief that Native peoples were destined to disappear from the continent, either through depopulation or amalgamation with settler populations. Brian Dippie's 1982 study, among others, has explored how the historical manifestations of these images of "vanishing" have impacted the seemingly contradictory U.S. Indian policies of removal and assimilation. Emerging from this ideology of the vanishing Indian that drove both policies and popular representations in the early twentieth century, many Westerns simply omit any images of Native families or children, focusing instead on white settler families threatened by groups of (exclusively male) Indian warriors.

This omission or "Indian absence" is central to the visual organization of the Western. Anishinaabe writer and theorist Gerald Vizenor points out the ways that Hollywood's substitutions actively suppress Native representational presence: "the simulation of the *indian* is the absence of real natives—the contrivance of the other in the course of dominance" (*Manifest Manners* vii). A growing number of studies theorize and describe the power of these generic absences to shape the national imaginary, tracing the forms that specific stereotypes of Indians have taken over time.[8] In a nuanced discussion of visual representations in Indian Westerns, Armando José Prats describes how cinematic Indians are indicated by signs of their absence, rendered as "invisible natives" in Hollywood films, which represent the threat of otherness through synecdoche and other paradigmatic textual absences and invisibilities.

This study extends these critical frameworks along a different trajectory, pressuring the Western's discourse of vanishing by exploring those productions that keep images of Native families and youth obsessively in view of film spectators. Although early trade journals declared that the boom in Indian dramas had ended by 1913, I argue that studio and independent producers returned to this genre at strategic historical moments, often coinciding with shifts in federal Indian policy. The emergence of Indigenous filmmaking as a movement in the second half of the twentieth century constitutes both a departure from and a politicized dialogue with these uneasy and ideologically burdened images of Native youth.

Envisioning Native families in the cinema is always a political act, and representations of youth in particular stake claims about the future of Indigenous nations as legitimate, and legitimating, heirs to the land. Controlling the signs of Indigeneity in visual representations engages issues of identity and the ongoing presence of Native tribes as distinct peoples with claims to their homelands and, in the United States, to the sovereignty acknowledged in nation-to-nation treaties. New critical work on Western history and the

Western film genre has emphasized the extensive, symbolic links between land ownership and inheritance. Historian Patricia Limerick maintains that "if Hollywood wanted to capture the emotional center of Western history, its movies would be about real estate" (55), and indeed some of the most cogent recent scholarship on the Western genre has focused on what Virginia Wright Wexman calls the "family on the land," referring to the dual issues of property and dynastic progression. Janet Walker maintains that the trauma at the core of many captivity narratives and the obsession with "generational accession" in many Westerns emerge "precisely at the point where property informs intergenerational conflict" (221, 229). My point in attending to the images of children and families who occupy the land in Indian dramas—and in later film productions—is to suggest that these figures have everything to do with both property rights and intergenerational relations.

For the center of gravity in the Indian drama, broadly defined, is the collapsed and interrelated domesticities of Indigenous and settler families. In the silent era, Indian melodramas were preoccupied with issues of sexuality, child-rearing, education, and personal appearance, which were also fundamental to the regulation of private domestic spheres by government policies of racial distinction, education, property claims, and issues of succession and heirship. Borrowing from historians working in the field of colonial studies, and particularly Ann Stoler's work on "microsites of familial and intimate space," I take up what she terms "racial discourses as historical processes of rupture and recuperation" in this context of the early Western ("Tense" 19). In these films, the visually persuasive and very public narrative form of cinema speaks through a racialized rhetoric of the domestic. Westerns depend on both rigid categories of racial visibility and interracial mixture in their narratives of domestic inheritance. This traffic between fixed and unfixed racial signage is most evident in photographic and cinematic depictions of Native children and youth, the populations targeted by the U.S. government's educational and social policies designed to alter their cultural allegiance, beginning with names and appearances. Western dramas—from *The Squaw Man* in 1914 to *Redskin* in 1929 to *Duel at Diablo* in 1966—cast Native children as the nation's children. Films that depict Native families and youth both contribute to and are constituted by debates about the boundaries of racial identity, social class, land stewardship, treaty rights, and the public management of domestic practices.

