

# 「所有」からの解放に向けて Looking Beyond Property 被写体としてのアメリカ先住民 Native Americans and Photography

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Ron Howard's movie Western called *The Missing* (2003) features a deformed Indian villain who uses photography both as a means for enslaving young white women and as the visual evidence that he owns them. Played by German/Innuït actor Eric Schweig, the figure of Pesh-Chidin, also called “El Brujo” or the witchdoctor, is an Apache leader in 1880s New Mexico, the period and area of the famous rebellions of real-life Apache leader Geronimo. But in contrast to Geronimo, who resisted relocation to a reservation, Pesh-Chidin attacks white settlements in order to take white girls and women and sell them into slavery in Mexico. The Indian witchdoctor employs photos to record and identify his acquisitions, but also as trophies of his successful raids. As part of his “savage” costume, Pesh-Chidin actually wears photos of his victims pinned to his clothing. In this way *The Missing* is a fantasy inversion of history, since it was in fact whites who appropriated Indian land and labor and then surrounded themselves with nostalgic photos of a supposedly vanishing people as visual tokens of their domination.

This imaginary inversion of the historic power relations governing Indian and non-Indian relations is, to be sure, a colonialist fantasy of self-legitimizing displacement—whites did not use photography to exploit Indians, Indians used photography to exploit whites! But why, at this

particular moment, would a Hollywood film represent a scenario in which non-Indians occupy a position of subordination in relationship to the photographic image that has historically been occupied by Indians?

One explanation for this is that some aspects of the visual relations of power that have long characterized Indian life have recently become relatively more widespread among non-Indians. Of course important differences remain and we must guard against an easy collapsing of the two very different contexts, and yet, in ways that recall Indian experiences of photography, many studies of culture under globalization suggest that visual images increasingly help determine the construction of social reality for large numbers of people. Cultural critic Fredric Jameson, for example, has famously argued that postmodern people “are condemned to seek History by way of our own pop images and simulacra of that history, which itself remains forever out of reach.”<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in his study of “the rise of the network society,” sociologist Manuel Castells argues that the contemporary moment is defined by what he calls “real virtuality,” “a system in which reality itself (that is, people’s material/symbolic existence) is entirely captured, fully immersed in a virtual image setting, in the world of make believe, in which appearances are not just on the screen through which experience is communicated, but they become the experience.”<sup>2</sup> Finally, according to radical geographer David Harvey, postmodern capitalism depends upon “the commodification of images of the most ephemeral sort” which, as a result, increasingly become the source of personal and collective identities. Postmodern subjects are like the replicants from the film *Blade Runner* whose memories are actually simulacra implanted by their creators and supported by simulated family photos. In Harvey’s account, these replicants, for whom “photographs are now construed as evidence of a real history, no matter what the truth of that history may have been,” serve as allegories for contemporary subjects bombarded with commercial images that threaten to displace other kinds of

representations.<sup>3</sup>

All of these accounts of how images tend to dominate the construction of history and identity under globalization recall earlier and ongoing contexts in which photography partly functioned as a means for colonizing Indian peoples. Consciously or not, non-Indians mobilized photographs in order to remake social reality and replace oppositional historical memories with images that supported white domination of Indians. Photographs of captured or defeated rebel Indians criminalized their resistance to colonization and symbolically policed them by depicting them in military custody. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, photography played a central role in the work of the Indian boarding schools where children were often forcibly separated from their families and communities and remade in line with white norms and expectations. Photographs literally formed a part of the financial base for the “civilizing” work of such institutions since they raised funds by circulating to donors paired photos of Indian children fresh from home and in native dress, on the one hand, and of the same children in white clothes and hairstyles on the other. Indigenous self-representations were further threatened by the practice of photographing sacred ceremonies and rituals. In some cases such photos were used as evidence to prove that Indian groups had violated state efforts to outlaw particular dances. In other cases non-Indian photographers have threatened sacred Indian practices by reproducing and selling images of them, which partly explains why many contemporary Indian communities in the United States proscribe photography in many contexts. And finally, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present, a mass of romantic, decontextualized photos and films, for which the ubiquitous images of Edward Curtis are but the tip of a vast iceberg, have dominated the visual field and marginalized alternative images. To the extent that such images have lodged themselves in the consciousness of many non-Indians they have been “construed as evidence of a real history, no matter what the truth of that history may have been.” Which is to say

