

Fall 2010

Soccer Stories

Donn Risolo

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/unpresssamples>



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

Risolo, Donn, "Soccer Stories" (2010). *University of Nebraska Press -- Sample Books and Chapters*. 58.
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/unpresssamples/58>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University of Nebraska Press at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Nebraska Press -- Sample Books and Chapters by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

RESERVATION REELISM

[Buy the Book](#)

MICHELLE H. RAHEJA

Reservation

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA PRESS LINCOLN AND LONDON

[Buy the Book](#)

Reelism

Redfacing, Visual Sovereignty, and
Representations of Native Americans in Film

[Buy the Book](#)

© 2010 by Michelle H. Raheja. All rights reserved.
Manufactured in the United States of America.

A version of chapter 5 first appeared as “Reading Nanook’s Smile” in *American Quarterly* 59.4 (2007): 1159–85. Reprinted with permission by The Johns Hopkins University Press. Copyright © 2007 American Studies Association. A version of the epilogue first appeared online at *In Media Res* at <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org>. *In Media Res* is a MediaCommons project.



Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Raheja, Michelle H.

Reservation reelism: redfacing, visual
sovereignty, and representations of Native
Americans in film / Michelle H. Raheja. p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-8032-1126-1 (cloth: alk. paper)

1. Indians in motion pictures. 2. Indigenous
peoples in motion pictures. 3. Indians in the
motion picture industry—United States.

4. Stereotypes (Social psychology) in motion
pictures. 5. Motion pictures—United
States—History—20th century. I. Title.

PN1995.9.L48R34 2010

302.23089—dc22 2010026528

Set in New Caledonia by Kim Essman.

Designed by Nathan Putens.

Contents

- List of Illustrations *vi*
- Preface *ix*
- Acknowledgments *xv*
- 1 Toward a Genealogy of Indigenous Film
Theory: Reading Hollywood Indians *1*
- 2 Ideologies of (In)Visibility: Redfacing,
Gender, and Moving Images *46*
- 3 Tears and Trash: Economies of
Redfacing and the Ghostly Indian *102*
- 4 Prophesizing on the Virtual Reservation:
Imprint and *It Starts with a Whisper* *145*
- 5 Visual Sovereignty, Indigenous
Revisions of Ethnography, and
Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner) *190*
- 6 Epilogue *221*
- Notes *241*
- Bibliography *291*
- Index *319*

Illustrations

- 1 Lizzie Pablo, a Nez Perce actor, during an audition for *Northwest Passage* 14
- 2 Director Edwin Carewe consults with actors Lupe Velez and John Boles 23
- 3 James Young Deer and Princess Red Wing in *Young Deer's Return* (1910) 24
- 4 Nipo T. Strongheart 26
- 5 Jay Silverheels as Tonto in *The Lone Ranger* (1949) 27
- 6 Joseph "Suni" Vance Chorre 28
- 7 Richard Davis Thunderbird 33
- 8 Luther Standing Bear in regalia 38
- 9 *Nova Reperta* (*New Inventions of Modern Times*)/*America* 48
- 10 Minnie Ha Ha and Mabel Normand from *The Mack Sennett Weekly* (1917) 55
- 11 Mildred Nelson, Molly Spotted Elk's younger sister 57
- 12 Minnie (Minnie Ha Ha) tries on a hat in *Mickey* (1918) 81
- 13 Chauncey Yellow Robe delivering his prologue in *The Silent Enemy* (1930) 89

