Gendered Construction of the American Indian in Popular Media

By S. Elizabeth Bird

Contemporary popular culture is permeated with images of Native Americans, who have become symbols of wisdom, beauty, peace, and nostalgia. In this paper, I trace the changes in this imagery over time, with particular emphasis on the role of gender, and how Native American men and women have become sexualized in relation to the White gaze, which is an important component of colonial domination. Many other Americans never encounter a Native American, and media fill a knowledge vacuum with outmoded and limited stereotypes. The 1990s lovely princess and Native American stud may be more benign images than the earlier squaw or crazed savage, but they are equally unreal and dehumanizing.

The scene is a drug store, anywhere in the U.S. In one direction is a display of cartoon images of Pocahontas, the voluptuous American Indian princess.[1] In another, a bright poster features a noble, American Indian elder gazing toward a setting sun. A doe-eyed maiden, in flowing white buckskin, smiles enticingly from her home among the collectible art prints. Shelves of romance novels display bare-chested, love-lorn warriors among the pirates, cowboys, and regency dandies. In contemporary popular culture, American Indians have become potent cultural symbols, and more specifically, Indian men and women have come to fill separate and different places in the popular White iconography.

In this essay, I trace the development of this gendered imagery, addressing male, and then female, constructions. Moving from historical origins to contemporary media manifestations, I suggest that to understand the way Indian imagery functions in contemporary White culture, we must consider how American Indian men and women have become both sexualized and desexualized, not in relation

[1] The terms "Native American" and "American Indian" are both used as self-description, with no consistent agreement as to which is "correct." I lived for several years in a region where "American Indian"' is the preferred term; I chose to use that designation here.

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to each other, but in relation to the White gaze. I begin with an overview of the way American Indians have been represented.

Constructing the American Indian: The Role of Anthropology

It is not new to point out that mass culture images of American Indians are images created by and for White culture (Berkhofer, 1979; Bird, 1996; Churchill, 1992, 1994; Francis, 1992). In earlier times, that alien image was feared and hated. It was fed by and has fed a popular culture that mythologized the massacre of Whites by savage, uncontrollable American Indians. The "captivity narrative," in which honorable White women and children were degraded by lustful savages, became a staple of popular journalism and fiction in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries (Derounian-Stodola & Levernier, 1993; Namias, 1993). Alongside that image has been a parallel narrative of the American Indian as the wise, spiritual keeper of the land. Whichever narrative has been in the ascendancy, American Indians themselves have had little voice. Their role has been to be the object of the White gaze and the focus of White myth.

Current media representations of American Indians are understandable only if seen as the legacy of a complex mesh of cultural elements, including formal history, literature, material artifacts, folklore, photography, cartoons, art, mass media, and anthropological discourse. The work of early anthropologists among Native American peoples was crucial in codifying the idea of the American Indian as "primitive other." Their ethnographic descriptions became the core of museum exhibits, world fairs, Wild West shows, and early silent films (Griffiths, 1996), ultimately leading to current popular depictions. The anthropological convention of the timeless "ethnographic present" placed native cultures into a time warp from which, in the White consciousness, they have not emerged. From 19th-century tourist displays to contemporary movies, television, and romance novels, White audiences have found pleasure in the traditional clothing, nobility, and sacred rituals that anthropologists and early photographers had first portrayed.

Traditional American Indian cultures are among the most thoroughly studied anywhere, with ethnographies providing a wealth of detail about costume, customs, myths, and rituals. However, they offer little sense of the people *as* people. This is especially true of the wave of "salvage ethnography" that swept across the Great Plains at the end of the last century, inspired by Franz Boas and the work of anthropological pioneers like Clark Wissler, Alfred Kroeber, Paul Radin, and Robert H. Lowie. Their goal was not primarily to understand contemporary native cultures, but to record them before they were lost. As Dippie (1982) wrote, "Ethnography was the anthropological equivalent of wilderness preservation. It drew upon the belief in the Vanishing American and substantially reinforced it" (p. 236). Volumes of American Indian ethnographies produced accounts of peoples programmed by cultural rules, calmly going about their (ultimately doomed) business.

Many American Indians have complained that they do not recognize themselves in these descriptions. This sense of misrepresentation is at the core of the

distrust of anthropology that is so pervasive among contemporary Native Americans, epitomized by the anger of DeLoria (1988):

> behind each policy and program with which Indians are plagued . . . stands the anthropologist. The fundamental thesis of the anthropologist is that people are objects for observation, people are then considered objects for experimentation, for manipulation, and for eventual extinction. (p. 81)

Biolsi (1997) used the career of anthropologist Haviland Scudder Mekeel, noted for his 1930s work with the Lakota, to illustrate the role of anthropology in constructing the Lakota as "primitive" as he searched for "authentic" American Indians to study. Whereas Lakota people were more interested in debating treaty rights and coping with change, Mekeel was looking for untainted primitivism. Similarly, Whiteley (1997) argued that standard descriptions in introductory anthropological textbooks have been important in confirming the image of American Indians as fundamentally different from Whites, and as representing past, "primitive" cultures. Speaking of popular portrayals of the Hopi, Whitely wrote: "So, (we) self-righteous anthropologists can be appalled by Smokis, art collectors, or New Agers, while conveniently blinding ourselves to a family resemblance with our own representations of Hopi culture" (p. 188).

Perhaps most important, as Rosaldo (1989) observed, classic ethnographic techniques had the effect of distancing the observer from the people studied, literally objectifying them. Individual ethnographers may have had close personal ties with the people they studied, but the conventions of ethnography prevented such closeness from showing. Bataille and Sands (1984) pointed out that, although traditional anthropologists employed techniques like autobiographies, they used these accounts simply as indicators of cultural patterns, rather than as ways to present their informants subjectively. The importance of this is that these ethnographies, and the White cultural products that spun from them, have continued to define popular conceptions of American Indians, even though ethnography itself has been transformed and problematized within the field of anthropology.

For example, a central stereotype of American Indians is their stoicism and lack of emotion, conditioned by a century and a half of stern, unsmiling photos, and descriptions of people behaving with programmed ritualism. Objective ethnography produced accounts of people devoid of human emotion because to write of emotion was "unscientific," not to mention uncomfortable. Current popular culture perpetuates this image. Thus, Kimberley Norris, an American Indian woman who had a small role in the 1980s TV miniseries, *Son of the Morning Star,* reported how she was told to redo a scene in which she wept for the slain leader Crazy Horse. Instead of her tears, she was told, "Let's do it again and just take it with that dignified stoicism of the Indians" (quoted in Greer, 1994, p. 144).

