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Edward S. Curtis in Context

Who was Edward Curtis, and what did he hope to achieve by publishing the twenty volume set, *The North American Indian*? What was his background, and what were the cultural influences affecting his understanding of the various tribes he sought to document? How was he viewed by his contemporaries in academia, government, and the public? How has the reputation of his work fared in the seventy years since completion of his work? How has he been viewed by Indians then and today? Developed in consultation with an Advisory Board of educators and researchers in American Indian culture, the resources provided in this Special Presentation can help to answer these questions. While consulting online reproductions of the images and captions themselves, the user can look up facts on a Curtis timeline and view a map depicting locations of the various tribal groups when they were photographed by Curtis. Accompanying essays discuss how Curtis worked, what his work has meant to Native peoples of North America, and how he promoted the view dominant in the early twentieth century, that American Indians were becoming a "vanishing race."

Curtis

Biographical Time Line for Edward S. Curtis



Edward S. Curtis (1868-1952) and The North American Indian

<u>Vanishing Race -</u> <u>Navaho</u>

The Myth of the Vanishing Race



Edward Curtis: Pictorialist and Ethnographic Adventurist

Map of North
American Indians as
Witnessed by Edward
S. Curtis

North American Indians as Witnessed by Edward S. Curtis

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Biographical Time Line for Edward S. Curtis

- 1868 Curtis is born in Whitewater, Wisconsin, and grows up near Cordova, Minnesota.
- 1887 Curtis moves to Washington territory with his father.
- 1891 Curtis buys into, and later owns a photographic studio in Seattle, and develops a reputation for portraits and landscapes.
- 1895 Curtis meets and photographs Princess Angeline, the daughter of Chief Sealth.
- 1898 On Mount Rainier, Curtis meets a group of scientists, including noted anthropologist George Bird Grinnell and C. Hart Merriam
- 1899 Based on his acquaintance with C. Hart Merriam, Curtis is appointed official photographer for the Harriman Alaska Expedition.
- 1900 Curtis accompanies George Bird Grinnell to the Piegan Reservation in northwest Montana to photograph the Sun Dance ceremony.
- 1903 Chief Joseph visits the Curtis studio and has his portrait taken.
- 1904 President Theodore Roosevelt invites Curtis to photograph his children after seeing Curtis' winning photograph in "The Prettiest Children in American" contest published in *Ladies' Home Journal*.
 - Louisa Satterlee, daughter-in-law of financier J. P. Morgan, purchases Curtis photographs at an exhibit in New York City.
- 1906 Curtis secures funds from J. P. Morgan for the field work to produce a twenty volume illustrated text American Indians, to be completed in five years.
- 1907 First volume of *The North American Indian* is published, with a foreword by Theodore Roosevelt.
- 1912 After 5 years, only part of the project (8 volumes) is completed
- 1913 J.P. Morgan dies, but his son decides to continue funding *The North American Indian* until finished.
- 1914 Curtis releases *In the Land of the Head-Hunters*, a motion picture depicting the "primal life" of Northwest Coast Indians.
- 1915 With 10 volumes of *The North American Indian* published, U.S. enters World War I. Interest in the project subsides, delaying publication of additional volumes for the next six years.
- 1916 Clara Curtis files for divorce; the divorce was finalized in 1919.
- 1920 With his daughter, Beth, Curtis moves photography studio from Seattle to Los Angeles. Curtis finances fieldwork by working in his studio and in Hollywood as a still photographer and movie camera operator for major studios.
- 1927 Curtis' Alaska trip culminates three decades of fieldwork.
- 1930 Last volume of *The North American Indian* is published.
- 1935 Materials remaining from *The North American Indian* project, including photogravure plates, are sold to the Charles Lauriat Company, a rare book dealer in Boston. Curtis turns his attention to gold-mining and farming.

1952 Curtis dies in Los Angeles.

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Two Strike

Edward S. Curtis (1868-1952) and The North American Indian*

By Mick Gidley Professor of American Literature, School of English, University of Leeds, England January, 2001

When the Spanish conquistadors appeared on their horizons in the sixteenth century, elders of the Hopi people advanced to greet the soldiers in the belief that the Spaniards were representatives of their long lost white brother. Contacts between whites and Indians like this--together with encounters which proved bloody from the start, such as with the Comanches of the southern plains--brought North American Indian peoples into the consciousness of Europeans, and into the consciousness of those Europeans who, through the formative experiences associated with migration across seas and settlement in strange lands, became white Americans. The whites at once started to mythologize: the Indians who helped the Mayflower settlers survive their first winter in the New World became noble savages, those who threatened Captain John Smith with execution became bloodthirsty villains, and those who exchanged Manhattan Island for a few beads and trinkets became both fools and benefactors. I am, of course, oversimplifying a long and painful history of the construction of what one scholar, Robert Berkhofer, has called "the white man's Indian," a history upon which much important commentary has been produced.

In essence, many different peoples speaking hundreds of distinct languages and living according to a vast variety of cultural patterns in environments ranging from sunken deserts to tropical swamps, from wooded mountains to bone bare plains, were remade into one complex but composite image: *the* Indian. And during the period of most rapid expansion westwards in the nineteenth century, though particular tribes were singled out for public acknowledgement in that their names--Sioux, Cheyenne, Apache, Nez Percé--became bywords for savage fighting (or, at best, resistance), the individual qualities of the cultures of these and other distinctly different peoples became further fused, subsumed into the one overwhelming myth of the Indian, invariably a painted plainsman about to swoop with bloodcurdling yells onto an unsuspecting wagon train of sturdy yeomen wanting only to start a new life. Moreover, as all who have watched films and television can testify, such imagery has dominated the mainstream (white) consciousness until very recently.

