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**A German reaction to Native Americans: Karl May's concept of
cultural development**

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The University of Arizona, 1989

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A GERMAN REACTION TO NATIVE AMERICANS:
KARL MAY'S CONCEPT OF CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

by

Katja Helma May

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the
DEPARTMENT OF GERMAN
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ABSTRACT

The "demise" of Native American cultures and the possibility of their "renaissance" is the subject of the literary work analyzed in this thesis. The German popular novelist Karl May (1842-1912) aspired to write the epic drama of the American Indians. Using randomly selected anthropological and linguistic information, he described particularly Apache and Comanche Indian culture with regard to leadership, warfare, women, and intermarriage. May viewed the Indians' assimilation as necessary and arrogantly recommended the "benign" influence brought by Germans to the New World. The Indians would be able to withstand the lure of "Yankee" materialism and pursue the path of righteousness. As this thesis points out, there is a correlation between Karl May's biography and his compassion for a wronged people such as the Native Americans. This study analyzes Karl May's thoughts on the "Indian question" and his emphasis on the role of change. Both Indian cultures and individuals, e.g. Winnetou, are adaptable.

INTRODUCTION

Karl May (1842-1912) believed in the renaissance of Native Americans, when their future looked bleak. Although steeped in mystical other-worldliness, his ideas were similar to those of the progressive reformers in America. Native Americans would have to adapt in certain prescribed ways. Karl May's suggestions were far removed from actual implementation. They nevertheless made a lasting impression on the perception of Native Americans in German-speaking Europe to this day.

The First Chapter looks at the literary genre Karl May excelled at, adventure literature. The biographical sketch suggests that there is a correlation between the novelist's personal experience of four prison sentences, punishment which by today's standards exceeded his offenses, and his interest in people, who were wronged and suffered from continuous injustice, because they were 'outside' of the system. Native Americans and May were innocent victims of a cruel, materialistic "White" society.

Yet Karl May was not a revolutionary, despite Ernst Bloch's suggestion that May's seemingly harmless novels were a subliminal outcry for revolutionary activity. Seeking redemption for himself and other unfortunate

people, Karl May found an escape from his problems by writing the voluminous work about Whites and Indians. Although since 1894 he began to claim to be identical with his German literary hero, Old Shatterhand, he actually travelled only twice outside of Germany and never as far as the West of the United States. The first chapter concludes in giving an overview of May's sources and literary influences.

Chapter 2 analyzes what Karl May thought of Native Americans and their place in history. He suggested that "salvation" for the Indians lay in a peaceful process of assimilation and detribalization, which would result in the revelation of ancient spiritual teachings contrary to superficial White materialism. Thus Karl May distinguished between "good" Indian, "good" White, and "bad" White influences on Native American cultures.

Chapter 3 provides a tentative analysis of May's attitudes towards Native American medicinemen, women, Mixed-bloods, and their cultures' chances of survival. As he was not very knowledgeable about American history or politics, one would expect his opinions to be extremely unrealistic. Instead of choosing a historical tribal leader, May invented his own idealized "noble savage."

The term is misleading, if one associates with it an

unchanging character. The novelist shaped the character of his Winnetou from a "bloodthirsty savage" to the noble, saintly image in the end. It has been suggested that Winnetou is the most important character in Karl May's American novels, because work on Winnetou accompanied May throughout his life. It is Winnetou who attracts most criticism. He has been described as a "de-indianized" individual, an object of homosexual phantasies, and a shallow stereotype.

These contradictory criticisms merit a closer examination, which takes place in the Fourth Chapter. Some of these critics disregard historical or ethnological information and falsely accuse May in some instances, when he did not err. He was criticized for describing the Apaches in "Plains garb," when in fact anthropological accounts on Apache clothing concur with May's description. In other cases I found the critiques correct.

