



Sacred Wilderness

Susan Power

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A Clan Mother story for the twenty-first century, *Sacred Wilderness* explores the lives of four women of different eras and backgrounds who come together to restore foundation to a mixed-up, mixed-blood woman—a woman who had been living the American dream, and found it a great maw of emptiness. These Clan Mothers may be wisdom-keepers, but they are anything but stern and aloof—they are women of joy and grief, risking their hearts and sometimes their lives for those they love. The novel swirls through time, from present-day Minnesota to the Mohawk territory of the 1620s, to the ancient biblical world, brought to life by an indigenous woman who would come to be known as the Virgin Mary. The Clan Mothers reveal secrets, the insights of prophecy, and stories that are by turns comic, so painful they can break your heart, and perhaps even powerful enough to save the world. In lyrical, lushly imagined prose, *Sacred Wilderness* is a novel of unprecedented necessity.

Sacred Wilderness Details

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Author : Susan Power

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From Reader Review Sacred Wilderness for online ebook

Jody says

I will treasure this book forever. I love, love, love the story. I loved the way she incorporated and integrated religious stories from multiple religions. I loved the way she created and shared the very human (and by that I mean imperfect) experiences for all of the characters, even the spiritual ones. All told, this story proves how we are all connected... and not all that different. This story demonstrates why and how we all need to care for one another. This story demonstrates how much we need to pay attention and think about what we are doing and the experience of others throughout that.

Carl Lavigne says

Susan Power name is fitting: she writes with power. Sacred Wilderness is a wonderful book. It condenses hundreds of years of personal history into only a couple hundred pages, and tells them with such honesty that it is easy to forget a word of it is fiction. Those well read in other Native American authors, as well as those with extensive knowledge of Native American history, arts, & cultures will get much more out of this than the casual novel reader. Epic in scope, and poignantly personal, this book deserves a thorough read.

Elizabeth Andrew says

I rejoice that SACRED WILDERNESS exists! I'm so happy to have read this novel, which is shot through with gratitude and kindness and women's wisdom and reconciliation between faith traditions and healing within the Native community. I'm thrilled to now know of Susan Power, who takes seriously the role of writer as healer in our world and is unafraid to do this work within the structure of a story. I love how she combines utter realism, naming real artists and powerfully evoking real Twin Cities places, with magical realism that's not magic at all but a serious depiction of the spirit world's habitation among us. I only wish some Minnesotan publisher had taken on this novel instead of Michigan State University. Minnesotans need to claim Susan Power as our own.

“I was always there in the process, this observer critiquing as I went, wondering what others would think. Is this good? Is this right? Heaven help me, will this sell? I’m not saying I’ve gone missing from the work completely, it’s my hand and my sensibility, my technique and obsession laying down the paint, but part of me has slipped to the side, quieted that watcher’s voice. Now I operate more on instinct, and I’m, well, this is embarrassing...” She playfull pretended to cover her ears. “I’m shattered with love for these subjects. They are front and center. Their stories, not mine. Sometimes I’m weeping with sympathy and joy, respect, and I don’t even know it ‘til Dylan walks in and wipes off my face.” --Grace in SACRED WILDERNESS

Gillian says

This was a Hanukkah gift from one of our daughters, the same daughter (who as a lively UW Badger)

introduced me to the joys of Louise Erdrich. What a treasure (the daughter, of course, but also this book)!! It was pure delight on so many levels: literary style, spiritual food, ideas for New Year's resolutions, sources for discussion with my Dear Husband (because it ties in with so much of his reading -- themes about tribal conflict, religious and otherwise), women, information about Native American traditions and ideas (past and present), humor, St. Paul (the city). Just. Absolutely. Perfect.

Harron68 says

One reviewer who gave it, as I did, 3 stars wrote "mixed feelings." True, a blend of contemporary times with ancient Indian religion (or mythology?) with Christian and not to be left out, Jewish tradition. I felt it was just too "new age" and way too much on the stories of native stories.

I've loved Erdrich, Hillerman, Least-Heat Moon, and others. This was too laden with Native American tales, guilt, pride and put-downs of European influence. Dreams, fantasy, call it whatever, the predestined life implies we don't have choice, so how to account for characters not taking the right path (having choices)? The duality, almost, blending Biblical into Indian tradition was too cozy, convenient. Finally, why does it always seem in reincarnation and in ancestor tracing/worship, the characters always come from great leaders/spirits of their communities? No ancestor was just "working class."

Andi Wunderlich says

Marvelous.

Sharon says

I'm not really ready to review but I wanted to mark down some pages and quotes to remember:

Page 77 "I understand what you're saying. We're stuck between the proverbial rock and a hard place. Either we're nearly stalked for our beliefs, filling some void in the shallow materialism of the mainstream culture with has folks latching on to us like disciples, or we're dismissed. I've been careful about how much to reveal when it comes to my true process for similar reasons - one wants to be professional, whatever that means. But as I get older I find I have to tell the whole truth - it just bursts out of me whether I like it or not." She laughed. "A few of us Native authors got tired of having our work labeled as 'magical realism' which is a pretty presumptuous designation if you really think about it, inferring the world of our books is an other reality, something fantastic, when we're just writing out of our ordinary experience. So I started teaching a Native Lit class called 'Real Magic, Not Magical Realism!' That does the trick!"

Page 83 "I looked at her to see what answer she was ready for. Quick or true?" How often we all do that.

Page 84 "Oh, I had nightmares, like anyone else, both sleeping and awake. But deep down I always knew there would be an end to the bad dream, every bad dream, so I let myself just live through the sorrow. Angry people can be jealous when they meet someone like that, someone who seem to own all the hope in the world. What they don't understand, these bitter ones, is that hope isn't anything like money; there is always plenty to go around and anyone can be rich."

