

Post Scriptum and Research to

MATAVA-SE CHRONICLES—Old Shatterhand Meets Don Carlos

Matava-Se's chronicles and their historic origins.

The description of Castle Rheinswalden and its history in the first chapter is based on that of the Castle of Monrepos, Neuwied, in *The Life of Carmen Sylva*, the English translation of the biography of Princess 'Waldroeschen' Elizabeth zu Wied, as translated from the German work 'Aus dem Leben Carmen Sylva's', by Baroness Stackelberg, translated by Baroness Deichmann, published in 1890.

The events set down within Chapter 2, Entries I to XXXII, are authentic accounts, written by real people, except for a few short inserts, bridging texts, and plot continuity considerations that are Matava-Se specific, fictional and hopefully blend in with the historical journal texts.

I set out to create a past life for Karl Sternau, aka Don Carlos de Olsunna, aka Matava-Se; it always bothered me that the young twenty-eight year old polished gentleman, physician and accomplished surgeon was suddenly supposed to be a just as accomplished, experienced *Westmann** who had travelled the Prairies, Rocky Mountains, Mexico, East Indies (and even battled the Papuas in New Holland, which in itself is an impossibility), and hunted elephants, tigers, as well as lions in Africa. Karl May provided some of the missing pieces, but not many: the elephant hunt in Ceylon, and the lion hunt in Africa, of which he wrote two versions.

(**Westmann* is a Karl-May-ism for westerner, frontiersman, hunter, trapper, mountain man...all in one word. For his fictional globetrotting universe, Karl F. May invented a number of 'Wild-West' expressions, as he did for his 'Orient' novels.)

Because I have never been in any of the places K.F. May's fictional characters travel, I must, therefore, rely on historic accounts written by people who had travelled in the real places at that particular time.

In the early 1880s readers of Karl May's *Waldroeschen*, were suddenly confronted with Karl Sternau revealing himself as Matava-Se, an accomplished westerner, mountain man, and explorer of the Rocky Mountains, who had distinguished himself with the skills necessary to not only survive but also make his mark on the wildest of Wild Wests, with a nom-de-guerre given to him by the inhabitants of the wilds. There was no mention of any of it prior to that revealing moment during a bizarre circus-like performance.

He had been travelling not only the Wild West but also 'did battle with the Bedouins of the Sahara, the Malays of the East-India Archipelago, and the Papuas of New Holland' so the narrator tells us in the opening sequences of *Waldroeschen* while the young surgeon and his lady-love take a stroll in a forest and are attacked by a gang of villains; and he even 'hunted tigers, panthers, elephants and lions' according to a five-year old know-it-all. (Original German text: *Wenn Sie einen Helden sehen wollen, so müssen Sie hier meinen Onkel Sternau ansehen, der ist in Amerika und Afrika gewesen, sogar in Asien. Da hat er Löwen, Panther, Tiger und Elephanten gejagt; da hat er auch mit wilden Menschen gekämpft.* [2nd part, 1st chapter of *Waldroeschen*])...and...(Original German text: *Während seiner Wanderungen durch fremde Erdtheile hatte er mit den wilden Indianern Nordamerikas, den Beduinen der Wüste, den Malayen des ostindischen Archipels und den Papuas Neuhollands gekämpft.* [2nd Chapter of *Waldroeschen*].

And all of this, in a marvellous universe of fiction, between the age of nineteen, the conclusion to his education at the Fredrick William University in Berlin, where his sponsor had sent him after he graduated from high school, and going to Paris where he studied medicine, and became an accomplished physician and surgeon by the age of twenty-eight.

Whether taking the original German *Waldroeschen* chronology, complete with sixteen years on an uninhabited, unknown, and unnamed island, or the chronology of *The*

Rodriganda Romances which deviates by nine years, reducing the marooning of Karl Sternau and his seven friends to seven years, calculating his birth year back from the execution of Maximilian I of Mexico, in *Waldroeschen*, one arrives at 1819 for the year of his forceful conception. His birth year is therefore 1820, allowing for his education, (including a few years in a university, sponsored, after his adoptive father's death, by his guardian, Kurt Rodenstein of Rheinswalden), the studies to become an accomplished surgeon at twenty-eight years of age (the curtain opener at *Waldroeschen* and *The Rodriganda Romances*) which would have taken also a number of years—let's be generous and make it four—in Paris under the famous Professor Letourbier. If his university education concluded at the tender age of eighteen years (end 1838?), and he begins his studies in Paris at twenty-four years of age, that leaves 1839 to 1843 (Karl Sternau's fictional age of nineteen to twenty-three years) for the travel education young people were sent on as a matter of process during the 19th century, where finances permitted, so recommended by W.M. Thackeray ca 1843.

