The Image of the Indian in Max Brand's Pulp Western Novels

by
Edgar L. Chapman

I

In the first important Western novel of the twentieth century, Owen Wister's *The Virginian* (1902), the stalwart hero is ambushed by some Indians; after a battle in which he kills several, the Virginian is wounded and later found unconscious by the schoolmarm heroine, Molly Stark Wood of Vermont. These are reservation Indians out on a rampage against their white oppressors, as Wister explains, since the time is close to 1890, and the Indian wars of the West are over.[1] Because he was writing a Western, and following the tradition of James Fenimore Cooper as well as the stage melodrama and dime novel tradition of Ned Buntline and others, and continuing the spirit of Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Shows, Wister may have assumed his audience expected an Indian attack, and so he gave them one.[2] Thus Wister, for all his literary pretensions, would seem to be motivated by the oldest axiom in show business or commercial writing: give the audience what they expect.

It is true that the incident serves a couple of other purposes in Wister's romance: the Virginian's courage and fighting prowess are reinforced by the action, and there is so little occasion to demonstrate these qualities between the initial clash with Trampas and the climactic shootout that something is sorely needed; and then, Molly Stark Wood gets the opportunity to nurse the Virginian back to health, a crucial period in their long romance. Moreover, the Virginian's convalescence allows Wister to portray the hero as a true Victorian gentleman toward women, even in his subconscious mind. For, we are told the while most cowpunchers would go into feverish deliriums and babble coarsely about the bodies of women, even their sweethearts, the Virginian never does this.[3] A life of consistent clean living and clean thinking has saved the Virginian from sexual repressions and given him what must be the most boring subconscious mind in all the annals of the written word.

In short, Wister, for all his high literary ambitions, which often

take the form of boring dialogues between the narrator and the Virginian about Sir Walter Scott, does not really present his Indians in an understanding or sympathetic spirit. His polite upper middle class romance displays an attitude not far removed from *The Police Gazette*'s report of the Wounded Knee Massacre:

> The Indian war in South Dakota, so long anticipated, has at last become a reality, and with it has come the death of a number of brave troops of the United States Cavalry. The leader of the warriors was Big Foot and he and his braves tricked the troop into ambush. Then a wholesale slaughter began, the Indians being nearly annihilated, those who were not killed seeking refuge in the Bad Lands, where they will be frozen or starved out. As soon as the troops had cornered the Indians they fell upon them with Hotchkiss guns. The Indians fell in heaps but, determined to the last, they fought to the death even after being sorely wounded.
>
> The saddest scene of the carnage was the killing of Captain George D. Wallace of the Seventh Cavalry, who was brutally tomahawked. . .
>
> It is said the General Sheridan first remarked that "A dead Indian is the best Indian" and the action of the soldiers appears to coincide with Little Phil's views. The action teaches the lesson that if the Sioux are of any use at all they should be fairly dealt with, and if not, that they should at once be given free passes to the happy hunting grounds. As they speak highly of the happy hunting grounds, it might be as well to start them on the journey in any case, and then if the decision be found unjust, to write them an apology.[4]

At any rate, we might take comfort from the fact that *The Police Gazette* was at least as inaccurate in its time as the *National Enquirer* and the *National Star* frequently are today.

Against this standard, and the film image of the Indian in some of the early silent films, the relatively understanding and sympathetic treatment of the Indian in the fiction of Zane Grey and Max Brand can hardly be praised enough. Grey and Brand were the two most widely read authors of popular Western fiction in the first age of the genre, before Ernest Haycox and Luke Short transformed it into a more complex form (as Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler transformed the private eye novel and as John W. Campbell, Robert Heinlein, and Isaac Asimov reshaped the science fiction story), all this coming in the late thirties and early forties.[5] Grey and Brand both may have been influenced by the liberalism and reform spirit of the Progressive era (roughly 1900-1916), but they wrote some of their most sympathetic work about the Indians in the 1920's, hardly a time of great public concern about treatment of minorities. Grey has received more credit than Brand for sensitivity to the Indian point of view, but it is Brand's work that I am going to examine in detail in this study. Nevertheless, a brief

summary of Grey's treatrment of Indians in his fiction will be helpful here for purposes of comparison.

II

Grey's earliest "Westerns" are his Ohio River trilogy, 1904-1907, written in imitation of Cooper and celebrating the exploits of the legendary Lewis Wetzel and of the Zane family who were Grey's ancestors.[6] Although inferior to his later novels of the Far West, and rejected by first rate publishers, these books later became commercial successes in cheap editions on the power of Grey's reputation after *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912) and other popular Grey novels for Harper's. The trilogy is packed with violenee, much of it based on actual historical events, and is largely anti-Indian, or one might say, anti-Shawnoe. Nevertheless, there is some ambivalence in these works. *The Spirit of the Border*, the second in the trilogy, makes one of its central acts of violence the historical massacre of a village of Christianized Indians, "the village of peace," or Gnadenhutten, established by Moravian missionaries. And one of the heroes, Joe Downs, marries an Indian princess, although both Joe and his wife are later killed by a vicious Shawnee in a vendatta. At the end of the book, Wetzel spares Wingenund, a Shawnee chief, when he learns that Wingenund has been a secret Christian and is sympathetic to the whites. Much worse than the Shawnees, in Grey's view, are Simon and Jim Girty, the renegade whites who live with the Indians and incite them to violence. Grey's overall theme seems to be that the Shawnees would have been peaceful and civilized if the Moravians had been allowed to Christianize them; but some bad Indians, and the evil Girtrys, would not allow Christianity to work, and thus created a bitter conflict between the two cultures. This is obviously a simplistic view, providing some excuse for the warlike exploits of Grey's hero, Wetzel; but a least Grey, consciously or unconsciously, is uneasily placing some of the blame for the Indian wars on white culture, even if on renegades and outcasts. In blaming the Girtys, Grey is rather like those later movies that place the "cause" of the Indian wars on greedy profiteers who sell rifles to the Indians.[7]

Grey's Ohio River trilogy is valuable if for no other reason than the fact that Grey's view of the conflicts between Indians and white frontiersmen is probably based on folk memory of the dominant and victorious white culture in Ohio at the turn of the century.[8] However, after his later travels in Utah and Arizona, and in his

successful career as a romancer of the Far West, Grey saw the condition of the Indian much more sympathetically and realistically. A few examples will suffice here.

In *The Heritage of the Desert* (1910), Grey's first major commercial success, Grey shows that at his best he is a much finer writer than Wister and a much better observer of Western people and the Western landscape, although critical snobbery has been slow to acknowledge Grey's superiority to the genteel Easterner who wrote *The Virginian*.[9] *The Heritage of the Desert* is largely a portrait of the Mormom patriarch, August Naab, but it is a principle of Naab's moral dignity that he is allied with a noble Navajo chieftan, who offers to help him against Holderness's land grabbing schemes. Here and later, the Navajos are Grey's favorite Indian people, and they are portrayed elegaically.

There are many similar portraits of Indians in later romances. *Desert Gold* (1913), though rather harsh toward Mexican bandits, offers a memorable characterization of a Yaqui who befriends the American heroes. Since the rangers who are the male leads turn out to be rather too much like overgrown boy scouts, the Yaqui steals the story from them, and at the end of the novel, Grey identifies the Indian with the landscape in a kind of mythopoeic fashion:

> . . . The last the watchers saw of Yaqui was when he rode across a ridge and stood silhouetted against the gold desert sky—a wild, lonely, beautiful picture. Then he was gone.
>
> Strangely it came to Gale then that he was glad. Yaqui had returned to his own—the great spaces, the desolation, the solitude—to the trails he had trodden when a child, trails haunted now by ghosts of his people, and ever by his gods. Gale realized that in the Yaqui he had known the spirit of the desert, that this spirit had claimed all which was wild and primitive in him.[10]

In *The Rainbow Trail* (1915), Grey no longer believes in the Christianizing of the Navajo, not at least as it is done by the Mormans and the evangelical missionaries. Shefford, the hero, is a defrocked clergyman from the bourgeois Midwest, obviously alienated by the sentimental piety of Victorian middle class Christianity.[11] Early in the romance, Shefford comes upon a rascally missionary wrestling with a Navajo girl at Presbrey's trading post. After Shefford knocks the lecherous evangelist down and sends him paeking, he learns from the trader that Willets is a missionary and that he was "teaching her religion" in order to convert the Navajo maiden.[12]

Later, Shefford meets Nas-ta-Bega, the brother of the

threatened Navajo girl, and undying friendship springs up between the two. At one point, Grey stops the action of the novel to write an interlude portraying in poetic language the ritualized and reverent average day of the pastoral Navajos (as Grey idealizes it).[13] Later, Nas-ta-Bega helps Shefford rescue Fay Larkin, the "Sago Lily," a beautiful mountain girl, from the oppressive Mormons; Mormonism is still secretly practicing polygamy in defiance of the United States government, and the Elders intend to marry Fay off against her will to a Morman patriarch. Clearly, the Navajos are presented as noble here in contrast to the lecherous missionary and the Gothic practices of the Morman Church. (It should be noted that *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912) and its sequel, *The Rainbow Trail*, differ from *The Heritage of the Desert* by presenting an unflattering image of Mormonism as a kind of Christianity in decadence, much like the image of Roman Catholic Church that appears in eighteenth century Gothic fiction.)

