

Post Scriptum and Research to

The Mission at Silverlake – Old Shatterhand and the Freedman

There is an obscure gap in the plot of the *Winnetou* trilogy, namely that between Vol II and Vol III.

While Karl F. May gives no details, and after mentioning the Sioux attack heads straight into the opening sequence of the story with ‘Sans-Ears’, which makes up the first part of *Winnetou III*, the gap left between Volume II and III allows for much creativity with which to fill said gap.

Old Shatterhand had been hunting in the northern Rockies with a group of hunters, and while riding south in the North Platte River region, Sioux attacked them, killed five, and caused the others to disperse in all directions of the compass when making a getaway from the attack. Old Shatterhand is left to ride south alone. Karl F May leaves no details of the makeup of the group of hunters; a perfect opportunity to create a little more detail, and let someone else tell the story of what happened to Almy Wilkins and her father after Leflor took over Wilkinsfield, and where they came to live after the Civil War ended, as the ensuing emancipation liberated the slaves of the southern states.

Mr. Wilkins and his daughter, Almy, fled Wilkinsfield after Leflor, neighbour and villainous plantation owner, had by nefarious means taken the cotton plantation from the Wilkins family. In *Old Shatterhand—The Sonora Adventure*, Martin Adler, the erstwhile German foreman on the plantation, retells the events on Wilkinsfield.

The continuation, several years on, takes place in the ‘Silverlake’ chapter of *Deutsche Herzen—Deutsche Helden*, the adaptation of which is presented in *The Mission at Silverlake*.

But first, the following publications have discussed, at length, the unbelievably unhinged plot, the mystery arcs that lead nowhere, the unnecessarily arrogant heroes, and a disappointing, unresolved ending of Karl F. May’s *Deutsche Herzen—Deutsche Helden: Sonderheft Nr. 6 der KMG, 1977, Walther Ilmer, “Missratene” Deutsche Helden (*)*; *Mitteilungen Nr 34, 12/1977, Walther Ilmer, Das Adlerhorst-Raetsel - ein Tabu?*; *Mitteilungen Nr 183, 03/2015, Peter Essenwein, Karl Mays Deutsche Herzen, Deutsche Helden, Versuch einer logischen Durchdringung (I)*. (*On Page 39, paragraph 9, Franz Kandolf’s editing of Karl F. May’s novel is annotated: [...] The question no longer arises: Is this still Karl May? Priority here is given to the full satisfaction of the reader, who is interested in a well-rounded reading experience. Helping out here and intervening creatively is justified in the case of a product that is—unfortunately—as unsuccessful as [*Deutsche Herzen—Deutsche Helden*].)

Like with *Waldroeschen* (as well as the other German Romances written under pseudonym for publisher Münchmeier in the 1880s), translating them verbatim would be a futile effort. Kandolfesque effort is required to present the adventures in a coherent, flowing plot for an English speaking reader; I make it clear: I am not Franz Kandolf, but like Kandolf, I am of the opinion that Karl F. May’s works deserve such creative intervention. The original, hand-written manuscripts are lost (in those days, they were destroyed after typesetting, since there was not enough space to store them), and rumour has it that a certain percentage of the text in said romances may not have flowed from Karl F. May’s pen.

This can no longer be detailed with accuracy.

In Karl Friedrich May’s novel *Deutsche Herzen—Deutsche Helden*, or *German Hearts—German Heroes*, the narration jumps forward a few years from the events on Wilkinsfield; it recounts details of the fates of Mr. Wilkins and his

daughter, Almy, as they found refuge at Silverlake somewhere in the Gila River region, under the protection of the local Apache tribes.