My recent work on audience response to the now-canceled TV show*, Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman,* which featured a post-Civil War Cheyenne village, indicated that the different responses of American Indian and non-American Indian audiences often hinged on their acceptance or otherwise of the classic unemotionalism of the Cheyenne characters (Bird, 1996). Thus, a White woman remarked approv-

ingly on the stoicism exhibited by an imprisoned Cheyenne: "You know, they can be very intense emotionally but able to suppress it and not show it" (p. 253). Another agreed, saying that stoicism was "a Native American value, and that's being true to your word and being willing to go to death" (p. 253). American Indian viewers were especially angered by this same story, arguing that "his manhood was suppressed," "his dignity was violated," and the character was not allowed to show normal emotions. "I could have seen anger, but he just . . . put his head down, made him look pitiful" (p. 256). Whereas White viewers generally found the portrayal of the Cheyenne to be positive and accurate, the American Indian viewers did not feel that way: "They're caricatures and they're not human beings with their own language, their own thoughts, their own feelings" (p. 254). Similarly, Shiveley (1992), in comparing male American Indian and Anglo responses to a classic Western, *The Searchers*, found that, whereas both groups enjoyed the film and both identified with John Wayne as the hero, the Anglo viewers also thought the film was generally authentic in its portrayal of the Old West. American Indian men did not feel that way. Shiveley's conclusion, like mine, was that White viewers have naturalized the popular, objectified imagery of American Indians, accepting it as "authentic," whereas American Indian viewers have resisted the dehumanizing behavior they see as central to the imagery.

The denial of American Indians's sexual identities in relation to each other has been an important element in the objectification of the American Indian. Anthropology has also had a role in this. Just as emotions tend to be purged from the ethnographic record, so does sexuality. The classic ethnography contains information about incest and marriage rules, but it provides little sense of people who are active sexual beings. Frequently, American Indian sexuality was classified as somehow inferior or more primitive than the refined expressions of Western love. For example, Morgan (1851/1962), in his classic work on the Iroquois, wrote, "of that passion which originates in a higher development of the powers of the human heart, and is founded upon a cultivation of the affections between the sexes, they were entirely ignorant. In their temperaments, they were below the passion in its simplest forms" (p. 322). The apparent denial of sexuality among ethnographic subjects reinforced a cultural tradition of viewing American Indian men and women (separately) as the sexualized objects of the colonialist gaze.

The Objectification of the American Indian Male

The Doomed Warrior

As Berkhofer (1979) pointed out, the American Indian male has usually been seen as either the "noble savage" or his alter ego, the "ignoble savage." What Berkhofer did not emphasize is that in both guises, the male image has always had a strong sexual dimension. During times of conflict with Whites, American Indian males became sexual threats, epitomized most clearly in that most pervasive of genres, the captivity narrative. Thousands of examples have been published in the past 3 centuries. The captivity narrative confirmed to popular audiences the notion of American Indian as "Other," whether that Other is evil or noble. As Namias (1993)

pointed out, the American Indian, whether male or female, was not only noble and savage, but also both exotic and erotic. All those dimensions were present even when Indian males were demonized. Part of the conception of the "primitive native" has been an often-repressed awareness of "animal sexuality." In the colonial period, American Indians were seen as wild, passionate, and alluring, blessed with a "dark beauty." According to Namias (1993), "The concoction of the noble, the wild, and the exotic appeared to whet the English sexual appetite, at the same time inspiring trepidation among several white captives" (p. 88). Rape of White captives appears to have been rare in this period. Captive Elizabeth Hanson, for example, wrote that "the Indians are very civil towards their captive women, not offering any incivility by any indecent carriage" (Drake, 1844, p. 125). Yet, Puritans like Cotton Mather quickly came to equate American Indians with the Devil, with sexual predation taking a larger and larger role in the image.

After the 1820s, as Whites encroached further into American Indian lands, the image of the sexual brute, capable of every kind of excess, became more and more prevalent (Ramsey, 1994). As Namias (1993) pointed out, anthropological arguments for the existence of superior and inferior races helped to justify exploitation and destruction, and "proven" sexual brutality bolstered further the rationale for destroying the American Indian, who appeared in endless dime novels and popular media as a highly sexualized figure: In 1867, Henry Tuckerman, speaking about Erastus Dow Palmer's 1859 sculpture, "The White Captive," commented that "No more suggestive incident can be imagined for either poetry, romance, or art, than the fair, youthful, and isolated hostage of civilization surrounded by savage captors" (quoted in Kasson, 1990, p. 76). Captivity narratives, such as Mary Jemison's, which described the love of a White captive for her American Indian husband, were unusual and often required editing for publication. Writing about her first husband, Sheninjee, Jemison stated that "his good nature, generosity, tenderness and friendship towards me, soon gained my affection . . . I loved him!" (Seaver, 1824/1961, p. 52). She also loved her second husband, Hiokatoo, "a man of tender feelings" (p. 112). Yet, in the 1856 edition of her story, editors added material that made Hiokatoo appear brutal and murderous. This is not to deny that White captives were sometimes raped and mistreated by American Indian captors; however, the captivity narrative became the most pervasive vehicle for standardizing images of American Indian males. During the 19th century, the same episodes of sexual savagery were repeated again and again in both true and fictional accounts of captivity, truly producing a mythical reality. The infamous narrative about the torture and death of Maria and Christina Manheim, captured by Senecas in 1779, ends as "these helpless virgins sunk down in the arms of their deliverer, death" (Drake, 1844, p. 334) and was endlessly copied and embellished upon in the years to come.

The fear of the blatant sexuality of the American Indian male continued into the era of cinema. Edgerton (1994) described the 1920 Maurice Toumeur-Clarence Brown version of Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans,* in which the evil Magua "stabs Cora repeatedly during the final rebuke at the cliff, after leering at her in uninhibited ways for much of the picture" (p. 1). In the 1936 George Seitz version, the White heroines continue to be terrorized by the evil, lustful Hurons, as Magua

tries to force Alice to be his "squaw." However, it is the "good" American Indian Chingachgook who voices the stereotypical vision of American Indian lust for White women: "Pale face squaw no good Mohican. Fair hair make heart of Uncas weak like water" (p. 6).