that the incessant circulation of an immense quantity of mainstream images represents an early and particularly influential form of “real virtuality” that partly displaced Indian-made images, including critical depictions of white settler colonialism and alternative images of Indian history, identity, and sovereignty.

Because the construction of social reality through images has had a more or less direct effect upon the survival of Indian peoples, Indian artists and intellectuals have grappled with how to respond to ongoing histories of colonialist representations and how to use visual technologies in support of Indian communities. And while I will briefly discuss several critics and artists—and, in a longer study, could discuss many more—in what follows I focus in particular on Hopi filmmaker, photographer, and cultural critic Victor Masayesva Jr. Masayesva is perhaps best known for his remarkable documentary *Imagining Indians*, which takes a creative, critical look at images of Indians in Hollywood films and Indian responses to them.<sup>4</sup> But he is also a remarkable photographer, as represented in his recently published collection of photographs and critical essays, *Husk of Time*.<sup>5</sup> In these works, I will argue, Masayesva, like several other artists and critics, draws attention to the ways in which dominant photographic traditions view Indian subjects as imaginative forms of property. Commercial photographs of Indians not only naturalize the representation of Indians as property but they also help to make such representations desirable and affectively compelling for non-Indian viewers and consumers in ways that reinforce the material dispossession and exploitation of Indian peoples. By contrast, Masayesva represents a Hopi temporality that, in its vast historical sweep, undermines ideologies of domination by bringing into relief the relatively brief and tenuous time span of capitalist imperialism in the Americas. Moreover, Masayesva's art and criticism counter the view of Indians as property while his own photographs are addressed to Hopi audiences and thus help construct an “Indian gaze” that has been largely

excluded from mainstream contexts. And ultimately, as members of groups who have long struggled with the power of images to shape social reality, Indian artist-intellectuals such as Masayesva have important knowledge to share about how to survive in an empire of images.

### **Imagining Indians as Property: Settler Colonial Photography and Indian Responses**

Historically in the United States, photography has framed Indian land and people as property. This is in part because a settler-colonial structure of feeling with presumed proprietary rights over Indian land, labor and culture has powerfully shaped the mass mediation of Indians, from early photos and films to contemporary digital images. Following Masayesva's analysis in his photo essay titled "Portraits and Landscapes," I argue that the two most common photographic styles for representing Indian subjects—portraits and landscape—have reinforced and imaginatively extended a possessive investment by non-Indians in Indian labor and land respectively. In the case of land, in a longer work one could show how landscape paintings, photographs, and films have helped make Indian land imaginatively available to an imperial gaze. Such images have helped justify Indian dispossession at the same time as they have invited non-Indian viewers to indulge in the desire to imaginatively possess a landscape by surveying it at a glance.

But since relatively more is known about the history of Indian land dispossession than the appropriation of Indian bodies and labor, in what follows I focus especially on the legacies of Indian slavery in visual culture. In many ways Indian slavery is central to U.S. history, particularly in the west. During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, first under Spanish, then Mexican, and ultimately U.S. rule, the slave markets of New Mexico and California sold thousands of Utes, Paiutes and Navajos into slavery.