Still later, in the 1920's when he was speaking out in his fiction on social causes, Grey tackled the situation of the Indian more directly in *The Vanishing American* (1922). Here Grey presents a star-crossed love between a white girl and Navajo man, Nopahie, who embodies all the nobility and dignity that Grey attributed to the Navajos. The novel ends with Nopahie's death rather than a marriage between the two, evidently one of the reasons the book has drawn the censure of Professor Russel Nye, who feels that Grey evaded a disturbing theme.[14] Although I respect Professor Nye's work immensely, I would argue that Grey's ending here is due not to the fear of miscegenation, but rather to a realistic awareness of the social hostility toward this kind of Indian-white marriage, and perhaps more importantly, to the desire to make an impact on his audience with an "unhappy" or sentimentally "tragic" ending.[15] At any rate, Grey's book presents Nopahie's death as symbolic of the Indian's fate, and fate is now viewed as bleakly tragic.

Grey also presents the Indian sympathetically in two romances that show what is now known fashionably as "ecological consciousness."[16] In *Thunder Mountain* (1932), the chief of a band of Sheepeater Indians prophesies in a prologue to the novel that Thunder Mountain is an accursed place because it conceals gold, and because the mountain itself is unstable and susceptible to slides. In the romance, we get the

story of the life and death of a mining camp, which begins with a murder and a stolen claim and proceeds through a career of greed and injustice until finally destroyed by a landslide. Thus nature takes revenge on man for man's rapacity and desecration of the wilderness. Man's justice is viewed in a particularly unflattering light in *Thunder Mountain*, for vigilantes, usually the instruments of popular justice, are about to hang the hero on false evidence, when the mountain strikes back and destroys the camp. In this novel, the mining camp may perhaps be a symbol for America, being punished by the depression; at any rate, the Indian serves as a tragic chorus on the tragedy of white lies and greed.

The Piutes, however, in *Wild Horse Mesa* (1924) act as agents of justice wronged by the whites. Here the hero, a wild horse hunter, befriends the Piute chief, Toddy Nokin, and prevents his unhappy daughter, Sosie, from eloping with a treacherous white man. Sosie's bitterness against her situation is presented with compassionate understanding: educated by missionaries at a reservation school, she no longer feels a part of her father's Indian world, yet her white education is not a passport to place of respect in white society. In repayment, the Indians befriend the hero at the end of the book by shooting the villain; but it is clear that like the great wild horse herds, the Piutes are an anachronism and soon will be forced to adapt or become extinct.

Grey offers no way out of the dilemmas presented by *The Vanishing American* and *Wild Horse Mesa*, although he hoped that his work would create understanding and sympathy for the Indian. Like many authors of Westerns, he was caught in the contradictions between his love for the wilderness as it was, and had been, and his celebration of the heroic effort that conquered the frontier in support of the myth of progress.[17]

III

One of the major differences between Grey and Max Brand is that there is really no very strong myth of social or national progress in Brand's Westerns. This is due in part to the alienation and cynicism of the author. Max Brand was the major pseudonym for Frederick Schiller Faust, a Californian whose highest ambition was to be a poet, or failing that, at least a great novelist. Born in 1892, Faust grew up in the actual West, in turn of the century Modesto, in

the San Joaquin Valley, and for him the valley towns created by the gold rush and the westward course of empire were purgatories of physical labor, social bigotry, and cultural sterility, or at best provincialism.[18] Faust's father had been a shabbily genteel lawyer from Illinois who had followed the rainbow west first to Seattle, and then to California. But there had been no pot of gold for Gilbert Leander Faust: instead the hardships of life in the Far West brought poverty, failure, and eventually destroyed the health of the elder Faust's wife, and finally his own. Orphaned at thirteen, young Frederick Faust was a brilliant lad toughened by hardships. Living with relatives as a poor relation, he performed much hard physical labor to earn his keep while distinguishing himself as a schoolyard boxer and as a student. His ambition was to escape from the workaday agricultural West that had destroyed his father, and Faust saw his intellect as a means to that end. Meanwhile, like many imaginative children and young people, he nourished fantasies of being a dispossessed gentleman who was obliged to restore pride and fortune to the family.

Faust's drive took him to the University of California at Berkeley on a scholarship, where he made a reputation as a promising poet and student of literature. Unfortunately, he also made a name for himself as a campus rebel, and became the scapegoat for President Benjamin Ide Wheeler's self-appointed mission to uphold the sanctity of nineteenth century social and academic ideals. Instead of being graduated in 1915, Faust was prevented from taking a degree by President Wheeler and made the object of Wheeler's angry commencement address.[19]

After a wanderyear that stretched into two years, Faust turned up as a starving poet in New York, after having sailed to Hawaii, worked his way back to Vancouver on a tramp steamer, enlisted in the Canadian army and tried to desert; he was later shipped to Toronto and succeeded in deserting; and then hitchiked and rode the rods to the Big Apple.[20] To avert starvation, Faust became a writer for the pulp fiction factories of Munsey and Street and Smith; from the first, Faust was a favorite protege of the Munsey editor, Bob Davis, his "discoverer."[21] An enormous talent for rapid composition made Faust the "king of the pulp writers" under the name of Max Brand (and other names). With newfound affluence Faust was able to marry his college sweetheart. Eventually, with his income soaring, Faust moved to Italy and rented a villa, where he could write his poetry, grind out his prodigious production of pulp Westerns, and live in the style of a latter day Renaissance aristocrat,

as he had dreamed of doing.[22]

Although Faust always disparaged his pulp fiction, and for years engaged in as little re-writing as possible, the Max Brand Westerns show a highly literate and evocative style, and reflect Faust's personality to a remarkable degree. The heroes are nearly always outsiders or outcasts, and in many cases outlaws or men with prison records, and they are nearly always extra-ordinarily talented men hampered by birth and social hostility. There is a great deal of sympathy for the underdog in Faust's pulp Westerns, whether this character happens to be a Chinese, an Indian, a Mexican or Mexican-American, an outlaw, a wild horse, or a dog gone feral, or an orphan boy. In at least two novels, the hero is a white boy raised by the Chinese; in several others, the hero is an outlaw's orphan; and in a number of other stories an American hero finds himself more at home among Mexicans than in his native country.[23] These Westerns reflect the attitudes of the Frederick Faust who had not only fled the modern West, but found twentieth century industrialized America a dreary place in comparison with the more timeless and traditional world of Italy.

Most of the Westerns Faust wrote under the pseudonym of Max Brand and other names take place in the post-Indian West where the conflict is mainly between outlaws and the law. To a great extent, this West is a creation of Faust's imagination, stimulated by his knowledge of folklore and Western legend, but it shows some resemblance to the world he knew in California as a child and an adoleseent in the period 1892-1912. But when he decided to write romances about Indians, Faust, or Brand as we shall call him in this role from now on, had no personal experience to draw on. Instead, he went to the books in his library for material, using, according to his biographer, the works of George Bird Grinuell and James Willard Schultz.[24] Since he has little knowledge of the Great Plains or of real Indians, Brand's Indian Westerns represent a creation almost entirely spun out of his powerful imagination stimulated by some historical research. As such, these works are singularly fascinating.

IV

The first important Max Brand Western to deal with Indian life is *The White Cheyenne* (1925).[25] This is a rather robust and at times rollicking saga of a gambler who befriends a white giant raised by the Cheyennes. The setting is the Great Plains in the 1870's. The

novel is narrated in a serio-comic tone by the gambler, a scapegrace Southern gentleman who was run out of Charleston for killing a fellow "gentleman" in a duel. At first we expect Rivers to be the hero of the tale, although he makes it clear that he doesn't really believe in the Southern code of honor, and it was this, as well as his reputation as a black sheep, that provided the reason for his swift departure from Charleston. But Rivers's first person narration--and Brand practically invented this technique for the Western--functions with its sardonic humor to counterpoint the adventures of Lost Wolf, the White Cheyenne. Like many Brand heroes of the twenties, Lost Wolf is a kind of overwhelming natural force, at times comic and at times frightening, but governed buy a different code from civilization, and being by his nature something of an affront to it.

Brand makes Lost Wolf admirable by several devices of characterization. Lost Wolf was supposedly raised by the Cheyennes, and then taken into white soeiety by a plainsman. Danny Croydon. While with Croydon, Lost Wolf learned to read and write, and to speak flawless English. Both Lost Wolf and the Cheyennes talk in a highly poetic idiom, much like the translations of Plains Indian speech that we find in many books today. This is generally true for all of Brand's novels containing Indians; it is the whites who speak in a coarse slangly vocabulary; whereas Indian speech is invariably dignified, and admirable.

Moreover, Lost Wolf is a great warrior with six-guns and rifle, as well as with knife and bare hands. He is a good tactician, and among the Cheyennes, a rich man, owning many ponies and buffalo robes, thanks to his raids against the Pawnees and the Sioux. But since re-joining the Cheyennes, Lost Wolf has not taken part in any raids against whites; thereby, Brand assures the sympathy of his white readers.

