

## REVIEW ESSAY

# The Contemporary Indian Romance: A Review Essay

PETER G. BEIDLER

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How do most contemporary Americans learn about Indians? Through history books? Through high school and college courses? Documentaries? Old John Wayne movies on television? Visits to Indian reservations? Direct conversations with Indians? Through recent movies in local theaters or on video cassette recorders? Probably none of the above. The "Indian romance" may be the most influential source of current information about American Indians.

By *Indian romance*, I mean the paperback novels about Indians that shout their titles to us from almost every paperback rack in almost every airport, drugstore, and bookstore in America: *Captive Embrace* and *Sweet Savage Splendor* and *Love's Wild Passions* and *Savage Journey*. They have colorful covers, most of them showing a white woman and an Indian man—both with lots of flesh in evidence—embracing in an outdoor scene somewhere west of the Mississippi. Perhaps we should be reluctant to take such novels seriously as subjects for scholarly attention, but because these books are written, published, and sold in enormous numbers in the United States, they cannot fail to have a profound impact on the popular conception of the American Indian.

In an effort to encourage my students at Lehigh University to

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explore the basic elements of the Indian romances that both reflect and influence current popular opinions about Indians in America, I decided to have them spend some time with these books. In my spring 1991 undergraduate seminar on "The Indian in American Literature," I devoted one week to a consideration of such novels. I had spent my spare time in airports and bookstores for the previous six months looking for recently published Indian romances, and I had surprised even myself when I discovered that I had located twenty-five different titles for 1990 alone. When I eliminated those in which neither the hero nor the heroine had any Indian blood—that is, those involving white captives of Indian tribes as the central characters—I had seventeen left. That was exactly enough so that I could assign one of these books to each of the sixteen members of my seminar and keep the remaining one for myself. Each of us wrote a five-hundred-word review of a novel. I have edited those reviews, and I present them below.

What did we learn about the contemporary Indian romance? They are all different, of course, but there is some sameness, too. Sold for \$4.95 or under, Indian romances are written by women—or at least published under female names—about stormy love relationships between men and women of different races.

The time is usually the nineteenth century. Of our seventeen Indian romances, only one was set before 1800, only one after 1900. Many of them, of course, occasionally glance back to earlier times, and a few glance forward, perhaps in an epilogue, to the twentieth century.

A surprisingly large number of tribes are represented in the contemporary Indian romance. Three tribes appear most frequently—Apaches, Cheyenne, and Sioux; these are featured in at least four of the seventeen novels. But other tribes also provide central characters: Shoshone, Suquamish, Crow, Blackfeet, Navajo, Nez Perce, Aztec, Hopi, and Croatoan.

Are any of these novels good? We found that they ranged from pretty good to pretty god-awful. The worst had stupid plots, with stupid characters playing stupid roles. The best managed to make us care about the characters, even those we did not believe could exist. Because the Indian romance sells rather well these days, some quite good writers, faced with the usually discouraging search for lucrative outlets for their writing talents, have decided to try to tap into this market.

As for the sexuality that dominates the mildly lurid covers of

contemporary Indian romances, some of the plots were little more than skeletons on which were hung a series of sex scenes. In others, the sex was handled with delicacy and sensitivity—or else was not an important factor.

As we tried to make comparisons among the seventeen novels, our most interesting discovery concerned the racial makeup of the main characters:

**TABLE 1**  
**Racial Makeup of Main Characters in Seventeen Indian Romances, 1990**

	Male protagonist	Female protagonist
Indian	8	0
Indian-white	7	4
White	2	13

This table indicates that the male protagonists tend to be Indian or mixed Indian-and-white, while the female protagonists are white or mixed Indian-and-white. Only two of the male main characters were white, and not a single female main character was a full-blood Indian. It is interesting that two of the four female protagonists of mixed blood began the novel separated from their Indian heritage. One was raised in England, another by a socially prominent New York family. How do we account for the absence of Indian heroines in Indian romances? We are not sure, but if it is true that white women constitute the dominant audience for the Indian romance, it seems logical to suggest that such readers want to identify with the heroines. If one of the motives for reading these novels is escape, it seems logical, again, to suggest that white women readers will find it easy to escape into plots about the amorous adventures of white women with rugged males in exotic settings.

We found a generic similarity in many of the plots: A pretty white woman of good family meets a ruggedly handsome Indian man when she least expects to; at first, she hates or fears him because of misconceptions about or distrust of his Indian race; later he uses his strength, his Indian skills of fighting and tracking, and his superior knowledge of the terrain to save her from dangers; she learns to respect the culture from which he comes; she falls in love despite her earlier distrust of him; they make satisfying love in exotic settings and then marry.

As for the social attitudes reflected in these novels, contemporary Indian romances tend, at least on the surface, to be decisively pro-Indian. It would appear that the days of the fictional, evil Indian antagonist are over. In almost all of our seventeen Indian romances, some white characters at least initially despise Indians as dirty, dishonest, stupid, cruel, or immoral, but by the end of the novel the whites who hold those racist views—if they have not been killed in hand-to-hand combat with the male protagonist—have changed their attitudes radically. Often, indeed, they fall in love with the very person they once hated or feared. More often the real villain in the novel is a white man who tries to force his repulsive attentions on the heroine.

To be sure, there is anti-Indian racism in many of these novels, but it is subtle. One way of analyzing that racism is to ask this question: If all we knew about nineteenth-century American Indians was what we read in Indian romances, what would we think about Indians? Well, we would think, for example, that Indian men at that time were almost exclusively young, strong, virile, handsome “warriors.” The authors of these romances simply ignore all other kinds of Indian men who lived in the nineteenth century—with the occasional exception of the old, old grandfather who remembers how it used to be in the days before the whites came to his people. And we would think that Indian women, if they existed at all, were the mothers of handsome Indian men or, if they were younger, were merely foils for the white women who successfully wooed their men.

Even more troubling is the suggestion in these novels that Indians have ceased to exist as Indians. Most of the heroes finally marry white women; the children of these marriages will, most likely, be culturally white. Those others, the ones who remain “Indian,” will, by implication, die out. These novels, then, tend to perpetuate the stereotype of the vanishing Indian, familiar to

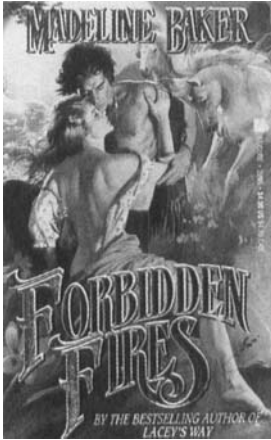
readers of American fiction since Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826). These contemporary romances suggest that, yes, there were some Indians back in the nineteenth century, but they either died out or have become biologically and culturally absorbed into the dominant white culture. Readers of Indian romances would undoubtedly be amazed to learn that Indians make up a rich, varied, and growing segment of the contemporary American population.