Nevertheless, alongside the brutal savage, the erotic appeal of the male American Indian body was never deeply buried. As the "Indian problem" grew less pressing into the 1890s, we saw the gradual ascendancy of the noble, and often eroticized savage, as the physical appeal of the imagined American Indian body grew increasingly overt. An important dimension of the objectification of the American Indian male has long been an acknowledgment of his erotic appeal, even if that appeal is forbidden. From first European contact, much was made of the physical nature of the natives of America—their nakedness, their fine physical development, and so on. Describing 16th-century engravings of newly discovered American Indians, Berkhofer (1979) wrote, "Such pictures as this one of a 'prince' established the muscular handsomeness and athletic virility of the Noble American Savage . . . . The lack of clothing and the careful distribution of artifacts upon and about the prince's body only enhanced the image" (p. 138). For years, depictions of American Indians tended to show them almost naked, even if the cultures concerned tended to wear more clothes. As long as American Indians were not a threat, their physical beauty was often admired, and their "innocent" enjoyment of their nakedness was even envied. Van Lent (1996) stated, "even when presented in the guise of moralizing, appreciation of the unclothed body of Native Americans has a long history" (p. 217).

Popular literature of the 19th century continued the appreciative gaze of the male body, often comparing the American Indian with a classical sculpture, such as in a story quoted by Billington (1981), describing an Apache "so perfectly formed that he would make Apollo envious" (p. 110). Gerdts (1973) described the popularity of male American Indian figures in neoclassic sculpture:

> The American Indian figure suggested a general aura of romance and nostalgia, but the male American Indian often came to express a certain sexual prowess that the white man could not. He was usually depicted as a powerful physical being, frequently semi-nude, while Caucasian males were almost invariably clothed, except for adolescent or youthful types . . . a symbol of primitive virility." (p. 129)

Striking in these images is a sense of the American Indian male as an object of desire, presented as exposed and available, as only White women, not men, could be. James Fenimore Cooper, in *The Last of the Mohicans,* has the beautiful Alice gaze at Uncas "as she would have looked upon some precious relic of the Greek chisel . . . while Heyward . . . openly expressed his admiration of such an unblemished specimen of the noblest proportions of man" (quoted in Berkhofer, 1979, p. 94).

Namias (1993) pointed to the strong 19th-century undercurrent of eroticization of the American Indian male in both art and popular culture. Chauncy B. Ives's sculpture, "Willing Captive," first produced in 1862 and reproduced often since, portrays a young woman clinging to her American Indian abductor, while her mother begs her to return to the White world. As Namias pointed out, "If there

were American Indians who looked like this one, no wonder there was a need for stories of tragic sexual unions" (p. 107), in which those who defied convention could only suffer for their choice. American Indians, although also often characterized as animal-like, at the same time carried associations of pristine, "first American" purity. They might actually be objects of White desire—their "savagery" and "nobility" being schizophrenically expressed in their sexual personae. The sexualized American Indian male apparently appealed to both White men and women. We might hypothesize different reasons for this: Perhaps there was a forbidden fantasy appeal for women who read captivity narratives voraciously in a culture that rigidly repressed respectable female sexuality. Although there is arguably an element of homoeroticism in the White male gaze, I believe the core of the attraction for White men lies in the powerful "going native" myth that has long been entrenched in U.S. culture. As Baird (1996) pointed out, the going-native narrative plays on the fantasy identification of the White man with the free, "natural" American Indian, who is simultaneously noble and yet able to allow free reign to his "wild" sexuality. For both White men and women, fear and fantasy are two sides of the same coin.

These noble American Indians, although attractive and exotic, were highly Europeanized in appearance, often painted and sculpted as classical figures. Often the beauty of the American Indian body was coupled with a romantic nostalgia, with the rise of the "doomed Indian" stereotype—the American Indian who knows his time is past, but accepts it with honorable resignation. Thus, in Thomas Crawford's 1855 sculpture, "Dying Chief Contemplating the Progress of Civilization," a muscular, naked (except for his headdress) "brave" sits, pondering the extinction of his people. An 1870 critic admired "the bowed head, the clenched hand, the stoical despair of this majestic figure" (quoted in Dippie, 1982, p. 216). Two sculptural images that have become cultural icons are Cyrus Dallin's 1908 "Appeal to the Great Spirit" and, most significantly, James Fraser's 1915 "End of the Trail." In different ways, each portrays a noble, defeated, scantily clad warrior, emblematic of the end of the race. Van Lent (1996) suggested that the resonance of these images, which have been copied endlessly in popular imagery, is rooted, at least in part, in the sheer physical appeal of the figure: "Even at the end of the trail, the fearless warrior, with all his depressive weariness, is irresistibly appealing" (p. 214). Although calling these early images "sex objects" would be stretching a point, we see the appeal of the exhausted, victimized warrior returning more explicitly later. Striking about all these images, whether verbal or visual, is that the representation is always of Indian men either alone, as the object of the White gaze, or in relation to White women. The American Indian woman is absent—the very conception of American Indian men and women interacting together in some real, cultural world is not part of the construction.

This has continued into the contemporary mass culture scene. The physical attractiveness of the "noble" American Indian male, as I suggested above, has not been unnoticed in early popular culture, although repressed and condemned. As early as the 1920 version of *Last of the Mohicans,* the allure of the "good" American Indian to White women was acknowledged. Cora admires Uncas to the British Captain Randolf: "Surely among his own people he is a prince!" Randolf is suitably

disgusted: "You! The daughter of Colonel Munro! Admiring a filthy savage!" (Barker & Sabin, 1995, p. 68). This mutual attraction was developed in subsequent versions of the film. Later Hollywood productions like *Apache* (1964) allowed White stars like Burt Lancaster to bare their bodies far more than they could in White roles.

Turning to the romance novel, we find that in the 1990s, the wild, rapacious beast has been replaced by a kinder, gentler version of savage. In a recent study of male American Indian imagery in film, romance novels, and other popular media, Van Lent (1996) convincingly showed that the image of the American Indian male has become a cultural icon in the 1990s. Perhaps in response to cultural uncertainties about correct male roles, the American Indian man, usually placed in a safe, "dead" historical context, has finally become a thorough-going sex object. Young American Indian men are handsome and virile, with the potential for decisive action when pressed, yet tender, loving, and vulnerable, in a way that White action heroes rarely are portrayed. Thus, Indian or mixed-blood men prove incredible lovers for White women in romance novels, whereas American Indian women are invisible. The heroes are strong, yet tender, as in a scene from a 1996 romance novel, *Too Tough to Tame*: "His arms were bands of steel and velvet around her, powerful but gentle. . . . She felt as if she were a feather, floating in his arms" (Camp, 1996, p. 184).