- 14 Neewa (Molly Spotted Elk) flees from a bear attack before being rescued in *The Silent Enemy* (1930) 92
- 15 Michelle Olson as Molly Spotted Elk in *April in Paris* 97
- 16 Michelle Olson as Molly Spotted Elk in *Evening in Paris* 98
- 17 Iron Eyes Cody from the Keep America Beautiful public service announcement 103
- 18 Iron Eyes Cody as he appeared in 1984 112
- 19 Characters from James Luna's *Petroglyphs in Motion* (2001) 154
- 20 Tonantzin Carmelo as Shayla Stonefeather in *Imprint* (2007) 163
- 21 Dave Bald Eagle plays a medicine man in *Imprint* (2007) 165
- 22 Concluding scene from *Imprint* (2007) 169
- 23 Shanna (Elizabeth Burning) in *It Starts with a Whisper* (1993) 174
- 24 Shanna meets Elijah Harper in *It Starts with a Whisper* (1993) 177
- 25 Image from Shelley Niro's *Tree* (2006) 182

- 26 Nanook (Allakariallak) at the trading post in *Nanook of the North* (1922) 192
- 27 Panikpak (Madeline Ivalu) and Qulitalik Pauloosie (Qulitalik) drive evil away from the community at the close of *Atanarjuat* (2001) 215
- 28 Cast and crew wave from boat while credits roll in *Atanarjuat* (2001) 219
- 29 Kelley Davis and Andrew Loeffler protest school ban on Thanksgiving costumes 228
- 30 Image from *Indigenous Holocaust* (2008) 239

Preface

Reel and Real Worlds

Stemming from a long tradition of staged performances such as the Wild West shows that were themselves informed by American literature's obsession with Native American plots and subplots, film and visual culture have provided the primary representational field on which Native American images have been displayed to dominant culture audiences in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.¹ But these representations have also been key to formulating Indigenous people's own self images. Spokane and Coeur d'Alene writer and filmmaker Sherman Alexie recalls watching western films on television as a child: "I hated Tonto then and I hate him now. However, despite my hatred of Tonto, I loved movies about Indians, loved them beyond all reasoning and saw no fault in any of them."² For many Native people, it has been possible to despise the numerous abject, stereotypical characters Native Americans were forced to play and deeply enjoy and relate to other images that resonate in some way with lived experiences of tribal peoples or undermine stereotypes in a visual field that otherwise erased Indigenous history.

The often excluded or undervalued stories and acts of "survival" of Native American spectators, filmmakers, and actors, and the memories of their descendants have inspired me to imagine the early half of the twentieth century as an era of heartache and happiness, poverty and prosperity, loss, revitalization, and creation of traditions.³ Because most twentieth-century cinematic images of Indigenous peoples often either reflected important pressures that Native communities were facing or completely elided Native concerns in ways that demonstrate deep-seated cultural anxieties, film scholarship provides a useful framework of analysis for

considering how Native Americans have responded to change and persisted in keeping and improvising traditions from the silent film era to the present. Analyzing cinematic images of Native Americans produced by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists of the early film period is also vital to understanding how contemporary Native American filmmakers and visual artists engage and critique this field of discourse.

Paul Chaat Smith has argued, “The movies loom so large for Indians because they have defined our self-image as well as told the entire planet how we live, look, scream, and kill.”⁷⁴ The plotlines of most westerns feature Native Americans living outside of their historical, geographical, and cultural context, situated in the past with no viable future. Native Americans are often hypervisible in North American films, especially in films produced during the first half of the twentieth century; at the same time they are rendered invisible through plotlines that reinforce the trope of Indigenous people as vanishing or inconsequential, they receive few speaking parts, and they are often uncredited.

Certainly one of the more insidious effects of Hollywood’s racial optics regime was that, despite intentional and unintentional inaccuracies, the films served as pedagogy and knowledge production for spectators. These films have been highly influential in shaping perceptions of Native Americans as, for example, a dying race that is prone to alcoholism and is inherently unable and unwilling to adapt to change. Even in films that express admiration for Native Americans, such as Cecil B. DeMille’s *The Squaw Man* (1914) or Delmer Daves’s *Broken Arrow* (1950), seemingly respectful and balanced representations are often rooted in uncritical, problematic racial ideologies that reflect unexamined notions of Native American culture on the part of the director and on the part of North American society as a whole.