We know where he travelled to become Matava-Se (namely the Wild West), and to battle elephants and tigers in Asia, and lions in Africa. But who could tell me how that would have come about? Karl May left nothing that pertained to the 'how' to posterity.

It all started with Lewis & Clark. After they had found a path through the wilds of America to the Pacific Ocean, it was only a matter of time before others pushed along behind them. Mountain men had always been 'up there' (since the first Europeans 'discovered' the continent, especially with the founding of the Hudson's Bay Company): *the coureur des bois*, *the voyageurs*, the trappers, hunters, pathfinders, and so forth; blame the fashion in Europe for the demand of beaver pelts. Luckily for me, some of those intrepid early mountain men were actually able to write. And they did write down their adventures; some while travelling, others later, from memory. The point is: there were men, and women, who experienced the adventures that Matava-Se was said to have experienced to make him the experienced and skilled westerner and mountain man he turned out to be, a process that was contracted to a paltry sum total of text that can be contained in one paragraph. Alas, May did not have the luxury of access to those early trapper and explorer journals.

I have.

Karl Sternau's entire journey—from the Missouri to the Rockies, to the Pacific Coast, down Mexican California, through to Mexico City (even into the Yucatan), from Mexico across the Pacific Ocean to the East Indies, where he hunts elephants and tigers (I've omitted the tigers, oh please! Just because an enthusiastic five-year old tells the Archduke that his uncle had hunted tigers doesn't mean it has to be true), and to Egypt where he shoots a lion, and from Alexandria sails across the Mediterranean, home to Germany—already exists. Each stage of Karl Sternau's travels can be found in one of the many journals written during the 1830s and 1840s, and painstakingly assembled and adjusted to fit plot continuity. It surprised me how many famous people he crossed paths with as they were exactly where he travelled at that particular time, and made appearances up in such journals.

As noted repeatedly, it is an experimental work, and I have, at last, satisfied my own curiosity about how Matava-Se actually got his nom-de-guerre in the Rockies, and how he got to hunt elephants in a region that was chiefly travelled and controlled by agents of either the Dutch East India Company, or the British East India Company, but was not really that accessible to 'ordinary tourists' at that time.

The events have also been contracted into one single journey, while in real terms they belonged to various locations, groups of travellers, and were also set apart in date, but occurred roughly within the same era (late 1830s and early to late 1840s).

Unless one has actually been there, experienced the incredible difficulty, as well as incomprehensible euphoria in unexpectedly sublime situations, while exploring a new world where hardly anyone of one's own culture has walked before (except those explorers), one would find it impossible to write chronicles that look, feel, and read

authentic. Countless unknown pathfinders, scouts, mountain men, westerners, hunters, trappers and other adventurers and explorers have travelled along their journeys of discoveries, from the east to the west on an enigmatic continent called North America, but only few have left records of their experiences.

Some of the journal writers whose texts have been preserved for posterity are: Frederick A. Wislizenus, Joe Meek, Robert Campbell, William M. Brooks, William C. Lobenstine, John J. Astor, James O. Pattie, Hugh Evans, Rev. Samuel Parker, Osborne Russell, Zenas Leonard, Richard Henry Dana, John K. Townsend, Nathaniel J. Wyeth, John Potts, Warren A. Ferris, Thomas J. Farnham, John A. Sutter, Isaac Graham, Josiah Gregg, Zebulon Pike, James Beckwourth, John L. Stephens, Frederick Catherwood, Harriet S. Chaswell, Joseph Walker, John 'Grizzly' Adams, John Russell Bartlett, Karl Lepsius, William M. Thackeray, Asa Bement Clarke, John W. Audubon, Leopold Von Orlich, and more; if I have omitted the writer of even a short comment, it would be by oversight, and thus my apologies posthumously, to that journal writer. Stephens and Catherwood are credited with the rediscovery of the Mayan culture.