Nevertheless, Lost Wolf does kill two white men, and he chases another out of the country. Since the man Lost Wolf frightens away is a bully and a gunfighter who has brutally beaten the narrator, the white reader will still approve of Lost Wolf's action. But Brand deals with white raeism and ehallenges the reader to a sense of fairness toward the Indian in the sequence where Lost Wolf kills two white men. Here Lost Wolf is avenging an Indian friend who disappeared in the vicinity of a wagon train. Thc narrator becomes a spy for Lost Wolf, joins the wagon train, and learns that two brothers who hunt for meat for the train had shot Lost Wolf's Cheyenne friend as callously as they shoot buffalo. Rivers, the

narrator, entices the two brothers away from the train, where Lost Wolf kills them (presumably in a duel) to avenge his Indian friend. The reader is thus led to condemn white racism, and to admire Lost Wolf as a man of honor who provides retribution for a red friend's murder. If the reader goes this far with Lost Wolf, he has aceepted him as a hero, while also siding with the Indians for a change.

Lost Wolf's Cheyenne notions of honor and humor eause a good deal of trouble for the residents of the plains town of Zander City, and the citizens, already biased by white bigotry, rise up in arms when Lost Wolf kidnaps Peggy Gleason, their most celebrated beauty. But the novel has a happy ending, more or less aecording to pulp formula: Peggy Gleason is a spoiled young beauty used to intimidating young men, but Lost Wolf's dominance of her wins her love. Although he respects her ehastity, he treats her pretty much as though she were a Cheyenne squaw when he brings her captive to the tribe. His rough handling causes her to love him; she is motivated apparently by the kind of feminine perversity so common in pulp fiction and the movies of the twenties (it was the age of *The Sheik* and Douglas Fairbank's *Taming of the Shrew*). But the Cheyennes will not aecept Lost Wolf's choice of a white wife. Lost Wolf and the girl are told to leave the Cheyenne tribe and to return to the whites (not presumably at Zander City, where he would be shot or hanged).

Rivers, the narrator, asks the inevitable question: "But do you think he will not be an outeast both from the reds and the whites?"[26] However, thc serious issues of the ending, Lost Wolf's marriage to a girl raised in white culture, and Lost Wolf's diffieulties of adjustmeut to white ways, are both treated lightly. It is suggested that Peggy Gleason will soon dominate him, as he has "tamed" her. And a frontiersman named Danny Croydon dismisses the problem of accommodation to white society: "What he doesn't know by teaehing, he knows by instinet. I think that lad will find a way to get on with the whites, when he bends his mind to it."[27] Although Brand is capable of almost any kind of ending that sounds faintly plausible, since he viewed his writing as commercial hack work, he doesn't always follow the expected formulas. And a decade later, he was to treat assimilation to white eulture more seriously.

In short, *The White Cheyenne* describes Cheyenne culture with sympathy, but it presents Lost Wolf as a curiousity, sometimes formidable, sometimes merely comic. Lost Wolf is a kind of Tarzan in the white world, and his Cheyenne attitudes are an excnse for Brand to draw the reader into a male chauvinist fantasy.

(Interestingly enough, by the middle twenties, Brand was beginning to be a little disenchanted with his marriage, evidently because he thought his wife lacked intelleetual seriousness and reteated too much into domesticity.)[28]

Indians contiunc to show up as minor characters in some other Westerns of the next few years. In *The Border Bandit* (1926), the hero, raised as a milksop by a New England mother, comes to Texas to collect a legacy, but makes the mistake of giving a eontemptuous push to a drunken Comanche.[29] The Comanche chief, White Hawk, repays the insult by kidnapping Oliver Tay and selling him into slavery to a Mexican mine owner. Tay turns into a he-man, escapes, and becomes a border Robin Hood, wanted in the U.S. and Mexico, and also a deadly enemy of the Comanche chieftain. But the image of the Comanches is not entirely negative, for Tay becomes the brother of another Comanche warrior, Yellow Wolf. Here we find Brand moving into the tradition of Leatherstocking and Chingachgook. A similar relationship with an Indian is worked into *Sawdust and Sixguns* (1927-28) where another tenderfoot, Anthony Castracane, uses his training as a circus athlete to terrorize Dodge City.[30] Outlawed by false accusations, Anthony finds blood brotherhood with Big Crow, an Osage warrior whom Anthony helps in a fight with the Pawness. (Because the Pawness were the perennial enemies of the Cheynne, and beeause Brand relied heavily on Grinnell's books about the Cheynne, the Pawness seldom receive much sympathy in Brand's books.) In a much later novel, *Lucky Larribee* (1932), Larribee the hero, also establishes blood brotherhood with an Indian, this time a Cheynne whom he fights to a standstill.[31] The novel primarily deals with the pursuit of a wild horse, however, and Brand follows his sources in suggesting that Indians were rather rough in their treatment of their mounts.

Even the ferocious Apaches are treated kindly in *Tamer of the Wild* (1931), where the hero, a professional thief in white world, wins some honor among the Apaches, and then gains the confidence to become a leader among whites. The novel is set in a remote part of Arizona (though Brand never names the territory, his setting is clearly the rough desert county we meet in novels about the Apache), where a lonely mine is menaced by Apaches. Rory Michel, the hero, feels some sympathy for the Apaches because of his profession of thief: as he says, Apache ethies make theft permissible in many situations. His success in healing a sick Apache child makes him a shaman to the Apaches, and helps him win the close friendship of one family in the tribe. However, he is unable to

prevent a clash between Apaches and whites, and ultimately forced to side with the whites. This bitter battle between whites and Apaches erupts here because of two men: the chauvinistic and bigoted Colonel Ware, who owns the mine, and a scheming Apache medicine man who dislikes Rory and wants bloodshed. In the evil medicine man, Brand resorts to a cliche villain, and the novel ends somewhat unrealistically with the Apaches leaving the battle after Rory breaks the power of the wily shaman. Despite such flaws, *Tamer of the Wild* deserves some credit as an early attempt to treat Apache culture sympathetically (it was published in the same year as Will Levington Comfort's strong novel, *Apache*, dealing with the tragedy of Mangas Coloradas, a great Apache leader. And this is sixteen years before Elliott Arnold's *Blood Brother* was published in 1947; Arnold's novel is the basis for the taboo breaking Hollywood film, *Broken Arrow* (1950), treating Cochise sympathetically).[32]

Brand was apparently fascinated by the theme of a white man leaving white civilization and finding honor and a sense of identity among Indians. He also seems intrigued by the challenge of portraying Indian culture "from the inside" in this kind of novel. One such plot deals with the white man who joins an Indian tribe, the basis for *The Rescue of Broken Arrow* (1929-30).[33] This time, the hero is an Irish-American guttersnipe, Bandon Suir Cashel, from the slums of New York. Somehow Cashel has joined a wagon train to escape his past as a sneak thief, but the pioneers, led by a self-righteous egotist, Fitzroy Melville, expel Cashel and set him adrift on the prairie. Cashel befriends Broken Arrow, the greatest Cheyenne warrior, and again a great kinship develops. Broken Arrow is a man of unimpeachable honor, and the first person to treat Cashel decently. Cashel learns to have a conscience from Broken Arrow's example and hopes to become a member of the Cheynne tribe in good standing. Yet he is not fully accepted until after Broken Arrow's capture by the Pawnees, when Cashel engineers one of the daring escapes that were Max Brand's stock in trade. (Northrop Frye calls this sort of thing the "Houdini motif.")[34] After gaining hero status, Cashel is allowed to settle in the tribe and marry one of its most beautiful maidens. As frequently happens in a Brand romance, the hero finds better treatment from outcast, or minorities like Mexicans or Indians, than he does from the dominant whites. However, despite this sympathetic treatment of the Cheynne, Indian life is obviously romanticized a good deal.

A variation on the theme of a white gaining honor among the Cheyennes shows up in *Vengeance Trail* (1931)[35] When Brand

tended to re-work a plot used earlier during his peak period in the thirties, he nearly always improved on it with better characterizations and more thoughtful treatment of theme. *Vengeance Trail* is a good example. In this story, a fourteen year old boy, Johnnie Tanner, is the main hero; joining the Cheyennes after a trek West, Johnnie becomes a tribal hero, although unlike Cashel, he eventually returns to the East. Like several Max Brand Westerns of the thirties, *Vengeance Trail* is cunningly conceived as both a "Western" and a boy's book." I say "cunningly" because I do not think this is accidental: either Brand may have had some notion of marketing some of these stories in hardcover form as "books for boys," or, hungry for literary immortality, he may have written some Westerns in this way in the hope of at least gaining a kind of enduring fame as an author for adolescents.[36]

However that may be, *Vengeance Trail* is an excellent narrative, both entertaining and fairly accurate historically, with a nice period feel to it.[37] The time of the story is the late 1830's or early 1840's, when Cheyenne culture was at its height, before the Plains Indians were threatened by the Westward movement. (Brand almost never dates a novel by reference to historic events, but his narratives--at least from 1925 on--contain references that allow a careful reader to date them within a decade or so:thus, the presence of a movie house in Clayrock in *The Stranger* makes it a modern Western, some time in the period 1915-1929; on the other hand, *Sawdust and Sixguns* is clearly set in the 1870's in the heydey of Dodge City.)[38] *Vengeance Trail* contains a revolver, invented by "Samuel Colt," at a time when these are a rarity, thus allowing us to date the book (presumably the gun is a Walker Colt).[39]

Johnnie Tanner, at the "princely age" of fourteen, lives with his Aunt Maggie, who runs a boarding house in New York City.[40] Johnnie's mysterious father is away as a sea captain in the South Seas, and Johnnie amuses himself with daydreams of pirates and Indians. Suddenly the father returns with a fortune and the announcement that his travels are over. As a special prize, the father exhibits the Colt, which almost seems to have a magic quality to it; and inside the Colt's handles are enormous pearls, the linchpins of Captain Tanner's fortune, it seems, which he had taken from a rival Yankee trader in a pitched battle at sea (not impossible in the early period of American trading in the South Pacific). After years of absence, the father wants the son's love, but feels he can't win it immediately; to speed up the process, he lends Johnnie the Colt to play with. The son in turn wants to love the father, but merely

respects and fears him: he has an adolescent's feeling of inadequacy before a strong father figure. This sense of weakness is reinforced by guilt when Johnnie allows a stranger to steal the gun.