Even after the Civil War technically ended slavery, similar forms of captivity or neo-slavery of different kinds persisted. These would include not only direct labor exploitation but also the forced reservationing of Comanches, Kiowas, Navajos, Apaches and others in the 1860s and 1870s; the transportation of so-called Indian war criminals who were forced to work on prison plantations in Alabama and Florida during the 1870s and 1880s; and finally the forced removal of Indian children from their families and confinement to boarding schools during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>6</sup>

While overlooked in conventional histories of film and photography, Indian slavery and related forms of coercion were in fact part of the material and ideological context that shaped the development of mass media in the U.S. southwest. Emerging roughly in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the development of photography, for instance, coincided with the violent suppression of Indian resistance that reached its nadir with the massacre at Wounded Knee (1891) and the subsequent consolidation of new systems of Indian control or neo-slavery such as prisons, the boarding schools and reservations. Moreover, Los Angeles, home to Hollywood and a center for the production of some of the most widely circulated images of Indians, was partly built by Indian slaves. Between 1850 and 1869, Indians who were arrested for debt and vagrancy, or who were simply kidnapped from other areas, were routinely placed on the auction block in the city's downtown plaza.<sup>7</sup> By the time the earliest Hollywood film westerns were produced, in other words, legal forms of Indian slavery were a living memory for many. In these and other ways, I would argue, histories of Indian enslavement influenced the subsequent framing of Indian film performers and photographic subjects as property.

A good example of how histories of Indian slavery and captivity have informed photographic representations of Indians is the case of Geronimo, perhaps the first Indian celebrity of an emergent U.S. mass media.

Geronimo and his band successfully resisted U.S. efforts to contain them on reservations until 1886, when they were forced to surrender, a scene that was photographed and reproduced in *Harper's Magazine*. The Apaches were even photographed at a stop in the train trip that transported them to prisons in Florida and Alabama, posed in front of the carriage where they traveled under heavy guard and "subhuman" conditions.<sup>8</sup> Once in southern prisons, one-quarter died from disease and overwork. In 1894 they were consigned to the reservation at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, at some distance from their Arizona homes. While so imprisoned, Geronimo was displayed, under armed guard, at various international exhibitions and fairs. In his own account of the St. Louis World's Fair, Geronimo stressed his status as a captive, noting that whereas other visitors "did nothing but parade up and down the streets," his movements were carefully circumscribed by his "keeper" — a term he also used to describe the owner of a performing bear he saw on the midway.<sup>9</sup> His status as both literal prisoner and symbolic property, however, is perhaps best reflected in the numerous, widely disseminated photos of the warrior after his capture. Geronimo is perhaps the most photographically reproduced Indian in the world, most famously in a photo of 1886, taken shortly after his surrender at Fort Sill: a portrait of him kneeling, rifle in hand and flanked by prop cacti. One explanation for the immense popularity of that image has to do with the way in which visual media frame Indians for mass consumption such that, as in this case, the borders of the photo serve as the jail keeper's symbolic surrogate, making Geronimo safe to view because symbolically reservationed to the surface area of an image at the disposal of individual viewers.

As this and many other examples of mass-produced portraits of supposedly conquered or "vanishing" Indians suggest, commercial photography has historically encouraged non-Indian viewers to take pleasure in the prospect of subjugating and even "owning" Indian people. Similarly, early Hollywood film westerns represented Indian captivities,

battles and imprisonments as if to ritually rehearse and reaffirm frontier imperialism and the domination of indigenous peoples. These ritualized forms of imperial spectatorship indirectly helped to reproduce conditions of domination by constituting Indian cultures as property and by encouraging viewers to assume a proprietary relationship to images of Indians. In his essay called “Geronimo!,” about photos of the Apache leader, writer and critic Jimmie Durham (Wolf Clan Cherokee) argues that “All photographs of American Indians are photographs of dead people, in that their *use* assumes ownership of the subject.”<sup>10</sup> The use of photos to imaginatively convert Indians into property is particularly pronounced in the case of mass-produced images of Indians on picture postcards and other popular formats, for such representations made “Indianness” discrete, portable and affordable to own. And although the average spectator could not own a film in the same way, nonetheless they could “rent” images of Indians for the length of a film screening. The very ubiquity, and hence ephemeral nature, of Indian images attest to the privileged orientations that they encourage, constituting such representations as highly disposable property, with a high rate of turnover in commercial markets. Put another way, starting very early in their history and extending into the present, photographs and films have visually reified Indian culture and helped make it available as material for the kind of incessant commodification of images that critics often associate with the contemporary conditions of globalization.