Some of the reminiscences published at the time, or during the ensuing years, seem to have been written from memory, without the aid of notes taken on the journey. This may account for the occasional discrepancy in dates (which I have taken the liberty to address, by not giving dates all too often), and the obvious confusion of places and events.* Nevertheless, the narratives convey a sense of verity to this fictional novel, and have a charm of simplicity and robust life.

(*Pattie appears to have written from memory, without the aid of notes taken on the journey—a fact that accounts for the occasional discrepancies in dates, and the obvious confusion of events. Editor's preface of *Early Western Travels 1748-1846* published 1905).

I am deeply grateful firstly to those intrepid men and women who wrote those historic diaries; and secondly to the digital age for making those texts available. Although the texts in question are in the public domain, with many almost two hundred years old, meaning they are not subject to copyright, and people are free to copy, use, and redistribute the work in part or in whole, credit to those early pioneers, adventurers, explorers and researchers is due.

Elliott Coues in 1895, in the introduction to 'Memoir of Zebulon Montgomery Pike' wrote: "[...] *Plagiarism acknowledged is no plagiarism—one has only to say 'by your leave', to appropriate with impunity whatever he desires. [...]*" during his discourse in dissecting "[...] *Humboldt's direct and unqualified charge of plagiarism against Pike, which has never been answered and is probably unanswerable [...]*"

Having said that: most authors of the journals are now dead for over one hundred years; their texts, published in the 19th or early 20th century are in public domain, available for use 'with impunity' as a whole or in parts.

There you go. With one addition: there is a valid point to this exercise.

Expanding on comment of KMG notices 3 May 2022.

Karl Friedrich May's novels continue to contribute aspects to the discussion about the rights of all ethnic and social groups; such a debate is better served by a critical engagement with historical texts, including their period-specific language, than by avoiding or even falsifying problematic material (cleansing historical fiction to make it palatable to new audiences, for example). The crimes of colonialism and slavery, the sweeping disregard for other cultures and the destruction of their natural livelihoods are unequivocally condemned in May's popular adventure narratives. During the 19th century, authors like Karl Friedrich May were restrained by the habitual thought and expression of the environment around them, and they were dependent on the information available at the time.

Such information came in many forms, not the least of which was in the shape of journals and chronicles by those who shaped the thinking of the time, the explorers sent by their governments, the hunters (of animals as well as people) sent by their rulers, the

armies sent by their generals; they were the tools of colonialism, and of slavery. Those mechanisms were the conduits of the historical conditionality of ethnic stereotypes and gender roles. Karl Friedrich May endeavoured throughout his life to arrive at a fairer judgement, culminating in a committed plea for tolerance and international understanding in the works of his later years.

By juxtaposing elements from May's plots and characters with those of historic persons' texts generally in my series of my private edition 'Gap Novels' (telling the tales that K.F. May only mentioned with one or two sentences, to bridge gaps in his *Winnetou* trilogy), but specifically in *The Matava-Se Chronicles*, some of the means by which the historical stereotypes and habitual thoughts of the time, with their genesis in a further past, influenced fictional novels of the 19th century can be displayed. The question remains: will future generations learn from the past? So far, generations in the past have not learned from the sins their forefathers committed. A pessimist would grumble: the condemnation of the sons to suffer the punishment for their fathers' crimes seems to remain an unbroken cycle into the 21st century.

Nevertheless, at the time Karl May wrote his *Waldroeschen* he had no means of obtaining an authentic eyewitness description of life in the earlier, unknown frontier lands, the wilds of the American continent, the as yet unexplored vast wilderness of what would become the United States.

However, during his writing career, there had already been a number of European adventurers, explorers, and 'globetrotters' who had been there, yet they were May's contemporaries; he was unable to use their descriptions and when he did, the specter of plagiarism of course arose.

Besides, I doubt very much that many of these mountain men journals had then been translated into German. Today, nearly two hundred years after those mountain men and westerners roamed the Rocky Mountains and Prairies of the Wild West, the availability of such texts via cyberspace enables entirely fresh interpretations, and the re-imagination of May's ideas and creations.