In the end, of course, we would hope that more and more people, instead of reading Indian romances by white writers who know little of Indian culture except what they read in other Indian romances, will discover some of the excellent books by Indian writers—the books that we spent most of my course considering. I mean writers such as McNickle, Momaday, Welch, Silko, and Erdrich.

In the following reviews, we try to give enough plot summary so that readers will have a sense of the main characters and actions in the novel. We also describe the attitudes toward Indians that the authors convey. We use the spellings employed in the novel—for example, Blackfoot rather than Blackfeet, and Navaho rather than Navajo. The seventeen reviews appear in alphabetical order according to author's name. (Yes, Madeline Baker published three novels in 1990.) The name of the reviewer appears at the end of the review.

**Forbidden Fires.** By Madeline Baker. New York: Leisure Books, 1990. 445 pages. \$4.50 paper.

Stalking Wolf, son of a Sioux mother and an Irish father, is banished from his adopted Cheyenne tribe in a dispute over an unfaithful woman named Summer Wind. Alone, Stalking Wolf sets out to make his way in the white world. He is attacked by a group of white men who beat him and plan to hang him as a horse thief. His life is spared at the last minute at the request of the beautiful Caitlyn, daughter of one of the white men. In an extraordinary turn of events, Stalking Wolf is hired to work on Caitlyn's father's ranch, where he changes his name to Rafe. He is successful in his work but unpopular with the men because of his Indian blood. Caitlyn, however, finds herself very much attracted to Rafe despite his Indian blood—so attracted that even after her father is killed in an Indian attack, Caitlyn accepts Rafe's proposal of marriage.



Rafe assumes control of the ranch and runs it successfully until Abner, a man whose three marriage proposals had been rejected by Caitlyn, plots a revenge that leads to apparent financial ruin for Rafe and Caitlyn and plunges them into many life-threatening predicaments. They are attacked by Indians, their entire herd of cattle is stolen, and Rafe is seriously wounded. They seek refuge in a Cheyenne village, where Caitlyn is forced to be a slave and Rafe is sentenced to run the gauntlet. Through a combination of strength, cunning, skill, and luck, Rafe

and Caitlyn are able to survive and return to their ranch.

This novel portrays Indians as cruel, evil, and repulsive savages. Although she eventually overcomes her prejudice, Caitlyn initially struggles to love Rafe despite his Indian blood: "She was repelled by his Indian blood. . . . She wished the fact that he was a half-breed didn't bother her so much, but it did" (p. 78). In all other respects, Rafe is the ideal man: strong, handsome, smart, and kind; his positive qualities, however, are never attributed to his Indian blood. Rather, Caitlyn considers it unusual for an Indian to have these good qualities. When Caitlyn's emotions toward Rafe begin to overwhelm her, she must remind herself of his negative qualifications: "He's Indian, she told herself, repeating again and again, Indian. Indian. Indian!" (pp. 50-51). When Rafe displays aggressive or violent tendencies, she considers them a manifestation of the Indian part of him, "wild, untamed, and completely savage" (p. 30).

Other Indians in the novel are portrayed negatively. Without provocation, Indians kill Caitlyn's father and brothers. When they capture Caitlyn, they immediately try to rape her. When Caitlyn is in the Cheyenne village, the men attempt to rape her and the women treat her harshly. Reflecting typical white attitudes, Abner says, "Everybody knows you can't trust a redskin any further than you can throw one" (p. 30).

—Richard Olstein

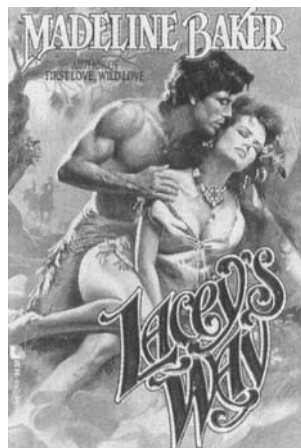
**Lacey's Way.** By Madeline Baker. New York: Leisure Books, 1990. 440 pages. \$4.50 paper.

Lacey Montana sees her father's prison wagon attacked by Apaches on the plains. Her father is carried off by the Indians, but she escapes and is able to save one convict's life—the handsome gambler and accused murderer Matt Drago. Lacey induces Matt to help her find and rescue her father. During their travels, they fall in love. After many adventures, they find themselves captive in the very same Apache village where her father had been taken.

Lacey finds out that her father has been accepted as one of the tribe for saving a young Apache from drowning, and now he is married to an Indian woman. She also learns that Matt is part Chiricahua Apache and part white. After Matt kills a respected warrior who wants Lacey, they escape to Salt Creek. There they solve a murder mystery and clear Matt's name of his supposed crime. Meanwhile, Lacey's father has moved to Kansas to avoid living on the reservation. Lacey and Matt marry, and with their new baby they travel east to reunite the family.

Living with the Apaches is a learning experience for Lacey. At first she cannot "quite comprehend the fact that her father had married an Indian" (p. 237), but she learns to accept his marriage and her husband's race as well. She observes that although their new life is rigorous, she is "happier than she had ever been in her life, and that surprised her" (p. 245). When Matt is injured and Indian medicine men treat him, however, she wants "to scream that pollen and smoke and endless chanting would not heal her husband" (p. 280). When Matt must go on a raid, Lacey asks him about scalping, and he replies, "I don't think I'll ever be Indian enough for that" (p. 271).

Although Matt is of mixed blood, he was born and raised as a southern gentleman. He is an experienced gambler, and "there was something about Matt that made the men wary of him" (p. 309). He has excellent tracking abilities, and he is perceptive in judging others. He is also brave and extremely adept with a pistol.



Even before Matt lives with the Apaches, he possesses great skill and strength. He even beats one of the best Apache warriors in hand-to-hand combat after two days of suffering without food or water.

Although Lacey and her father eventually transcend their prejudices against Indians, many white men in the novel do not. The captain who marries Matt and Lacey notices Matt's Indian "look" and wonders if Lacey "had run away from home to marry a man her parents didn't approve of." He "hated to see a girl as pretty and young as this one get mixed up with a man who would only cause her unhappiness" (pp. 142-43). When Matt discovers that he was framed for murder because a wealthy saloon owner had been selling guns to Indians, one man comments that "people don't look kindly on those who sell guns to the enemy" (p. 414).

—Karen L. Atkiss

**Love in the Wind.** By Madeline Baker. New York: Leisure Books, 1990. 429 pages. \$4.50 paper.



Shattered by grief at her fiancé's death during an Apache raid, the lovely Katy Marie Alvarez decides to enter a convent in New Mexico. En route to her destination, her coach is attacked by Indians. Katy, the lone survivor, is taken captive by a handsome Cheyenne warrior named Iron Wing, who decides to keep the white woman as his wife and slave. After months of hard captivity, Katy gradually grows accustomed to Cheyenne life and admits that she is in love with Iron Wing. Iron Wing falls equally in love with his white wife and decides to let her return home rather than risk having her killed in the war that is imminent between the Cheyenne and the United States Army. While being escorted home, however, Katy is kidnapped by Mexican bandits and sold into prostitution. Iron Wing rescues her and, after discovering that during his absence his tribe was exterminated by the cavalry, decides to live with Katy on the Alvarez ranch.