Mass produced photo portraits further encouraged a proprietary relationship to Indian people by simulating intimacy with them. Late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century media images supported an imaginary intimacy with Indian cultures that, while recalling Indian slavery, reproduced ideologies of white supremacy and Indian subjection in novel ways. Laguna writer, critic, and photographer Leslie Marmon Silko argues that imperialist photographers, most famously “voyeurs/vampires like Curtis, Voth, and Vroman,” reinforce white supremacy by freezing Indians in a primitive



and pre-technological past.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, Silko suggests, non-Indian photographers presumed a level of intimacy with Indian rituals and ceremonies that speaks to a sense of white entitlement to property rights over Indian communities: "At first, white men and their camera were not barred from the sacred kachina dances and kiva rites. But soon the Hopis and other Pueblo people learned from experiences that most white photographers attending sacred dances were cheap voyeurs who had no reverence for the spiritual."<sup>12</sup> Because of such aggressive intimacy and the presumption of visual ownership of Indian culture, the photographic record is filled with images of Indian people who appear angry or upset about having their picture taken, or of Indians attempting to avoid having their image captured.<sup>13</sup> Silko concludes that because Pueblo people were acutely aware of "the intimate nature of the photographic image" they ultimately "refus[ed] to allow strangers with cameras the outrages to privacy that had been forced upon Pueblo people in the past." Building upon Silko's claims, I would argue that, complementing the photographer's invasive sense of entitlement, commercial images simulated a sort of virtual intimacy with Indians and their cultures and thereby reinforced the belief that whites had privileged access to, and knowledge of, Indian realities.

Such fantasies, whereby viewers imaginatively get close to Indians and visually "grasp" them, as it were, make historic photos of Indians particularly prominent and pronounced examples of what Walter Benjamin analyzed in his famous essay on "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" as the modern urge "to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction."<sup>14</sup> According to Michael Taussig in his reading of Benjamin, modern photography and film helped make visible what Benjamin called the "physiognomic aspects of visual worlds" or the manner in which new visual technologies effectively blurred the differences between the senses of perception, such that visual images seemed to induce tactile sensations.<sup>15</sup> To paraphrase Taussig for the present

context, photographs of Indians often convey the impression that seeing is another mode of sentient contact, “the gaze grasping where the touch falters.”<sup>16</sup> By stimulating the desire to visually grasp or get a hold of Indians, photographic portraits have often encouraged viewers to combine visual and tactile registers and take sensual pleasure in the imaginary experience of controlling or “owning” Indians.

It is important to remember that the view of Indians that I’m describing is not simply determined by or a function of visual technologies such as photography and film. Rather, I have attempted to suggest the ways in which photography has been linked or “articulated” to larger colonialist ideologies, particularly those that treat Indians and their land as property. Which is also to suggest the possibility that visual technologies could be remobilized in anti-colonialist ways as well. One manner in which Indian writers and critics have done this is by reinterpreting historic photos of Indians in ways that undermine white claims over Indian images. One such method of rereading historic photos is to study how their Indian subjects resisted the dominant conventions of commercial photography and attempted to project a different image of themselves for the camera. In her essay titled “Rosebuds of the Plateau: Frank Matsura and the Fainting Couch Aesthetic,” for example, the Cherokee critic and museum curator Rayna Green analyzes a 1910 photograph of two young Indian women, probably Salish, from the state of Washington. The photo, “Two Girls on a Couch,” was taken by Frank Matsura, a Japanese immigrant to the region about whom very little is known, but Green speculates that his status as Japanese, “at a time of great American prejudice and violence against Asians,” may have given him a particular affinity for his Indian subjects. In any case, the photo depicts two young women, servants who probably worked in the kitchen of a wealthy white household, in front of an ornate painted backdrop, dressed in “white” outfits and reclining on a Victorian couch. One of the women, in particular, catches Green’s eye since she seems

to assert a critical distance from the whole process of being photographed:

She's had it rougher. Maybe the mister in the house where she's a servant has had a go at her (tried to have sex with her). Or she doesn't trust Frank, even though he looks just like some of her people. Or she likes her friend and Frank well enough to pose, but she doesn't buy it, thinks it's for white girls and knows better for herself. She gives it her best, looking right into the camera. But the situation remains confrontational. "I ain't afraid of nothin'...I've seen everything I need to see and more. I'm comfortable, whatever you think." If she lived today she'd wear jeans, shades, and a punky black T-shirt.<sup>17</sup>

Here Green stresses the young women's efforts to control her representation in ways that undermine efforts to see Indians merely as property. Within the limits of the situation, the young woman asserts herself before the camera and, in Green's account, attempts to communicate with other Indians who might recognize and understand her critical distance from the processes of being photographed.

Similarly, in his essay on Geronimo, Jimmie Durham discovers in a photograph of Geronimo the Apache leader's attempts to represent himself for and communicate with Indian audiences in the future. Here Durham examines a photo of Geronimo from 1904, late in his life, seated at the wheel of an early automobile. Driving the most modern of contraptions, Geronimo almost seems to taunt those who would represent him as a part of the quickly vanishing past:

Geronimo, as an Indian "photographic subject," blew out the windows. On his own, he reinvented the concept of photographs of American Indians. And he did so far as he could, concerning pictures of himself, which are so ubiquitous that he must have sought "photo opportunities" as eagerly as the photographers. Yet even when he was "posed" by the man behind the camera, he seems to have destroyed the pose and created his own stance. In every image, he looks through the camera

at the viewer, seriously, intently, with a specific message. Geronimo uses the photograph to “get at” those people who imagine themselves as the “audience” of his struggles. He seems to be trying to see us. He is demanding to be seen, on his own terms.<sup>18</sup>

In these ways critics such as Durham and Green suggest that some Indians who appeared in historic photos were also the active makers of their photographic images and that they in effect posed for and attempted to address Indian audiences. In contrast with images framed as evidence that Indians are a vanishing people, Durham and Green read historic photos as attempts by Indians to communicate across time with Indian viewers they hoped or believed would survive into the future. Seen in this way, such photos enable Indian viewers to construct themselves as an audience and to imagine an indigenous gaze (or gazes)—possibilities largely excluded from dominant contexts where it is assumed that images are addressed only to non-Indian audiences.

### Victor Masayesva and the Hopi Gaze

Victor Masayesva's work is largely dedicated to countering the desire to “own” Indian cultures and promoting Indian sovereignty. As he explains, “Our initiations into adulthood in Native North America are conducted through meters and hand spans of sovereignty. Sovereignty pervades our civic, religious, and economic lives, certainly our lives as artists.” Masayesva's art is pervaded with sovereignty in part because it seeks to preserve and reproduce Indian views of the world. In many cases this may mean, as Fatimah Tobing Rony notes, stressing “the importance of *not* photographing certain subjects, whether profane or sacred.” The Hopi artist's particular form of iconoclasm, in Tobing Rony's account, is part of an effort to oppose the what she calls the “media ‘cannibalization’ of Indians” and to reassert the identity of Indians as sovereign peoples.<sup>19</sup> Masayesva,

for example, describes the motivation for his documentary, *Imagining Indians* (1992) in this way:

Coming from a village which became embroiled in the filming of *Darkwind*, a Hollywood production on the Hopi Reservation, I felt a keen responsibility as a community member, not an individual, to address these impositions on our tribal lives. Even as our communities say no, outsiders are responding to this as a challenge instead of respecting our feelings...I have come to believe that the sacred aspects of our existence which encourage the continuity and vitality of Native peoples are being manipulated by an aesthetic in which money is the most important qualification. This contradicts the values intrinsic to what's sacred and may destroy our substance. I am concerned about a tribal and community future which is reflected in my film and I hope this challenges the viewer to overcome glamorized Hollywood views of the Native American, which obscure the difficult demands of walking the spiritual road of our ancestors.<sup>20</sup>

Thus throughout the film, Masayesva focuses on Indian opposition to cinematic practices and ideologies of white intimacy and ownership, interviewing an Indian electrician on the *Dances with Wolves* set who objects to the film's use of Ghost Dance songs; a Navajo man who criticizes Hollywood's commercialization of the figure of the skinwalker; and Indian activists who oppose the filming of ceremonial objects and sacred places.

In the remaining portions of my essay, however, I want to discuss not Masayesva's films but the photographs and essays collected in *Husk of Time*. He studied photography at Princeton and in the photo essay titled "Portraits and Landscapes," Masayesva tells the story of "the first print I sold to Princeton University," a landscape photo of a woodpile from his backyard in Hoatvela on the Hopi reservation. In his joking prose, the scene is a concrete reality directly perceived by the senses, "with the smell of dog turds and incontinent stink surrounding the woodpile." This is in part because in the Hopi context Masayesva describes, wood is not a

commodity, abstracted from its conditions of production but rather a direct use value visibly embedded in a set of social relations. Or, as he explains, “woodpiles say a lot about the owner. Big-diameter logs mean you have a new son-in-law or you have a new truck with a V-8 engine that can go the distance. Chainsaw-cut logs mean Sally Woods had a truckload sale of illegally cut wood. Boughs and dry branches mean your husband is lost—it’s called no-husband wood.”<sup>21</sup> In contrast to commodity fetishes, which obscure material social relations, Masayesva describes the wood in ways that foreground the social relations in his village while tying it directly to issues of survival, in this case the ability to live through cold Arizona winters.

And yet, while he was a student at Princeton, Masayesva discovered that a photograph of a woodpile could become a commodity, particularly if it was sepia-toned. “Sepia resonates in the minds of non-Indians viewing photographs of Native Americans because it creates a buffer where nostalgia blossoms and dulls the ache resulting from misplaced responsibility for another human race. Sepia removes the subject from this world, and when the subject is safely removed, so is the non-Indian’s accountability. Poverty is burnished with a warm color.”<sup>22</sup> In the case of Indian subjects, visual technologies and techniques such as sepia extend and deepen the experience of commodity fetishism by not only imaginatively abstracting Indians from their social contexts but by further investing that abstraction with the guilt-absolving glow of nostalgic pleasure.

In this account sepia-toned photos of Indian subjects make the very process of commodification, the process of imaginatively distancing Indian peoples from their contemporary conditions of existence and converting them into commodities, both aesthetically pleasing and emotionally satisfying for many non-Indians. As a satiric response to such imagery Masayesva made another sepia-toned photo titled *Arizona Highways* (1979), a picture of a dead dog in an advanced state of decay. With grim humor

Masayesva once again stresses the material realities that make photographs possible, noting that while “it is not immediately apparent that the subject is a reservation dog,” those from the region “will swear the dog was 95 percent fat free, qualifying it as an Indian subject dog.” As he concludes, “This photograph was satirically aimed at the tourist magazine *Arizona Highways*, which singularly has been responsible for nurturing the nostalgic sensibilities of thousands of snowbirds and retirees considering Arizona. Today, conservative non-Indian Arizona still does not see the Indian dog but looks forward to the holiday issue featuring Arizona’s native people.”<sup>23</sup> The fact that, in contrast to the image of the woodpile, this second sepiia photo has not been bought (“I have not had a buyer for this print,” Masayesva writes, “although its borders are nice and fuzzy”) suggests that it self-consciously poses a challenge to the desire of many non-Indians to own “Indianness.”