Page 133 "I say that you honor us to share your powerful stories, but they cannot replace those that have grown from the very earth we stand on. Our stories are true for us because they are alive. We see them and hear them, and life would not be possible without them." Both respect and boundaries when dealing with someone trying to sell their religion to others. Yes.

Page 134 "Where are the women in your story? You have heard us talk of our Mother, the Earth, and Sky Woman who came down to get everything started. You have met our Clan Mothers whose wisdom is so cherished we rely on them to elect our leaders, and with one word they can remove his antlers and replace him." Page 135 "When you tell us these stories empty of women, they cannot talk properly on their one leg. They sound unfinished because they ignore half the world."

Page 136 "Your story. My story. Why do they have to crack heads like antlered bucks? Why does one need to trample the other? Why can they not speak to each other in friendship?"

Jalilah says

Grass Dancer bedazzled me few years back, so when I found out Susan Power had written a new novel, I was very excited. Sacred Wilderness does not disappoint! While both novels travel through time with a variety of characters, Grass Dancer and Sacred Wilderness are very different.

Where as the mythology in Grass Dancer is entirely Native American, in Sacred Wilderness the spirituality is an interesting blend of Native American and Catholic. This blend works beautifully! For example Catholic influences are every chapter is named after a mystery in the Rosary and there is an appearance of the Virgin Mary, known here as Maryam.....in modern day a Saint Paul, Minnesota! Different sections of the book are devoted to different clan mothers, some modern day, some historical, some in mythic times. One of my favourite parts was a Mohawk legend of the "Peacemaker" that is very similar to stories of Jesus. Within this story the Virgin of Guadalupe legend is worked in. Susan Powers is not imposing a Christian story on First Nation figures, rather conveying the idea that the First Nations already had their own spiritual beliefs and prophets that were similar to those in Christianity before the Europeans arrived.

This is the kind of book that you keep thinking about days after you read it. It is a very powerful and deeply moving novel and I highly recommend it! Susan Powers is a very gifted author who is becoming one of my favourites.

Katy says

I am not good at writing reviews and this book is going to make it harder than usual. The story started off slow for me, until I began to look into the characters that Powers writes and their underlying motives. Not a religious book, but a very spiritual one that had me delving deep into myself and my beliefs -- a touching novel and one that makes you consider what matters.

Shelby Harper says

I was captivated by the four strong women in this novel, whose stories are interwoven to create a tale of love, loss, regret and redemption. Sacred Wilderness spans time and location, allowing the story to unfold to the reader in a slow, organic way. The book moved me as a reader and as a writer.

Harry Allagree says

First of all, I believe this is a book which might be of great significance & inspiration to every young adult/adult American woman. It is a work of validation in the most honest terms one could write.

There is so much wisdom in this almost poetic work by Susan Power, a novel which is part of the American Indian Studies Series of Michigan State University Press. It's one of the clearest & breathtaking expressions I've ever read of the worldview of First Peoples. It's also uniquely innovative in its respectfully honest statement of the conflicts & relationships with Christian, particularly Catholic, religious tradition. The last two chapters "The Gospel of Maryam" & "Assumption" are immensely eloquent & realistic.

If you're looking for a message of hope in this turbulent mess of the end of 2016, Susan Power's book is it!

Andrea Stoeckel says

Again, the stars aren't posting. It gets a 5** rating from me.

This is a funny book! A little bit Yiddish, a little Minnesotan, and a whole lot of Native humor speinkled in a book about "waking up" to your history, realizing you can lie to yourself, and how (our) stories can and will shape us. Sometimes short and sweet beats long and full of spoilers. I have read all three of Power's books now, and she is a powerful writer (pun intended). GO FIND HER WORK!!!!

Michelle says

4.5*

Lacey Louwagie says

This book was divided into several different story "sections" -- one that took place in present day and followed an older Native American woman who was employed by a wealthy couple as a cook/housecleaner and others that delved into the stories of the main characters' ancestors.

I loved the way this book blended Native American and Catholic spirituality (which is what drew me to the book), particularly the Virgin Mary's intuitive understanding that all beings who forged a path of peace were sacred and would have been "friends of her son." Mary's manifestation appeared in both the historical and

the modern timelines, and I liked her portrayal in the historical one better; she felt just a touch too "woo-woo" in her modern incarnation, and I kind of felt as if the privileged, unemployed middle-aged woman she was sent to "awaken" was not really deserving of the honor. On the other hand, her appearance to comfort a grieving mother and clan leader in the historical storyline seemed a much more worthy visitation.

The historical writing was incredibly beautiful and evocative. The modern writing I found to be a little stilted in places, but I liked that it lent some greater insight into the politics of being American Indian and living in the current culture. This is something I still strive to find a deeper understanding of, especially since moving to a state with a significant Native population that still remains mostly a mystery to me.

Siobhan Wolf says

This book swept me away!

Reading *Sacred Wilderness* was more than a pleasure, it was, for me, a sacred experience. I was so moved by it that it is hard to put into words. Susan Power is a craftswoman and storyteller of the highest caliber. Her use of language appears effortless, yet so many passages stopped me in my tracks and forced me to read them over again to savor their beauty and to gather all the subtle meaning packed into them.

The novel follows the lives of two women and their families as they connect and become intertwined, learning from one another as they go. It is a story of culture clashes. It is a story of spiritual journey and understanding. It is a story of self discovery and transformation both expected and unexpected. Spanning generations, it is also a story of our humanness and the things that push us apart and draw us back together. Ultimately, it is a story of the deep and powerful love that lives inside each and every one of us.

I cannot recommend this book strongly enough.