Mr. Wilkins was a benevolent slave owner, and by Karl F. May's narrative treated his slaves in a decent manner—he was not a cruel master; and that was the paradox that surrounded white slave owners, they deluded themselves that their slaves were content. However, no matter how decent a white slave owner treated his army of slaves, he remained a slave owner, a buyer and seller, a trafficker of humans. Nat Turner's rebellion more than thirty years before the setting of the plot of *The Mission at Silverlake*, among other things pointed to the lie that slavery was a benevolent institution. Of the army of rebellious slaves that followed Turner in 1831 it was believed that: "*all the brigands were slaves—and most, if not all these, the property of kind and indulgent masters.*" That is the point: slaves were property, chattel, things to be dealt with like cows, furniture, old socks...

While Karl F. May gave Mr. Wilkins and his daughter, Almy, a refuge away from the southern slave states, where the Civil War was still raging, although by the time *The Mission at Silverlake* evolves, it had been over for about two years, the fate of the Wilkinsfield slaves after Leflor had taken over, remains unknown. During the latter part of the 19th century, one in four cowboys was black. Mr. Wilkins' house servant, who assisted Martin Adler to expedite Leflor out of the house and off the estate, was by his own words Master Wilkins' servant. Leflor simply insulted him as '*Schafskopf*', but the reader is not informed of his name. In the chapter *Villainy on Wilkinsfield* of *The Sonora Adventure*, said black indentured servant received from me the name Isaak (with a 'k').

After 1865, with the Emancipation Proclamation and Thirteenth Amendment that freed all slaves in the United States, Isaak, like hundreds of thousands of other African Americans in the South, faced the difficulties of finding a way to forge an economically independent life in the face of hostile Whites. In my re-shuffled Karl-May-Universe, Mr. Wilkins had ensured that Isaak was able to read and write, but with few other resources, such as money, he needed a job. He accompanied Mr. Wilkins and his daughter, Almy, out of Arkansas, and presumably across Indian Territory (today's Oklahoma), into New Mexico and possibly Arizona. After helping his erstwhile owners, Mr. Wilkins and Almy, to escape Leflor, Isaak received his freedom from Mr. Wilkins; he was now a freedman. He chose to stay with Mr. Wilkins and Almy during the dangers faced in their refuge at Silverlake, being employed as their major-domo. When they then travelled towards California, Isaak parted company with them, and headed off into his own future as a freedman. He became a hunter, trapper, and then cowboy. It was at that time that he joined a group of hunters, and in the process of their hunting endeavour encountered Old Shatterhand, who also joined them for a hunt along the North Platte River.

Role models for Isaak Miller in *The Mission at Silverlake* are Nat Love, the famous African American cowboy also known as Deadwood Dick, and William Wells Brown, the first African American author to publish a novel with *Clotel, or, The President's Daughter: a Narrative of Slave Life in the United States*, in 1853 in London. Snippets of Isaak Miller's life as a slave before escaping Wilkinsfield are based on William Wells Brown's *Narrative of William Wells Brown, a Fugitive Slave*, written by himself (autobiography).

Silverlake is a fictional setting, placed somewhere west of the Mimbres Mountains, which are the southern extension of the Black Range or the Sierra Diablo, and north of Silver City; given the wooded hills and dales in the Gila National Forest, and the settings of new features like man-made lakes, or 21st century retreat establishments in the mountains, May's Silverlake (a precursor to his later man-made feature of the same name in the novel *The Treasure in Silver-Lake*) is aptly

placed. However, I cannot find Sierra della Acha; it is atop the 'Acha' where one finds a 'miraculously wonderful' mountain lake.

Karl F. May writes: "*Am Ufer des Sees stehen die alten Gebäude einer katholischen Mission, welche nicht mehr bewohnt waren. Man sagt, daß dort einst ein sehr reiches Volk gewohnt habe, Tolteken oder so ähnlich soll ihr Name gewesen sein. Dieses Volk fand viel Silber in den Bergen, und als es dann verdrängt wurde, hat es unermessliche Schätze in der Nähe des Sees vergraben. Deshalb und weil das Wasser des Sees bei klarem Wetter und wenn die Sonne scheidelrecht steht, wie flüssiges Silber funkelt, hat man ihn den Silbersee genannt. In der alten Mission am Ufer wohnt die Nakana.*" (On the shore of the lake are the old buildings of a Catholic mission, which are no longer inhabited. It is said that a very rich people once lived there, [the] Toltec [...]. [They] found a lot of silver in the mountains, and when they were displaced, they buried immense treasures near the lake. For this reason, and because the water of the lake sparkles like liquid silver in clear weather and when the sun is shining straight down, it has been called the Silverlake. The [lady called] Nakana lives in the old mission on the shore.)