Karl May absolutely ignored the historical situation of the 1860s and 1870s. The Mescaleros spent two painful years at the Bosque Redondo in New Mexico, the site of the later renowned Navajo exile. None of these hardships find reflection in Karl May's work. In German literature for adolescents the ahistorical "free" life of the Indians has become immortalized through Karl May's books, comic strips,

or open-air dramatizations.

May's favorite Native American people was the Mescalero Apache, a tribe not particularly well-liked by most non-Indians in the historical American Southwest. Whereas May did not speak Apache or any other Native American language, he did succeed in teaching generations of Germans a few Apache words. As a result of his prolific writing, the Apache tribe is the most well-known Native American people in Germany.

Some of May's more pacifist writings were banned or severely altered during the Hitler regime, but he was generally a recommended author. Even Adolf Hitler was an avid reader of Karl May's adventure stories. Sometimes loved, sometimes shunned, May's Indian novels have always had an impact on the image of Native Americans in the German mind. The history of Karl May's rehabilitation in the socialist German Democratic Republic, which took place in the early 1980s, is also one of the assessment of Karl May's political acceptability.

The question remains, why are Germans so fascinated with American Indians? The findings of this thesis suggest that because of Karl May's vivid imagination, mixed with ethnographic and geographic facts, Germans have identified with May's fictional Indians for generations.

Sulky, allegedly misunderstood, and yet so very noble, the European image of American Indians is easily molded to fit almost all purposes.

This Thesis concludes that Indians in Karl May's novels are not static, that their culture undergoes development, and that Winnetou becomes the Indian Karl May would have liked. Winnetou dislikes Indian "superstitions" and is searching for "religious" values. Although the characterization of Winnetou is definitely "Indian," his disposition is absolutely acceptable to the "good" Whites. According to May, modelling themselves after Winnetou would ensure a promising future for all Native Americans.

CHAPTER 1

WHY A LITERATURE ABOUT OUTSIDERS?

The nature of the relationship between Native Americans and Whites was one of the central aspects of nineteenth century adventure stories. Karl May thought about the "Indian question," described, and "answered" it from his point of view. Native Americans suffered from loss of their land, violent conflicts with Whites and other Indians, and from diseases. According to his theory, the Indian tribes bore some of the guilt, as they were divided among themselves. The propagated "solutions," for instance, increased morality and education, seem naive and unsatisfactory to the modern critic.

All of May's ideas concerning this subject were a product of his milieu and time. An analysis of his biography suggests that there is a correlation between the novelist's personal experience of four prison sentences for minor offenses and his compassion for people who were wronged, as the Native Americans were. They were 'outside' the system of justice. Despite Ernst Bloch's suggestion that these seemingly harmless adventure stories were a subliminal outcry for revolutionary activity, Karl May was no political activist, to some of his critics'

regret.

Literature is an expression of one's self and of the historical context within which one is writing. The philosopher Jacques Derrida called to attention that reading and writing are the same process. If that is true, then Karl May's books are constantly being reproduced in the minds of countless German-speaking Europeans, year after year. Some of Karl May's critics proudly refer to the fact that, when they were young, their exposure to his books was brief in order to legitimize their claim to ideological non-contamination.

Karl May (1842-1912) has influenced the image of Native Americans in German-speaking countries through his voluminous work of entertaining adventure stories. His main heroes are the Mescalero Apache Winnetou and the German Old Shatterhand. Indeed, the impact of these two fictional characters on German culture has been very large. For instance, Hartmut Lutz found the Mescalero Apache tribe to be the most well-known among West German school children. Certain idioms from Native American languages in May's books were widely understood in the Federal Republic.¹ According to Lutz' evaluation, these

¹In Lutz' survey, 90% of the West German high school students named the Apaches, when asked to give an example of a Native American tribe. He also asked for language

findings only indicated the stereotypicality of knowledge on Native Americans in West Germany.