The beginning of the novel is saturated with Indian stereotypes. As seen through Katy's eyes, "the Apache were neither man nor beast but some kind of depraved inhuman monsters that went about preying on innocent women and children" (p. 25). Although exposed to the horrors of war with Indians and raised believing these stereotypes, Katy makes an effort to understand and accept her captors. Most of the Indian stereotypes vanish as Katy gradually realizes that "Indians were just people like everybody else, subject to the same joys, the same fears" (p. 80).

Although Iron Wing is sympathetically portrayed as a great warrior and hero, and although his emotional expression seems sincere in his relationship with Katy, the novel occasionally lapses into racism. While Katy easily adapts to life in the Cheyenne village, Iron Wing struggles to adjust to white culture. Katy reasons that "it might be easier for a tame creature to adjust to a wild life than for a wild thing to adjust to a civilized environment" (p. 344). Later she again refers to Iron Wing derogatorily when she concludes, "You could catch a wild animal, tame it, and love it, but it was never truly happy, no matter how big the cage. Wild things were meant to live wild" (p. 401).

Although primarily a romance, the novel attempts to explain some Cheyenne customs, such as the Sun Dance held with the Sioux at midsummer and the Sweetheart Dance, held after the spring buffalo hunt. It also describes some everyday activities such as the gathering of food, the tanning of hides, and the care of children in the Cheyenne village. And it compassionately conveys the sadness of a people and culture destroyed: "My people are gone. You are. . . all the family I have. I would like my children to grow up here, in the midst of those who will love them for what they are" (p. 427).

—*Brian R. Bankoski*

**Winter Wolf's Woman.** By Karen A. Bale. New York: Zebra Books, 1990. 414 pages. \$4.50 paper.

While Anna O'Leary, whose mother was Cheyenne, and her fiance Nathan, who is also part Cheyenne, travel across the country, their train is attacked by a band of Shoshone. Nathan escapes, but Anna is taken captive. Among the Shoshone, she meets Winter Wolf, a Cheyenne warrior who earlier had been captured by the



same tribe. He and Anna help each other escape, and Winter Wolf brings her back to his people.

Although Anna is desperately in love with Nathan, she marries Winter Wolf to ensure her survival. Returning to claim Anna, Nathan discovers that she has married his cousin, Winter Wolf. Anna must now choose between life in the white world with Nathan or among the Cheyenne with Winter Wolf.

The author resists suggesting that certain qualities are inherent in Indian blood. Consider Anna's courage, for example.

Even though Anna is physically small, she is described as "a woman of great spirit . . . a woman of great courage" (p. 129). Her courage, demonstrated when she jumps into a river to save a small child from drowning, is said to come in part from her Cheyenne mother. When Anna has trouble deciding between the two men, Winter Wolf's mother, Little Deer, reminds Anna that, "like your mother, the warrior, you can be equal to these men in many ways" (p. 216). The courage Anna shows is not solely a result of her Indian blood, however, for not all Indian women possess it. Furthermore, Rachel, the white woman who helps Nathan and his brother after the Indian attack, is also portrayed as courageous.

Winter Wolf is said to show his Indian qualities when he is angry. After beating Anna, he tells her, "My father has always said that I let my anger control me. He is right. You suffered for it" (p. 174). The author makes clear, however, that not all Indians share that anger and violence. Brave Wolf, Winter Wolf's father and chief of the Cheyenne, is wise, fair, and patient. It is interesting that Nathan is surprised at Brave Wolf's fairness in trying to determine which man Anna should go with: "He hadn't expected this from Brave Wolf. He had assumed that Brave Wolf would side in favor of his son. Nathan knew he had given up much by trying to be fair to him" (p. 185). Just as Winter Wolf is not a savage because of his Indian blood and Anna is not courageous because of hers, Nathan is no more kind and patient because he has less Indian blood. He tells Anna, "I've tried being patient with you, Anna, but I've run out of patience" (p. 363) and slams the door behind him.

Although in the end Anna chooses the suitor with less Indian

blood, the author is to be commended for not suggesting that a character's negative or positive attributes are solely the result of his or her racial makeup. It is refreshing that in this novel not all Indians are said to be savage animals, nor are all white people said to be innocent victims. The author strives for a balanced view.

—Kristie M. Immordino

**Sioux Splendor.** By F. Rosanne Bittner. New York: Zebra Books, 1990. 447 pages. \$4.50 paper.

The preacher's daughter, Cynthia Wells, does not realize that the Sioux natives of South Dakota are a kinder, more civilized people than the white settlers who live in Deadwood in 1875. Then she sees Red Wolf, a Sioux warrior, brutally beaten by her white neighbors. Rather than let Red Wolf hang at dawn, Cynthia steals away in the middle of the night to set him free. Although the whites who witness Red Wolf's release are sure he would rape Cynthia, given the chance, she feels that she can trust him. After the rescue, she must leave town to escape the ridicule of the townspeople.



Cynthia is captured later by Sioux warriors, one in particular called Many Bears. She is horrified when Many Bears beats her, drags her, and seems to give no thought to her welfare. In spite of this mistreatment, she soon develops a love for and understanding of the Sioux people and falls deeply in love with Red Wolf, by whom she becomes pregnant. Although Red Wolf himself has killed white men, Cynthia sees, behind his "wild look," "a human form, human emotion" (p. 21). Eventually, she comes to believe that the ordeal she has endured has been good for her and that the Sioux are not evil animals—not even those, like Red Wolf, who help to defeat Custer at the Little Big Horn.

Cynthia's idyllic bliss with Red Wolf is short-lived. White soldiers attack the Sioux, murder many of them, seize Cynthia, and return her to Deadwood. There she finds the days filled with a longing for Red Wolf. She has fond memories of his people and

feels indignation at the cruelty of the whites. She soon realizes how trivial, selfish, and destructive the whites' priorities are. Her family refuses to look beyond the Indian stereotypes to accept the experiences of their daughter. They cannot understand that the injuries she has sustained at the hands of whites—friends, soldiers, and the politician of uncertain gender preferences who becomes her “legal” husband—are far more humiliating than anything that has been done to her by Indians. Eventually, Cynthia is reunited with Red Wolf, who has been sent to the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania and who returns to his people as a teacher. And eventually their son comes to terms with Red Wolf, his father.