At any rate, the Colt proves to be a magic talisman for Johnnie Tanner, for it leads him into his adventure with the Cheyennes. The thief who steals the gun heads west with John in pursuit. Following the man to a ferry over the Hudson, John then pursues his quarry to Pittsburgh. Befriended there by some kindly folk, the boy follows the thief downriver on the Ohio. Finally John is taken under the protection of Hank Raney, a mountain man going back to the plains. Raney takes John on the Missouri River to Liberty and then to the Great Plains. The gun, it seems was stolen by "Pawnee Harry," a rascal who had lived with the Pawnees in the past, and was just starting back when the chance to steal arose. Raney and John join the Chenennes, whom Raney knows of old, and Johnnie soon learns mueh about Cheyenne life. Sinee the Cheyennes are constantly at war with the Pawnees, John gets a chance to strike a blow for them; and in a daring raid on the Pawnee camp, he recovers his gun. The Cheyennes look on John as a warriour and "medicine mau" or shaman, and at last he feels himself a hero. Regrettably, he and Hank must leave the tribe to return to white life; on their trip back, they meet John's father, with whom the boy is reconciled.

Preposterous as this narrative sounds, in a bald summary, it is a delightful and nearly perfect boy's adventure story. (And what adventure story for boys does not sound absurd in a plot summary?)[41] Life with the Cheyennes is presented as an idyllie world. Johnnie Tanner has the kind of hair-raising experiences that adolescent boys dreani of; his adventure with the Cheyennes is a perfect Arcadian episode, despite its perils. The book in fact ends with a tone of regret, as though Johnnie were saying farewell to his boyhood, and the reader to Indians in the wild untroubled tribal life.

Thus, in these novels, the Cheyenne are depicted as fierce but noble warriors, living in an untroubled wild state; moreover, they are generally more honorable than whites, though Brand does provide them with one or two weak characters and a villain or two. The image of the Indians in these books is thus a highly positive one, even if somewhat romanticized. Generally, however, Brand has evaded or avoided portraying the darker side of Indian history, and he has tended to avoid the problem of white bigotry and racism, although he has touched on these in *The White Cheyenne* and

Tamer of the Wild. In other books, he was to suggest something of the tragedy of Indian life.

V

A hint of the Indian's tragedy comes out in Brand's treatment of the reservation Indian. Although he generally evades presenting the harsh picture of the defeated Indian, there are two interesting incidents that deal with the Indian on the reservation.

The first of these is in *Smiling Charlie* (1927), one of Brand's worst novels. The book is largely a collection of twenties clichés of popular romance: the hero is a gentleman outlaw, actually the scion of an Eastern family out on a lark; there are two heroines, one a sentimental ninny and the other a clever and heartless flirt; there is a wealthy cattle baron, supposedly a benevolent despot, but actually a mean spirited manipulator of people; and there is finally a narrator, a brave deputy sheriff with some fighting ability but essentially a naive and stupid fellow. In addition to an inept plot, the novel has characters with whom no reader beyond the age of sixteen could sympathize.[42]

One action sequence stands out from this mess, however. Billy, the deputy, describes the consternation through the mountain range of the "Sierra Blanca" when some reservation Indians escape and go on a tear. Billy himself is a racist, and describes the Indians as a "handful of copper scum," and he remarks "They have educated Indians up into football teams and such civilized kinds of murder these days, but in the old times of the reservations there was no way that they was able to take out their meanness, except by gambling and throwing knives at a line," and so the "meanest" Indians went on a vendetta against whites.[43] Billy's words are confirmed when the three renegade Indians shoot up a posse and later terrorize some mountain ranchers. In a bloody sequence, Billy kills the Indians in a showdown, after some racial slurs have been exchanged on both sides. However, Billy does acknowledge that he was frightened during the shootout, and he later speaks with some sarcasm about the white hysteria over the "red peril."

Since Brand makes it clear that Billy is not especially bright or morally perceptive, one tends to read most of what he says, other than pure description, as unintentional irony.[44] The reader is therefore left to draw his own conclusions about this brutal incident. It is fairly clear from Billy's account that the Indians found

reservation life to be a humiliating and boring existence, and that when they revolted violently against it, they were snuffed out contemptuously, like wild animals who had escaped from a zoo.

In a much better novel *Blood on the Trail* (1933), Brand introduces a reservation Indian as a spokesman, both for the Indian, and, surprisingly, on behalf of acceptance of life and the human condition. *Blood on the Trail* is an interesting novel, despite its hackneyed title, probably supplied by some harried editor. This Thoreauesque novel deals with Dave Reagan, a young, slow talking, gentle giant, who leaves civilization in disgust and goes to live in the mountains with a wolf he has tamed. Regan has been a poor relation exploited by his uncle and cousins, shiftless ranchers who let Dave do much of the work while they fight and drink and condemn him as a "half-wit" behind his back. When he learns how little they care about him, Dave takes the only thing he loves, the wolf that he has tamed, and a knife, and goes into the mountains, where he lives a hermit-like existence, wholly dependent on his own resources. But one of the few people he meets is an elderly Indian who also dwells in the mountains: the Indian, a Cheyenne named Walking Thunder, had lived in the white world as a school teacher for a time; he speaks excellent English, thanks to the Carlisle school ("Not that I learned a great deal."). Walking Thunder counsels Dave that "you only get out of the world what you pay for . . ."[45] The Indian lives in the mountains because his wife and children were killed in a fire, but he advises Dave that a young man should not live apart from human society until he has proved that he can live within it. Walking Thunder suggests that Dave return to the human world to find out what happened to a girl he was once attracted to. When Dave protests abont the disadvantages he would face, Walking Thunder makes the simple comment: "I am a man with a red skin, and I live in a nation of white people," said the Indian simply. "What is your curse compared with mine?"[46] Convinced, Dave returns to civilization, and eventual triumph over obstacles there.

Both Dave and Walking Thunder serve as comments on the necessity of struggle and acceptance of the human condition. The message could hardly have been lost on Brand's Depression readers, many of whom may have had little more than the Spartan fare that Dave and Walking Thunder lived on in the rimrock. Here, as in the last white Cheyenne novels, we see the Indian in Brand's fiction becoming a spokesman for hard won wisdom and enduring ideals.

VI

In 1927, before he had reached the tough wisdom of the thirties novels, Brand had returned to the theme of the white Cheyenne. The second white Cheyenne novel, *Thunder Moon*, describes the childhood, youth, and young manhood of a white boy raised from infancy by the Cheyennes.[47] Stolen by a childless brave named Big Hard Face, Thunder Moon grows up thinking himself to be a Cheyenne, until he realizes that his skin is too fair. To compensate for his lack of Cheyenne blood, Thunder Moon makes an effort to excel at sports and as a fledgling warrior. But he fails to endure the initiation ritual of the Cheyennes, which requires him to submit to a mutilation of the skin of his chest by a knife, and thus brings disgrace on his foster father. (Here Brand is engaging in a curious bit of genetic speculation: He seems to think that Thunder Moon's "white blood," or genes, would not allow him to submit stoically to the ritual knife. Obviously, this is highly suspect as biology; but the real point is that the ritual mutilation of the passage into manhood was revolting to Brand, and his implausible explanation of Thunder Moon's revulsion indicates his own inability to imagine the ritual in positive terms.)[48]

Thunder Moon's disgrace, though felt strongly by the boy and his father, turns out to be only temporary. Thunder Moon becomes a hero by helping a Cheyenne warrior against the Pawnees, and he and Big Hard Face become rich in horses. Later Thunder Moon, famed as a horseman and hunter, goes to an American outpost, "Fort Humphrey Brown," and wins a horse race from a white competitor. Most of the whites want to cheat Thunder Moon of his prize, but an idealistic Army officer insists on fair play. Finally, Thunder Moon and another friend win an important battle against the Commanches of the Southern Plains.

Most of this episodic novel, it will have been noticed, takes place within Indian society and in clashes between the Cheyennes and other tribes. The setting is the timeless Great Plains before the Civil War; white society exists only in the fort, which is distant from the main centers of white civilization. There is no pressure on the Indian world to yield its land to whites, or to endure the presence of white settlers. While we are given a glimpse of white chicanery, bigotry, and greed at the fort, this is balanced out by some whites who believe in fair play. In short, Brand preserves the romantic and idyllic tone of the novel by setting it in the high tide of Plains Indian culture, and carefully evading the wars that were to come, and the

tragic defeat of the Indians.

Within these limitations, *Thunder Moon* is a skillful recreation of Indian life. The Indians are portrayed as noble warriors who seldom go hungry, live a life of manly combat with other tribes, and live by religious ideals of honor. Brand shows himself to be fascinated by Cheyenne myths, and recreates something of their substance through Thunder Moon's reverence for the "Sky People," and the "Underwater People," that is, the gods and spirits that the Cheyennes created mythopoeically to identify with their environment. In his adult years, Thunder Moon becomes both a warrior and a shaman, a man singled out for special blessings by the "Sky People."