But when the seeming white brother appeared on the mesas of Arizona in the sixteenth century, the Hopi had been expecting him for hundreds of years. That is, they had an extensive history quite their own, and a corresponding literature. Indeed, all of the Indian peoples--however much the coming of horses and other later imports affected the bases of their cultures--had a history, a religion, a system of government, social customs, handicrafts, and myths and songs of their own which predated the coming of white people among them. Edward Sheriff Curtis' *The North American Indian* was a truly magnificent effort to record a vast amount of very many of these aboriginal cultures. Published between 1907 and 1930 in twenty volumes of illustrated text and twenty portfolios containing more than seven hundred large-sized photogravures, *The North American Indian*, which was issued in a very limited edition and sold rather expensively on a subscription basis, contains millions of words: descriptions of homelands; accounts of religious beliefs that some might find strange; accounts of tribal organizations ranging from the aristocratic to the casually democratic; records of ceremonies so subtle in their significance, or so seemingly bizarre, that an alien eyewitness could easily not understand what it all meant; versions of haunting myths, songs and stories; descriptions of domestic chores and of intricate and skilled arts

and hunting practices; and heroic tales of arms and men. In short. *The North American Indian* is a monument in words and pictures to a range of cultures which most white men could not or would not see.

Early Life and Influences

It is also a monument to the zeal and stamina of its primary producer, Edward S. Curtis. Curtis was born in Wisconsin, grew to early manhood near Cordova, Minnesota, and came of age in the environs of Seattle, Washington. The Curtis family, led by Edward's father, Johnson, were part of the great westward migration in search of a better life. In 1855, when Chief Sealth--from whom the city of Seattle took its name--surrendered the Puget Sound region, he is supposed to have said in his address to Governor Isaac Stevens, "When the last Red Men shall have perished, and the memory of my tribe shall have become a myth among the white man, these shores will swarm with the invisible dead of my tribe, and when your children's children think themselves alone in the field, the store, the shop, or in the silence of the pathless woods, they will not be alone." During Curtis' youth Seattle was a frontier town, confident, heaving and building, yet still in fact frequented by some few dispossessed Coastal Salish Indians, including Princess Angeline, Chief Sealth's daughter. Seattle was also a port, and the combination of frontier city and the opening to the sea presented the energetic young Curtis, who had already learnt photography, with opportunities for both advancement and travel. He was quick, for example, to follow and report on the hardships which befell the prospectors who joined the gold rush to the Klondike in 1897.

There was much business--and much which held interest--for a Pacific Northwest photographer at the turn of the century, as is evidenced by the rapid growth of portrait studios and the commercial exploitation of the medium by local industries--including, to give just one example, the documentation of logging by Darius Kinsey. By 1892, Curtis was a partner in a portrait and photoengraving business, and went on to make his own studio, acquired soon afterwards, the portrait venue in the city. His favorite subjects beyond the confines of the studio were Mount Rainier, city scenes, and, increasingly, local Indians. Curtis kept abreast of national, even international, trends in photography--and in the visual arts more generally--and his early writings for Seattle magazines reveal that he absorbed much from Pictorialism in photography, including the example of Alfred Stieglitz, the founder of the Photo-Secession. He took what he had learnt into the field with him, and we can see this even in his depictions of nearby indigenous folk, people Curtis seems to have considered as decadent and lost. They were struggling for survival on the outskirts of the city, many sported their hair short and wore so-called "citizen's dress" rather than traditional costumes, but in Curtis' "picturesque genre studies" of them, they appear still and timeless against the sunset. Several such pictures, including one of Angeline digging clams, began to win prizes in competitions.

In later life Curtis liked to tell a story of how, when out climbing and photographing on Mount Rainier, he rescued a stranded party of travelers that turned out to be a group of leading scientists. It is more likely that the rescue, if such it was, took place during one of the expeditions he led for the Mazamas, a Portland-based mountaineering club. Among the group was George Bird Grinnell, editor of the sporting journal *Forest and Stream* who was also an authority on Indians. It was probably through Grinnell, who befriended him, that Curtis was appointed Official Photographer to the Harriman Alaska Expedition of 1899. Curtis had had very little formal education, so he assimilated much from the evening ship-board lectures delivered during the voyage. In the course of this survey of the Alaskan coast, though Curtis was impressed by the leader, C. Hart Merriam, and by the conservationist John Muir, the influence on him of Grinnell deepened and he agreed to accompany the older man on his annual visit to the Piegan people of Montana the following year.

In the course of the Sun Dance ceremonies--rituals of pain willingly suffered "for strength and visions"--that he witnessed during the visit, Curtis appears to have experienced a sense of mystical communion with the Indians, and out of it, together with Grinnell's tutelage and

Vanishing race - Navaho
Vanishing race - Navaho

further experience in the Southwest, came his developing conception of a comprehensive written and photographic record of the most important Indian peoples west of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers who still, as he later put it, retained "to a considerable degree their primitive customs and traditions." Curtis seems to have held to a varying but always paradoxical racial ideology. In part, like most white men of his day, he believed that when measured against the doctrine of "the survival of the fittest" the Indians were revealed as unadaptable, even inferior, and thus he could cast down judgements as if from superiority, as he does, for instance, when he says "no single noble trait redeems the Kwakiutl character." In part, however, he agreed with the established policy of the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, that Indians could not survive unless they forfeited traditional lifeways and adapted to the mores of the dominant culture; indeed, they should be made to adapt. Yet again, perhaps because of his aesthetic--even religious--appreciation of the attractions of traditional Indian cultures, Curtis also regretted and elegized the Indians' passing, and chose "The Vanishing Race"--his view of some Navajos entering a canyon, one head turned to look regretfully back--as the keynote picture for The North American Indian. And this complex of views did not remain stable: in later years, partly as a result of stories he heard about California settlers' mistreatment of Indians, Curtis grew to respond to his government's policy towards Indians--which he then saw not as inevitable but chosen--with fierce anger (as may be witnessed in his 1924 preface to Volume 13 of The North American Indian).

In hindsight--in the light of the emergence of pan-Indian political movements (including the American Indian Movement), the vitality of Native American literature and arts, and other subsequent manifestations of what some have termed "Red Consciousness"--Curtis was undoubtedly too pessimistic in feeling that Indians had no definable future as Indians. Like so many others, he simply did not grant that an abiding sense of identity may persist through all sorts of cultural change; indeed, dynamic cultural change, if at variable speeds, is an aspect of the human condition. At the same time, Curtis was certainly correct in his judgement that he was living at a time that was the last possible one for many memories to be recorded (such as those of Hunts to Die, who passed on much Apsaroke or Crow lore for inclusion in *The North American Indian*) and for many images to be captured by his magic box (such as the faces of figures like Little Wolf and Red Cloud or the celebration of fading ceremonies like that of placating the spirit of a slain eagle). Although married, and with a growing family, Curtis embarked on a task that lasted thirty years, that took him in heat and snow to the remoter regions of a continent, and to which he frequently devoted over seventeen hours a day.