Through this novel, the reader is allowed to see Indians from the point of view of an innocent preacher's daughter. Cynthia is aware of the Indians' crimes, but she sees “more cruel violence and hideous crimes committed . . . by soldiers at that Indian camp than I ever saw committed by any Indians” (p. 272). That settles any questions she may have had about the rights and wrongs of Indians wars. The Sioux prefer to live peaceful lives without interference by the army, the government, or seekers of gold. What is in store for them, however, is a series of empty promises and broken treaties.

—*Christel Shea*

**Gentle Savage.** By Kathleen Drymon. New York: Zebra Books, 1990. 351 pages. \$4.50 paper.

Valentine Prescott is the daughter of a mixed-blood Blackfoot woman whose deathbed wish is for Valentine to live among her people for one year. When Valentine comes of age, she reluctantly leaves her fiancé, Jeffrey Russell, and the luxury of her home in England to sail for America. At first repelled by her Indian ancestry, Valentine shuns the customs demonstrated by the Blackfoot guides who have been sent to escort her to the Indian village. Eventually she embraces the Indian way of life, receives a new name, Heart's Flame, and finds love with the warrior Night Rider, who served as one of her guides. After a year, her happiness is interrupted when some members of the neighboring Crow tribe murder her grandparents. Valentine is then kidnapped by her former fiancé, who is driven insane by her rejection of him. Finally, after several horrifying experiences, Valentine is rescued by Night

Rider, and they return to happiness in the Blackfoot village.

Many scenes in this novel portray the viciousness of Indians. During the Blackfoots' avenging attack against the Crow, for example, Night Rider "cut the brave that he was facing from throat to belly, ripping his upper body apart," and then, "with a satisfied cry, he watched the bloody innards spill upon the ground" (p. 218). The face of one of the Crow warriors is "smashed beyond recognition" (p. 217). After the attack, the new Blackfoot chief, Sacred Eagle, addresses the Crow villagers, but "his glazed eyes told the [Crow] chief that in truth he had not yet had his fill of killing, and if any wished to come before him, he would willingly oblige them to their deaths" (p. 219).

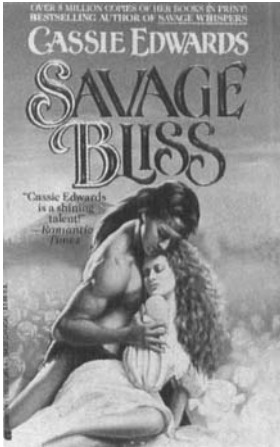


Although appearing primarily in the early judgments of Valentine and in the crazed views of her former fiance, an insidious racism is woven throughout the novel. When Valentine first sees the Indian garments sent for her to wear on her trip to the Blackfoot village, she is filled with "distaste," must "hold back a shriek of terror," and has to "reassure herself of the vast difference between her and the savages confronting her" (pp. 30-31). During a pause in the journey to the village, Night Rider watches Valentine bathe in a stream. His defense is that "the maidens of my village are not as shy" (p. 37) as Valentine. She is angered by his behavior and mentally notes that "he and everyone else in this Blackfoot village would find her strange indeed if they thought for a moment that they would change her into an uncivilized, immoral savage" (p. 37).

While Valentine, to some extent, overcomes her racist views, her former fiance does not. During Night Rider's rescue of Valentine from Jeffrey Russell, Jeffrey is "awestruck as he looked upon the towering, furious visage of the Indian savage" (p. 247). He pledges revenge against Valentine and that "red devil," the "savage" Night Rider (p. 248). The author does not appear to share such views, but some of her readers may.

—Jennifer Gentile

**Savage Bliss.** By Cassie Edwards. New York: Charter Books, 1990. 321 pages. \$3.95 paper.



Thirteen-year-old Amelia Storm daringly sneaks away from her father's ship off the coast of what is now Washington State to talk with a young Indian man she sees on shore. Her father, a Boston trader come to Puget Sound to trade trinkets and rum for pelts, is a rigid and protective parent who would never have allowed her to talk with any man, let alone an Indian. Amelia and Gray Wing immediately fall in love, but when they return from their encounter, they find that Amelia's ship has left without her. She stays with Gray Wing but is soon captured by warriors of the Haida tribe

who, in turn, trade her to the Chinese. Amelia remains in China for ten years before finding her way back to Gray Wing. While Amelia and Gray Wing search for happiness, they experience numerous hardships and adventures, including another separation and the loss of many loved ones through revengeful wars, smallpox epidemics, and suicide.

Having brilliant red hair, fair skin, and an independent spirit, Amelia possesses all the qualities of a "true American." Her father is a wealthy businessman who hates Indians and associates with them only for the pelts they bring him in trade, but she forms a different opinion about Indians almost immediately. When she first sees Gray Wing, she does not feel the same hatred and disgust that her father does: "She could see the uniqueness of the Indian, who was tall and barefoot, wearing only a breechcloth. . . . Something deep within Amelia's stomach strangely stirred" (p. 7).

Gray Wing, who is destined to become chief of the Suquamish, prides himself on his skill at whale hunting. When Amelia first meets him, she traces the tattoo of a whale on his arm. He explains that it is the crest of his village and a sign of great nobility. She also discovers totem poles that are the "visual symbols of prestige" associated with ancestral traditions (p. 18). As the novel progresses, Gray Wing finds that his position with the neighboring Haida tribe depends on his relationship with the chief at the time. Gray Wing seeks revenge against those who hurt his people and loved

ones. He and other Indian chiefs blame the whites for the terrible smallpox epidemic decimating their villages.

Throughout the intense love relationship between Amelia and Gray Wing, the reader finds references to many of the traditions of the Indian peoples. Indeed, the author claims, in a special "author's note," that she did some research into the customs of the Suquamish Indians. In her novel we discover, for example, that interaction among the members of nearby tribes depends on peace between the chiefs of the tribes. Marriage rituals include Amelia's harpooning of a whale to prove her worth as the wife of an Indian chief. In the end, during Gray Wing's Potlatch, Amelia chooses the Indian way of life, feeling herself "being drawn more and more into the wondrous customs of the Suquamish Indians" (p. 316).

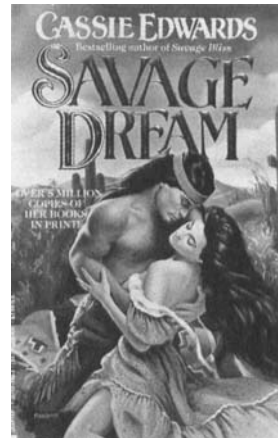
—Melissa M. Hantak

**Savage Dream.** By Cassie Edwards. New York: Charter Books, 1990. 312 pages. \$3.95 paper.

Maria Zamora's father is a wealthy white plantation owner who has been known to abduct Indians from their villages to use as slaves. Shadow, a handsome Navaho chief, tries to discuss the problem with Zamora, but Zamora ignores Shadow's pleas and abducts more Indians with the help of a rebel Navaho, Charging Falcon. In revenge, Shadow raids the plantation, takes his people back from slavery, vows to punish Charging Falcon, and kidnaps Maria from her father.