Although Brand avoided the problems of Thunder Moon's relationship to white society, and the coming clash of the whites with the Cheyennes, he apparently did arrange in a sequel for Thunder Moon to enter white society and to fall in love with a white woman. Unfortunately, this sequel is not readily available to scholars: it appears to exist only in the pulp magazine of fifty years ago, for unlike *Thunder Moon*, it has not yet been issued in an accessible book.[49]

VII

More impressive than the earlier novels about the Cheyenne is the Red Hawk trilogy. These novels, *War Party* (1934), *Frontier Feud*, (1934), and *Cheyenne Gold* (1935) were written near the end of Brand's career as a pulp Western author. Brand was at the peak of his powers in 1933-1936, and produced many of his best Westerns, including the Silvertip series and the Montana Kid trilogy in this time, while also shrewdly working at a conqnest of the "slick" magazines. Just when his efforts to escape the pulps and to pay off chronic debts were being crowned with success, Brand accepted an offer to go to Hollywood and work on the Dr. Kildare movies, whieh grew out of a story he had written. Perhaps Brand was exhausted by the gigantic expense of energy required in these years; but after 1937, he wrote few Westerns or other kinds of adventure stories, devoting his energies mainly to films and to the Dr. Kildare novels which seem today to be only period pieces.[50]

Composed in this great fecund period of the middle thirties, the Red Hawk trilogy represents Brand's definitive statement on the Indian and his clash with white culture. In the Red Hawk novels,

Brand treats frontier life in a more tragic tone. War between Indians and whites is nearly always on the verge of eruption, with the uneasy peace threatened by bitter hatreds and bigotry, especially white racism. Moreover, Brand portrays Cheyenne life as much more than merely a warrior culture devoted to hunting and tribal wars. It has a highly ritualized and religious vision of the world, which Red Hawk responds to profoundly. Through Red Hawk's mysticism, Brand is able to describe the Cheyenne myths and their religious consciousness much more fully than before. Red Hawk is more a shaman than a warrior, and his visionary experiences play a large part in the trilogy. It is hard to read the books today as anything but a clearcut indictment of white society, and a defense of the Indian's poetic vision.

To be sure, the Indians are not presented as guiltless: the first chapter of *War Party* describes in harrowing style the Cheyenne raid on Kate Sabin's cabin, and the reaction of three year old Rusty, who will become Red Hawk, to his mother's death: "What instinct told the boy that she was going away beyond call—forever?"[51] Thus the framework of a bitter and relentless hatred between Indians and whites is established, unlike the humorous and idyllic moods that dominate the earlier Cheyenne novels.

The themes of *War Party* are Rusty's initiation into young manhood and his discovery of his identity. As in most popular romances of this kind, a birthmark or an identifying piece of jewelry plays a role: Rusty carries his mother's green scarab necklace with him into his life as a white Cheyenne. In addition, Brand uses a romantic variation on the Sohrab and Rustem motif by building to a climactic battle between Red Hawk and his white father, the embittered Marshall Sabin, whose hatred for the Cheyennes has turned him into a white ally of the Pawnees. Unlike the usual Sohrab and Rustem tale, the novel concludes with a formula happy ending. Recognizing the scarab, Marshall Sabin is re-united with his son and Rusty becomes engaged to a white girl. This ending is really only a suspension of action, and is altered by the next novel. Despite the conventional framework of *War Party*, there are a number of memorable sequences.

Rusty's initiation into manhood begins with his failure to endure the ordeal of mutilation. After disgrace, he leaves the tribe to enter white society, but except for the kindness of Maisry Lester and her gentle and ineffectual father, he finds nothing but hatred and contempt in the frontier town of Whitherell (suggesting "wither all"). An agonizing year of labor in the blacksmith shop of the brutal

Sam Calkins hardens Rusty Sabin physically and mentally. In vivid imagery, Brand portrays Rusty toiling secretly at night to forge a great knife as a weapon. After beating the hulking bully, Calkins, in a fist fight, to the joy of the coarse Mrs. Calkins, Rusty takes his leave of the white world by ritually washing off the grime of the blacksmith's trade: ". . . He was washing himself clean of all his days among the whites, of all the humiliation, the shame, the sorrow and the foulness that comes out a brooding mind . . ."[52] Although he chooses to be an Indian once more, Rusty is still involved with the white world. Seeing Maisry Lester courted, unwillingly, by two crude and quarrelsome brothers, Rusty pledges himself to win her by tracking and capturing the legendary White Horse, or medicine horse.

Christianity has never made much of an impression on Rusty, for when younger, Rusty had received a sacred sign from the Cheyenne god, Sweet Medicine. He had undergone a purification ceremony at the entrance to the Sacred Valley in the Black Hills, the legendary holy ground where Sweet Medicine "dwells," and now in his pursuit of the wild stallion, Rusty, under his Cheyenne name of Red Hawk, returns to the worship of Sweet Medicine. His Indian mysticism gives Rusty the inner strength to pursue the famous horse on foot, and the quest becomes an epic one:

> Many people have heard of the hunting of the White Horse. The two names come ding-dong into the memory, like sound and echo: Red Hawk and the White Horse! It is generally known, also, that the hunt ran from the Canadian River on the South, to the Milk River on the north; up to the Yellowstone and the Powder Rivers, and up the forks of the Platte, both North and South. It is also known that the drama was concluded among the Blue Water Mountains.[53]

By this time in his career, Brand has learned to make invented legend sound like authentic and credible folk tale and oral myth, as the quotation indicates with its use of phrases like "Many people have heard. . ." Brand also cleverly mixes actual place names with the invented one, the "Blue Water Mountains," the mythic branch of the Rockies where the Silvertip novels also have their setting in the post-Indian West. Such narrative skills make the Red Hawk novels take on the tone of an Indian legend retold.

After killing a vicious white hunter who proposes to kill the White Horse, Rusty tracks the stallion relentlessly on foot until he wears down the horse's resistance. He tames the horse for riding, in much the same way, using the mixture, of gentleness and strength in his personality. But after returning to the Cheyennes, Rusty feels

that he must erase the memory of his failure at the initiation rite. With his horse, he rides into the Sacred Valley of Sweet Medicine, and passes through an ordeal of silence and hunger there for three days. On the third day, he receives a blessing in the form of an omen from Sweet Medicine: he also discover gold, a fateful act, but he returns from the valley to great honor among the Cheyennes, who hail Red Hawk as a great shaman and prophet. It will not have escaped Christian readers that Rusty's passage through the holy valley parallels the three days of Christ's death and resurrection, when according to Christian tradition, Christ passed through the underworld and "harrowed" hell. Brand thus transforms Red Hawk into a kind of archetypal hero/redeemer figure.

From triumph among red men, Rusty returns to the white world, where his small cache of gold arouses greed in the Bailey brothers who have been courting Rusty's sweetheart. Rusty survives their greed when, after guiding the brutal Baileys to the Sacred Valley, he sees them kill each other in a quarrel. After his climactic fight with Marshall Sabin, the hero of the Pawnees, Rusty is recognized by his father and re-united with him. He also gains Maisry's love, and so appears to have triumphed over white bigotry and intolerance at the end of *War Party*.

In the second novel, *Frontier Feud*, (also known as *Brother of the Cheyennes)* Rusty's life among the whites is nearly turned to tragedy by the malicious Major Marston.[54] In this book, the Sabins and the Lesters move to the Southern Plains and take up residence at Fort Marston, commanded by the ambitious major of that name (he has had his political friends in Washington name the fort for him.) Marston cannot bear to see so much apparent good fortune bestowed on a mere white Indian and blacksmith like Red Hawk, and his envy prompts Marston to plot a way to humiliate Rusty and to steal his fiancee.

A more villainous army officer than Marston would be hard to imagine; Brand comments sardonically:

> . . . The motto of Major Marston, when it came to Indian warfare, was "Be thorough." He believed the old adage that the only good Indians are the dead ones, and he lived up to his belief. Midnight attacks on Indian villages were his forte; and like the redskins themselves, he counted all scalps, no matter of what origin.
>
> If the hail of bullets which the major directed happened to strike down women or children, he expressed regret for the moment, but he was sure to include all the fallen in his list of "enemy killed."
>
> His troops hated him with all their hearts, but they respected him because he was always successful in whatever he set out to do.[55]

Marston flogs Bill Tenney, a thief from Kentucky who had saved Red Hawk from drowning in the "Tulmac" River, and then outlaws Red Hawk when Rusty and two Cheyenne friends help him escape. Using a forged letter and lies, Marston manages to destroy Rusty's engagement, and then he plots his biggest coup: to fall on the nearby Cheyenne village and ambush them, killing all the Indians as well as Rusty. Though there is no official war, Marston believes he can easily persuade Washington that his attack was justified beeause the Cheyenne had moved southward.

Marston is a melodramatic villain, but he is a very cool and plausible creation for all that, and his actious are uncomfortably close to the historical truth about such officers as Fetterman and Custer. Marston's plan to destroy a peaceful Cheyenne village is a precise parallel to Custer's actual destruction of Black Kettle's village on the Washita. Brand's villainous major is a harshly satirical caricature of the military mind, and at times seems to be modeled on an imaginative conception of Custer.