The North American Indian Project

Despite the local success of his studio, popular exhibitions, lantern slide lectures, and contracts for magazine articles, by 1905 Curtis had run out of funds for the expanding Indian "series." But his photographs had attracted national attention. President Theodore Roosevelt employed him to take both his official Inauguration views and his daughter's wedding pictures. Other national figures also patronized him. Then financier J. Pierpont Morgan, out of his virtually uncountable fortune, agreed to subsidize the field work for *The North American Indian* by granting the capital to set up a company, The North American Indian, Inc. In return, Morgan was to have several sets of the completed work for his own use and Curtis was to take on the task not only of producing the work, but also of selling subscriptions to it. Over time, this arrangement was to prove something of a treadmill for Curtis, but it did enable a major project-perhaps the largest anthropological project ever--to be undertaken. It was always a more *collective* project than has often been granted. While Curtis was the leader and figurehead, and while the publicity for the enterprise often stressed his personal role as an intrepid Westerner venturing among wild, mysterious, even hostile, peoples, camera and six-gun at the ready, the Morgan money actually enabled a changing *team* to be created.

Frederick Webb Hodge, one of the period's leading authorities on Indians (he was then compiling the standard *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*, completed in 1910), agreed to edit the volumes. William E. Myers, a former newspaperman, became the single most important recruit.

In later years Curtis frequently expressed his indebtedness to Myers' gift for languages and his ethnological assistance, but he did not publicly disclose that Myers was in fact the person responsible for the bulk of both the research and the *writing* of each succeeding volume of *The North American Indian*. Other ethnological assistants were employed, including Curtis' nephew by marriage, William Washington Phillips, Edmund A. Schwinke, Edwin J. Dalby and, on Myers' resignation ahead of the final two volumes, Stewart C. Eastwood. The field team of regular assistants was often augmented by valuable Indian helpers, including A. B. Upshaw, a Crow who had been educated at the Carlisle Indian School, George Hunt, who had also worked for Franz Boas and other ethnologists of the Northwest Coast, and such lesser-known figures as Sojero, a Tewa-speaking Pueblo, and Paul Ivanoff, who acted as interpreter among some of the so-called Eskimo groups along the Alaskan coast. President Roosevelt himself wrote a foreword in which he praised Curtis' powers of observation, both of external facts and of what he termed "that strange spiritual and mental life" of his subjects.

It was with such support that Curtis set out to create The North American Indian as a major production. At the same time, he was compelled also to tout for subscriptions on the Eastern seaboard. His extraordinary egotism and ambition for "the work," as he called it, enabled him repeatedly, despite extreme difficulties in selling subscriptions (only 227 were ever sold), to return to the field with optimistic vigor, sometimes accompanied by members of his family, sometimes by such notables as Edmond S. Meany, historian of Washington State, or A. C. Haddon, virtual founder in Britain of anthropology as an academic discipline. He caught thousands of images, mounted an elaborate "musicale" or "picture-opera" at Carnegie Hall and other venues, and even made a film--In the Land of the Head-Hunters (1914)--which in some respects anticipates Robert Flaherty's conception of narrative documentary in Nanook of the North (1920). (In passing, I should say that during the 1920s, in Hollywood, Curtis also took stills for Tarzan films and for Cecil B. de Mille's The Ten Commandments of 1923). Curtis wanted The North American Indian--with its oral histories, detailed tribal summaries, occasional hand-colored pictures, language data, transcriptions of music (which had been recorded on phonographic cylinders)--to be both the most comprehensive compendium possible and to present, in essence, nothing less than the very spirit of the Indian peoples.

Members of the team accordingly consumed quantities of energy and patience on their subjects, spending weeks at a time with them, returning year after year to acquire the information and pictures they needed, persuading them to re-enact ceremonies and events and to let them witness sacred occasions. And this was not just a one-way traffic: while the dominant culture and its servants inevitably have the upper hand in representations of "others"--as the opening remarks here intimated--the subject peoples should not be thought of as mere malleable matter. It is interesting that by now, in the early twenty-first century, we have a number of Native American contributors to the debate on the Curtis project who see a sustaining value in the representations the project produced. Certainly, its creation would not have been possible without a great deal of willing cooperation from many different tribal groups. This does not prevent us acknowledging that sometimes events were not so much re-created as constructed whole--as in the case of the supposed "whale hunt" that Curtis persuaded the Kwakiutl to undertake for the film, to give it, he thought, excitement akin to that provided by contemporary westerns. And, it seems, Curtis himself was sometimes aware of the damage that could be done--and was done--by the celebration of sacred events not for their spiritual purpose but for the camera, and for money.

The final volume of *The North American Indian*, on Eskimo groups in Alaska, was published in 1930. After this, his health broken by the strain of incessant travel compounded by legal and financial worries consequent upon his earlier divorce, Curtis took an interest in the remnant of his studio that had been relocated to Los Angeles--by then run by his eldest daughter--dabbled in mining, farmed a small-holding in Whittier, dreamed of an expedition to the interior gold mines of South America, wrote (but didn't publish) much memoir material, and in his later years watched his life's work seemingly slide into oblivion.

Representing Indian Life in Words and Pictures

The North American Indian-expensively produced and issued in a severely limited edition over a long period-could not prove popular. But in recent years anthropologists and others, even when they have censured what they have assumed were Curtis' methodological assumptions or quarreled with the text's conclusions, have begun to appreciate the value of the project's achievement: exhibitions have been mounted, anthologies of pictures have been published, and The North American Indian has been increasingly cited in the researches of others. There has been a reprint edition of the entire work, a valuable paperbound reprint of all the large-size photogravures, and there will doubtless be scholarly editions of parts of The North American Indian complete with annotation incorporating the findings of more recent authorities.