Karl May is popular in Austria as well. As he visited the Austrian capital to give a speech on world peace only a few weeks before his death in 1912, the Viennese and all Austrians remembered him fondly. When the owner of the copyright to May's books, Euchar Albrecht Schmid, had difficulties in publishing them in the German Democratic Republic after World War II, he transferred the rare privilege to the Ueberreuter Verlag in Vienna. Pocket book editions are still published in concession by Ueberreuter.

In the country of his birth, May initially fared less well. As just mentioned, following World War II Karl May's books were purged from its libraries. They seemed to advocate imperialism or, even worse, the ideology of National Socialism. In East Germany the state authorities on culture rehabilitated Karl May only after three decades of shunning his books. It came as a surprise that in 1982 "Winnetou" was the most popular name chosen by East German

samples. His control group were a group of Californian high school students. Hartmut Lutz, "Indianer" und "Native Americans." Zur sozial- und literaturhistorischen Vermittlung eines Stereotyps, (Hildesheim: Olms, 1985), pp. 448-471. Hereafter Lutz, "Indianer."

parents for their babies.² With the sale of his books at an all time high, Karl May's popularity seems to be undergoing a renaissance in East and West.

If there were two columns, with racism and Indianertümelei (stereotypology) on one hand and history or "truth" on the other, May's writings would classify under the first. However, the author was a product of both his environment and contemporary science, the "truth" at the time. He was also concerned with the future of Native Americans as he saw it. His fascination with "Indians" triggered virtually millions to be lastingly enamoured with their image. He initiated a strange familiarity with the "Indian question," which smacked of nineteenth century paternalism. Blaming Karl May for exhibition of racist thoughts alone is to dismiss him too eagerly.

This thesis is based on the close reading of ten Karl May texts. Listed in a chronological order they are the early adventure stories "Inn-nu-woh" (1875) and "Old Firehand" (1875.) Compiled and partly rewritten in 1892, Karl May published the trilogy Winnetou I, II, III, soon after followed by the volumes of Old Surehand I, II

²Franz Hoffmann, "'kriegen es nun wieder mit Winnetou zu tun. Schwierigkeiten, sich ein Erbe anzueignen," Weimarer Beiträge 32 (1986): 2082. Hereafter Hoffmann, "Schwierigkeiten."

(1896.) Der Ölprinz (1897) was a novel specifically written for the youth. Two years prior to May's death, he travelled to America and wrote his last novel, Winnetous Erben (also called Winnetou IV.) turning the Winnetou-cycle into a tetralogy. In 1910 May also wrote his autobiography, titled Mein Leben und Streben.³

Karl May was a master of the genre Abenteuerliteratur. Ever since James Fenimore Cooper's novels about the American wilderness had been translated and published in Germany between 1823 and 1841, this type of literature had become very popular. It features many common elements. Fictional America is populated by morally upright Whites, noble savages, corrupt Europeans, and bloodthirsty Indians. This literature abounds in recurring motives like travel, friendship, and competence.

Life in the Great Plains, which also provide the setting of May's adventure books, requires from Indians and non-Indians alike the capability to endure hardships. Descriptions of suffering, or being under-estimated, and the cycle of capture-release are full of suspense for the reader. The Indians are physically better equipped to

³I am using the readily available edition by E.A. Schmid, ed., Karl May Taschenbücher, Ausgewählte Werke, (Wien: Ueberreuter, 1951 and 1960.) Hereafter cited by title in abbreviated form.

learn skills such as sneaking up on people, from a young age. In May's fiction, the Indians and some Whites excel at competitions in sharp-shooting and fights with beasts and men. Physical competence and austerity are a prelude to violence, which is abundant in the stories.

Violent conflict situations in Indian-White relations also figured prominently in the stories of other nineteenth century writers of adventure literature. These were the Frenchman Gabriel Ferry alias Eugene Louis Gabriel de Bellamare (1809-1852), the Germans Charles Sealsfield alias Karl Postl, Friedrich Gerstäcker, Balduin Möllhausen, and Robert Kraft. Their books suggested the morality of self-help, even violence, in "lawless" situations. In order to appear historically accurate, these authors, including Karl May, made use of scientific, ethnographic, and political references.