Marston's plot to burn the village is thwarted by Red Hawk; and under Rusty's leadership, the Cheyennes force a humiliating truce on the cavalry, depriviug them of their horses and making them walk home. Believing that his career is ruined, Marston calls Red Hawk to a private duel in an isolated valley nearby. Although Marston hires the Laviers, three frontier toughs, to ambush Red Hawk at the showdown, the white Indian survives with the help of Bill Tenney, his friend and professional thief. Whereas Red Hawks's sense of honor and simplicity arouse malice in Marston, Red Hawks' nobility of character works to change the dog-eat-dog morals of Tennoy into a more humane level of moral action. But even in death of Marston does not change; mortally wounded by Rusty's hugh knife, he cries in anguish, "A—a damned—a white—Indian . . ."[56]

If in the first two books, Rusty faced white bigotry and the malice of the military mind, in the third book he has to deal both with white greed and red resentment. *Cheyenne Gold,* the conclusion of the trilogy, returns to the Black Hills, where Rusty goes after ending his engagement with Maisry, and then quarreling with the Cheyenne, thanks to the malice of an envious medicine man (a cliche villain who mars the book). Rusty is torn between his white and red loyalties here, and he is equally torn between two women, Maisry, the white girl, and Blue Bird, the half white and half Cheyenne girl he has known all his life. In his exile from both the white and the Indian worlds, Rusty returns to the Saered Valley and lives for a time in lonely serenity: he may leave the Cheyennes,

but nothing can shake his faith in Sweet Medicine. When Blue Bird joins him by accident, it appears that the two will settle down for a romantic idyl. But they are not allowed this private happiness: white greed spurs the people of Whitercll to seek the source of Rusty's gold in the Black Hills, and one ruthless scoundrel murders Maisry's father with an axe, hoping to find a map. Whites and reds are about to fight a pitched battle over gold and territory, when Rusty intervenes and brings about a temporary peace. But the peace is shakey, and Rusty cannot finally deeide whether he is white or red. Nor can he choose whether to marry Maisry or Blue Bird; his confusion over the two women indicates his inability to choose between races. Either choice seems to be a tragic forfeiture of part of his being. Instead, he deeides to ride away to the west to "tall, blue mountians, and blue is the color of heaven and of peace,[57] as he says in his farewell note. He concludes that the conflict within him is too deep to allow easy solution:

> Farewell. My heart aches. My heart is colder than a winter morning. To die is not great sorrow; but it is not the will of the god that I should live among you. The red of my heart and the white of my skin have cursed me.
>
> Pray for me. Offer sacrifice. Love one another. Farewell.[58]

Obviously, Brand had brought his character too close to the reality of white and Indian strife, and no conventional happy ending would satisfy him or convince any but the most naive of readers.[59]

Although he worked within the limitations of popular romance, Brand's trilogy deals with the main causes of the Indian and white conflicts, and the books make a serious indictment of white treachery, malice, greed, and racism. In Red Hawk, or Rusty Sabin, Brand created a hero with touches of Christ and St. Francis of Assissi, a mythic figure whose visionary response to red eulture made him far superior to any whites in the novels.[60] Although the trilogy is flawed, it is strong enough as a literary work to make one wish that Brand had forgotten all commercial considerations and written for once with high art as his only aim. It is said that even his agent, Carl Brandt, was deeply disappointed when he thought about what could have with *War Party* with just a little revision.[61]

VIII

Max Brand was a romantic living in a time when serious art claimed to be "classicist" or "anti-romantic," and the only market

for romantic fiction was a popular one. In addition, Brand needed the self-esteem of being tremendously prolific and of living in a princely life style. But perhaps under any circumstances, he could not have written a "great" book.

Yet Brand had a remarkable talent, and his treatment of the Indian in his Western fiction was strikingly fair and truthful, given the time when he wrote, and the sources he used. Of course, Brand was guilty of romanticizing the Cheyennes a good deal, but even more than Zane Grey, he attacked stereotypes of Indians in Western fiction. In the twenties and thirties, the cause was a good deal less popular than today, and he may have run some commercial risk in the process. This explains the necessity of the "white Indian motif"; readers could identify with an Indian hero more readily if they thought of him as "white" by birth. There was a spirit of reform in the thirties, and a willingness to look with favor on outsiders and defeated races in America. But it was many years before any of the Red Hawk novels except the second one found a hardcover publication; and only recently were the first and third Red Hawk novels given exposure to a large paperback audience.[62]

Brand portrayed the American Indian as a great warrior, a man of honor and truthfulness, and through his device of the "white Indian" he was able to show the religious side of the Cheyenne culture in great depth. Brand was clearly ahead of his time as far as popular fiction goes anyway. It was not until 1950 that Will Henry published a Western novel in which Crazy Horse was a hero and Custer a villian; and it was not until 1953 that Henry's *Yellow Hair* (published under the name of Clay Fisher) described Custer's treachery in massacring the Cheyenne on the Washita. By 1959, with Frederick Manfred's *Conquering Horse*, more serious novelists had taken up the cause of the Sioux. In 1964 Thomas Berger, probably using some of the same sources as Brand, gave a magnificent picture of the Cheyenne way of life in *Little Big Man*. In 1966, Richard Brooks' film *Hombre* based on a novel by Elmore Leonard, told a grimly tragic story of a white man raised by Apaches, who was forced to defend stagecoach full of greedy and bigoted whites. That was three decades after the publication of the Red Hawk trilogy. Max Brand may have squandered a great literary gift on pulp writing, but he managed to tell Americans a good many unpleasant truths about the conflicts between white and Indian.

Bradley University

NOTES

[1]Owen Wister's, *The Virginian*, was published orginially by The MacMillan Company in 1902. Since then, there have been many editions. For this paper, I have used the paperback edition published by Washington Square Press, New York in 1964. Subsequent references are to this edition.

Wister tells us in the 1902 preface that the novel takes place in the period between 1874 and 1890, although it is worth remarking that Wister's own experience with Wyoming and the West did not begin until 1885. At any rate, the Indian attack comes near the end of the novel after both the narrator and Molly Wood have known the Virginian for several years. Molly's care of the Virginian leads to their engagement; and the climax of the novel, their marriage and the gunfight with Trampas, follows within a year or so.

The 1902 preface is on page vii of the Washington Square Edition. Wister's explanation of the attack by the Indians comes on page 244.

[2]Wister does not claim Cooper or the dime novel as his antecedents, nor for that matter the Wild West show. His main acknowledged literary precursor is Scott's historical romances, which the narrator and the Virginian discuss on one of their rides. Molly Wood also introduces the Virginian to other Romantic English writers, like Browning.

Wister's explanation of the Indian attack (on page 244 of the Washington Square Press Edition) includes an ironic comment about the way newspapers inflate a skirmish with Indians: "Editors immediately reared a tall war of it; but from five Indians in a guard-house waiting punishment not even an editor can supply war for more than two editions . . ." Yet Wister himself is guilty of using this Indian attack as a dramatic plot device: Indians are simply stage props.

[3]*The Virginian*, p. 243. Wister actually writes, "Nor did the delirium run into the intimate, coarse matters that she dreaded. The cow-puncher had lived like his kind, but his natural daily thoughts were clean, and came from the untamed but unstained mind of a man."

[4]This is quoted from a collection of reprints from *The Police Gazette: The Police Gazette*, edited by Gene Smith and Jayne Barry Smith (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972) p. 187. The original story is dated January 17, 1891. The story is sketchy and short on details, and Wounded Knee is not mentioned by name: the story refers merely to South Dakota and the Sioux. Big Foot's ragged band of Sioux were massacred at Wounded Knee, about four days after Christmas, 1890; more than 300 Sioux, men, women, and children, were killed or died from wounds inflicted by the Army's rifles and Hotchkiss guns. Also dead were twenty-five soldiers, probably most of them due to wild shooting by the whites.

[5]Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* (1930) and Continential Op stories appeared in the late twenties and early thirties; Chandler's fiction appeared in pulps of the thirties, especially Black Mask; by 1939, with the book publication of *The Big Sleep* a revolution in detective fiction had taken place in America. Similarly, John W. Campbell introduced a more restrained and intelligent kind of science fiction story in the thirties, writing under the name of Don A. Stuart. In 1938, Campbell took over the editorship of *Astounding* and had a great influence on the field for over twenty years, developing many writers of "hard" sciene fiction including Heinlein and Isaac Asimov.

[6]The Ohio River trilogy includes *Betty Zane* (1904), published at Grey's expense and not successful; *The Spirit of the Border* (1906), published by an unimportant house; and *The Last Trail* (1907) also published by a minor house. Grey's success after *Heritage of the Desert* and *Riders of the Purple Sage* with Harper and Bros. eventually made these books successful, although only in *The Last Trail* does Grey really begin to hit his stride.

[7]This is not to defend those who ran weapons to the Indians for profit; but blaming gunrunners for a war is a simplistic exercise which the public mind has begun to recognize as a fraud (that is, blaming a symptom of conflict for the conflict itself). Yet this is the view of many Western films before *Stagecoach* (1938), and some afterward.

[8]Grey claimed to be using a journal by Colonel Ebenezer Zane, his kinsman, as a source for his books on the Ohio border conflicts. But, according to Carlton Jackson in *Zane Grey* (New York: Twayne Press, 1973), there was no journal, only family tradition and folklore for Grey's source (pp. 22-23).