The captivity narrative has proved to be a resilient myth that can be reinterpreted to fit the times, collapsing fiction, history, and folklore into a continuing, malleable narrative. In this mythical realm, the American Indian male has become anything the current White culture wants him to be, and so does his sexuality. In romance novels, the captivity narrative mutates again, providing the framework for almost all examples of the genre. Romance author Cassie Edwards (1997), for example, writes the successful "Savage Series." These books range across 19th-century Indian country, where beautiful White women are captured with regularity. The following quotations are taken from a publicity insert in her latest, *Savage Longings* (1997): "Searching the wilds of the Wyoming Territory . . . Rebecca Veach is captured by (Blazing Eagle) the one man who fulfills her heart's desire" (*Savage Secrets*); "Alone in the Kentucky wilderness . . . Pamela and Strong Bear share a forbidden love forged in a breathless rapture of mounting ecstasy" (*Savage Eden*); "(In) the lush forests of Minnesota. . . . She is his captive . . . his gleaming, bronzed chest and hard-muscled arms ensure her surrender" (*Savage Splendor*).

Significantly, although these American Indian men are strong and virile, they are also vulnerable. As Van Lent (1996) pointed out, a common characteristic of American Indian heroes is that they are often victimized, forced to suffer, lose their culture, and even die. The romance hero Storm, in Deborah Camp's (1996) *Too Tough to Tame*, begins the book severely wounded, and the heroine nurses him back to life. Other heroes have to accept the reality of the impending doom of their people. In a 1994 television movie, *Cheyenne Warrior*, the romance also begins with the near death of the hero, followed by a growing attraction between him and his nurse/lover. Eventually, they separate, and the warrior rides off to a fate as inevitable as that of the doomed lover Uncas in *Last of the Mohicans*. The pathos of the "End of the Trail" is an integral part of the attraction of the wounded

Indian lover. Feminist critics have pointed to the seemingly perverse attraction that women often have for suffering men. As Kirkham and Thumim (1995) wrote,

> the penetration of wounding and its consequent invalidity . . . places the male in the position of the female and allows for female recognition, empathy and the acknowledgment of sexual attraction. . . . The physical and psychological wounding of the male marks him as vulnerable, in the manner of the wounded Christ—an ultimate symbol of male vulnerability. (p. 25)

Handsome American Indian men fit the "wounded" role perfectly. Not only are they often personally victimized, they represent the tragedy of their vanished race. These romantic heroes are always inexorably drawn to White women. The romance hero Storm is wounded because he was discovered in bed with a White woman. He laments: "White women. Would he ever learn to stay away from the pale-haired witches?" (Camp, 1996, p. 2). Naturally he fails to learn and falls in love with the heroine, "a moon maiden with golden hair and alabaster skin kissed here and there by the sun" (Camp, p. 245). American Indian women are presented as squaws, who put up with the fact that once their men have laid eyes on a White woman, their own women lose all their appeal. The prevailing view of Indian women in the books is summarized in *Comanche,* a book purportedly written by model Fabio (1995). The heroine is discussing the fate of White women in history who have been captured by the American Indians never to return: "Agnes had disappeared to become another faceless squaw and breeder among the People" (p. 54). Often, squaws will put up with drudgery and abuse, accepting the duty to "service" any man, whereas the proud White captive refuses to submit.

The American Indian romance novel has moved to the screen fairly successfully. *Cheyenne Warrior* drew from the genre. So did a 1995 movie, *Follow the River,* based on a captivity tale. In the latter film, the handsome, sensitive American Indian captor (Eric Schweig) falls in love with his White captive (Sheryl Lee), whom he abducts along with her children. He never wins her, however. She is clearly drawn to him in several erotically charged scenes, but does not succumb, and eventually escapes. In the final scene, the honorable captor brings her children back to her, in a gesture of selfless love. The 1992 Michael Mann version of *Last of the Mohicans* lovingly displays the physical attractions of both Eric Schweig as Uncas and Daniel Day-Lewis as American Indian wannabe Hawkeye. Of course only the White hero survives to enjoy the love of a White woman.

The full-blown American Indian captivity romance moved to television in a 1997 CBS movie of the week, *Stolen Women, Captured Hearts.* This production, "based on a true story," traced the romance of Anna Morgan (Janine Turner), captured in 1868 by Lakota Chief Tokalah (played by Cree actor Michael Greyeyes). The love story followed the standard pattern of the captivity romance. At first, she refuses to cooperate, while the arrogant chief tries to make her bring him food and behave as an Indian woman should. Meanwhile, she sneaks furtive glances at his seminaked body and gazes from the tepee at an eroticized scene in which Tokalah dances at the camp fire. Finally, she escapes, but is caught, at which point the couple have an angry scene that culminates in a passionate night of lovemaking.

It emerges that Tokalah had long ago had a vision in which he saw Anna as his destiny, a common motif in American Indian romance novels. Their happiness is shattered when General George Armstrong Custer arrives to retrieve the woman. Anna, however, is unable to adjust to life with her unloved husband and rides off to her lover, whom she finds broken and weeping around the smoking wreckage of his village. The final shot of the film shows them embracing, nothing certain except the undisputed fact that love conquers all. The movie was a success, finishing 12th in the ratings that week.

Even in these thorough-going romances, however, the brutal savage still lurks. In many romance novels, the hero is described as having White blood, which tempers his savagery with a touch of civilization. Even if he is full-blood, he is often seen as more rational and realistic than other men of his tribe, who have a tendency to raid, pillage, and fight among themselves when not listening to his wise advice. He is frequently seen as the voice of progress who realizes change is coming. In other words, the American Indian hero is a wonderful fantasy figure for the White reader. He is just wild enough to be exciting, but still civilized enough to be acceptable.

What these romantic young men have in common is relative powerlessness. They are physically strong, but structurally impotent. Constantly, they represent a dying culture, even when not dying themselves, as they are loved by more powerful White women, or serve as the sidekick for more powerful White men. They evoke admiration and pity, but they are not a threat. This, especially in the past, was the key to being able to view them as exposed, naked, and objectified, in a way that White men could not be viewed.