In his far-reaching study of the American "myth of the frontier," Richard Slotkin, building on the work of earlier studies by scholars such as Will Wright, Jim Kitses, and John Cawelti that identify the genre's binary structures of civilization and savagery, asserts that Western genre narratives of

American "regeneration through violence" became "the structuring metaphor of the American experience." He writes, "the moral landscape of the Frontier Myth is divided by significant borders, of which the wilderness/civilization, Indian/White border is the most basic. The American must cross the border into 'Indian country' and experience a 'regression' to a more primitive and natural condition of life so that the false values of the 'metropolis' can be purged and a new, purified social contract enacted" (14). Slotkin's vision of a narrative dependency on structures of opposition, based in regressive temporality, offers a compelling account of the Western's obsessive emphasis on violent masculine combat—especially vigilantism.[9] While sympathetic Indian dramas partake of this phenomenon, I argue that they also address their audiences in a different register. Violence and vigilantism are subsumed within emotional melodramas of interracial domestic separation, maternal anguish, and child custody. Critical focus on the constitutive binary oppositions structuring the Western tends to elide the ongoing public contestation over Indigenous futures in the United States. The Western's narrative investment in the chronology of U.S. national origins further obscures Native priority on the land. The orientation of the Western to the national past also encodes a national future, and the genre's visual representation of kinship stages a drama of Native absence and presence that is crucial to this "backward-looking" future charter.

The pedagogic work of Westerns is closely tied to the genre's emotional investment in telling stories about history. Often targeted toward children and marketed as family fare, Westerns teach history by claiming frontier realism, even within the genre's more melodramatic modes of storytelling. That silent Westerns functioned as spectacular "Americanizing" history lessons for youthful and adult audiences—especially for young boys—has been demonstrated by scholars such as Richard Abel.[10] As early as 1914, D. W. Griffith claimed for motion pictures both educational and general public influence in an eerie prediction of the political power and global eye of contemporary television media: "Just think of what it [the motion picture] would mean as an educational force. Think what could be done with the picture if it came into the hands of a rival political party with a big issue like that of slavery before the voters. Think of the possibilities as a newspaper, with up-to-the-minute illustrated areas of the world."[11] For decades, Western genre costumes and accessories were the very sign of white American boyhood.[12] Sympathetic Westerns, claiming (but not delivering) ethnographic content and newly "authentic" representations of American frontier history, are as sites of education that also include scenes of education. Indian dramas and other films about institutional education of Native people have functioned pedagogically, miseducating generations of young viewers about the nature of cultural difference and the history of U.S. settlement. Lee Clark Mitchell argues that narratives of education—the processes of "making the man"—in 1950s Westerns such as *Shane* (Stevens 1953), *Hondo* (Farrow 1953), and *High Noon* (Zinneman 1952) demonstrate broad cultural ambivalence about childrearing and the work of enculturation. The mise-en-scène of education seems to evoke a middle-class utopian wish for experiential frontier education in some Westerns (for example, *Hondo*), while others advocate for systemic progressive reform through the exposure of hardship and loss in military-style boarding schools for Native children (*Redskin*, Schertzinger 1929). In fact, Westerns consistently emphasize the intergenerational transmission of racial knowledge as a foundation of continental settlement, as we see in the images of white women schoolteachers and children learning in frontier settings that pervade its visual discourses of cultural reproduction in films such as *Shane* and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (Ford 1962).

Sympathetic Westerns as a didactic, sentimental medium combining theatrical and realistic modes have often been marketed as presenting the "real" story—specifically the "real Indian" story—of the Western frontier for the first time. Promotional declarations of new authenticity in production and cultural spectacle seek to legitimate the genre's power to write history and to stage, through the films' pedagogical and enculturating work, a visual articulation of public or collective memory. Claims to the mimetic production of a real frontier have functioned at the industry level to bring in middle-class and youth audiences, and to stave off censorship efforts, even as these constructions of realism in Westerns depended on theatricality and the marketing of casting and costuming. Audiences have responded to various cinematic ways of locating claims to realism, including historical content, documentary truth claims, counterculture politics, low production values, high production values, and immersive technologies. The financial success of such strategies is evident in the blockbuster arc of *The Squaw Man* (DeMille 1914), *Broken Arrow* (Daves 1950), *Billy Jack* (Laughlin 1971/1973), and *Dances with Wolves* (Costner 1990), all films that tell nostalgic or "sympathetic" stories about threatened Indigeneity. In early frontier dramas with melodramatic storylines, trends in stylistic realism also supported the reform impulses and assertions of pedagogical authenticity. Early ethnographic documentaries such as *In the Land of the War Canoes* (1914) and *Nanook of the North* (1922) share with Western frontier melodramas this pedagogical function, bending rhetorically powerful visual narratives to the task of public persuasion. The early and reciprocal influences of ethnographic filmmaking and the Western genre have lent fictional narratives the authority of historical truth claims while infusing ethnographic image-making with the melodramatic conventions of frontier dramas. This exchange and pedagogical subtext is traceable in public discourses regarding government education of Native children as a civilizing process and cinema as a site of education for white youth. But in remaking cinema as an educational theater, Indian dramas also stage a theatrical presentation of education. The dramatic articulation of federal policies of "Indian education" took place in visual and even proto-cinematic form, I argue, through the production and circulation of before-and-after images of Native boarding school students in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These images constitute a precinematic visual narrative of Native tradition and modernity that profoundly influenced the development of the Western, especially the sympathetic Western, a form that in turn has undergone subversive use by Native filmmakers.