[9]Wister was born in Philadelphia, attended Harvard, and was a friend of Theodore Roosevelt. His writing about the West developed out of a trip there, after he failed in a music career, and made little headway as a lawyer. Wister's hero, The Virginian, is a kind of natural gentleman, and Wister stresses his gentility, supposedly the product of his Virginia origin. By contrast, Grey was misfit in the East; Grey always liked to hunt and fish, and was something of an outdoorsman before going West. Also, Grey spent a good deal of his time as a successful novelist in hunting, fishing, and camping out. There is quite a difference in character here.

[10]*Desert Gold* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1913; paperback reprint, New York: Pocket Books, 1973), p. 278.

[11]*The Rainbow Trail* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1915), p. 41, contains Shefford's account of his break with the Church: "As I grew older thought and study convinced me of the narrowness of religion as my congregation lived it. I preached what I believed. I alienated them. They put me out, took my calling from me, disgraced me, ruined me . . ." This happened in Shefford's home town, "Beaumont," Illinois.

[12]*The Rainbow Trail*, p. 7.

[13]*The Rainbow Trail*, pp. 102-105. Another chapter, "The Navajo," pp. 184-191, describes the tragedy of Nas-Ta-Bega's sister, dead in childbirth, and ends with the words, "The Navajo is dying—dying—dying!" There is a bitter denunciation here of the "white man's road."

[14]*The Unembarrassed Muse* (New York: The Dial Press, 1970; paperback edition, 1971) p. 274. Much as I admire Professor Nye's work, I differ with him on several points in his chapter on the Western. And, he is inaccurate in indicating that Grey evaded the love affair between Mescal and John Hare in the *The Heritage of the Desert*, and a matter of fact, Hare marries Mescal and looks forward to a honeymoon of happy sensuality.

[15]In most of Grey's stories, the formula happy ending is a marriage of one or more couples of lovers who have triumphed over obstacles, and usually a future in which the lovers settle down and put down "roots" in the West. To suggest a tragic situation, Grey must break with his formula, and have his white girl and Indian hero be star-crossed lovers.

It might be noted that Grey's publishers bragged on book jackets that Grey had "Indian blood" in his veins, apparently a boast that Grey was proud of. This does not suggest that the author had a horror of white/Indian miscegenation, indeed, perhaps there never has been as much concern in American popular culture for the white/Indian mating as there has been about white/black miscegenation. James B. Hendryx once wrote a "northern," *Blood of the North*, with a half-breed as hero, and Max Brand wrote at least one short novel with a half-breed as hero.

Carlton Jackson, in *Zane Grey*, 78-82, gives a more positive view of Grey's concern about the fate of the Indians.

[16]Grey, raised in the late nineteenth century and becoming a writer in Teddy Roosevelt's America, thought about it as conservation. The theme appears in several novels, like *The Deer Stalker* (serialized in a magazine in 1925), where the Arizona rangers try to make a great drive of deer to a game preserve.

[17]John G. Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique* (Bowling Green, Ohio; the Popular Press, 1970), pp. 55-58, describes this contradiction as a basic principle in many Westerns.

[18]Robert Easton, *Max Brand: The Big "Westerner,"* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970) is the source for much of the information here about Frederick Faust's life. His early years in California are dealt with in pages 1-14.

[19]Easton, 23-26, deals with Faust's clash with Benjamin Ide Wheeler. It was a conflict that grew over the period of Faust's undergraduate career, for Faust's writings in the University literary magazine and his personality made him a hero to the nonconformists. Faust was ahead of his time, believing in more liberalized curriculums, fewer lectures, and the like.

[20]Easton, 27-38. Faust's attempt to desert the Canadian Army in order to find a more rapid way of getting into World War I was thwarted in Vancouver, and cost him ten days in jail. But he succeeded in deserting in Toronto, after re-enlisting, and traveled across country as a fugitive until he was able to sneak back into the United States. Is it any wounder that many of Faust's Westerns are about outlaws and fugitives?

[21]Easton, 44-47.

[22]Easton, 113-128 deals with Faust's princely life in Italy. In many ways, Faust was alienated from America and lived the life of a wealthy expatriate. Since Faust was from an impoverished background, he liked to pretend that he was a gentleman with a birthright of wealth. The long hours at a typewriter spent on his hack fiction were not much discussed in the household; Faust always tended to disparage his popular writing and treat it as a temporary matter until he went on to better things. Interestingly enough, though, some of Faust's most interesting characters in his fiction are not gentlemen by birth, but self-reliant rascals who are able to pose as gentlemen.

[29]The novels referred to are *Clung* (1920) and *The Outlaw of Buffalo Flat* (1930), both about a white raised as a Chinese. *Black Jack* (1921) and *Outlaw Breed* (1926) are about an outlaw's orphaned son, and *Seven Trails* (1922) not only uses an outlaw's orphan as hero, but is the first of many novels about a hero who goes south of the border to find acceptance in Mexico, the best of these being the Montana Kid novels in the thirties. (All dates refer to magazine publication, rather than hardcover book appearance. Brand wrote so many novels and published so quickly that Dodd, Mead, and Co. and other publishers took only two or three of the

[30]Not all Brand novels have been published in hardcover: some of early pulp novels have yet to be rescued, and some of the Chelsea House Westerns have not been re-issued by Dodd, Mead, hence, one cannot say with absolute authority that this is the first Brand Western about Indians. But it is the first, chronolgically, that I have read, and my knowledge of Brand's output includes a reading of 131 novels. *The White Cheyenne* was issued as a book by Dodd, Mead, in 1960.

[31]*The White Cheyenne* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1960; reprinted New York: Warner Paperback Library, 1974), p. 221.

[32]*The White Cheyenne*, p. 222.

[33]Easton, pp. 83-84, tells of the beginning of the marital rift that grew to considerable proportions in the marriage of Faust and Dorothy. Part of Faust's problem with marriage was that he expected his wife to share his ferocious energy, and to strive to be a literary giant. Another problem was that he was always looking for adventures, both in travel and with other women.

[34]*The Border Bandit* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947; paperback reprint, New York: Warner Paperback Library, 1975) p. 11. This novel was published by Harper and Bros. uner the name of Evan Evans, a late pseudonym developed in 1933 for the Montana Kid novels. The three Montana Kid books were written for the famous editor, Cass Canfield, of Harper's; Canfield made Faust to some serious revisions, and as a result, the three are Faust's masterpieces. The other Evan Evans novels, however, aren't quite up to that standard: they are merely magazine novels that Harper editors chose as being close to the standard of the Montana Kid books. Four or five of them are very good, but two or three can be classed as lemons.

[35]*Sawdust and Sixguns* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950) is another "Evan Evans" novel. Its theme is much the same as *The Border Bandit*, although it is not quite on so grandiose a scale. However, confusion has been confounded here by Warner Paperback Library Library, which issued the novel under a new title, *Tenderfoot*, in 1967. This act in turn causes further confusion because a 1924 novel had been published by Dodd, Mead as *The Tenderfoot* in 1953, and paperbacked under that name by Pocket Books. Warner Books has recently issued a new paperback version of *The Tenderfoot* under the title *Outlaw's Gold*. Such actions make Max Brand a trying author for a scholar's attention.

[36]*Lucky Larribee* was issued as a hardcover book by Dodd, Mead, in 1957. Its period is in the mythic times of the Great Plains.

[37]*Broken Arrow* tells of the friendship between Tom Jeffords and Cochise; both novel and film are based on history. The film, directed by Delmer Daves, starred James Stewart and Jeff Chandler.

[38]Another "Evan Evans" novel, published by Harper's in 1948.

[39]Northrop Frye. *The Secular Scripture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 133.

[40]This was published in book form by Dodd, Mead, and Co. in 1941.

[41]This point of view is highly speculative, and based on no external evidence. But I would argue that the "Western" label has been harmful to the reputation of many Brand novels, which just as well could have been marketed as "boy's books," or "wild animal" stories. Such Brand novels as *Alcatraz (1922)* and *The White Wolf* (1926) fit into the category of the "wild animal" tale, and would make excellent reading for older children and adolescents. Although Zane Grey is an influence on the wild horse stories in the canon of Max Brand novels, Jack London appears to be an obvious influence on the dog and wolf novels and on the novels about Alaska and the Klondike, like *Might Lobo* (1932) and *Torture Trail* (1932). There are many interesting parallels between Brand and Jack London, aside from the fact that both were from impoverished backgrounds, and both were from California (Brand, though born in Seattle, grew up in California).

[35]Brand sets the novel in the days when travel to the West was largely by river, and he attempts to make the time and geography credible, although, since Johnnie is unfamiliar with the territory, Brand avoids many specific details of setting and geography. There is, however, one interesting flaw in the story's background: in traveling from Liberty, Missouri, to Fort Leavenworth in the Kansas territory, Brand has Johnnie and Hank Raney to "ferry the Platte" and cross the Missouri bottom lands. This is indeed possible, and necessary, but an author more familiar with the country would have mentioned that the Platte they crossed was the "little Platte" or the Missouri meandering stream of that name—not the more famous Nebraska plains river. It seems fairly obvious that Brand was following an old map of the plains around 1840 when he wrote the story.