The early life of Matava-Se, aka Don Carlos de Olsunna, aka Doctor Karl Sternau has been a mystery ever since Karl May suddenly allowed the young doctor to morph into a 'seasoned' westerner. Matava-Se was the prototype for Old Shatterhand, and his Indian brother Shosh-in-liett, one part of the prototype for Winnetou (the other part of the prototype consisted of Inn-Nu-Woh, the old Sioux/Apache chief). We'll never know what made Karl May change his mind about the character of Karl Sternau so suddenly in chapter 1, 2nd part, *Waldroeschen*, during a circus performance that has no equal.

However, since Karl Sternau was 28 years old at the opening of *Waldroeschen* there is a window of opportunity for the young man to undertake journeys, and acquire those travel adventure experiences with which May imbued his character in said chapter: May told us that the young man's adoptive father, teacher Sternau, ensured that young Karl had all the education he required, but then died before the young student completed high school. His mother then accepted the invitation of a relative, and moved with her son and younger daughter to Rheinswalden, where Karl Sternau's much older cousin Kurt Rodenstein, the owner of Castle Rheinswalden, then attained the inferred role of sponsor and guardian of both Karl and his half-sister Helene, and offered the family a home.

The only possible time for young Karl Sternau to travel would be after schooling and studies. Traditionally, in that era, after leaving high school, or university, young people were sent travelling for educational purposes (W.M. Thackeray, ca 1845: "[...] that I can't but recommend all persons who have time and means to make a similar journey—vacation idlers to extend their travels and pursue it: above all, young well-educated men entering life, to take this course, we will say, after that at college; and, having their book-learning fresh in their minds, see the living people and their cities, and the actual aspect of Nature [...]").

The age for a young person to travel largely depended on the individual's maturity, and destination and length of the journey on the financial means of the family. In Karl

Sternau's case, given that he was born in 1820, this would have been at around the age of 19, in 1839, until 1842 or 43 at the most—it was a considerable transformation, and Karl May glossed over it with about one paragraph of text. For by the time he was 28 years old, Karl Sternau was a qualified and celebrated physician and surgeon—at the opening of *Waldroeschen*—which meant he had to return a few years prior to that to begin his medical studies in Paris, according to May, which would take several years for him to become a qualified surgeon.

How to unveil the mystery of Matava-Se, the seasoned and experienced Westerner who had widely travelled through the Rocky Mountains, Mexico, East Indies and Northern Africa before he was 28 years old? Only the words of travellers from that time (1830s and 1840s) would be able to fill in the gaps with the missing pictures. Scouring cyberspace for such journals yielded a plethora of travel accounts, and literally filled every corner of the wilds of the Wild West, Mexico, as far down as the Yucatan Peninsula. And thus, *The Matava-Se Chronicles* at last unveil what young Karl Sternau (could conceivably have) experienced, and how he earned his nom-de-guerre, Matava-Se.

Since this is also an experimental work, I wish to make it abundantly clear that *The Chronicles* consist in the majority of authentic, although adjusted, excerpts from journals and biographies of mountain men, explorers, adventurers and trappers, who were eye-witnesses to life in the unknown wilds. I do not aim to plagiarize, refer above. At the same time, those authentic journals are written so wondrously well, that they deserve being foundations for new work.

And by explaining ad nauseum the purpose for the use of these 19th century journals I hope to ward off any and all misgivings and pointing out of cheaply filling the covers of a fiction novel with texts from other authors, for the searching for, reading, researching and adjusting of these journal texts required more time and effort than the writing of a new, imagined, and most likely completely inaccurate text of '*Kitsch*', and thus would not have been worth my effort. By reading the journals, I also gained an invaluable insight into the real history of the winning of the West.

The marvellous orator, Red Jacket, in a speech to a missionary delegation of 1805 already put it very plainly and succinctly:

"[...] your forefathers crossed the great water and landed here. Their numbers were small. They found in us friends, not enemies. They told us they had fled from their own country because of wicked men, and had come here to enjoy their religion. They asked us for a small seat. We took pity on them granted their request; they sat down among us. We gave them corn and meat. In return they gave us poison [rum]!

"Brother: The white people had now found our country. Tidings were carried back and more white people came, yet we did not fear them. They called us brothers, and we believed them to be friends. At length their numbers had greatly increased; they wanted more land; they wanted our whole country. Our eyes were opened and our minds became uneasy. Wars took place. The white people hired the Indians to fight against each other, and many of our people were thus destroyed. The white people brought to us the fire water. It was strong and powerful, and has slain thousands. [...]