Indigenous Visibility, Visual Sovereignty, and Fourth Cinema

Working with Native crews or with non-Native partners on collaborative productions, Native filmmakers and performers have critically assessed and appropriated the language of American cinema, rerouting the codes and performative idioms of the Western to reveal the instability of its generic world-making. The films I discuss in this book are politically oppositional but semiotically articulated with the expressive generic codes and conventions of Hollywood Indians. And when revisiting the Western's scenarios of extralegal violence and of domestic rupture and repair, some Native filmmakers have deployed the expressive possibilities of cinematic reclamation in specifically familial terms. Contemporary films such as Hopi director Victor Masayesva's 1993 *Imagining Indians* and Jeff Spitz's 2001 *The Return of Navajo Boy* return to earlier recorded images for purposes of political revitalization and even the reconfiguration of fragmented families. The films have voiceover narration and embedded scenes of viewing, situating the older images within contemporary Indigenous hermeneutic frames and within the trajectory of a reconstructed past. The filmmakers' close attention to multigenerational storytelling permeates all points of media circulation, including production, performance, and spectatorship. Through narration and other strategies, conventional codes and icons are reoriented in service of viewers' emotional investment in Indigenous histories. By shifting the established political significations of Western iconic stars, frontier melodrama, and ethnographic display, contemporary Native films such as Chris Eyre's *Skins* target the connections between policies of expropriation, social disruption, and the manipulation of Indian images in mainstream cinema. Using reflexive strategies to reframe older media images, many new Native productions underscore the historically unstable relationship of dependency between racialized policies of state wardship that made a public issue of Indigenous domestic relations, and the performance and technological projection of intimate family matters in the cinema.

Rather than forming a wholly separatist voice of resistance, recent Native-directed and collaborative films richly engage earlier productions as a cinematic heritage and archive, harnessing and reshaping the continuing cultural potency of popular cinematic memory. These productions reflexively take over and reuse existing media images. But their acts of "remediation" serve a distinct social agenda, one that addresses a particular history of colonization in which Hollywood's representational thefts repeated and reproduced U.S. genocidal programs of land expropriation, cultural interruption, and familial rupture.[13] Embedding commentaries on the Western in their feature films and documentaries, contemporary Native filmmakers have accessed multiple audiences and blurred the distinctions between public and private modes of viewing. Rather than suggesting a unified perspective in either Hollywood's construction of Indianness or in the independent, Indigenous productions that "talk back" to Hollywood's Indians, I focus on complex moments of intercultural imaginings when cinematic productions trouble discourses of racial purity and binary opposition with the complex politics and consequences of circulation and exchange.

In many Native films, representational acts of familial or genealogical recognition—which also function as a political recognition of Native claims—support discourses of Native sovereignty in specifically visual ways. Tuscarora artist and critic Jolene Rickard, writing about sovereignty in Native art, argues in an influential 1996 article that "Sovereignty is the border that shifts Indigenous experience from a victimized stance to a strategic one" (51). Beverly Singer developed the term "cultural sovereignty" to describe a "social movement" that involves "trusting in the older ways and adapting them to our lives in the present" (2). Seneca scholar Michelle Raheja has defined "visual sovereignty" as a "reading practice for thinking about the space between resistance and compliance" ("Reading Nanook's Smile" 1161). Her definition stresses the way this practice enables a duel address to both Native and non-Native populations "by creating self-representations that interact with older stereotypes but also, more importantly, connect film production to larger aesthetic practices that work toward strengthening treaty claims and more traditional (though by no means static) modes of cultural understanding" (*Reservation Reelism* 19). In a different formulation that also emphasizes self-determination, Randolph Lewis calls the work of Indigenous filmmakers such as Alanis Obomsawin (Abenaki) a "cinema of sovereignty," defining "representational sovereignty" as "the right, as well as the ability, for a group of people to depict themselves with their own ambitions at heart" (175). Visual sovereignty, then, is an expansive framework that creates a critical space to privilege a range of Indigenous aesthetic strategies and access to traditionality in a political world. This concept also accommodates several specifically cinematic tactics; it begins to account not only for the political interventions of silent-era Native filmmakers in the Indian drama narratives of their contemporaries, but also for twenty-first-century Native filmmakers' power of retrospect over mediated images from the past.