The text *is* rich. Curtis stated that the objective of *The North American Indian* was to depict "all features of Indian life and environment ... the young and the old, with their habitations, industries, ceremonies, games, and everyday customs," and to this list could be added such matters as the history, religion, mythology, and stories of each people. In my opinion it meets the stated objective, *and* it is written with vigor and--whether descriptive or analytical in kind--considerable flair. On occasion it includes data--linguistic, or ethnographic, or historical--to be found nowhere else. Sometimes its data provide useful qualification or supplementation of other authorities. Always, it has something interesting to tell. Needless to say, the nature of ethnographic investigation and, especially, writing has been a matter of much heated theoretical debate. We have to accept that, in a variety of ways, anthropology does not simply record indigenous people; it *constructs* them. But I for one am prepared to accept, without too much hesitation, the project's claim that all its data were derived from or checked against what Indians "in the field" told Myers and associates. That is, *The North American Indian* is not monolithic or merely a monument. It is alive, it speaks, if with several voices, and among those perhaps mingled voices are those of otherwise silent or muted Indian individuals.

Of his own photographs Curtis said, "rather than being designed for mere embellishment," they are "each an illustration of an Indian character or of some vital phase in his existence." Sometimes the relationship of picture to text is direct, as in the portrait of Two Strike, whose "Biographical Sketch" in Volume 3 reads as follows:

Brulé. Born 1821. At the age of twelve he accompanied his first war-party against Pawnee. At thirty-one he led a party against the same tribe and counted coup. Twelve coups, all on Pawnee, and twenty-two battles. Two Pawnee counted coup on him, but the second he killed. Was never wounded. Name changed from Living Bear to Two Strike after unhorsing two Pawnee riding the same animal. After the sixth coup he was declared chief, and, as others died, gradually ascended to the position of head-chief of the Brulés. He never fasted for the purpose of seeing a vision, and had no medicine, but wore a bear's ear "to frighten the enemy."

Two Strike
Two Strike

*This essay was originally written as the introduction to the first anthology of both words and pictures derived from *The North American Indian, The Vanishing Race: Selections from Edward S. Curtis' "The North American Indian"* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1976; New York: Taplinger, 1977); it was reprinted, without change, in an edition of the same book published by the University of Washington Press in 1987. I now know a great deal more about the Curtis project than I did when I edited that anthology. For evidence, please see my later study titled *Edward S. Curtis and The North American Indian, Incorporated* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; paperback, 2000), in which I attempt to give a full and balanced account of the project as a whole, and to assess with more subtlety than is possible in a short essay the nature of the project's contribution to the evolving representation of Native American peoples. Therefore, though I have retained the basic structure of the original introduction, along with very many of the same words, the present essay should be considered, in its own right, as new work. And since, like its predecessor, the present essay is intended for general readers rather than for academics, I have avoided recourse to footnotes. [Details about these and other publications on Curtis and photography of North American Indians are available from my web page at the University of Leeds. *Mick Gidley*]

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The Myth of the Vanishing Race

By David R.M. Beck Associate Professor, Native American Studies, University of Montana February, 2001

By the early 20th century, when Edward Curtis began the work on what came to be the twenty-volume publication featured on this website, American Indian nations and people were largely viewed by scholars, government officials and the public at large as a vanishing race. This belief was buttressed by two scholarly theories: 1) the view that America's continental "Manifest Destiny" was successfully completed in geographic terms, that the "frontier" had been closed by Euro-American expansion into every part of this nation; and 2) Social Darwinism, which posited that cultures battled with each other in an evolutionary contest in which one was destined to triumph and the other to fade into extinction. This theory dovetailed both with demographic evidence, embodied in a precipitous drop in Native populations, and with the federal policy of forced assimilation, which even most supporters of Indian people believed to be the only hope for Indian survival in the new century. In popular terms, these views were reinforced in wild west shows, world fairs, art, literature and a variety of other venues, all of which helped lay the foundations for the American public's long-standing misinterpretation of American Indians.

By Curtis's time American Indians had endured a highly destructive, centuries-long assault on their homelands, their societies, and their cultures in physical, spiritual, and emotional terms. Under the guise first of religion and then science, Euro-American invaders had stripped the indigenous communities of this continent of nearly all of their land and resources, and carried forth an all-out attack on their languages, religions, educational systems, family structures, and systems of governance. For centuries missionaries, soldiers and government officials led this assault. By Curtis's time, humanitarian reformers, social and physical scientists, and artists lent their authority to these efforts as well.



Vanishing race - Navaho

Rapid population decline followed, and

sometimes preceded, Euro-American invaders, caused not only by warfare and capture for slavery, but by diseases which Europeans had brought to this continent. The combination of violence and disease caused some tribal communities to lose as much as ninety percent of their member populations. As wave after wave of disease hit at times of early contact, communities might lose a quarter to a third of their populations time and again. This type of population loss continued well into the nineteenth century, as western tribes had first contact with Euro-Americans, and as eastern tribes were forced one after another to remove from their homelands to west of the Mississippi, with conditions weakening old and young alike, making them more susceptible to starvation and disease. All in all, a land that may well have held seven to ten million American Indians at the time of Columbus's arrival contained approximately a quarter of a million by 1900.

Policy of Forced Assimilation

This rapid decline, together with the advance of white America into all territories of the United States, suggested to government officials and reformers alike that Indian societies were quickly disappearing from the American landscape and that Indians themselves would soon disappear from the American milieu. Under the guise of Richard Henry Pratt's famous dictum to "kill the Indian and save the man" the federal government, through an aggressive policy of forced assimilation, attempted to destroy Indian cultures and arts, tribal societies and governments, and Native religions and families in order to "help" Indians join what was at the time believed to be the melting pot of American culture and society. Between the late 1880s and the mid 1930s this philosophy and effort formed the central basis of federal Indian policy. Under this policy, communal land holdings were individualized and tribal governments were systematically undercut.

The all-out assault on Indian communities was accomplished in part by taking children from their families and placing them in schools, on and off reservations, where they were forced to lose their own languages and learn the English language and American customs and manners. This was coupled with an attempt to turn Indians into farmers--both among tribes that had never farmed and held unfarmable land, and those that had farmed for centuries, but had been pushed onto unfarmable land. The United States attempted to force Indians to take up farming when the resources they held made the accomplishment of that goal all but impossible.