Similar yet distinct images of death and decay are common in Masayesva’s body of photographic work, including numerous photos incorporating antelope antlers, snakeskins and skeletons, and decomposing birds. From one perspective images of decaying carcasses foreground the material conditions of poverty and destruction disavowed by fetishistic photos of Indians. Recalling *Arizona Highways*, the photo titled “Georgia O’Keeffe (Southwest Bouquet)” [1991] represents several decayed coyote carcasses partly painted over with images of African violets that resemble images by O’Keeffe. Here O’Keeffe’s flowers, which have become ubiquitous in tourist images from the Southwest, fail to hide the starved conditions out of which they have grown, a larger political economy that subordinates and exploits Indian people.

From another perspective such images are what Tobing Rony calls “photo(s) of desiccation” that represent the destructive aspects of cultural appropriation and commodification.<sup>24</sup> And from a final perspective I would argue that Masayesva’s photos use images of death and decay

to represent a Hopi temporality of transformation and change. Or as he writes, “Like photographs whose meanings are evident after exposure onto transparent emulsion, words, tales, and images are the perfect snakeskins for encasing time, which can be sloughed off and regenerated for another season.” Here the snake and the snake skin represent the cycles of life and death that constitute Hopi time, a view of the past with a much vaster scope than in most western, post-Enlightenment perspectives on history. As filmmaker and critic Beverly Singer (Tewa and Navajo) reminds us in her introduction to *Husk of Time*, the Hopi “have lived in their present villages for more than ten centuries. In spite of outside intrusions they have maintained key activities concerned with planting corn, dancing for the plants, and making pilgrimages to special places—little of which appears in Masayesva's photos.” Instead, she argues, “he employs a kind of Einsteinian relativity to manifest what he is thinking about as an indigenous person, particularly life, death, and rebirth as shown in metaphors of things left behind—insect shells, snake skins, deer antlers, cornstalks, burnt trash. Such work is unfamiliar and unnatural to first-time observers, but it offers arresting statements against photography's freezing of things in time.”<sup>25</sup> One consequence of this kind of temporal relativity is to imaginatively undermine the ideologies of white domination and “ownership” of Indian peoples represented in so many mainstream photographs by making visible how, from the expansive Hopi perspective of ten centuries, the period of European control over the Americas is relatively short, contingent, and hence potentially tenuous. When placed in relationship to Hopi history and cosmology, white claims to own Indian land and culture seem insignificant, shortsighted and absurdly hubristic.

By presupposing Hopi cosmology, moreover, Masayesva performs an Indian gaze and addresses an Indian audience. To return to “Portraits and Landscapes,” he begins that photo essay by describing the genesis of his 1982 black and white portrait, “Butterfly Dancer,” in ways that suggest a



critical difference between a proprietary orientation toward photographs of Indian peoples and alternative Indian uses of photography. As Masayesva explains, his father sponsored a Butterfly Dance to celebrate his son's safe return from Vietnam. "Up to that point I had vowed never to be a portraitist in the manner of Edward Curtis and the many more recent photographers for tourist magazines that featured Indians posing in native costumes. Those images represented the epitome of stereotyping to me, and I would have no part of it."<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, he agreed to photograph his aunt, a young girl who had picked one of Masayesva's brothers for her dance partner.

Although it was awkward and imposing, I had taken to a four-by-five-inch camera and thoroughly enjoyed composing on the ground glass underneath the cloth prior to releasing the shutter. The sound of the shutter being released was like a rush of air through wings and appeared in my imagination like a release of time not capturing or freezing a moment of time, despite all the promising Kodak claims. It was like releasing a moment that had been resigned to living in the steady current of time. The sound and the release together had all the appearance of yellow pollen dislodged from plant stems.<sup>27</sup>

Developing this photo makes him reflect on why, despite histories of tourist photography, "Indians love to be photographed in their native costumes." "The stereotyping," he concludes, "is in the eyes of the working ethnographer, while the Indian imagines himself, dressed in his costume, far beyond the moment, given momentum by the pollen release into a future where he or she is alive on his or her own terms."<sup>28</sup> Recalling Green and Durham, Masayesva here projects into the future an Indian gaze and thus asserts, against mainstream absences or images of "vanishing" people, the continued survival and sovereignty of Indian communities.