As Alexie’s discussion of the figure of Tonto suggests, narrative film has provided a space in which to critique the often fantastic

and surreal images of Native Americans. But these cinematic and televisual experiences also enable Indigenous spectators to engage critically with the artifacts of imagined cultural knowledge produced by the films and their long political, narrative, and historical context, stretching from at least 1492 to the present, particularly as film viewers intuited that those images were the partial products of Native actors. These reactions to films are complicated because Native American spectators neither wholly identified with the representations onscreen nor did they entirely reject them. This viewing practice is similar to what Rey Chow calls “ethnic spectatorship,” a critical examination of the often intractable and egregious stereotypical spectacles of racialized popular images.⁵ Ethnic spectatorship, according to Chow, also involves a politics of identification that radically re-reads the viewing practices of ethnic and racialized spectators as a “suturing” exercise predicated on a sophisticated understanding of what Teresa de Lauretis terms narrative “illusion” rather than one that creates a split or duped self.⁶ Narrative film provided a space in which to critique the often fantastic and surreal popular culture images of Native Americans. For spectators like Alexie, films with Native American plots and subplots capture the imagination by signifying at least some sort of *presence*, however vexed, in a representational field defined primarily by *absence*.

This book is my attempt to see an alternate vision of Native American representation and spectatorship as products of a complicated and sometimes discomfiting history with a vibrant, equally complex future rather than only as abject repositories of the victimized. In it, I retrieve and decipher Native American representations in mainstream feature-length films and examine how these images have been reanimated and subjected to scrutiny by contemporary Indigenous narrative and experimental filmmakers. I suggest an Indigenous film theory that focuses

on what I call “redfacing,” the process and politics of playing Indian; the “virtual reservation,” the imagined and imaginative sites produced by the cinema; and “visual sovereignty,” a concept specific to visual culture and aesthetics, but rooted in thinking about sovereignty in other contexts. The book begins with an analysis of early feature-length films with Native American plots and then engages these images of Indigenous peoples in conversation with more recent visual culture production by Native American artists. I argue that early Hollywood cinema had more Native American “presences” than subsequent eras in the history of the studio system. It is these presences that allow Native American actors and representations to enter the public memory and take on their own social life, even if in sometimes racist and stereotyped fashion. As such, the representations from early Hollywood are now the basis, sustained over generations, for contemporary Native American narrative cinema, characterized by Indigenous-centered aesthetics and grassroots filmmaking.

The violence of invisibility has plagued Native American communities primarily through its contradictions. Native Americans remain hypervisible in commercial fields such as advertising and consumerism, but virtually invisible when it comes to most everything else of substance.⁷ One of the consequences of this contradiction is that Native Americans stand at the center of the dominant culture’s self-definition because Euro-American identity submerged and formed upon the textual and visual culture register of the Indigenous “Other.”⁸ This Manichean binary required the rendering of Native Americans as invisible through the rhetoric of the vanishing Indian.⁹ Euro-Americans, therefore, desired a highly controlled, mass-mediated, and virtual Native presence at the same time that Indigenous peoples were deemed threatening, excessive, savage, and less-than-human. “We are shape-shifters in the national consciousness,” Smith writes, “accidental survivors, unwanted reminders of disagreeable events.”¹⁰

Historically, it has perhaps been better to be represented in some way, however problematic and contradictory, than to remain invisible, a body that did not register in any important way in the national imagination. Filmic images, taken alongside the range of other visual artifacts circulating in the twentieth century, therefore instilled some “life” through recognition and presence on the virtual reservation as moving pictures (in the sense of film’s affective economy and its ability to animate communities that non-Indians perceived as dying or dead) for Native people who were considered doomed, defeated, vanished, or ghostly. This was particularly true in the early-cinema period when Indigenous-themed films were often set in the present, even as they simultaneously operated to homogenize very distinct tribal communities and portrayed tribal peoples along a “savage-noble” continuum.