Unbeknownst to Maria's father, the lovely eighteen-year-old girl has been infatuated with Shadow for some time. Maria and Shadow are increasingly attracted to each other, and after a few days in the Indian village, they fall very much in love. When they decide to marry, Maria wants to tell her father.

After many plot complications—including Maria's mother's suicide and Maria's abduction by Charging Falcon—Maria convinces her father to bless her union with Shadow. Zamora finally makes peace with the Navaho, but after the wedding he is mur-



dered by another plantation owner. All his possessions, including the plantation, are left to Maria. In the end, Maria decides to give up her life on the plantation to live among the Navaho as Shadow's wife. She is pregnant at the end of the story.

Shadow is a full-blood Navaho, with "smooth bronze skin and striking Indian features" (p. 7). "Breathtakingly, ruggedly handsome" (p. 7), Shadow has a beautiful body. Most of the other Navahos in the novel are also described as attractive. Maria's best friend Pleasant Voice is "even more delicate and fragile" than Maria (p. 12), and "her copper face displayed large, dark, slanted eyes, her nose slightly curved, her lips full" (p. 12).

Although Shadow is referred to as a "savage" by Zamora, he is not at all savage. In trying to make peace with the white plantation owners, he agrees to stop one of his favorite pastimes, raiding. He wants to be a good leader who can protect his people and keep them comfortable and happy. The term *savage*, of course, has a variety of meanings. At the wedding ceremony, Maria thinks, "Tonight he looked more savage than not, dressed in only a breechclout" (p. 286). For her, the term *savage* is not pejorative; his savageness makes him look "wonderfully seductive" (p. 286).

Except for the cruel Charging Falcon, Indians are generally portrayed positively in this novel, although the Indian way of life is somewhat romanticized. The Navaho ceremonies described in the story are beautiful and rich. The Navaho wedding ceremony, for example, closes with this line: "Daltso hozhoni, all is beautiful indeed" (p. 293). At the end of the novel, we are told that this couple will be happy in their new life together. Shadow says, "Maria, you have made my hogan a house of happiness." The novel closes with these encouraging words: "Daltso hozhoni, at long last all was beautiful" (p. 312).

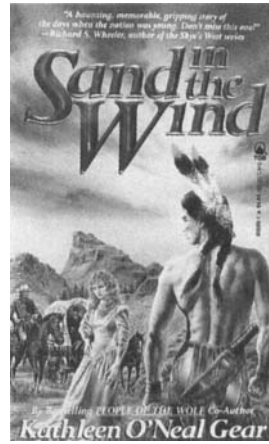
—Debra Schwartzberg

**Sand in the Wind.** By Kathleen O'Neal Gear. New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 1990. 314 pages. \$4.95 paper.

Colleen, a golden-haired nineteen-year-old, is forced by her father to marry Robert Merrill, a prosperous farmer. She is troubled, however, by dreams of a handsome Indian warrior. On a westward journey with her brutal husband, following some emigrants and a road-building team, Colleen is haunted by her dreams.

During the trip, she falls in love with Lieutenant Matthew Douglas, one of the soldiers who is escorting the wagon train. Because of that love, she is cursed by her husband as a witch and a whore.

As Colleen's and Merrill's wagon train approaches the Montana wilderness, a twenty-year-old Cheyenne warrior and medicine man named Wounded Bear is visited, in his dream visions, by a white wolf, which tells him that a golden-haired woman is coming to help his people. The people ignore him, believing that he is deranged or haunted by evil. In the fighting that ensues between Indians and whites, Colleen and Wounded Bear risk their lives and fall in love. Colleen rides away with her Indian warrior, and the two lovers end up wounded but happy in the mountains. Eventually, Lieutenant Douglas is killed by Robert Merrill, whose head is bitten off later by a white wolf.



Colleen wants to ease the dangerously hostile situation between Indians and whites: "If we don't the Cheyenne will die" (p. 253). She convinces the authorities to change the route of a proposed road, away from Indian Country—a move that prevents more bloody fighting between the two sides.

For the young Wounded Bear, "the whites are bad. They are trying to wipe the Tsistsistas [Cheyenne] from the face of the earth" (p. 85). He is the great hope of his people. He loves them and wants to save them, but he knows that the only way to do so is to compromise with the other side. When he and Colleen unite, he says, "We renewed the people" and "made them whole again" (p. 246).

In the hostile confrontation between whites and Indians, there is a lack of mutual understanding. The whites curse the Indians as "red devils" and "savages" (p. 131), because "we've been sending missionaries . . . but these Indians haven't yet learned to appreciate Christian values. They still . . . practice the most abominable morality" (p. 131). Even Colleen, in the beginning, believes that "the Indians are pagans. Their gods are false" (p. 77). The Indians hold similar prejudices against the white people. An old man tells the young people, "I see the whites bringing huge shovels to rip chunks from the earth. . . . I see you doing it with them. You will

become crazy. You will all die off . . . die off . . . because you've forgotten the prophecies of our fathers" (p. 310). Except for romantic love, this novel holds out little hope that relations between the two races will improve.

—*Jian Shi*

**Cherish the Dream.** By Kathleen Harrington. New York: Avon Books, 1990. 409 pages. \$3.95.



Theodora and Thomas Gordon, a brother-sister science team, join a government expedition across the Plains to discover and map a safe route over the mountains into California. The expedition is led by Captain Blade Roberts, a handsome half-Cheyenne warrior who grew up on the Plains but now leads a "white" life. The son of a Cheyenne "princess" and a French-Canadian trapper, Blade spent the first twelve years of his life in a Cheyenne village, learning to become a warrior. He got his Indian name, Blade Stalker, by slitting the throat of a Crow warrior in hand-to-hand combat.

A couple of weeks into the journey, Tom Gordon dies under mysterious circumstances; before drawing his final breath, he asks Blade to look after Theodora. Blade protects her life in a number of situations, at the same time fueling his desire for her and adding to her animosity toward him. Theodora is torn between her hatred of this arrogant man and her physical attraction to him. Eventually she realizes that traveling on the frontier with Blade is the life she was meant to lead, so she marries him, and they continue their explorations together.

Early in the novel, Theodora displays her ignorance and fear of Indians: "Terrified, she waited for a hail of arrows to rain down upon them" (p. 222). She even tells Blade, "They're all just savages, aren't they?" (p. 176). Lieutenant Fletcher, jealous of Blade, displays to Theodora his blatant prejudice toward all Indians, including his superior officer, Blade Roberts: "Roberts lived with the savages until he was twelve. . . . I've no need to lie about him to you.