"We first knew you, a little feeble plant, which wanted a little of our Earth on which to grow. We gave it to you, and when we could have trod you under our feet we watered and protected you. Now you have grown to be a mighty tree, whose top reaches the clouds, whose branches overspread the whole land; while we who were once the tall pine of the forest have become the little feeble plant, needing your protection. When you first came here you clung around our knee and called us father. We took you by the hand and called you brother. You have grown so great that we can no longer reach up to your hand, but we now cling around your knee and beg to be called your children."

From *Our Life Among Iroquois Indians*, H.S. Caswell, 1892.

Karl May wrote Wild West stories in an imaginary, fantastical environment where the 'noble savage' personified by his 'Winnetou' was still roaming freely and proudly atop his courageous mustang, although that narrow slice of history had long since vanished even

back in his days. The *Winnetou* trilogy was written, or rather, composed, during 1893. The saga with Matava-Se was a work that preceded *Winnetou* in publication date by a decade; yet, parallels abound. Both main protagonists' first name was Karl, both had a 25-shot Henry-Rifle, and a heavy, double-barrelled 'bear killer', both travelled the Wild West and made friends with the native population, especially the romanticized Plains Indians, the Apache, both had distinguished themselves as skilled westerners, and had a nom-de-guerre bestowed on them by others. The *Winnetou* Trilogy was filled with characters who, like him, were famous mountain men and native warriors; the long-running saga about Matava-Se also had an entire cast of famous westerners and American Indians. While in the 1880s German politics got in the way of a good fictional story, and diverted the *Waldroeschen* plot accordingly, the *Winnetou* trilogy was far more rounded and self-contained; having said that, May constructed *Winnetou* volumes II and III from five different short stories, while he wrote only volume I as an entirely new text.

Like *Out of Vandaemonia*, *Clipper Run*, *Into the Past*, and *Fables of the West*, *The Matava-Se Chronicles* combines chronology, characters, and locales in a crossover, as a prequel to *The Rodriganda Romances* (as well as, if you wish, May's own, German *Waldroeschen*), and sets the fictional characters and events against the background of historic events and, at times, includes historic figures.

The names of famous trails still echo through the history of the 19th century United States of America. However, before the trails received names, mountain men, hunters and trappers, Native American Indians, missionaries and other travellers blazed those trails. The snippets of the various journals, as confusing as the naming of locations, rivers, mountains, valleys, lakes, etc. are, describe a series of trails taken by many who came after them; they started in Independence, or West Port (Westport, Kansas City), went along a portion of the Santa Fe trail, following the Kansas River for a short stretch, then the valley of the Arkansas River, and where the Santa Fe Trail veered off to the south-west, carried on west generally along the Arkansas. Then, where Pueblo is now situated, before there was even a fort, the trail blazers took a turn north, partway followed a trappers trail, which later became known as the Cherokee Trail, across the South Fork of the Platte, across Horse Creek, along a shortcut north to the North Fork of the Platte, and to Fort Laramie (and the Rendezvous of 1839 on the Green River).

These rivers have their origins in the same region of the Rocky Mountains. The Arkansas flows south first, and then east into the Mississippi, the South Fork and the North Fork of the Platte flow north-east first, and then east into the Missouri. These rivers were the highways into the unknown for explorers of the early eras.

From there, the treks followed the Oregon trail to Fort Hall, from where it turned south-east, and a fork of it followed a route that later became known as the Trail of Forty-Niners, skirting around the 'Great Sandy Plain', via Lake Tahoe, across the Sierra Nevada to San Francisco. The Oregon Trail continued roughly west from Fort Hall to Fort Boise, along the Snake River, and then the Columbia River to Fort Astoria first, and later, when Fort Astoria became defunct, to Fort Vancouver. From there, a southern trail led through the Willamette Valley, across the Siskiyou Pass, and into the Sacramento Valley—Mexico.