Filmic images provided a kind of shield that protected Native American spectators from the burden of representation that would have forced them to lay bare often-private cultural practices (practices that for many were already marginalized within a marginalized field that privileged Southwestern and Plains Indian cultural identities as an Indigenous norm). While Native American spectators ambiguously empathized and identified with the caricatured portraits of Native Americans onscreen, these images flagged a broader, offscreen reality by the mere fact of their existence. They took some pressure off individuals to explain “Indian culture” to people who would have had a hard time understanding experiences that fell outside the hegemonic images of stereotyped Native Americans. The “reelism” of film resides in its ability to function as a placeholder: as a representational practice it does not mirror reality but can enact important cultural work as an art form with ties to the world of everyday practices and the imaginative sphere of the possible.

The very thing that makes early twentieth-century filmic Native American images so offensive to contemporary sensibilities was,

ironically, what made them relatively unproblematic, even perhaps comforting, for spectators who were offered few alternative mass media self-representations. They could be visible in a culture that invested in the rhetoric of the vanishing Indian, given the western film genre's ubiquity and excessive, if highly vexed, attention to Native Americans. They could also remain anonymous behind the screen that the stereotypical images offered. These seemingly contradictory desires—to be both visible in a nation that had already written Native America's obituary and to be hidden from further violence in the face of overwhelming ignorance by non-Indians—coalesced around an understanding, through the liminal, physical space of the cinema, of Native American identity as a placeholder for visual sovereignty. This space could simultaneously screen some issues of importance to Native people as creative engagement rather than sociological effect and could connect with the critical work of sovereignty and decolonization that occurs offscreen (and often in spite of Hollywood).

Acknowledgments

This book would not have been possible without the generosity, encouragement, good humor, and support of a legion of colleagues, friends, and family. I have been truly blessed to bring this project to completion under the guidance of such wonderful people and I am eternally grateful. I am indebted to so many that it is difficult to single out individuals and I apologize to those whose names I have not included. I am fortunate to be a member of a collegial and supportive academic department. The English department at the University of California, Riverside (UCR) has consistently and unflaggingly challenged and encouraged this project. Sincere and humble thanks to Katherine Kinney—who served as a steadfast, skillful, and compassionate chair—and to Susan Brown, Kathleen Carter, Tina Feldman, Linda Nellany, and Cindy Redfield, staff members who make good things happen. UCR has been an intellectually rigorous and inspiring place from which to write this book. Special thanks to my wonderful and exceptional mentors, colleagues, and friends at UCR, many of whom graciously read chapters of this book and who all provided inspiration, support, and sagacity: Geoff Cohen, Stephen Cullenberg, Jennifer Doyle, Lan Duong, Erica Edwards, Keith Harris, Katherine Kinney, Monte Kugel, Molly McGarry, Dylan Rodríguez, Freya Schiwy, Andrea Smith, Cliff Trafzer, and Jonathan Walton. My most appreciative thanks to the brilliant members of my writing groups, who generously read and commented on versions of this book and encouraged me to continue when my enthusiasm for this project flagged: Amalia Cabezas, Tammy Ho, Jodi Kim, Tiffany Lopez, Vorriss Nunley, Jacqueline Shea Murphy, Setsu Shigematsu, and Traise Yamamoto. To Lindon