The authors embedded their political views in the stories. Although they used the same genre, their messages differed according to their political creed. The American Cooper was conservative, which at the time meant sympathetic toward monarchy. He suspected that democracy would deteriorate into ignoble mob rule. Postl alias Sealsfield, on the other hand, narrowly escaped political persecution in authoritarian Germany and emigrated to the

United States. His stories tell of his faith in democracy. Postl described what he perceived as democracy on the American frontier in bright colors, because he was a republican in the original meaning of the word.⁴ Compared to Cooper's and Postl's political messages, Karl May's opinions were fuzzy and contradictory, leaving him open to attack from any modern viewpoint.

To show how confusing Karl May's political views were, three examples may suffice. In his novel Winnetou I a former republican repents his activities in Germany during the abortive democratic revolution of 1848. Ruefully this character confesses to having left his German homeland. In order to atone for his political wrong-doing, this misguided revolutionary went among the Apache Indians as a lone missionary-teacher.⁵ There he was given the name of Klehki-petra (White Father.) This example illustrates that Karl May harbored conservative feelings.

Yet, in another book, he championed the liberal cause of the Mexican Reform. The president of Mexico, the Indian Benito Juarez from Oaxaca, led an independence

⁴Bernd Steinbrink, Abenteuerliteratur des 19. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland. Studien zu einer vernachlässigten Gattung, (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1983,) pp.5, 95. Hereafter Steinbrink, Abenteuerliteratur.

⁵Winnetou I, pp. 67-69.

movement against the 'foreign rule' of the Habsburg prince Maximilian. With the backing of Napoleon III, the Austrian was to become emperor of Mexico before he was accused of 'treason' and executed by his unruly subjects.⁶ That Karl May would thus sympathize with republicans, who had killed royalty, is a surprise.

Although none of the travel accounts are political treatises, they are set in historical situations which require both commentary from the narrator and action by the heroes. In one novel, Karl May took a decided stand for the Republicans in the American Civil War. Here he repeatedly referred very negatively to the Ku-Klux-Klan.⁷ Klan members are despicable slugs, who favor a system of racist injustice, not only victimizing Blacks but Indians. All of the positive characters in the stories are pro-Union. Despite May's loathing for political agitation in his own country, he sought to side with the winner in a conflict abroad: Perhaps one can interpret his political attitudes as opportunistic.

Critics have argued that few political problems concerning the fate of Native Americans found reflection in

⁶May refers to these events in Winnetou II, pp. 26, 92, 133 passim.

⁷Winnetou II, pp. 44, 46/7, 63, 71ff.

May's novels. For instance, the interesting and little-known Confederate Indian policy in "Indian Territory," in contrast to the virtual abandonment of Native Americans by the Union during the Civil War, finds no reflection in the novels, although May had the advantage of being approximately contemporary with these events. To the accusation of neglecting history, his response would have been that he was not trying to write erudite treatises of the "Indian problem."⁸ Rather, he chose to solve the problem on a moral plane. Chapter 2 will explain this theory. His style of organizing the material will be the subject of the following paragraphs.

Karl May wrote his stories in sequels. Ernst Bloch called Karl May's style of writing "Kolportage."⁹ In English literature Charles Dickens pioneered with this technique. Both authors wrote stories for publication in magazines. In order to keep the suspense, they alternated lengthy descriptions with moments of action. Karl May used direct speech very frequently, interspersing it with phrases from foreign languages.

Thus Karl May wrote the predecessors to his voluminous

⁸Karl May, Mein Leben und Streben, (Freiburg: Fehsenfeld, 1910; facsimile edition of this autobiography by Hainer Plaul, ed., Hildesheim: Olms, 1975), p. 141.