Having said that: while consulting historic maps, the names of rivers, mountains, lakes, in short the landscape features necessary to identify the region in which one travelled, were in as confusingly varied spots as imaginable. Even Drake's New Albion still ghosted around on some maps. A stream deemed a tributary to one river, was described as flowing into another on a different map; names inscribed on one map were not in existence on another, a mountain range being described as sitting west of the writer's position, was actually situated in the east, and so forth. The most mysterious of them all being the Buenaventura River, which has graced maps of all kinds and rivers in all directions, including one lake. What the old Spaniards expected did not materialize, namely a river from the sierras to the Pacific to facilitate water traffic, just like the Mississippi and Missouri rivers did, and still do, on the eastern half of the continent.

Buenaventura River Legend

The river was chronologically the last of several imagined incarnations of an imagined Great River of the West, which would be for North America west of the Rockies what the Mississippi River was(is) east of the Rockies. The hopes were to find a waterway from coast to coast, sparing the travelling around Cape Horn at the tip of South America, which became moot in later years, after the building of the Panama Canal.

In 1776, two Franciscan missionaries Atanasio Dominguez and Silvestre Velez de Escalante sought to find a land route between Santa Fe in Nuevo Mexico to Monterey in Alta California. On September 13, they encountered what is now called the Green River in modern day Utah, a southward-flowing tributary of the Colorado, and named it San Buenaventura after the catholic saint Bonaventure.

At that point in time, there was nothing mythical about the Buenaventura River. Dominguez and Velez de Escalante's journal correctly notes that above their crossing, the river flowed toward the west. It flowed generally south-west where they crossed it and continued south-west as they traveled in its vicinity. Escalante also correctly recorded that after its junction with the Rio San Clemente (today's White River[?], which he also named), the Buenaventura River turned to the south. So, the original Buenaventura River is real and exists today under a different name.

When they found the Sevier River, and misinterpreted descriptions of the local Native Indians, who may have been describing what today is called Humboldt River, the confusion created the legend of the Buenaventura River; the error of depicting the Buenaventura as flowing south-west to a lake was perpetuated by early explorers and cartographers such as Alexander von Humboldt, and gave rise to the erroneous application of the name to various rivers and even lakes over time.

Henry S. Tanner's influential map of 1822 shows the Buenaventura River flowing from the north central Rockies through the Sevier Lake to the Pacific Ocean south of Monterey Bay.

After Fremont established that no rivers flowed across the Great Basin region to the Pacific, [...] [the United States] directed their ambitions to a transcontinental railway, which was completed in 1869, after the Mexican–American War of 1846–48 and the American Civil War of 1861-65.

In general: the party of travellers in *The Matava-Se Chronicles* leaves the western shore of the Missouri River, travels west along the most well-known rivers: Kansas, then its tributaries, further along the upper Arkansas, and the Platte, where it then follow the Snake River. Along the Snake River, where Matava-Se separates from the trappers, and goes his own way, he encounters the Columbia River, which leads him to the Pacific Ocean, and the former Fort Astoria. From there the lone rider, Matava-Se, travels south, across the Siskiyou Mountains pass, into California, which at the time is still a part of the larger Mexico. He then travels ever further south to Mexico City, and from there into the Yucatan Peninsula, from where the journey takes him across the Gulf of Mexico, to the Rio Grande, and north again into what is today New Mexico, namely to Santa Fe. While travelling along the upper reaches of the Rio Grande, he visits the Apache tribes who dwell along that river, and the Rio Pecos, and lives among them, before he heads west again to the Pacific coast, and from there with a ship west across the Pacific Ocean, to some of the islands in the northern Pacific and the Indian Ocean, before returning home, via Egypt and the Mediterranean, and then overland, to Germany.

The Sandwich Islands are of course Hawaii.

The fictionalized conversation between Matava-Se and Augustus Sutter, about the latter's past misadventure in Europe, which caused him to leave and travel to America, includes a mention of Charles-Louis Napoleon Bonaparte (Louis Napoleon). Although the nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte has experienced the events included in Sutter's fictional discourse, it is very unlikely that Sutter ever met Napoleon III. However, the fact that Napoleon III once was exiled, and spent a part of his exile in Switzerland, and even joined the Swiss Army, is a wonderful piece of history, and I could not resist; especially not since

Sutter himself styled himself a 'Captain of the Swiss Guard'. Napoleon III is also the emperor who had big ideas about conquering Mexico, and installed Maximilian of Habsburg as Maximilian I of Mexico, which turned out to be a fatal appointment for Max.

Marlies Bugmann, Tasmania, 2023