In returning to familial images and stories recorded in the past, Native independent filmmakers at the turn of the twenty-first century remember the consequences of such early policies and persuasive representations, often specifically in terms of a subsequent active claiming, or reclaiming, of land and family. Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith has emphasized the value for Native communities of the related Indigenous research projects of *claiming* and *returning* (143, 155). Although Smith focuses primarily on the claiming and returning of land and of ancestral remains, the projects she outlines inspire and intersect with the arena of representation. The practical assertion of Indigenous sovereignty in the arena of popular culture parallels other forms of international Indigenous struggle to retrieve "elements of their heritage held by others." James Clifford characterizes this retrieval as "a process of forcefully detaching and reattaching artifacts and their meanings: projects of a dynamic tradition critically reworking its colonial history" ("Traditional Futures" 159).

While this project focuses on Westerns and Native American films produced in the United States, these films have also reached beyond those national boundaries through global circulation. In the silent era, the French company Pathé Frères hired the first Native American director, James Young Deer, to make films in Hollywood for U.S. and European exhibition, and European archives have extensive holdings of Westerns. Chickasaw director Edwin Carewe's films regularly showed in Europe (the only extant copy of his 1928 film *Ramona* was recently repatriated from the National Film Archive in the Czech Republic). From production to circulation and exhibition, the international life of such a seemingly nation-specific genre as the Western parallels the correspondingly transnational scope of Indigenous media production. Films that might at first glance appear to be isolated productions with limited circulation are often localized participants in larger, coterminous international movements, for example the 1972 film *House Made of Dawn*'s concurrent emergence with innovative media productions in the 1970s and 1980s by Indigenous cultural activists such as Merata Mita (Maori) in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Alanis Obomsawin in Canada, and Essie Coffey (Muruwari) in Australia.[14] Key studies in Indigenous media by scholars such as Faye Ginsburg, Eric Michaels, Pamela Wilson and Michelle Stewart, Jennifer Deger, Houston Wood, Shari Huhndorf (Yup'ik), and Corinn Columpar take up this global focus. Pamela Wilson and Michelle Stewart identify "international Indigenism" as a term that privileges Indigenism over nationalism, often appealing to broader discourses of universal human rights in venues of international law such as the United Nations in order to apply pressure on nation-states to recognize Indigenous rights within and across national borders. They describe the concept as one that "may at times appear to be strategically essentialist in its international appeals, identifying Indigenism as a philosophical and cultural attitude toward the world that is shared by all Indigenous peoples, a model for global conduct in its resistance to colonialism, imperialism, environmental destruction, and now, globalization" (8). Michelle Raheja identifies the central resistance articulated by global Indigenous media as redefining racial discourses rooted in United States history: "Transnational Indigenous media production rethinks Audre Lorde's dictum that 'the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house' by insisting that the very foundations on which the master's house is built are Indigenous and should be reterritorialized or repatriated" (18). Key elements of these transnational Indigenous rights include protection or restitution of territories and cultural patrimony, projects for which self-representation in media is and has been essential. Films that follow the transnational repatriation of sacred materials, film footage, and even individuals to their home communities—feature films such as Maori filmmaker and intellectual Barry Barclay's *Te Rua* (1991) and documentaries such as Métis director Gil Cardinal's *Foster Child* (1987) and *Totem: The Return of the G'psgolox Pole* (2003), and Claude Massot's *Nanook Revisited* (1990)—expand transnationally the discourses of repatriation in films such as *The Return of Navajo Boy* (Spitz 2001) discussed in this book.