The contradiction of federal policy was problematic on another level as well. The insidious nature of racism in America worked to ensure that even those American Indians who succeeded in white terms--giving up their connections to their homelands and communities, and learning trades and professions in the American educational systems--were frozen out of the larger American society on the basis of skin color and perceptions of lack of intelligence, and forced to the fringes. Indians who stayed on reservations were largely believed by the dominant society to be representatives of a rapidly passing way of life, while those who left the reservations became largely invisible in American society.

Nostalgia for an "Almost Extinct Civilization"

All of this fed into a nostalgic market in American culture that was adapted into popular entertainment systems. Although Indians had been used as display curiosities and non-Indians had "played" at being Indian for a long time before this period, both of these activities flowered in the decades that coincided with the federal policy of forced assimilation as the belief grew stronger that Indians were disappearing forever from American society,.

Wild west shows portraying re-enactments of the recent wars on the plains, with Indians in full regalia galloping against the Cavalry, reinforced the notion that tribal cultures were more part of America's past than its present. Boy Scouts, the YMCA through its Indian Guides program, and schools through their use of Indians as mascots helped mythologize Indians as part of history rather than portray them as participating in current events. And highly attended encampments at world's fairs and other events drove the point home as well.

At the 1893 Columbian World's Exposition held in Chicago, for example, an Indian village set up on the Midway was meant to remind visitors of times past rather than times future. One guidebook to the fair refers to "the aborigines of this country" as an "almost extinct civilization, if civilization it is to be called." There was no question to the writers of this guidebook that Indians were a dying race. The book urged visitors to see the Indian exhibit, warning that "it is more than probable that the World's Columbian exposition will furnish the last opportunity for an acquaintance with the 'noble red-man' before he achieves annihilation, or at least loss of identity." Ironically, this provided employment for Indians who had been forced to abandon the life style being portrayed.

The country's great natural history museums were established or began to flourish during this period as well. Ethnologists, in the belief that a finite amount of tribal material culture existed,

raced each other across the country to build collections of Indian artifacts. Indian displays were placed in "natural" settings in many of these museums, in which Indians were to provide the third leg of a triad--wild plants, wild animals and "wild" people. These displays left observers with the dual perception that Indians were a part of the natural world, that they were somehow "exotic," and that they were becoming extinct. Models or mannequins of Indians were created for these displays, sometimes using face castings of real people. Occasionally Indian people themselves were brought into museums and put on display. The displays themselves reinforced the notion that Indians were no longer a part of American society. Often housed down the hallway from displays of extinct fauna, such as dinosaurs, a number of these showcases have remained relatively intact in museums across the U.S. even into the 21st century.

The role of ethnologists extended beyond the collection of material artifacts; they also collected stories and wrote volumes on aboriginal life, and some even unabashedly used their research to further the process of colonization. Their writings contain many valuable descriptions of life in Indian communities during Curtis's lifetime, but they also helped develop a definition of Native cultures as being of value only when static. All change was viewed as culture loss, which served to reinforce the notion among non-Indian Americans that tribal cultures were edging ever closer to extinction. The scientific community supported these ideas as well, for example through "experiments" in skull measurement which purported to prove the superiority of the white race over other races, which, using Spencerian logic, meant the other races were on the road to disappearance. Even in academia it has taken most of the 20th century to begin to cast many of these assumptions aside; they seem to be even longer lasting in popular culture.

In addition to ethnographers, patrons--both wealthy and not--collected Indian artifacts, spurred on by the myth of the vanishing race. J.L. Kraft (founder of Kraft Foods) collected Northwest Coast totem poles, one of which was long displayed on Chicago's lakefront. Milford Chandler and Richard Pohrt collected artifacts from across the continent, which are now in the holdings of the Detroit Institute of Arts, among other institutions. And J. Pierpont Morgan paid Curtis to photograph Indians. In short order Curtis's photos became viewed as ethnographic representations, and have since evolved to a status in which they are studied for critical analysis of the role of ethnographers and collectors.

Railroad barons also used imagery of Indians as a vanishing race to sell tourist vacations to the west. Both the Santa Fe and Burlington Northern railway companies created tourism campaigns around these types of images. National Parks such as Grand Canyon and Glacier National Park displayed Indians in traditional regalia as haunting reminders of the past as part of their tourist attractions. In fact, these ideas came to permeate society, from advertising images to the images summer camps and resorts used to attract tourists to those portrayed in popular literature. Many of these images have had an amazingly long life and continue to saturate American culture. Peruse the shelves of your grocery store, read the sports pages of your local newspaper, check out the westerns or the romance novels in your local bookstore--images of Indians that suggest they are a part of American history that is no longer with us are abundant.

Myth of "The Vanishing Race" Endures

This imagery had long been a part of popular culture, but the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890 and the end of the Plains Indian wars, Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 announcement that the American Frontier had closed, and the federal attempts to forcefully eradicate Indian culture and assimilate Indians into American society all converged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to firmly cement that imagery as a myth of a vanishing race, with the notion that Indians are historical features of an American landscape, not functioning members in a modern society. Ironically the federal policy of forced assimilation was in itself a recognition that Indians had not disappeared from America, and the official reversal of that policy in the 1930s, however effective or ineffective that reversal may be judged to be, was also an acknowledgement that Indians had not vanished as either a people or as political communities. Indian cultures, though badly damaged by all of this,

managed to survive in reality, but not in the mythology of the larger culture. It was within the context of this mythology that Curtis took these photos, and his doing so contributed in no small way to the continued pervasive presence of the myth of the vanishing race in American society even into the present time.

Notes

- 1. Horace H. Morgan, *The Historical World's Columbian Exposition and Chicago Guide* (St. Louis: Pacific Publishing Co., 1892), 269-70, 294.
- Mick Gidley, "<u>The North American Indian Project</u>," in "Edward S. Curtis (1868-1952) and *The North American Indian*" (Chicago and Washington, D.C.: Northwestern University and American Memory Project, Library of Congress, 2001), <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award98/ienhtml/essay1.html>.

Suggested Readings

Douglas Cole, *Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985.

Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, revised and expanded. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1996.

Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Civilize the Indians, 1880-1920.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001.

L.C. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883-1933.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996.

Roy Harvey Pearce, Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967.

Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions*, 1876-1916. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History Since 1492.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987.