About 'Nakana': Karl F. May writes (verbatim translation): "Actually, it is Palomonakana in full. Both words belong to the Tehua dialect. The former means dove and the latter forest, primeval forest, together therefore the dove of the primeval forest." Wikipedia defines 'primeval forest' thus: "An old-growth forest, sometimes synonymous with primary forest, virgin forest, late seral forest, primeval forest, or first-growth forest—is a forest that has attained great age without significant disturbance [...]." Thus, Silverlake is situated in a forest that has not been disturbed by man since it came into existence eons ago.

Karl F. May invented much of his 'Wild West' language, including Native Indian words and their meanings. Clearly, 'Palomo' is borrowed from Spanish—with one caveat: Palomo is a male pigeon/dove; 'Paloma' would be the correct spelling for a female pigeon/dove. The character in question is a young lady. 'Nakana' is also a person's name (female and male) of varying origins and cultures. Since the region of New Mexico was under Mexican dominion not ten years before the setting of the plot, I think it only fair to give the kind young lady the proper Spanish-translation name for 'Dove of the Forest', or 'Dove of the Woods', namely: *Paloma del Bosque*. (N.B.: There is a native dove, *Columbina inca*, also called *la tortolita mexicana*.)

In the German original, Karl F. May has a number of characters address the young lady as 'Nakana'. Let's over-think this...: "Good evening Miss Forest." However, *Paloma del Bosque*, aka Almy Wilkins, makes merely two minor appearances: a cameo 'ride through', and a 'reveal', and then has no further influence on the plot.

Repeatedly, and in various Karl-May novels, the Llano Estacado and the Bolson de Mapimi are described as 'terrible deserts like the Sahara in North Africa'. Of course, this is not quite so; 21st century information about both regions is readily available to the interested reader. For this fictional plot, the terrible 'Sahara-like' conditions shall remain intact, because it refers to a minor, non-essential point in the plot.

Nuggets the size of goose eggs. Karl May's description of a double pin used by the Dove of the Forest to hold back her black hair: '*Das prächtige, dunkle, in langen, schweren Flechten herabhängende Haar trug keinen Schmuck als eine Doppelnadel, an welcher sich zwei Nuggets von der Grösse eines Gänseeies befanden.*' Translation: 'The splendid, dark hair, cascading down her back in long, heavy braids, was adorned with nothing but a double pin, on which were two nuggets the size of a goose egg.' A goose egg is three times as large as a chicken egg. Imagine two nuggets of the size of a goose egg—each—and of the weight of gold—each—in

someone's hair. Even a flattened piece of gold in the shape of a goose egg, would still have considerable weight, not to mention an awkward shape and size to be of use, let alone be comfortable in someone's hair. Let's make it '...of the size of a small dove's egg.'

And then there is the Southern Railway to Mohawk Station along the Rio Gila. Considering that the original German version set the plot at Silverlake about four years after the Civil War, (say 1868-69), taking a railroad trip to Mohawk Station from somewhere in New Mexico was impossible, because the Southern Pacific tracks from Los Angeles crossed the Colorado River at Yuma, Arizona in 1877; the first Southern Pacific train to reach Tucson, Arizona, did so in 1879.

However, since this is a minor point, Petermann Station, called Mohawk Station after the Civil War, was a well known stage coach stopping point. Rather than undertaking a railroad journey, which was not yet possible, the people travelling to Mohawk Station are taking the stage coach.