You've experienced his savagery personally" (p. 70). His own hatred is more than personal and extends to all Indians. About to rape an Indian woman, he hits her in the face, saying, "I don't need t' hear that damn gibberish when I'm takin' y'. . . . I don't need t' be reminded that you're nothin' but a filthy squaw" (p. 327).

The most satisfying episode in this novel is the visit Theodora and Blade make to Blade's family in a Cheyenne village. It is thoughtfully written and shows white people through the eyes of Indians. Through this visit, Theodora learns how wrong she is in her ideas and fears about Indians. She also learns that many of her own actions are perceived negatively by her hosts. Shortly after arriving in the village, Blade tells Theodora, "Everyone's already convinced you're half savage" and warns her against "an outburst of bad manners" (p. 226). She ignores his advice and gets into trouble by sitting on the men's side of the lodge. The men misinterpret her actions, concluding that she wants to marry them because "she does not shyly lower her eyes the way our women do. She meets each warrior's gaze with boldness and smiles openly at them" (p. 265). Theodora eventually comes to appreciate and respect Indian ways. Her time in the village is an educational experience for both her and the reader.

—*Nicole D. Matson*

**Wyoming Star.** By Elisabeth Macdonald. New York: Pocket Books, 1990. 378 pages. \$4.50 paper.

Caroline Forester is haunted by her half-Indian heritage. Ashamed of both her outward appearance and the legend of her Nez Perce great-grandmother Falling Star, she strives for acceptance in the white world. Her search for identity takes her away from her family, carrying her to an exclusive boarding school, to college for a short time, and to the fast life of New York City.

Despite her efforts, Caroline feels that she does not fit in, so she returns to her family in Wyoming. Her return unleashes the passions that rule the rest of her life—her lustful but suppressed love for her half-brother Cameron and her undeniable love for and commitment to her husband Milo and their oil business. She is consumed with making Milo happy as well as making Wyoming Star Oil successful. The latter eventually takes precedence. Her obsession with business strains her marriage and prevents her



from having a warm relationship with her daughter Sara, who has embraced the Indian traditions that Caroline denies. Eventually, after a succession of hardships and triumphs, Caroline is able to find a balanced life. Her marriage improves, and her need for power in the company diminishes. Finally, her love for her daughter becomes evident as she and Sara together mourn the death of Caroline's mother in the traditional Nez Perce way.

Caroline is a sympathetic character because her confusion is understandable. She is continually subjected to mockery because she is an Indian. Other people make her feel cheap and inferior. When she is still a schoolgirl, she is nearly raped by some white boys, who declare, "We're gonna have some fun with the little squaw" (p. 10). Some years later, talking with a former lover, Caroline asks, "What do you think I am?" His response is telling: "Just the hottest little squaw I ever bedded" (p. 77). At the same time that she must endure this kind of abuse for being part Indian, Caroline has to contend with her mother's insistence that she embrace their Nez Perce heritage. The novel shows the turmoil that Indians can experience in the modern world.

A disturbing aspect of the novel is Caroline's lust for her half-brother, Cameron. By suggesting that Indians have unnatural sexual desires, the author reaffirms stereotypes about Indians as savages whose lustful passions are barely held in check by white standards of propriety.

It is interesting that despite Caroline's many efforts to deny her Indian heritage, she is never able to break away. Midway through the novel, she experiences a "vision" that tells her where the company should drill for oil. Caroline knows it is a power she has inherited from her Indian ancestors. She tells Milo, "I do have the gift... a legacy from Falling Star" (p. 138). Her vision suggests that her Indian heritage is an indelible part of her being that she will never be able to abandon.

—Elizabeth Rigney

**Cheyenne Sunrise.** By Constance O'Banyon. New York: Zebra Books, 1990. 384 pages. \$4.95 paper.

When Gray Falcon, a handsome Cheyenne warrior, is killed at the Battle of the Little Big Horn, he leaves unconsummated his love for his fiancée Alanna. The rest of the story is about Alanna, the half-Cheyenne granddaughter of a chief. She was raised by her mother's people, the Cheyenne, after her white father went back to his wife on a plantation in Virginia.

After Gray Falcon's death, the Cheyenne are moved to a wretched reservation in Indian Territory, where many of them starve to death because of neglect by the United States government. Alanna's father hears of his daughter's difficulties and sends the handsome Nicholas Ballanger to escort her to Virginia. They fall in love and eventually marry. After many plot complications, Alanna and Nicholas resolve their differences, and Alanna becomes the mistress of a large southern plantation. In the end she finds that she is pregnant. Although she largely abandons the ways of her mother's people, at one point she goes to Washington to testify to a congressional committee looking into the plight of the Indians.

Although Alanna is half-Cheyenne, she is almost entirely white in appearance. Her Cheyenne fiancé observes that "if she had not been exposed to the sun, her skin would be white" (p. 13). Her white husband, Nicholas, is excited by "her creamy white breasts" (p. 346). The congressman before whom she testifies about the plight of the Cheyenne tells her, "It is difficult to believe that you were brought up in an Indian village, because you look just like any well-brought-up southern girl" (p. 310).

If her appearance is white, in what ways does her "Indian half" show up? She has a "strange power over the animals, as if they were drawn to her in some unexplained way" (p. 249). That power enables her to tame a horse that no white man had been able to ride. Her spirit is said to be "wild and free" (p. 354), and she has "sharp instincts" (p. 360). And she is brave. When she learns that a white woman who is a rival for her husband's love has come to visit her, "Alanna, who had the blood of Cheyenne war chiefs in her veins,

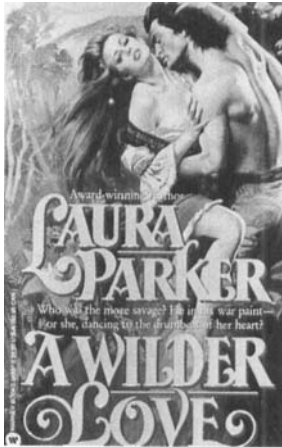


came down the stairs, ready to do battle with the woman" (p. 377). When asked whether she hates whites for what they did to her family, she says, "No, how could I? My husband is white, my brother is white" (p. 309).

Although this Cheyenne "princess," the central character of the novel, is portrayed with great sympathy, the book demonstrates a disturbing racism. The following statement, for example, suggests that most Indians are dirty: "My grandmother was an oddity in the Cheyenne tribe because she insisted I bathe often, even in the winter" (p. 210). Alanna's white husband suggests that he thinks most Indians are stupid when he tells her, "You were never meant to live in an Indian lodge, Alanna. You are bright and intelligent, and the time would have come when you would have been discontented with such a simple existence" (p. 370).