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Oglala War-Party

Edward Curtis: Pictorialist and Ethnographic Adventurist

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Edward Curtis presented his photographs, notes and cultural observations as ethnographic. He argues against those detractors who petitioned the government that he was not a trained ethnographer, and that his work was not decisive. Three generations later the native heirs choose his photographic images for reasons other than the politics of the social sciences. Perhaps natives praise the visual analogy. Curtis pictures may, in fact, be the choice of more natives than any other photographer. This association, in my view, is aesthetic, not ethnographic.

Why would natives pose to create a portrait simulation, a pictorialist image not their own, for photographic adventurists who later nominate their pictures as the *real*, and the ethnographic documents of a vanishing race?

Perhaps for the money and tricky camera stories.

Why, several generations later, would native embrace these romantic pictures as real moments of their own cultural memories?

Perhaps the images are a sense of presence, a visual analogy. Or, perhaps it is a cult of native remembrance. "In photography, exhibition value begins to displace cult value," wrote Walter Benjamin in *Illuminations*. "But cult value does not give way without resistance. It retires into an ultimate retrenchment: the human countenance. It is no accident that the portrait was the focal point of early photography. The cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead, offers a last refuge for the cult value of the picture."

Richard Kearney argues in *The Wake of Imagination* that the "human ability to 'image' or 'imagine' something has been understood in two main ways throughout the history of Western thought." The first is a "**representational** faculty which reproduces images" of some reality; the second is a "**creative** faculty which produces images" that stand alone. "These basic notions of imagination" refer to "everyday experience" and "artistic practices."

Absence and Presence: Representation of Natives

The modernist constructions of culture, with natives outside of rational, cosmopolitan consciousness, are realities by separation, a sense of native absence over presence in history. The absence of natives was represented by images of traditions, simulations of the other in the past; the presence of natives was tragic, the notions of savagism and the emotive images of a vanishing race. The modernist images of native absence and presence, by creative or representational faculties, are the rational binary structures of the other, an aesthetic, ideological, disanalogy.

The distinctions and discrepancies of pictorial, ethnographic, and detractive visual images of natives are not easily resolved by cultural evidence, censure, or the politics of identity. Crucial to the resolution of these vagaries of photographic esteem is a visual method of interpretation; a choice of metaphors and visual reason that does not separate natives as the other in an eternal

academic disanalogy.

Edward Curtis created pictorialist images of natives, but most of the interpretations are ethnographic. The creation of visual images, in other words, is represented by linguistic authority. Pointedly, photographic images are bound by the structure of language. Barbara Stafford argued in *Visual Analogy* that language is a "godlike agency in western culture," and to free "graphic expression from an unnuanced dominant discourse of consumerism, corruption, deception, and ethical failure is a challenge that cuts across the arts, humanities, and sciences."

3

Analogy is an active, aesthetic, creative connection in the visual arts, and in the sense of natives, analogy is a desire to achieve a human union in visual images, rather than a cultural separation in language. Analogy absolves the distance and discrepancies of pictorialist and ethnographic pictures of natives by restoring a sense of visual reason.

Analogy "demands that we take seriously the problem of correlation," wrote Stafford. Analogy "is central both to ancient religions and to a modern anthropology of the senses." Analogy is a creative, visual process, but it was "supplanted by the elevation of atomistic difference: the obsession with unbridgeable imparity and the hieratic insistence on insurmountable distance between the material and spiritual realms." Analogy "has the virtue of making distant peoples, other periods, and even diverse contemporary contexts part of our world." Stafford wants to "recuperate the lost link between visual images and concepts, the intuitive ways in which we think simple by visualizing."

Science and Ethnology

Consider the learned theories and studied pictures of natives as the "hieratic insistence" on disanalogy. Ethnology, for instance, became a sacred association in the studies of native cultures. William John McGee, the "ethnologist in charge" at the Bureau of American Ethnology in the late nineteenth century outlined the goals of this agency in this way:

"Ethnologists, like other good citizens, are desirous of raising the Indian to the lofty plane of American citizenship; but they prefer to do this constructively rather then destructively, through knowledge rather than ignorance, through sympathy rather than intolerance," wrote McGee. Ethnologists "prefer to pursue in dealing with our immature race the course found successful in dealing with the immature offspring of our own flesh and blood." $\frac{5}{2}$

Curtis announced similar racialists notions that natives were comparable to children. The notion of natives as immature was a common theory of evolution at the time. Many scientists were involved in a harsh debate of monogenism, a single origin, and polygenism, many origins; these notions of creation were used to explain distinctive native cultures, and native resistance to cultural dominance.

Early in the nineteenth century many "critics began to question the monogenetic assumptions, set forth in the Bible, that all mankind shared the same origin," wrote Robert Bieder in *Science Encounters the Indian*. "Increasingly they began to explain Indians' recalcitrant nature in terms of polygenism. To polygenists Indians were separately created and were an inferior species of man." ⁶

Natives were first simulated as savages in the common cultural binaries of savagism and civilization. Then, by chicanery, federal treaties, and military means natives were removed to reservations and nominated the vanishing race at the end of the nineteenth century.

American civilization was a cultural manifest and a religious covenant over bogus savagism. The "Indian was the remnant of a savage past away from which civilized men had struggled to grow," wrote Roy Harvey Pearce in *Savagism and Civilization*. "To study him was to study the past. History would thus be the key to the moral worth of cultures." American civilization progressed

from "past to present, from east to west, from lower to higher." Pearce pointed out that those "who could not journey to see Indians in person could see them pictured in numerous collections of Indian sketches and portraits." $\frac{7}{2}$

Influences on Curtis

Edward Curtis was born in Wisconsin in 1868. Naturally, he grew into the literature of natives. He likely read dime novels, captivity narratives, and the sensational newspaper stories of the evanescence of the transient savages. As a young man he must have seen sketches of natives and reproduction of portraits by George Catlin and Charles Bird King. Curtis was curious, no doubt, and eager to understand the history and literature of his time.

