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Book Review: Edward S. Curtis: The Women

Clara Sue Kidwell

University of Oklahoma

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Edward S. Curtis: The Women. By Christopher Cardozo. Foreword by Louise Erdrich. Introduction by Anne Makepeace. New York: Bulfinch Press, 2005. 127 pp. Photographs, plate list. \$35.00.

Beyond the Reach of Time and Change: Native American Reflections on the Frank A. Rinehart Photograph Collection. Edited by Simon J. Ortiz. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004. xii + 172 pp. Photographs, index of illustrations. \$50.00 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

Photographs by Edward Curtis have been widely reproduced, and Christopher Cardozo's selection is distinctive only because all of the subjects are women. Cardozo's text gives a brief biography of Curtis and is highly laudatory of Curtis's ability to establish relationships with his subjects. The reproduction of the photos is disappointingly muddy, an effect that emphasizes the sense that the photos are of significant age. It does not capture the extraordinary qualities of clarity, depth, and luminosity that characterize Curtis's originals (although per-

haps it would be impossible to reproduce those qualities except from Curtis's glass plate negatives).

The photographs of Frank A. Rinehart have not been widely reproduced in contemporary publications. Rinehart was the official photographer of the Indian Congress at the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition in Omaha in 1898, but beyond this fact we learn nothing of his life or his place in the history of photography. The value of the book is that the images serve as inspiration for the reflections of a number of Native authors. The images do not speak for themselves. They are carefully posed and stylized studio portraits characteristic of the "vanishing Indian" school of photography. The brief essay by Simon Ortiz that begins the text speaks to the way a photo can convey a sense of immediacy with the past, or, as Ortiz says, "history is right now." The essays are very personal responses to the significance of photos in the lives of contemporary Native people. Geary Hobson writes about the absence of photos of his Quapaw ancestors as an erasure of their identity. Laura Tohe writes about herself as the subject of tourist photographs at the Gallup Ceremonial when she was a child. Some essays are written from a historical perspective. Ted Jojola comments on photos from the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 as a form of exoticizing Natives, particularly the Igorot of the Philippines.

The writers of the essays imbue the photos with their own senses of meaning, and their words are by turns informative, evocative, and challenging. The synergy between the photos and the authors gives the book greater meaning than just a collection of short essays or a collection of striking Indian portraits. It opens new ways of seeing images.

CLARA SUE KIDWELL
Native American Studies Program
University of Oklahoma