The Wise Elder

In addition to the young, romantic hero, there is another male American Indian type. Indian men, rather than women, were the focus of the wave of fascination with American Indians that crested in the 1960s and 1970s when the counterculture embraced Indians as purveyors of ancient wisdom (Brand, 1988). Once again, this image of the "wise elder" was not new; 19th-century advertisements often portrayed images of "old sachems," or "wise chiefs," hawking patent medicines and herbal remedies, along with their princess daughters. Francis (1992) wrote of the 1920s career of "Grey Owl," who became a spokesperson for wildlife and nature and turned out to be an Englishman named Archie Belaney. His importance to the wise elder stereotype is that his admiring acceptance by White audiences was not so much because of what he said but because he "spoke with the accumulated wisdom of the people who had inhabited the eastern woodlands for thousands of years" (p. 139). In other words, being a "real" American Indian was crucial. The same authenticity was central to the embrace of the largely fictional 1854 speech of Chief Seattle by environmentalists in the early 1970s, and the enormous success of Carlos Castaneda's fabricated "medicine man," Don Juan, during the same period (Casteneda, 1968; DeMille, 1976, 1990). The American Indian elder who is wise beyond White understanding began to appear in films like *Little Big Man* (1971) and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975), and returned in force after *Dances with Wolves* (1990).

The fascination with a largely invented notion of American Indian spirituality subsided somewhat in the 1980s, although the American Indian "wannabe" phenomenon was gaining momentum (Green, 1988a). It rose again in the 1990s, when as never before American Indians became chic—mystical, wise, earth loving, and tragic. New Age culture appropriated American Indian religious practices, clothing, music, and myths, and Indian-inspired art and design became all the rage (Churchill, 1994; Smith, 1991; Whitt, 1995).

The new mystical American Indian man is in late middle age, gray haired, somber, and wise. He is represented on greeting cards and popular art, clad in buffalo robes and feathers. Unlike his younger counterpart, he is rarely scantily clad, and he is definitely not a sex object. Unlike the young brave, he has power. He communes with the spirits and passes on his wisdom, usually to White people. Whereas the young warrior represents the pathos of a doomed race, the wise elder represents the way the wisdom of the lost race can be incorporated peacefully into the modern world. In period pieces like *Dances with Wolves* and *Little Big Man,* elderly chiefs speak wisely about the inevitability of White domination, whereas younger hotheads protest. In movies set in more recent times, these older men provide a spiritual dimension in films like *Free Willy* (1993), *Legends of the Fall (*1994), and even *Natural Born Killers* (1994).

These wise elders are usually isolated from other American Indians. They are mysterious loners whose role in the film is to advise the White heroes. *Legends of the Fall* is a classic example of American Indian identity being appropriated to add mystery and resonance to White characters' life problems. On television, the stereotypical "mystical wise men," appears in popular television shows of all kinds, such as CBS's *Walker, Texas Ranger,* where the supposedly part-Native hero (Chuck Norris) is advised and inspired by his Indian uncle and mentor on a semiregular basis. Once again, the mentor is disassociated from any tribal context of his own. The wise elder is there again in a fall 1996 episode of the CBS series, *Touched by an Angel,* in which the Judaeo-Christian guardian angels enlist the help of a wise Navajo elder to help a young Jewish archeologist find spiritual redemption. Even the syndicated series *Baywatch* nodded to American Indian spirituality in a 1997 episode featuring a tribal elder's wish to die on a beach, surrounded by chanting Indians.

Rather unusually*, Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman* flirted with both stereotypes embodied in the same character. The series began its run with its only major Cheyenne character, medicine man Cloud Dancing (Larry Sellers), married and a member of a village. However, no other American Indian characters were ever fully developed and most, including his wife, were killed off. Once alone, Cloud Dancing became the epitome of the stoic, strong, noble male Indian, who suffers horrendous personal losses with dignity and forgiveness. However, after the destruction of his village at the battle of Washita, his rare appearances focused on a rather unlikely romance with a middle-aged White woman, thus avoiding the strain of maintaining audience interest in a Native love story.

With this odd exception, the male elder is uniformly desexualized, in that he appears not to have a family or an identity himself. His culture is relevant only in so far as it serves the White hunger for spirituality, and like his younger, sexier

counterpart, he assuages White guilt. The warrior's fight was noble but futile, whereas the elder recognized the inevitable and now uses his power to aid White culture. Whether he is eroticized as a sex object, or coopted as a spiritual resource, the sexuality of the American Indian male is successfully contained, and sexuality between American Indians is erased.

Princess or Squaw: Objectification of the American Indian Woman

As Albers and James (1987) pointed out, popular imagery of American Indians has tended to focus on males. They traced the tradition of portraying Indian women on postcards, which usually took the form of photographs of anonymous women, unlike the male images, which usually named the chiefs and warriors they portrayed. Whereas American Indian men appear in White mythology as named individuals (e.g., Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, Geronimo), women are represented only by Pocahontas, Sacajewea, and nameless artisans or squaws. Just as male imagery traditionally alternated between nobility and savagery, female imagery is bifurcated, although equally objectified, and contains the same mixture of erotic fascination and revulsion. A dominant image has been the American Indian princess, represented by Pocahontas, the 17th-century sachem's daughter who, according to legend, threw herself in front of her tribe's executioners to save the life of colonist Captain John Smith. Even before this, the "Indian queen" image had been used widely to represent the exoticism of early America, evolving into the dusky princess who "continued to stand for the New World and for rude native nobility" (Green, 1975, p. 703). The maiden or princess is the female counterpart of the noble "princes" portrayed by the early colonists and artists, although significantly the two images are rarely seen together as part of a representation of an American Indian culture. Each is presented separately for White perusal. After all, if the princess represents the virgin land that will be possessed by the White man, it would be somewhat inconvenient if she already owed her allegiance to a native prince.

As Tilton (1994) described it, the Pocahontas/princess myth became a crucial part in the creation of a national identity. The American Indian princess became an important, nonthreatening symbol of White Americans's right to be here because she was always willing to sacrifice her happiness, cultural identity, and even her life for the good of the new nation. Endless plays, novels, and poems were written about Pocahontas, extolling her beauty and nobility. The prevailing view of the princess was that she was gentle, noble, nonthreateningly erotic, virtually a White Christian, and yet different, being tied to the native soils of America. As Tilton (1994) explained, the Princess Pocahontas story enabled the White U.S., but especially the South, to justify its dominance, providing a kind of origin myth that explained how and why American Indians had welcomed the destiny brought to them by Whites.

The sexualized American Indian princess stereotype thrived in the 19th century. As Green (1988b) pointed out, "the society permitted portrayals to include sexual references (bare and prominent bosoms) for females even when tribal

dress and ethnography denied the reality of the reference" (p. 593). Scherer (1975) mentioned the tradition of "cheesecake" photographs of half-naked American Indian women; sculptures, such as Joseph Mozier's 1859 Pocahontas, portrayed bare-breasted, classical-looking figures, glancing demurely down from the White gaze. Francis (1992) described the late 19th-century success of author and poet Pauline Johnson, the "Mohawk princess," who declaimed melodramatic tales of doomed love between American Indian women and White man.