## Conclusion

Critics of the image under globalization often assume that images are part of a larger totalizing system, with no outside, and which ultimately reinforces the destructive aspects of capitalism. In ways that express a fairly widespread critical attitude toward images shared by certain Marxists intellectuals in the U.S., particularly those influenced by the Frankfurt School's famous critique of the so-called "culture industry," David Harvey has argued that image production and circulation is one of the main engines of contemporary global capitalism.

Given the ability to produce images as commodities more or less at will, it becomes feasible for accumulation to proceed at least in part on the basis of pure image production and marketing. The ephemerality of such images can then be interpreted in part as a struggle on the part of the oppressed groups of whatever sort to establish their own identity (in terms of street culture, musical styles, fads and fashions made up for themselves) and the rush to convert those innovations to commercial advantage...The effect is to make it seem as if we are living in a world of ephemeral created images.<sup>29</sup>

Although Harvey describes a "struggle" over images between oppressed groups and capitalists, he represents it as a futile one for the oppressed in which capitalists always win in the end. This is implied not only by the narrative arc of the passage cited above but also by the larger trajectory of his argument. Here and elsewhere in *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Harvey seems unable or unwilling to imagine an engagement with or production of images that does not ultimately and seemingly inevitably feed capitalist exploitation.

While the Indian artists and intellectuals I have analyzed are similarly concerned with the destructive effects of commercial image-making, they differ from critics of globalization in revealing ways. For them, precisely

because powerful social realities are constructed out of visual images it is politically important for Indian peoples to both critically analyze existing images and make critical counter images. As Masayesva suggests, not all images are made with buyers in mind but with an eye to reproducing Indian identity and by addressing Indian audiences across time. For Masayesva and others, Indians cannot afford to stand aloof from the world of images, for survival and sovereignty may depend upon them.

## Notes

1. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 25.
2. Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, volume I, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 404.
3. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1990), 287-9, 312.
4. Victor Masayesva Jr., *Imagining Indians* (1992). Available on DVD from Documentary Educational Resources, <http://www.der.org/films/imagining-indians.html>
5. Victor Masayesva, Jr., *Husk of Time: The Photographs of Victor Masayesva* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2005).
6. The information in this paragraph is synthesized from Jack Forbes, *The Indian in America's Past* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964); Curtis Marez, "Signifying Spain, Becoming Comanche, Making Mexicans: Indian Captivity and the History of Chicana/o Popular Performance," *American Quarterly* 53 no. 2 (2001): 267-307.
7. Forbes, *The Indian in America's Past*.
8. Frederick Turner, "Introduction," Geronimo, *Geronimo, His Own Story: The Autobiography of a Great Patriot Warrior*, as told to S.M. Barrett (New York: Meridian, 1996 [1901]).
9. Geronimo, *Geronimo, His Own Story*, 155-62.
10. Jimmie Durham, "Geronimo!," *Partial Recall: Essays on Photographs of Native North Americans*, ed. Lucy Lippard (New York: The New Press, 1992), 56.
11. Leslie Marmon Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 184.
12. Silko, *Yellow Woman*, 176.

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21. Masayeva, "Portraits and Landscapes," *Husk of Time*, 10.
22. *Ibid.*, 8.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Tobing Rony, "Victor Masayeva, Jr., and the Politics of *Imagining Indians*," 24.
25. Beverly Singer, "Introduction," *Husk of Time*, xvi-xvii.
26. Masayeva, "Portraits and Landscapes," 5.
27. *Ibid.*, 6.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 289.