Curtis opened a photographic studio in the early 1890s. It was at the same time that natives lost their land, human rights, a sense of presence, and were pictured as the tragic cultures of a vanishing race. Sitting Bull had been shot by soldiers, and then, two weeks later, hundreds of Ghost Dancers were massacred by Seventh Cavalry soldiers on December 29, 1890, at Wounded Knee. Curtis was a man of nature, a mountaineer and adventurist, but surely he could not have been unaware of newspaper stories about these native miseries. His first pictures must have drawn him into many conversations about natives. Curtis was motivated, after all, to pursue a photographic record of the last natives, and he did so with romantic, pictorial images that ran against the popular notions of the savage.

Many American newspapers created and promoted stories of savagism and the vanishing race. The Civil War, and later the telegraph, changed journalism and the way news was reported. Press associations and "cooperative news gathering" were inspired by the telegraph. War "increased newspaper readership and stimulated new competition between urban newspapers," observed John Coward in *The Newspaper Indian*. Editors "discovered that they could increase their profits when they published stories about major battles," including, of course, conflicts with natives.⁸

Journalists, at the time, were too close to the western adventures of the army, and many thought that native cultures "could be easily known and explained by simple observation," noted Coward. "The 'vanishing Indian' theme was especially popular in the nineteenth century, when native cultures did seem to be fading before the westward rush of white settlement." Clearly, "newspapers played a major role in creating and maintaining popular Indian identities in the nineteenth century." The press, however, was not alone in the promotion of the savage. George Catlin and many other artists, hundreds of photographers, politicians, and an entire cultural system created the image and historical idea of the tragic savage at the vanishing point. 9

Sitting Bull, the Lakota healer, for instance, was known largely through simulations and "newspaper representations," especially in the sensational stories on the Battle of the Little Bighorn. The *New York Times* raised a catch question about Sitting Bull: Was he "an extremely savage type, betraying that bloodthirstiness and brutality for which he has so long been notorious?" That savage image of a native humanist was created by strangers. "The Sitting Bull of the papers and the man himself were often worlds apart."

Curtis created his picture <u>The Vanishing Race</u>, in 1904. The photogravure, published three years later in the first of his mighty twenty volume set, *The North American Indian*, depicts a column of natives lost in the shadows, a sentimental evanescence.

"The thought that this picture is meant to convey is that the Indians as a race, already shorn of their tribal strength and stripped of their primitive dress, are passing into the darkness of an unknown future," Curtis wrote in the caption to *The Vanishing Race*. About the same time he wrote in *Scribner's Magazine* that the "relationship of the Indians and people of this country is that of a child and parent. We will stand convicted for all time as a parent who failed in his duty." He declared that natives were "being ground beneath the wheel of civilization, and though we may be

able to justify our claims that advancement and progress demand the extermination of the Indians, we can scarcely justify the method used in this extermination." 11 Curtis, of course, would always be the master of the pictures.

Remarkably, this haunting photograph, *The Vanishing Race*, was created less than a decade after he first aimed a cumbersome view camera at Princess Angeline, the native daughter of Chief Seattle. "I paid the princess a dollar for each picture made," wrote Curtis. "This seemed to please her greatly and with hands and jargon she indicated that she preferred to spend her time having pictures made than in digging clams." 12

Curtis as Pictorialist

Curtis paid natives to pose; he selected ornaments, vestments, and he played the natural light, tone, picturesque reflections, and the solitary nature of natives in his pictures. The pictorial images of pensive warriors are simulations of the real; transmuted in visual analogies. The aesthetic poses of natives countered the cruelties of reservations and binaries of savagism and civilization.

"In terms of pictorialist aesthetics, posing contributed positively to the final image," observed Christopher Lyman in *The Vanishing Race and Other Illusions*. "In terms of ethnography, posing did 'injustice to scientific accuracy.' "13 Curtis paid natives to pose and dance in several simulated ceremonies, but he may not have understood the actual tricky scenes. The Navajo *Yebechai Prayer* [film by Curtis], for instance, was reversed by native dancers to protect their sense of the sacred. Curtis, however, was never at the actual ceremonies. He staged the dances out of season. "Navajo sensibilities" clearly were not his "primary considerations." Curtis used "not only 'phony' costumes, additions, and poses," observed James Faris in *Navajo and Photography*, "but indeed, in some cases actual phony Navajo." 14

Curtis is lauded as a pictorialist, but not favorably reviewed as an ethnographic photographer. Yet his pictures are rarely mentioned in historical references to the pictorialists, or Photo-Session, at the turn of the twentieth century in New York City. Curtis was not of the salons or societies that established the aesthetic, pictorial arts of photography; his focus was more ideological, a photographic rescue artist. He posed as an ethnographer out to capture the last images of a vanishing race. To do this, of course, he paid for native poses, staged, altered, and manipulated his pictures to create an ethnographic simulation as a pictorialist. Clearly, he was an outsider, too far removed from the photographic salons to court or count on ready shows and reviews that had instituted pictorialist photography. Curtis, moreover, had received a five-year endowment from the financier John Pierpont Morgan to produce twenty volumes of *The North American Indian*. The project actually lasted more then twenty years.

John Tagg asserted in *The Burden of Representation* that photography was rather "common as to be unremarkable" in the late nineteenth century. Pictorialists reacted and sought "to reinstate the 'aura' of the image and distinguish their work aesthetically from that of commercial and amateur photographs." He argued that the revolution was not pictorialist, but a new means of political control. "It was no longer a privilege to be pictured but the burden of a new class of the surveilled," wrote Tagg. 15

Curtis created simulations of surveillance, the pictorialist pose of ethnographic images. He removed parasols, suspenders, wagons, the actual traces of modernism and material culture in his pictures of natives. Curtis was a pictorialist, but his removal practices were ideological, a disanalogy. He created altered images of the vanishing race at the same time that thousands of native scholars graduated from federal and missions schools. Luther Standing Bear had returned to the reservation as a teacher. Charles Eastman returned as the first native medical doctor on the Pine Ridge Reservation. Curtis may have noticed native survivance, but he was dedicated to pursue pictures of a vanishing race.

"Curtis was concerned about criticism of *The North American Indian* by professional ethnologists," noted Christopher Lyman. "He explained away their skepticism, however, as a reaction to inflated accounts of his work in popular press." Curtis "was selling images to a popular audience whose perception in 'Indianness' was based on stereotypes." He was motivated to remain in the favor of ethnologists.