Even as the noble "Indian maiden" was exotic and desirable, 19th-century White society was still uneasy about the implications of that desire. Popular tales abounded of the fate that befell both White men who married American Indian women and especially the women themselves, epitomized by Ann S. Stephens's (1861) dime novel, *Malaeska: The American Indian Wife of the White Hunter*. In that story, Malaeska married a White man and gave birth to a son, who eventually rejected her and killed himself when he learned he was a victim of an "unnatural marriage." The American Indian women who married White men, although often doomed, were generally seen as noble, selfless, and willing to sacrifice themselves for love. Often carefully described as unlike their more degraded sisters, they sometimes turned out (quite logically) not to be American Indians at all, but enculturated White captives. In this way, the White man's exotic fascination with the Indian woman could be indulged, but tamed. Like the later romanticized male or half-blood heroes, these noble maidens or exotic White captives have all the trappings of exciting "Indianness," but usually side with Whites and aid their White lovers against the intemperate savagery of their compatriots.

As with males, the lustful and inhuman savage is but the other face of the maiden or princess. American Indian women have endured the burden of both racial and gender stereotyping. Just as popular imagery defined White women as either good or bad, virgin or whore, so it forced images of American Indian women into a similar dichotomy. The "Indian princess" is defined as one who helps or saves a White man, but if she actually has a sexual relationship with a man, she becomes a squaw, who is lower even than a bad White woman (Green, 1975). The squaw is the other side of the American Indian woman. She is a drudge who is at the beck and call of her savage husband, produces baby after baby, and has sex endlessly and indiscriminately with both Whites and Indians. This image, like the romanticized princess, had its roots in the very earliest accounts of Native American cultures. Vespucci's *Mundus Novus*, published around 1504–1505, described Native women as "tolerably beautiful and cleanly," yet "very libidinous," and drawn inexorably to White men (Berkhofer, 1979, p. 9). John Lawson, writing in 1709, declared that "those American Indian girls that have conversed with the English and other Europeans, never care for the conversation of their own Countrymen afterwards" (quoted in Washburn, 1964, p. 47), which was no doubt convenient, because White traders "find these American Indian girls very serviceable to them" (p. 46).

The use of American Indian women by White men was often justified by essentially dehumanizing them—claiming that they were not capable of the same emotions as White women, even to the extent of neglecting their children. Thus, according to the 1764 narrative of Henry Grace, American Indian women "seem

almost void of natural Affection, being more careless of their Offspring than Brutes" (Derounian-Stodola & Levernier, 1993, p. 68) In many such narratives, the women are portrayed as bloodthirsty, lazy, filthy, and prone to drunkenness, occasional acts of kindness being interpreted as out of character or abnormal.

Clearly, some relationships between White "squaw men" and American Indian women were caring partnerships, but the overwhelming image of the squaw is indeed that of a sexual convenience. Green (1975) documented the sad history of this image in popular songs and tales of the 19th century. Indeed, as D'Emilio and Freedman (1988) wrote,

> [in the 19th century] sexuality continued to serve as a powerful means by which white Americans maintained dominance over people of all races. . . . At a time when middle-class morality rested heavily upon a belief in the purity of women in the home, stereotypes of immoral women of other races contributed to the belief in white superiority. (p. 86)

The inescapable fact about this dual imagery of American Indian woman is that it is entirely White defined. From early contact, White observers brought their own preconceptions to indigenous American cultures, and authoritative sources, including ethnographies, defined the role of the American Indian woman in ways that bore little relationship to reality. Thus, in 1844 Thomas McKenney (who was the chief U.S. administrator of Indian affairs from 1816 to 1830) and James Hall wrote:

> The life of the Indian woman, under the most favourable circumstances, is one of continual labour and unmitigated hardship. Trained to servitude from infancy and condemned to the performance of the most menial offices, they are the servants rather than the companions of man. (McKenney & Hall, 1933/1984, p. 199)

No actual American Indian culture saw women in these limited terms. In fact, the range of American Indian cultures offered a variety of roles for women, many of them holding a great deal of honor and prestige (Foster, 1995; Lewis, 1941; Medicine, 1983; Tsosie, 1988.) The complexities of these roles rarely appeared in ethnography, mainstream history, or popular culture because they were not understood by White cultural observers. Thus, as Green (1975) argued, stereotypes of male and female American Indians "are both tied to definition by relationships with white men, but she (woman) is especially burdened by the narrowness of that definition" (p. 713).

As popular media evolved, imagery of American Indian women remained narrow. The popularity of the Western genre has kept American Indians locked in the past, as film and television endlessly relived the myth of the late 19th-century frontier. During the golden age of Western film (from the 1930s through the 1950s), actual American Indian characters were surprisingly rare, appearing mostly as yelling hordes, scenery, or in occasional bit parts. The Western has been overwhelmingly male, dealing with male quests and challenges. American Indian men

appear as savage warriors, scouts, and, occasionally, expendable sidekicks. American Indian women disappear or surface as minor plot devices (Tompkins, 1992).

Thus, during the height of the cinematic Western, the squaw was the most common image of American Indian women. At the same time, the sacrificing princess stereotype was still salient. Marsden and Nachbar (1988) described the princess image in a plethora of early films, such as *Kit Carson* (1903), *The Squaw's Sacrifice* (1909), and *The Indian Maid's Sacrifice* (1911). From the 1920s to 1940s, the portrayal of the princess declined, returning with the "sensitive" Westerns of the 1950s, such as Delmer Daves's *Broken Arrow* (1950). This told the story of a White man, who in the course of setting up a peace accord with Apache Chief Cochise (a wise elder), falls in love with and marries Sonseeahray ("Morning Star"), an Apache woman who is, naturally, a princess. Sonseeahray dies after being shot by a White man who is breaking the peace, but, as always, her death is not in vain, apparently sealing the peace accord. The princess figure again went into decline in the 1960s, seeming outdated and of less importance to White culture. Although the graphically obscene dimension of the squaw rarely translated into the movie era, the remnants of it have remained in the few, tiny roles for American Indian women in Westerns since the 1950s. Without the princess stereotype, White culture had only the squaw. She was, by definition, unimportant and uninteresting, epitomized in American Indian actor Lois Red Elk's 1980 remark that, of the many minor characters she had played in her career, none was given a name (Leuthold, 1995).