⁹Steinbrink, Abenteuerliteratur, p. 195.

novels in piece-meal fashion, often forgetting what had happened or contradicting his own storyline. Some mistakes entered the book-length novels, which were published after May had become famous for his contributions to family magazines. In Winnetou I, for instance, the omniscient narrator foretells the treacherous way in which Winnetou will meet his death in the future, by the hand of a White man. By the time he finally got to the scene, in Winnetou III, May had forgotten his earlier announcement and had let Winnetou killed by the bullet of a hostile Oglala Sioux Indian. The method of writing sequential stories for magazines proved detrimental to the quality of the work.¹⁰

The sources for Karl May's seemingly detailed knowledge of American geography and languages have astounded his readers. Literary and journalistic travel accounts influenced May. The widely publicized travels of Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), Prince Maximilian zu Wied in Württemberg (1782-1867), and Friedrich Gerstäcker (1816-1872) were common knowledge in nineteenth century

¹⁰Reinhold Frigge, Das erwartbare Abenteuer. Massenrezeption und literarisches Interesse am Beispiel der Reiseerzählungen von Karl May, (Bonn: Bouvier, 1983, Abhandlungen zur Kunst-, Musik- und Literaturwissenschaft, Band 357), p. 196, deplores the same problem. Hereafter Frigge, Abenteuer.

Germany.¹¹ Also, the accounts and paintings of George Catlin were accessible to the inquisitive mind.

From the history of his publications it is clear that retelling of Gabriel Ferry's Der Waldläufer (Paris, 1850,) had a profound impact on May's own stories. Ferry's novel introduced May to the Apacheria, or American Southwest.¹² He followed the precedents set by Cooper and Ferry, namely that each author had a favorite tribe. Cooper preferred the Mohicans and Delawares, Ferry the Comanches, and May picked the Apache tribe.

His choice in favor of the Apaches over Ferry's Comanches has been interpreted as a manifestation of May's alleged anti-French sentiment, as these two tribes are enemies. Another critic claimed the opposite was true, however, pointing out that May's Indian hero Winnetou closely resembles Ferry's Rayon Brulant.¹³ Regardless of this unresolved controversy, the fact that May wrote about

¹¹Lutz, "Indianer", pp. 272-274.

¹²Frigge, Abenteuer, p. 193.

¹³Gert Ueding with Reinhold Tschapke, eds., Karl-May-Handbuch, (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 1987), p. 539, hereafter Ueding, Handbuch; Bernhard Kosciuszko and Christoph F. Lorenz, Die alten Jahrbücher, Dokumente früher Karl-May-Forschung. Eine Bestandsaufnahme, (Übstadt-Weiher: Serden, 1984, Materialien zur Karl-May-Forschung, Band 8), pp. 86, 484-493, hereafter Kosciuszko and Lorenz, Alte Jahrbücher; Frigge, Abenteuer, p. 193.

different tribes demanded that he had to find information about each.

May used the scholarly work of Albert Samuel Gatschet (1832-1907), a Swiss linguist, who studied Native American languages. In 1877 he was appointed as an ethnologist of the United States Geological Survey and became connected with the Bureau of American Ethnology in 1879. Gatschet wrote three glossaries of Southwestern Native American languages.¹⁴ They also featured ethnological information on the various tribes in the Southwest. One of Gatschet's treatises appeared in the German language in Weimar, 1876, and found its way into Karl May's private library.

Gatschet's glossaries provided many words and idioms from Native American languages, which May used in his stories to make them more realistic. Even the most notorious of the 'stereotypical' Indian words, "howgh," or phonetically [ha-au], really means "yes" in Apache.¹⁵ With the exception of Winnetou, which will be discussed in Chapter 4, the names of the Apaches in Karl May's novels are not his inventions.