—Peter G. Beidler

**A Wilder Love.** By Laura Parker. New York: Warner Books, 1990. 346 pages. \$4.95 paper.



Fanny Sweets is an Irish woman of eighteen who, because she is an orphan, has come under the influence of Phineas Todd. Todd teaches her how to be a pickpocket and supports her while she steals for him. They go to Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show to steal from the crowds, but Phineas and Fanny are separated. After an enemy of Phineas's nearly kills Fanny, she hides in an Indian tipi that is a prop for the show. There she meets Matthew, one of the Sioux performers, and steals a bracelet from him. Later Matthew rescues her from a dangerous wild horse and becomes fascinated by her fine body and her odd ways. After Fanny joins the show, Matthew again finds it necessary to rescue her, this time from being raped by a white man.

Later, Matthew returns to his home among the Sioux in the West, and Fanny follows him. When she becomes sick, he nurses her back to health, and they soon marry. Bill Cody visits and tells of a Wild West Show performance planned for the Queen of

England. He wants to take some Indians with him, despite their superstition that no Indians can cross the ocean without dying. Finally, Matthew and Fanny decide to accompany him. After a difficult trip, Fanny is briefly reunited with Phineas Todd in England. He does not ask her to be a pickpocket again, but he does ask her to help him to assassinate Queen Victoria.

Matthew is a Harvard graduate who prefers the "pure and simple life" (p. 127) of his people despite his assimilation into white culture. Fanny, who finds him "a strange and haunting mixture of the savage and the intellectual" (p. 169), has only the education gained through personal experience. Some of her odd mannerisms cause Matthew to call her a *witkowin*, or crazy woman (p. 94). When he realizes that she has stolen his bracelet, he challenges her moral sense. She fails to understand, and he becomes "weary of the conflict of cultures" (p. 127). Despite their cultural differences, however, they are drawn together by their love and by the fact that both are outcasts in their own cultures.

The traditions of the Dakota Indians are important to Matthew. One of those traditions is to help people who are sick. For that reason alone, he nurses Fanny back to health even though she has stolen from him. Dakota traditions also require celibacy, so celibacy is very important to him. Although Fanny sparks his wildest desires, he controls his passion, because the Indian code tells him that he must. Fanny remarks on his obvious lust for her: "That wasn't a tent pole propping up the sheets" (p. 234). One of the myths about Indians that circulates through the show grounds is that Indians do not like to kiss. Fanny finds out, however, that Matthew is not opposed to kissing: "Then, suddenly, softly, his lips were against hers" (p.169).

—Kiersten Mitchell

**This Wild Heart.** By Patricia Pellicane. New York: Zebra Books, 1990. 384 pages. \$4.50 paper.

After Morgan Wainright, the beautiful, pampered New York socialite, tells her father that she loves the dastardly Bradley Redgrave, her father forces her to prove her maturity by sending her to survive for six months on the Nevada ranch she has inherited. Morgan realizes when she gets there that she is not the sole owner of the Red Rock Ranch; she must share her lodgings



with Joseph Youngblood, the virile half-Hopi co-owner of the ranch. She is somewhat frightened by him: "Indians killed. . . . Did they still go on the warpath? . . . Did Indians still take scalps?" (pp. 27-29). The story follows Morgan's adjustment to the dangers of the West and to life on the ranch, and focuses on the hatred that she and Youngblood feel toward each other. Yet, for all the disdain Morgan holds for Youngblood initially, after a series of hardships she falls in love with him, marries him, and becomes pregnant with his child. In the end, Morgan decides to give up New York

altogether and to live on the ranch.

Stereotypes abound, especially at the start of the novel. Youngblood is described as "nearly naked, but for a breechcloth and moccasins" (p. 31) and a "half-dressed savage" (p. 44). In fact, the entire Hopi Nation is portrayed as in a state of undress. While visiting Youngblood's Hopi family atop a mesa, Morgan finds that she must wear Indian clothes and wonders "if the whole Hopi nation slept naked" (p. 247). Often Youngblood communicates primitively: "Youngblood grunted in true Indian fashion" (p. 95).

Youngblood's physical appearance is that of an Indian; his white characteristics are portrayed through his education and his Christian name, "Joseph." Upon meeting him, Morgan notes, "This man was no savage, at least not in the true sense of the word. He was obviously educated" (p. 32). She learns, to her amazement, that Youngblood is a graduate of Harvard Law School, and she wonders, "Why in the world would an educated man choose to put aside that education and take on the running of a horse ranch instead" (p. 198)?

Although this novel strives to depict Youngblood and the Hopi Nation in a fair light, it is subtly racist. This statement, for example, apparently intends to show Youngblood's manliness and courage but is actually a racist remark: "Jake suppressed a shiver as he remembered the look of death in [Youngblood's] eyes. No. He didn't want to go up against one of his kind" (p. 371). And Morgan shows her prejudice when she insinuates that Indians cannot be trusted as sex partners: "He was a trickster, of course, this wily, oh so handsome Indian. No doubt he knew what would

happen if he kissed her" (p. 60). Near the end of the novel, Morgan is brutalized and nearly raped by the repulsive Jake. This encounter makes her realize that Youngblood is more civilized than most white men.

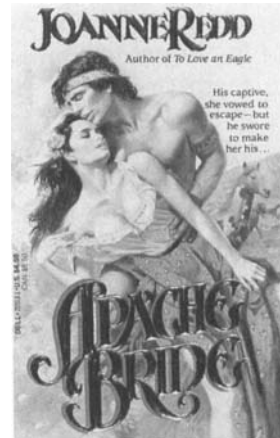
—*Elisa M. Chiusano*

**Apache Bride.** By Joanne Redd. New York: Dell, 1990. 384 pages. \$4.50 paper.

During a journey to visit her father in Mexico, the lovely Alison Carr sees the Apache chief Ramon ride by. She finds him appealing but reminds herself that "he's a cold-blooded killer, a savage! He's our enemy!" (p. 9). Ramon sees her, too, and feels drawn to her. That night he abducts her from bed. Overcome by passion for her, yet fiercely proud of the fact that "Apaches do not rape their captives" (p. 48), Ramon resolves to wait for Alison to acquiesce willingly to sex with him. "I will never be willing for you to do that to me!" she asserts boldly, to which he replies, "Yes, you will. Someday you will beg me for it" (p. 49).

With the aid of Ramon's sister, Jacita, Alison learns the ways of the tribe, as well as new methods for collecting and cultivating food to make life easier for the women. Meanwhile, Ramon, threatened by the United States cavalry "yellowlegs" and encouraged by the fact that Mexico's President Diaz is a Mextec Indian, makes a deal allowing the Apaches to move peacefully onto a Mexican reservation. However, the tribe is betrayed. The Mexicans use alcohol and the cover of a festival to ambush the Indians and force them to march toward Mexico City, where they are to be sold as slaves. After a trial and a second betrayal, the Apaches finally break loose and run from their captors. Jacita, her husband, Ramon, and Alison are successful in their escape. They return home to live in love and happiness until their deaths many years later.