[36]*The Stranger* was published originally in magazine form in 1929, and is a mystery set in the modern West, so that there is no reason to question the action merely because the time is roughly contemporary. *Sawdust and Sixguns* goes into a kind of epic description of Dodge City in its heyday, thus allowing the reader to recognize the period. Frequently, the presence of an automobile or a telephone line helps to date the Brand Western as a story set in the 1890-1914 period. Earlier stories can usually be dated by the kind of guns used, or something similar. However, it is possible to argue that there are anachronisms in several Brand Westerns. Those written prior to 1925 are very carelessly treated in regard to setting: they seem to take place in some mythic region that may be still in existence out in the Rockies, even in the 1920's.

[37]Before the Mexican War, Colt revolvers were not in general use very much, except among a few frontiersmen, naval officers, and except for the Texas Rangers, who ordered a large number of Colt .44's. This Colt was made to the specifications suggested by Captain Sam Walker of the Rangers, and hence is often called the "Walker Colt." See Clair Huffaker, "Sam Colt Was a Curious Man," pp. 137-155 of *Clair Huffaker's Profiles of the American West* (New York: Pocket Books, 1976); the book is by Clair Huffaker, of course.

[38]*Vengeance Trail* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1931; paperback reprint, New York: Pocket Books, 1973), p. 7.

[39]In several Brand novels of 1929-1932, we get plucky teenage boys who admire the hero and help him, or play the role of hero themselves. Destry learns that his real enemy is Chester Bent in *Destry Rides Again* (1929) because a boy helps him. The Kid in *The Hair-Trigger Kid* (1931) is the idol of a town mischief maker, incidentally, this novel is revelatory of the author's personal feelings, I believe, in other ways. In *The Stingaree* (1930), the hero, Alabama Joe, shares the center stage with Jimmy Green an orphan of thirteen who is also the town's toughest fighter and the leader of a gang of young tough boys. *The Stingaree* is narrated primarily from Jimmy Green's point of view.

[40]This novel's characters, with the exception of Colonel Stockton, all seem to be stereotypes from earlier Brand stories and from other stories of twenties. Generally, the more a Brand Western follows twenties stereotypes, the more dated it seems today, which is logical enough. One twenties stereotype in this book that Brand used again and again was the "good" outlaw who is really a gentleman by birth and breeding (we might call this the "Raffles" motif). This sort of romantic figure is still palatable if the hero is fighting for social justice, like Zorro; but when, like Smiling Charlie, the fellow is just a rich heir out for a good time, the character is almost intolerable. Presumably, Brand had nourished fantasies about gentleman crooks as an adolescent, and he put his sort of thing in his fiction, but one of the reasons that his thirties Westerns are much better than the twenties product is the fact that Brand had out-grown the juvenile conception of the gentleman outlaw by the thirties.

[41]*Smiling Charlie* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1931; paperback reprint, New York: Warner Paperback Library, 1975), p. 98.

[42]Several Brand first person narrators are guilty of dramatic irony because they do not know the future, or they lack full knowledge of certain characters. But Billy is duped by his girl friend, a hopeless flirt, patronized by Colonel Stockton, and defeated in several showdowns by Charlie. He is the most obtuse Brand narrator I have run across, and one is tempted to believe that Brand wrote the entire novel as an exercise in irony at the expense of naive readers of Westerns.

[43]*Blood on the Trail* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1957; paperback reprint, New York: Pocket Books, 1971), p. 98.

[44]*Blood on the Trail*, p. 102.

[45]*Thunder Moon* was published in a Dodd, Mead, and Co. edition in 1969. Subsequent references, however, are to the Pocket Books paperback (New York: 1975).

[45]*Thunder Moon*, pp. 43-45. Brand doesn't put the matter as crudely as I have of course. But he makes Thunder Moon inordinately sensitive to pain, in contrast to the Indian boys he grows up; thus Brand seems to attribute an innate stoicism to Indians, rather than one developed by discipline and ritual. I find it hard to believe that a white boy raised among Indians would have a different attitude toward pain from the Indians.

[46]Easton's bibliography of Faust's writings lists two novellettes and one booklength serial about Thunder Moon in addition to the first novel. Hence, there is the material for one or two more Thunder Moon books, but the publishers have not brought them out. Acquiring pulp editions of Max Brand stories at this date, fifty years after publication, is about as easy as finding an unpublished novel by Herman Melville.

[47]As Max Brand acquires a body of scholarship and criticism, there will probably be many arguments about whether his decision to leave the world of magazine fiction for Hollywood in 1937 was wise or not. His agent, Carl Brandt, felt that Brand was making a serious mistake, for he seemed to be on the verge of conquering the "slick" magazine market, and perhaps had a chance to write hardcover bestsellers (Easton, p. 201-205). On the other hand, Brand gained financial security and developed an archetypal character in popular literature and film in Dr. Kildare.

Brand's decision seems to me to have been a bad choice, both for his popular fiction and for his serious literary ambitions. At the time of the middle thirties, Brand was writing his best Westerns and his best adventure novels (as *The Golden Knight*, 1936, about Richard the Lion-Hearted in Austria, proves). While the Dr. Kildare stories were the basis for some excellent films—popular film of the thirties at its best—they are dated today, because their medical technology and knowledge has been superseded. The Kildare films, however, are better than the television show that carried on the tradition in the sixties, because Kildare was more of a rebel and less an establishment figure in the films and books. But Brand was capable of doing much better work than the Kildare books.

Perhaps, it might be argued, the move to Hollywood was necessary for Brand's health and emotional stability. He consumed enormous energies in the period 1932-1938, writing Westerns and adventure stories at an enormous rate, and aiming at the "slicks" too. One suspects that Brand found writing for the "slick" magazines, with the necessity of careful plotting and revising, and with the inhibitions imposed by the "slicks," a rather nerve wracking business, even though the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Collier's* had not yet reached the nadir of banality they achieved in the middle fifties.

[51]*War Party* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1973; New York: Warner Books, 1975), p. 10. Very likely, though, the novel was published in magazine form in *Argosy* as a serial, beginning in September, 1933. See Easton, p. 289, for a listing in Faust's bibliography.

[52]*War Party*, P. 71. Red Hawk stays for his apprenticeship at the blacksmith shop as part of a vow to himself, even though both the kindly Richard Lester and some Cheyenne friends plead with him to leave.

[53]*War Party*, p. 81. Rusty tracks the White Horse on foot because no horse can catch the famed stallion; Rusty feels however that persistence will wear the horse down. Brand was borrowing from himself here. Silvertip, at a later date in the history of the West, tracks his great horse, Parade, on foot through the wilderness of the Sierra Blanca (a fictionized Sierra Nevada). See the 1933 novel, *The Stolen Stallion*, the first of the Silvertip stories.

[54]*Frontier Feud* (New York: Dodd, Mead, Co., 1974; paperback reprint, New York: Warner Books, 1976). This novel was published by the Macauley Company in 1935 in hardcover as *Brother of the Cheyennes*; the author was identified as "George Owen Baxter," Brand's second most common pseudonym for Western magazine fiction, and the name he had used in the twenties for a number of Westerns for Chelsea House. The novel was also paperbacked by New Library in 1949 and 1953 as *Brother of the Cheyennes*. Dodd, Mead, and Co. changed the title on re-issue. This sort of thing makes study of Brand a little confusing at times.

[55]*Frontier Feud*, pp. 19-20. Marston's name probably was suggested by the Greco-Roman god Mars, who is a rather unpleasant fellow in classical poetry; Mars also steals Venus, the wife of the blacksmith god Vulcan, as Marston tries to steal Rusty's fiancee. However, as I suggest in the text, Marston has certain analogies with George Armstrong Custer.

[56]*Frontier Feud*, p. 184.

[57]*Cheynne Gold* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1974; paperback reprint, New York: Warner Books, 1975), p. 158.

[58]*Cheyenne Gold*, p. 158.

[59]The reader cannot help thinking, if he is at all familiar with the actual history of the Black Hills, that the discovery of gold there in 1874 precipitated the final great war between Sioux and Cheyenne and the United States Army, leading to Custer's defeat in 1876 and the death of Crazy Horse in 1878. Hence Rusty's peace can only be temporary. Myth can work within historical framework, but it cannot contradict history directly.

[60]At this time in his life, Brand was torn between his wife and his mistress, as Rusty was torn between a white woman and an Indian woman, and Brand found the choice an impossible one. In addition, Brand was pressured by debts and driven by his ambition to conquer the world of the slick magazines, as well as his ambition to gain lasting literary fame. Guilt over these "worldly" ambitions and over his marital problems made Brand long for an ascetic nature; in addition, though Brand considered himself a pagan, he was sporadically religious and a great admirer of Christ and the Catholic faith. At the time Brand was composing the last of the Red Hawk novels, he was in the midst of some of this confusion; and a couple of years later, he was working on poems about Christ and St Francis (See Easton, p. 201).

[61]Easton, p. 170.

[62]They have been presented as a trilogy, that is, in the seventies. Note 55 discusses the earlier printing of *Frontier Feud* under another name. These novels are certainly not the best known in the Brand canon, however, for they are disquieting in many ways, and do not provide formula endings quite the way the Western fan expects. The first novel lacks the kind of shootout the fan expects, although Red Hawk does seem to get the girl; the second novel provides the shootout and is probably the closest to the conventions. *Cheyenne Gold* would be the least satisfactory of the three, though, from that point of view.