Like her princess predecessor, the newer squaw was devoted to a White man. However, she had even less importance to the plot and was easily sacrificed if necessary. None of the famous "Indian" movies of the early 1970s had substantial roles for women. In the going-native fantasy, *A Man Called Horse* (1970), the English protagonist, Morgan, marries the chief's sister, Running Deer, who is the sexual aggressor. The film suggested throughout that American Indian women are naturally attracted to White rather than American Indian men. Running Deer dies, of course, as does the mute American Indian wife in *Jeremiah Johnson* (1972), and American Indian wives in *The Man Who Loved Cat Dancing* (1973) and *Little Big Man* (1971). Later, the 1991 film, *Black Robe*, although lavishly praised by critics for its accuracy, misrepresented the important role of Iroquoi women in political decision-making (Churchill, 1994). Worse, perhaps, it resurrected the squaw in Annuka, a young Algonquin woman. Churchill (1994) commented on "Annuka's proclivity, fair and unmarried maiden though she is, to copulate voraciously with whatever male she happens to find convenient when the urge strikes. More shocking, she obviously prefers to do it in the dirt, on all fours" (p. 128). Only when she falls in love with Daniel, a young Frenchman, does she learn how to enjoy love and the civilized "missionary position." Once again, the message is that sexuality among American Indians is casual and animal-like, although an Indian can be uplifted by a real love relationship with a White.

American Indian women are even less apparent on popular television than men. There is no standard female figure comparable to the wise elder who can be grafted as guest star onto a range of different shows. Network television went

some way in expanding the imagery of American Indian women in the now-canceled CBS series, *Northern Exposure,* which ran from 1990 to 1995. *Northern Exposure* was set in contemporary Alaska, and the creators seemed consciously to set out to break stereotypes through all its characters. As part of an ensemble cast, the show included two native Alaskan characters, Ed Chigliak and Marilyn Whirlwind. Like all the characters on the show, neither was simple and one dimensional, but rather displayed idiosyncratic, quirky characteristics. Marilyn was a physician's receptionist who in many ways was wiser than her boss. Perhaps she was the wise elder transmogrified into female form, yet she was allowed to be sexual, without being seen as "loose" or "squawlike" (Taylor, 1996).

Aside from *Northern Exposure*, the only show that has included American Indians as regular characters was *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman,* which proved especially popular with women, at least in part because of its essentially feminist point of view (Dow, 1996). Created and produced by a woman, Beth Sullivan, the show takes many of the standard Western formulas, such as the hero battling for justice, while transforming the hero into a woman. It is especially striking, then, that the show failed to produce a strong Cheyenne female character. Over the 6 years of the show's run, the wise elder character of Cloud Dancing became the sole focus of Cheyenne representation. Even before she was killed off, Tantoo Cardinal (as Cloud Dancing's wife, Snowbird) had little to do but offer smiling advice to her husband, just as she did as Kicking Bird's wife in *Dances with Wolves* and as a nondescript wife in *Black Robe* and *Legends of the Fall.* At the end of the 1994–1995 season, the producers found the strain of incorporating American Indian characters too much, killing off most of them, including Snowbird.

In the mid-1990s, living, breathing American Indian women have become largely invisible in mainstream popular culture. The most prominent American Indian icon has been a cartoon. Despite its feminist pretensions, Walt Disney's 1995 animated feature, *Pocahontas,* clearly echoed the old imagery. Pocahontas persuades her father to make peace, even though it is not clear why it is in her best interests to do so. She rejects the American Indian man chosen for her in favor of the Nordic John Smith. Even though she eventually loses her lover, she learns to recognize the inevitability of progress, an important, guilt-reducing element in the White image of American Indians. In the cartoon, Disney tells us also that Pocahontas taught John Smith respect for nature, implying that she had a profound impact on how the nation developed—a sentimentalizing of the way things actually happened, and a kind of collective fantasy that recalls the sentimental image of Pocahontas embraced in the 19th century. Disney's version harks back to Victorian imagery in other ways. The cartoon character is notably voluptuous and scantily clad, as were the earlier images. It even echoes Victorian conventions in showing Pocahontas as lighter skinned than the men of her tribe.

This *Pocahontas* is still a White fantasy, and the Disney-led revival of the story has breathed new life into an American Indian princess stereotype that never really disappeared. The image lives on in local legends about maidens, or princesses, who leaped to their deaths for love of a handsome brave or a White man (DeCaro, 1986). It makes occasional forays into romance novels, such as Edwards's (1997) *Savage Longings.* American Indian heroines in romances are rare because

they would not fit easily into the captivity structure—the power relations between a White male captive and an American Indian female captor would be too uncomfortable. Instead, *Savage Longings* follows the pattern of the White hero who brings an Indian bride home, although in the 1990s the end result is happiness. American Indian women in the story are drudges or worse, with the exception of the heroine, Snow Deer, a "Cheyenne princess" who falls in love with the handsome Charles Cline. He is entranced by her innocence and perfect beauty. After various travails, the couple marry, and Snow Deer learns to become a White wife and mother, changing her name to Mame. Her brother also marries a White spouse and leaves the village to live with his wife. Strikingly, no successful Cheyenne-Cheyenne marriages appear in the book.

With a few exceptions, however, the romance with an American Indian heroine has not been widespread or popular, undoubtedly because targeted readers are White women. The maiden or princess is still around, however, on Pocahontas-inspired merchandise, collector plates, and so on. The American Indian maiden, like the wise elder, has become a symbol of ancient wisdom and harmony with nature, although more frequently in graphic art than television and movies. Gift shops abound with artworks of round-eyed American Indian maidens in fringed white dresses; princesses named "Little Flower" or "White Dove" gaze provocatively from greeting cards. Babcock (1994) pointed to the long-standing place of the female Pueblo body in the White appreciation of Southwestern arts and crafts: "An Indian mother shaping Mother Earth and gracefully carrying her burdens was and is indeed something of a bourgeois dream of an alternative redemptive life" (p. 44). In whatever context, the American Indian maiden is almost always seen alone—not as the partner of the warrior, who prefers White women anyway.

Challenging the Imagery

Although mainstream popular culture offers little subjectivity to the American Indian, male or female, the impetus for change is mounting. Independent American Indian filmmakers are producing their own movies that speak about who they are (Weatherford, 1992), and there are more American Indians in production roles in Hollywood. In 1998, Chris Eyre and Sherman Alexie made *Smoke Signals,* the first major feature film directed by an American Indian, and a revelation in its nonsentimental presentation of a native point of view. Although critically praised, it did not receive the wide distribution given to major Hollywood "Indian" movies. As always, resources for large mainstream productions go where money can be made, and as long as American Indians are not considered marketable in their own right, change is slow.