Curtis created the picture, *Oglala War-Party*, at a time when natives were starving on reservations. Surely he was not insensitive to the adversities or natives, but his pictures reveal only the simulations of the vanishing race. He paid natives to pose as warriors at a time when their rights were denied, and their treaties were scorned and evaded by the federal government. Curtis was a dedicated pictorialist, but miscarried the ethics of his situation on reservations. Yes, he was indeed answerable for his time with natives, not by historical revisionism, but because he boldly advanced his career in the presence of native torment and worried hearts.



Oglala War-Party

Lyman noted that Curtis, "like that of most people of the period, seemed preoccupied with

images of Dakota 'hostility.' The caption for *Oglala War-Party* explains, 'Here is depicted a group of Sioux warriors as they appeared in the days of intertribal warfare, carefully making their way down a hillside in the vicinity of the enemy's camp.' " Curtis created a simulation of a native absence and an ethnographic presence.

The photogravure *In a Piegan Lodge*, published in *The North American Indian*, was retouched by the crude removal of a clock. The original negative pictures the clock in a small box on the ground between two natives. Curtis removed the clock to save a simulation of traditional authority. The picture with the clock has a curious elegance and inspires a visual analogy. The retouched photogravure without the clock is fakery and disangle.

Oglala War-Party In a Piegan Lodge

visual analogy. The retouched photogravure without the clock is fakery and disanalogy. 17

Dino Brugioni outlined "four distinct kinds of faked photographs" in *Photo Fakery*. The first two are the removal and insertion of details, and the other two are photomontage, and false captions. Curtis was clearly a photographic faker by his removal and insertions of details, and by false captions.

"Photography transcends natural boundaries and verbal language and is probably the most important vehicle for advancing ideas, and ideals, throughout the world," wrote Brugioni. "When a photo is manipulated in any way, truth is compromised; when truth is compromised, distrust begins. Distrust produces a lack of faith in the media," he noted, but photography "has always been manipulated." 18

Curtis created the pictorialist scenes of what he believed to be a vanishing race, and yet he understood that the captured images, not the actual natives, were aesthetic simulations.

Notes

1. Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 225, 226. Benjamin pointed out that "as man withdraws from the photographic image, the

- exhibition value for the first time shows its superiority to the ritual value."
- 2. Kearney, Richard. *The Wake of Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 15. "The imminent demise of imagination is clearly a postmodern obsession," wrote Kearney. "Postmodernism undermines the modernist belief in the image as an *authentic* expression. The typically postmodern image is one which displays its own artificiality, its own pseudostatus, its own representational depthlessness."
- 3. Stafford, Barbara Maria. *Good Looking: Essays on the Virtue of Images* (The MIT Press, 1996), 5. "In most American university curricula, graphicacy remains subordinate to literacy. Even so-called interdisciplinary 'visual culture' programs are governed by the ruling metaphor of reading," wrote Stafford. "Consequently, iconicity is treated as an inferior part of a more general semantics."
- 4. Stafford. Visual Analogy, 51, 61.
- 5. Hinsley, Curtis M., Jr. Savages and Scientists: The Smithsonian Institution and the Development of American Anthropology, 1846-1910 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981), 287.
- 6. Bieder, Robert E. Science Encounters the Indian, 1820-1880 (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), 11, 12. "But if the Indian were an inferior species of man, what then was his fate? Would the effect of the environment be the same on the Indian as it had been on European man? Were Indians capable of further progress, or had they reached the limits of their potential?"
- 7. Pearce, Roy. *Harvey Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 49, 110.
- 8. Coward, John M. *The Newspaper Indian: Native American Identity in the Press, 1820-90* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 16, 17, 20.
- 9. Coward. The Newspaper Indian, 34, 229.
- 10. The New York Times. July 10, 1876. Quoted in John M. Coward, The Newspaper Indian, 159, 190.
- 11. Lyman, Christopher M. The Vanishing Race and Other Illusions: Photographs of Indians by Edward S. Curtis (New York: Pantheon Books, in association with the Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982), 79. Lyman cited Edward S. Curtis, "Vanishing Indian Types: The Tribes of the Northwest Plains," Scribner's Magazine. June 1906. President Theodore Roosevelt and other government agents expressed similar racialist views about natives. Curtis, it should be remembered, was beholden to Roosevelt for his letter of introduction to John Pierpont Morgan.
- 12. Gidley, M. Edward S. Curtis and the North American Indian, Incorporated (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 21. and Edward S. Curtis: Photographer of the North American Indian by Victor Boesen and Florence Curtis Graybill (Dodd, Mead & Company, 1977), 15.
- 13. Lyman. The Vanishing Race and Other Illusions, 65.
- 14. Faris, James C. *Navajo and Photography* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 108, 114, 115, 116. "Curtis tells us he staged the Nightway photographs not because he was there at the wrong time of year but because of the resistance to his photography--a rather minor logistical matter," writes Feris. "The type of resistance is never explained in detail, though we can probably assume it came from assimilationist bureaucrats (Navajo and

- non-Navajo) who resented Curtis's emphasis and manipulation to achieve some representation of 'aboriginality."'
- 15. Tagg, John. *The Burden of Representation* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 56, 58, 59. "What Walter Benjamin called the 'cult' value of the picture was *effectively abolished* when photographs *became so* common as to be unremarkable; when they were items of passing interest with no residual value, to be consumed and thrown away," wrote Tagg.
- 16. Lyman. The Vanishing Race, 78.
- 17. Lyman. The Vanishing Race, 86,106.
- 18. Brugioni, Dino A. *Photo Fakery: The History and Techniques of Photographic Deception and Manipulation* (Dulles, Virginia: Brassey's, 1999), 17, 202. "After the turn of the twentieth century, heavily manipulated photos were produced to create supposed intrinsic and artistic values," wrote Brugioni. "The photomontage was used as an important propaganda weapon both for and against Nazi Germany. Communists and other nations often rewrote history by removing people and *events from* photos, *despite the* fact that copies of the original photos were usually available throughout the world."

This essay is based on a presentation at a seminar on Edward Curtis at the Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, California, October 6-7, 2000.

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North American Indians as Witnessed by Edward S. Curtis

"North American Indians as witnessed by Edward S. Curtis" based on a map by Mick Gidley in *The Vanishing Race* (1976).



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