¹⁴Who Was Who In America, volume I, 1897-1942 (Chicago: Marquis Inc., 1966), p. 444, s.v. "Gatschet, Albert Samuel."

¹⁵Albert Samuel Gatschet, Zwölf Sprachen aus dem südwestlichen Nordamerika, (Weimar: Böhlau, 1876), p. 112. Hereafter Gatschet, Südwestliche Sprachen.

Particularly the Apache words in May's novels are verifiable. Winnetou's father is named "Intschu-tschuna," which means "Good Sun." His daughter "Nscho-tschi"'s name actually translates as [nsho], good, and [tschi], day. Likewise, the title of the Apaches' German teacher "Klehki-petra" comes from [petra], "father," and the word for white. The two famous horses "Hatatitla" and "Iltschi" are named after lightning and wind. Even a Chickasaw received an Apache name, "Mba," meaning "Wolf," from May.¹⁶ Yet Apache was not the only Indian language, which May used to add the ring of authenticity to his fictional accounts.

The second-frequent native tongue in May's books is the Moqui (Hopi)¹⁷ language. As in his books, "wete" in Hopi means "woman" and "taka," "man." "Brother" is "wawa," "tahua" in Hopi is "sun," and "tokbela" means "heaven." The mysterious Indian Kolma Puschi, who turns out to be a woman in disguise as a man, is named after [kolma],

¹⁶Gatschet, Südwestliche Sprachen, pp. 69, 98, 102, 104, 106.

¹⁷Gatschet writes, "The moqui or Moki towns of Arizona are speaking a Shoshoni...language...Moki is only a nickname given to one of their towns, which had declined to give battle to some enemy... The people calls itself Shinumo." They lived according to him north of the Colorado Chiquito, must therefore be the Hopis. Albert Samuel Gatschet, "Indian Languages of the Pacific States and Territories and of the Pueblos of New Mexico," Magazine of American History 8 (1882): 254-263.

"black," and [puschi], "eye."¹⁸ Although the Moqui or Hopi tribe are never at the center of May's novels, he preferred to use words from this language for particularly mysterious characters.

Gatschet's lists did not contain all of the vocabulary to be found in May's novels. May seems to have improvised by using other sources as well,¹⁹ or he evaded the problem by taking words from the Apache language. Apache [oto] means "hair," as in "Kakho-oto"'s name, which is supposed to be Kiowa and mean "dark hair."²⁰ The origin of Comanche, Kiowa, Ute, and Sioux (Lakota) words in May's fiction is not clear. At least occasionally May's Lakota is correct, as in the medicineman's name "Wakon," which truthfully refers to "sacred." Although many of the Indian words can be traced to an existing Native American language, it is nevertheless doubtful whether they could have formed personal names as Karl May claimed. Furthermore, it is likely that he invented some words to suit his purposes.

¹⁸Gatschet, Südwestliche Sprachen, pp. 58, 98, 100, 102, 108.

¹⁹For instance Manuel Garcia Rejon, Vocabulario del idioma comanche, (Mexico, D.F.: Imprenta del Ignacio Cumplido, 1865,) pp. 21-92, which features a Spanish-Comanche dictionary and vice versa.

²⁰Gatschet, Südwestliche Sprachen, p. 84.

Karl May amassed a collection of 2,500 books. An exact list of titles are not available, as the study on his library is out of print. Summarizing the discussion of his linguistic sources, there remains to be said that Karl May did not hesitate to copy complete entries from encyclopediae like the Brockhaus' Conversationslexicon on geography and botany. The accuracy of historical information will be the subject of the following chapters. Provided the relatively unscientific research methods of Karl May, the question remains what captured his interest in Native Americans so much.