When the conventional wisdom is challenged, it is usually by nonmainstream producers or in documentary filmmaking, where the commercial stakes are lower. The National Film Board of Canada has produced many films, including a series of four television movies in 1986 called *Daughters of the Country.* There, movies told separate stories of native or Metis women, from the 18th century to the present. They were unusual in that they used a mostly native cast, but they were extraordinary in that they told stories from the point of view of the Indian women who

were their central figures, as *Smoke Signals* did. Instead of movies that gaze through the eyes of White settlers, soldiers, or trappers, we see those Whites as interlopers whose ways are alien. Life in the Ojibwa village focuses on everyday tasks rather than mystical ceremonies, and the lead actors are neither voluptuous princesses nor dumpy squaws, but ordinary women who face human dilemmas not defined by their ethnicity.

In the more commercial arena, the recent Turner Broadcasting series, *The Native Americans,* attempted to dramatize historic moments in American Indian history in a series of feature-length movies. Although *Geronimo* and *The Broken Chain* were dismissed by at least one American Indian critic as "feeble" (Merritt, 1994), the same writer had kinder words for *Lakota Woman: Siege at Wounded Knee,* a dramatization of the autobiography of Mary Crow Dog (who took part in the 1973 American Indian movement siege at Wounded Knee). The movie was made with a 90% American Indian cast, and 40% of the crew were American Indians, offering unprecedented opportunities for Indians to gain experience in filmmaking techniques. The movie told the story from the point of view of Mary Crow Dog, and neither degraded nor glamorized her as she dealt with problems that often confronted her because of her ethnicity.

Conclusion

The fact that these stereotypes have been around so long demonstrates the way they have become entrenched in White mythology. Where personal knowledge is lacking, media have additional power as agents of enculturation. In Shiveley's (1992) study, Whites, but not American Indians, saw Westerns as historically accurate. The point is that Westerns, even those television ones like *Dr. Quinn*, feel authentic to White audiences—a myth that is "an affirmation of their own social experience" (p. 733). At present, with the popular infatuation with American Indians, there are probably more roles than ever for American Indian actors in mainstream popular media, and they are everywhere. These roles are inevitably subordinate, however, and either rooted in the past or in a conception of American Indians as traditional and primitive.

Most important, as I have endeavored to show, the representations we do see are structured in predictable, gendered ways. Women are faceless, rather sexless squaws in minor roles, or sexy exotic princesses or maidens who desire White men. Men are either handsome young warriors, who desire White women, or safe sexless wise elders, who dispense ancient wisdom. Nowhere, in this iconography, do the male and female images meet. The world where American Indian men and women love, laugh, and couple *together* lurks far away in the shadows. These days, representations of American Indians are more accurate, in terms of costume, cultural detail, and the like than in the 1950s, when White actors darkened their skins to play American Indians. As far as suggesting an authentic, subjective American Indian experience, though, there has been little progress.

The objectification of the male and female American Indian is embedded in a complex set of cultural attitudes to both race and gender. One of the most com-

mon ways to deny other races' subjectivity is either to deny their sexuality or to define it as somehow inferior or more animal than White sexuality. Descriptions of American Indian cultures have presented them as emotionally "unnatural": They did not care for their children or their spouses; they had sex "like dogs in the dirt" (Churchill, 1994); and they could only be stirred to more honorable feelings of love by White partners. The degraded squaw, for example, is rejected every time by decent American Indian men in favor of virginal White women. This sexualization of dominated races was and is an important component of colonial domination (Hall, 1995). By labeling others as sexual savages, Whites

> reassured themselves that their own race was indeed the civilized one it aspired to be. Distancing themselves from the sexuality of other races served instrumental, as well as symbolic, purposes. By characterizing other races as, at best, remote sexual pagans and, at worst, sexual monsters in pursuit of white women, whites could manipulate the sexual fears of their own culture in order to justify the conquest of Indians, Mexicans, and blacks. (D'Emilio & Freedman, 1988, p. 107)

People of other races become sexually available to the dominant culture. In some sense, the dominant culture is perceived as actually elevating the oppressed by coupling with them. Thus, the gendered stereotyping of other racial groups serves to maintain White male definitions of self. The early demonizing of both American Indian males and so-called squaws served to emphasize the central importance of purity among White women, allowing White men to destroy rapacious American Indian men while using American Indian women as conveniences, and helping White men maintain their racial and gender superiority. The more erotic presentation of American Indian men, in times when they were not a threat, also defined the essential power of White men, in that American Indian men could be displayed, naked and powerless, in a way unthinkable for their White counterparts.

The rarity with which White culture has acknowledged American Indian affection and sexuality is emphasized in two unrelated vignettes. Sherry Smith (1987) described Captain John Gregory Bourke's account of his visit to Santa Domingo Pueblo in New Mexico in 1881, where, unnoticed, he watched two lovers: The American Indian man

> was received with a disdain tempered with so much sweetness and affection that he wilted at once, and instead of boldly asserting himself, dared do nothing but timidly touch her hand. Finally, she took his grasp and "he, with earnest warmth was purring into her ears words whose purport it was not difficult to conjecture."

Bourke continued,

> So much stuff and nonsense have been written about the entire absence of affection from the Indian character, especially in relations between the sexes, that it affords me great pleasure to note this little incident, in which the parties

> acted with perfect freedom from the restraint the known presence of strangers imposes. (quoted on p. 63)

A century later, one of the most striking scenes in *Lakota Woman* was a moment when Mary, as a young girl, dances with and kisses her young Indian boyfriend. It was the kind of scene that would be totally unremarkable in any White movie, yet it stood out as something we simply do not see—American Indian people laughing, cuddling, and exploring their own sexuality, without regard to Whites. The stereotypes will be hard to shatter—their role as the exotic, fascinating "other" is so naturalized. As Spivak (1993) commented, "The person who *knows* has all of the problems of selfhood. The person who is *known* seems not to have a problematic self" (p. 202). That has been the issue with the representation of American Indian for centuries. White culture has known them, gazed on them, and objectified them, appropriating their sexual and personal identities for its own purposes. The lovely princess and American Indian lover of the 1990s may be more benign images than the squaw or the crazed savage, but they are equally unreal, and ultimately, equally dehumanizing.

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