This broader account of Indigenous cinema and media has benefitted in particular from the work of Barclay, in his films and in publications such as *Our Own Image* and *Mana Tuturu*. Barclay's term for Indigenous cinema, "Fourth Cinema," invokes and extends the classification system first articulated by Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino's manifesto "Towards a Third Cinema" (Barclay offers the shorthand definition of "First Cinema being American cinema; Second Cinema Art House cinema, and Third Cinema the cinema of the so-called Third World," pointing out that these could all be termed "Invader Cinemas" from an Indigenous perspective).[15] Unlike Third Cinema's focus on colonial legacies in the context of modern nation states, Fourth Cinema describes "how the old principles have been reworked to give vitality and richness to the way we conceive, develop, manufacture and present our films" in ways "outside of the national orthodoxy" (11, 9). Barclay brilliantly encapsulates a paradigmatic Indigenous revision of cinema's form and purpose by appropriating the metaphors of colonialist contact narratives in films such as *The Mutiny on the Bounty* (1935, 1962), identifying "The First Cinema Camera" as one that "sits firmly on the deck of the ship," while "The Camera Ashore, the Fourth Cinema Camera, is the one held by the people for whom 'ashore' is their ancestral home" (10). Barclay's figure for the perspectival reorientation in films by Indigenous filmmakers—"the Camera Ashore"—is balanced by an equally important concept that he develops, in his recent books, around the provenance of Indigenous images.[16] *Mana Tuturu*, or "Maori spiritual guardianship," incorporates traditional Maori protocols into contemporary archival practices while simultaneously establishing Maori ownership as paramount over public claims to Maori images. Barclay's use of traditional Indigenous concepts to reframe dominant discourses of image ownership expands the concept of the "Camera Ashore" to encompass elements of film transmission, circulation, reception, and archiving. His attention to the definitions and strategies of trans-Indigenous cinemas and image archives inform the critical frameworks in this book's close investigation of Native American mediamakers's engagement with the discursively national confines of the Western, while also facilitating the recognition that the production and reception of Westerns and Native films have always been an international phenomenon.

In recovering archival images, Native filmmakers have used mise-en-scène, editing, and sound to assert a representational sovereignty over productions made during a time when Native performers and audiences had little or no voice in cinema, a form of retroactive control over the aesthetic production and political meaning of the films. Establishing Indigenous claims to past media production and reception becomes an act of intergenerational communication, performing social work that Faye Ginsburg describes as a "mediation of rupture."[17] Ginsburg defines the counterstream of Indigenous media in terms of its potential to mediate colonial ruptures through the social relations of film production, circulation, and reception. I want to historicize the surge of energy and activity in Indigenous media-making of the last thirty years, for Ginsburg's paradigm of Indigenous media as mediation can be seen not only as a recent phenomenon but also in the productions of earlier film practitioners such as James Young Deer and Lillian St. Cyr, the Ho-Chunk actors who so intensively participated in the formation of the Hollywood Western (as discussed in chapter 1).[18] Furthermore, Native filmmakers have articulated such mediations using one of the primary modes of mainstream theater and cinema, the generic and affective registers of Western melodramas. The sympathetic Western melodrama makes large-scale structures of colonial power visible in the close-knit arenas of the domestic. While melodramatic stage and cinema productions have functioned to transmit the images that underwrite "scenarios of colonial fantasy," some Native media-makers have been able to harness the social power of public sympathy that emerges from these Hollywood images to connect audiences with Indigenous political agendas.[19] More radically, they have seized and reinterpreted Native characters enmeshed in scenarios of government supervision. The enunciation of colonizing interventions and familial damage in frontier dramas is recognizable to viewers who see a reference to the real in the text and production of the Hollywood West. Paternalistic sentiments associated with sympathetic Westerns become available for hermeneutic realignment and a renegotiation of emotional identification, even in its signature stereotypes, forms, and narratives of the vanishing Indian and the Indian torn between tradition and modernity.