Barrett, whose laughter, intelligence, and subversiveness I miss terribly. I am fortunate, also, to work with so many wonderful and engaged students in the English department and with members of the Native American Student Program at UCR who constantly encourage me to be a better scholar and person.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to many friends and colleagues who graciously read draft chapters, fielded frantic questions, helped refine my arguments, and produced the work that served as inspiration for this book. This list could stretch on endlessly but includes: Chad Allen, Berta Benally, Susan Bernardin, Blackfire (Clayson, Jeneda, and Klee Benally), Bill Brown, Dorothy Christian, Charlotte Cote, Denise Cummings, Thirza Cuthand, Philip Deloria, Anna Everett, Chris Eyre, Peter X. Feng, Christie Firtha, Stephanie Fitzgerald, Sandy Franks, Faye Ginsburg, Rayna Green, Alex Halkin, Sabine Haenni, Joanna Hearne, LeAnne Howe, Shari Huhndorf, Iglookik Isuma Productions, Jim Kreines, Daphne Lamothe, Shannon Leonard, Diana Linden, Carolyn Linn, James Luna, Joe Mancha, Elise Marubbio, David Martinez, Bunny McBride, Kathleen McHugh, Melinda Micco, Muriel Miguel, Rick Monture, Deborah Nelson, Shelley Niro, Chon Noriega, Eve Oishi, Michelle Olson, Kim Orlijan, Patricia Ploesch, Yeidy Rivero, Juana Rodriguez, Jeff Rhyne, Rob Schmidt, Audra Simpson, Jacqueline Stewart, Theresa Tensuan Eli, Jennifer Tilton, Gerald Vizenor, Robert Allen Warrior, Missy Whiteman, and Pamela Wilson. Michael Tsosie deserves a special note of thanks for hours logged as a brilliant interlocutor and best friend. He gave me the gift of laughter with his irreverent and acerbic wit when I needed it most. Thanks, too, to the hundreds of people who generously reached out to my family with support, love, prayers, and advice in November 2008 when collective local concerns about Thanksgiving costumes became national news.

This book owes its existence to the courageous Native American filmmakers and actors who participated in films from the silent

era to the present and to their descendants. Thanks, especially, to Steve Smith, Heather Chorre Garcia, Shari Holland, Jean Archambaud Moore, Galina Mala Liss, Ted Mala Jr., and Ted Mala Sr. for generously sharing stories about and images of their relatives. My gratitude is also extended to the present and future producers of Indigenous media who continue to challenge and shape representations of Native people.

Gary Dunham deserves heartfelt thanks for believing in this project from its onset. I have been blessed with an astute and dedicated editor at the University of Nebraska Press, Matthew Bokovoy, who was encouraging and honest, thoughtful and rigorous. His unflagging support of the project and expertise is very much appreciated, as has been the assistance of Elisabeth Chretien and Ann Baker at the University of Nebraska Press. Ann Harrington, the press copyeditor assigned to this project, was also patient and thorough in her attention to this book. Thanks, too, to the anonymous press readers who reviewed the manuscript and provided incisive comments.

I am indebted to the Center for Ideas and Society and to the Academic Senate at UCR for providing me with fellowship awards and to UCLA's Institute of American Cultures/American Indian Studies Program for awarding me a postdoctoral fellowship, all of which enabled me to complete this work. The remarkable and energetic staff and archivists at the following research centers and libraries were also incredibly helpful in guiding me to invaluable archival sources and images: the Abbe Museum, the Autry National Center of the American West, the Braun Research Library at the Southwest Museum, the British Film Institute, the British Museum, the Denver Public Library, the Gary L. Friedman Archives, Marc Wanamaker/Bison Archives, the Margaret Herrick Library at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the Motion Picture Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division at the Library of Congress, the National Archives

and Records Administration in Riverside and Washington DC, the Robert and Frances Flaherty Study Center, the Tomás Rivera Library at UCR, and the Yakima Valley Libraries.

My deepest appreciation is reserved for my family. Without them, this book would not have been possible. Although my mother did not live to see this book to its completion, her love of westerns inspired it, and she taught me that although film representations of Native Americans were disconnected from reality, they were nevertheless important. I like to think she would have seen herself in the pages of this book. Her sister always believed I would write this book and I cherish her fierce support. My father's passion for reading has always been infectious, and my brothers' generosity of spirit has always been unwavering. Lastly, words can never express my gratitude to Amar Raheja, unflagging source of strength, integrity, and patience. But, most of all, this book owes everything to my daughters for their love, courage, joy, and humor.