Alison, the central character of the novel, is tall and has blue eyes. Jacita describes her skin as "quite lovely, as creamy as the yucca blossoms" (p. 106). She is also described as headstrong,



possessing “determination and a sense of adventure” (p. 13). The narrative, which is developed from her perspective, is essentially a love story about her and Ramon. Although she continually views the Apaches as “savages,” her prejudice is contrasted with the sensual desires of her body. This paradox is recognized by Ramon: “You are still lying to yourself. Your mouth says one thing, your body another” (p. 197).

At the close of the novel—yes, Alison does “beg for it”—the two cultures supposedly come together when Alison chooses to remain with her lover. Even this reconciliation, however, fails to conceal the white supremacist and anti-Indian attitudes that flavor the novel. Alison’s choice is described as being “between her white culture and heritage with all of its comfort and security” and “having to scratch in the dirt for a meager living” (p. 378).

In the end, because “no woman could turn down paradise” (p. 378), Alison decides to give up culture and ease. She chooses, instead, the romantic and sexual gratification presented “by her magnificent chief, her fierce savage warrior, her exciting lover” (p. 379).

—Victoria Walker

**Sun God.** By Nan Ryan. New York: Dell, 1990. 454 pages. \$4.50 paper.



When Amy Sullivan returns to her family’s ranch in Texas after five years away at school, she surprises everyone. At age sixteen, she has blossomed into the epitome of blonde womanhood. She is welcomed home passionately by Luiz Quintano, the son of her father’s partner. The handsome young man, who is half-Spanish and half-Aztec, is known to Amy and to his mother as Tonatiuh, Sun God. Luiz’s father is Spanish, and his mother is the Aztec Princess Xochiquetzal, a powerful goddess.

Luiz and Amy fall in love, and they share a wonderfully physical and emotional relationship. After the sudden and closely timed deaths of both of their fathers, Luiz

falls prey to Amy's greedy, racist brothers, Baron and Lucas, who beat him nearly to death. To save his life, Amy tells her brothers that she does not love Luiz. Not understanding her motives, Luiz sees that denial as betrayal. The brothers leave him in the desert, where he is saved by his goddess-mother.

Returning ten years later with bitterness for Amy still in his heart, Luiz finds that Amy married within three weeks of his banishment and gave birth to a child. After many months of trying to punish her for her betrayal of him, Luiz learns her true motive for denying her love. He also discovers that the child is his.

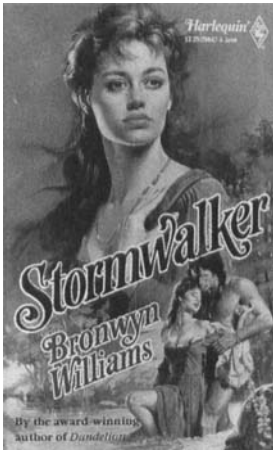
The author describes Luiz as an inferior Indian and a superior god, almost a divine creature: "The Indian stood naked in the sunlight. His name was Tonatiuh—Sun God—in the language of his mother's people, the imperial Aztecs. The name fit him. . . . His tall, wet body glistening in the bright desert sunshine, Tonatiuh appeared to be a young god" (p. 1). Amy sees him as "her Aztec Indian Sun God . . . communing with the ancient spirits" (p. 91). Amy's brothers, on the other hand, see him as an "uppity half-breed" (p. 102), a "superstitious half-breed" (p. 114), a "barbarian redskin" (p. 114), and a "filthy . . . redskin" (p. 119).

Luiz possesses "magical" abilities apparently inherited from his mother. For example, he has a mysterious skill in controlling horses. He captures a wild mare who, "as if she understood every word, pranced towards the man so commandingly beckoning to her" (p. 388). Luiz also has clairvoyant powers. His dreams predict the deaths of both his and Amy's father, as well as Amy's apparent "betrayal."

This cliché-ridden novel exhibits many of the romantic assumptions that American society holds regarding Indians. The author even includes an episode with a band of dirty, uncivilized Apaches whose chief has a perverted appetite for white women. This Apache chief is meant to contrast dramatically with the noble Luiz. The novel perpetuates traditional generalizations about Mexicans and American Indians, in broad "good-guy" and "bad-guy" categories. The author never delves into the true significance or depth of Indian cultures.

—Jennifer A. Allen

**Stormwalker.** By Bronwyn Williams. New York: Harlequin, 1990. 299 pages. \$3.25 paper.



After watching her parents die during an Indian uprising, and after suffering a brutal rape, Laura Gray is forced to flee to the woods of what was later to become North Carolina. During her stay in the woods, she begins to feel as if someone is watching her. She fears that it is her Indian rapist, but it turns out to be the hunter Stormwalker, a mixed-blood Croatoan Indian. Having been raised to fear Indians, Laura is hesitant to accept Stormwalker's help, but slowly she learns to trust and to rely on him. Together they survive among the savage tribes and

treacherous conditions of the wilderness.

Stormwalker is the son of a Croatoan chief and his white wife, Bridget. Known in town as John Walker, he is engaged in a constant internal conflict between Indian culture and the white world. When he goes to town, he disguises "the color of his hair well enough" to make him "as English as any man in Packwood's Crossing" (p. 37). While in town, John feels uncomfortably attracted to Laura but shuts out such thoughts: "Deliberately, he forced himself to think of Kitappi" (p. 10), an Indian woman he has considered marrying. To Stormwalker, the white world is intimidating and threatening. The only way to ease his mind is to ponder his peaceful Indian life.

The townspeople in the novel view the Indians in a variety of ways. The Harker boys refer to the Indians as "wild'uns" who "wandered in and out of a body's house like chickens if the door wasn't kept shut" (p. 8). To some they are childlike: "They were more like children, according to Addie Harker—nosing about for sweets, touching anything bright and shiny that happened to catch their eye" (pp. 8-9). To others the Indians are "savages" (p. 95) and "treacherous bastards" (p. 283). Young Laura reflects about the Indian who raped her: "Later she would remember biting down hard on the hand that covered her mouth, gagging at the taste of filthy, greasy flesh and hearing a guttural voice grunt" (p. 16).

Sometimes Indians are lumped into one group. When someone asks which Indians are burning white homes, another answers, "Hell, it don't matter, does it? One lot's as bad as the next!" (p. 14). The whites generally distrust or fear the Indians and seek to clear them off "their" land. These attitudes create the conflict in the story. Laura, after all, has seen the Indians as rapists and murderers. Upon waking up one morning, she looks into Stormwalker's eyes and thinks, "Blue eyes? Since when had these heathens had blue eyes?" (p. 95). She is greeted, to her surprise, by a friendly voice saying, "Welcome to this morning, Laura Gray" (p. 95). For the first time, Laura begins to see her "savage" enemy as a human being.

In the beginning, Laura fights Stormwalker's friendship and love, but as she grows to know him, she is able to look beyond the stereotypes. Eventually, she and Stormwalker build a life together in the wilderness.

—*William D. Smith*