In various ways, images of Native families and generational accession in cinema visualize Indigenous civic allegiance and genealogical futures. Attending to visual discourses of Indigenous families and futures in historical Indian dramas and in contemporary Indigenous films that reframe earlier images addresses a conceptual gap in Western genre film studies, a critical inattention to the ongoing Native presence within, alongside, and outside of Western genre film production. The phrase "Indigenous futures" comes in part from visual anthropologist Eric Michaels's articulation of the relationship between contemporary Indigenous "cultural futures" and local Aboriginal autonomy in media production. The term has been taken up in different ways by James Clifford, Faye Ginsburg, and Fred Myers to break through the rigidly linear temporalities and "constitutive opposition" of tradition and modernity that have dominated Western academic, popular, and political discourses about Indigeneity (Clifford, "Traditional Futures" 152). Similar binaries or "constitutive oppositions" in the Western are the very instantiation of rupture and erasure that discursively suppress Indigenous generational (and hence cultural and political) continuity. The analyses in this book attempt to unravel the binary oppositions that structure both Western and ethnographic documentary genres—civilized and primitive, garden and wilderness. Yet they also take into account the ways that these same generic sign systems, with their cinematically mediated Indian "absences" and racialized melodramatic codes, have become part of the mediascape that shapes the work of Native filmmakers, performers, and viewers.

Thinking about the ways that Native films foreground imaginative visions of Indigenous futures—even as they look back to historical events and archival texts premised on Indian demise—facilitates an overt acknowledgement of the world-making qualities of visual media and articulates the political stakes of public culture images of Indians. U.S. government representatives instituted federal laws and policies such as the General Allotment Act of 1887 and the residential boarding school system because they imagined that Native nations had no future ("vanishing" either through population decline or assimilation). These policies were both promoted and contested through the dissemination of images in the popular sphere. Ginsburg and Myers argue that "Policies . . . are not simply bureaucratic formulations but are given vitality as a social force through powerful and persuasive narratives—most effectively in popular media through which they circulate promiscuously" (29). Frontier film dramas about government interventions in Native American families reveal how linked institutional and representational structures come to dominate our imaginations and make our world. Stuart Hall has famously argued that popular culture matters because it is a political "arena of consent and resistance." It is "one of the sites where this struggle for and against a culture of the powerful is engaged: it is also the stake to be won or lost in that struggle" ("Notes" 239). In this arena of visual popular culture, images of Native families function as sites of contestation over whose vision of the future should become reality. Images of families have functioned as a site where Indigenous media-makers rewrite the imposed imagined futures of Hollywood scenarios with their own autonomous visions.

In the section that follows, I unpack the stakes and arenas of these intersecting discourses in the concrete exemplar of the before-and-after image sequence, initiating an alternative origin story for Indian drama films and sympathetic Westerns in the visual documents circulated by government boarding schools across the turn of the twentieth century. These before-and-after photographs, in their dramatic sequencing and close connection to U.S. policies of assimilation, powerfully shaped the discourses of sympathy in the Western as well as its disinvestment in Indigenous futures. While Western images of Native peoples clearly emerged in part from the legacy of Wild West shows (Buffalo Bill Cody's in particular),[20] critical discussions of the origins of frontier iconography in Wild West shows have eclipsed another paradigmatic point of origin for Indian dramas in the visual representational practices of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. Carlisle was the first and most well-known of the many federal Indian residential schools established to assimilate Native American children into the dominant culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Understanding the visual influence of school documents on sympathetic Westerns requires a discussion of the history and function of before-and-after images, a discussion that also lays the groundwork for my investigation of the convergence of image and policy in the mobile scenarios of early cinema.

Early Cinema, Photography, and the Visual Iconography of Education

Photographs of Native American boarding school students comprise a colonial archive of staged images that circulated as public documents at the same time that the Western film genre took shape in the early twentieth century. This book is primarily about moving images, but I want to begin by discussing earlier image technology in the form of before-and-after photographs that purported to measure assimilation in separate, temporally sequenced visual frames. This discussion is important because the implied narratives of progress inherent in this style of carefully posed, consecutive photographs underpin the modern scenarios and reformist stance of many silent Indian dramas and Westerns. Frontier and Indian dramas of the 1910s and 1920s were profoundly shaped by these still images, which were originally created to document and market to the public a program of institutional education. Yet, as I discuss in chapters 1 and 2, the films also complicate the tropes and discourses visualized in the photographs.

The sequencing techniques of before-and-after photographs can be considered proto-cinematic in their attempt to make photographs tell iconic stories. According to Martha Sandweiss, nineteenth-century manipulations of photographs strived to make the "literal accuracy" of photographs "symbolic and theatrical . . . an important scene in a longer story" (106, 102). In this period, emerging film technology functioned doubly as a tool of cultural expression through melodramatic storytelling and as a scientific tool for measurement and documentation. The before-and-after sequences, like Eadweard Muybridge's sequenced photographic motion studies, attempt to capture change occurring in time. Muybridge's images render moments in