The vast volume of his fiction about Indians is astonishing, when one considers the course of May's career. Writing did not come easily to him as a result of his upbringing. His life was one of poverty and lack of opportunity. Although Native Americans were not the only subjects of his books, his literary intentions might well have been to exonerate his own misery by expressing pity and hope for the fate of less fortunate, colonized people. In 1910, the year of his autobiography, he also wrote a key novel directly addressing the "solution to the Indian problem." To May, Native Americans seemed in a particularly dangerous decline. White Americans appeared to carelessly push the Indians around for the benefit of

people steeped in materialism and greed.

In his books, Karl May stubbornly and self-righteously insisted on the integrity of his moral convictions, his search for spirituality, and on unquestionable disinterest in material possessions. His self-characterization based on these claims resembles the stereotype of the wholly unmaterialistic beliefs of American Indians. The parallel cannot be drawn too far, because May was convinced that Native American value systems needed improvement, not his own. Nevertheless, in all of his books he sided with the hard-working poor, Native Americans and German settlers alike, against rich or materialistic people. Almost too often May asserted that he did not want what he could not get: the comfortable life of the upper class in Europe.

His biography explains his alleged anti-materialistic attitude. He and his family endured a shockingly bitter life, tormented by obtrusive poverty and misery. Karl May (born February 25, 1842), was the fifth of fourteen children, nine of whom died in early childhood. Born in Hohenstein-Ernstthal in the traditional weaver district of Silesia, his family had for generations been subjected to the difficult working conditions of this cottage industry. Men, women, and children weaved all day

long, every day.

There were few alternatives in this class-conscious and sexist society. Sometimes the family would sew gloves to supplement the small income from weaving cloth. At one time, Karl's mother inherited some money, most of which her husband spent on drinks. With the rest of the inheritance she secretly trained to become a midwife in order to add another source of income. As church records on causes of death in the family and the region indicate, particularly men were prone to alcoholism and fatal injuries. The family income was very low and hunger a common occurrence.

In this dreary environment Karl May grew up to become infatuated with fairy tales and other phantastic stories. In his autobiography Karl May explains that his maternal grandmother influenced him tremendously. He always remembered her very fondly, a trait that has been ridiculed by some of his critics. In this writer's opinion, May's love for his grandmother is a very likeable trait for a "professional storyteller." Later in life he referred to himself as such.

A second influence on the development of the boy's imagination was his father. Although young Karl had to help with his share of weaving, his father encouraged the sickly child to develop his intellectual abilities. The

man's dream was that the boy would surpass his lowly surroundings by improving his mind with "knowledge." The nature of this information was of secondary importance to the father; he simply forced Karl to read anything and everything. As there were not many books available, the son read cheap, mass-produced suspense stories. Without caution against the superficiality of these dime-novels he acquired a vast arsenal of genre-typical writing formulae. Over the years, Karl received no expert guidance toward a career in the writing profession.

In addition to his grandmother and father, Karl's hazy ambition to escape the weaving milieu received support from the local pastor, who helped Karl to secure a small scholarship. It came from Hohenstein-Ernstthal's church patron, the duke of Hinterglauchau. This small sum only paid for Karl's board and tuition at a teachers' college, although he had hoped to attend a grammar school leading to an academic career at a university. The chronic lack of sufficient financial support determined the future of this promising student. Consequently, Karl May got merely a teaching certificate.

The timing to be a young, hard-working teacher seemed right. The German states were undergoing industrialization. It was customary for factory owners to

provide schools for the children of their workers. Little wonder that, after his graduation, Karl May secured a position as a substitute teacher immediately. Yet his luck or his will-power left him. Instead of becoming a teacher, May took the detour of a 'criminal career,' before he successfully entered the profession of an editor and writer.

The reason for his failure to become a regular teacher in one of the factory schools was his repeated trouble with the law. First, Karl May spent six week in jail in Chemnitz (September 8-October 10, 1862,) because he had allegedly stolen his roommate's watch.²¹ Modern jurisprudence would probably not have convicted him on this charge. This incident destroyed his prospect to find another teaching position.

Karl May felt victimized by injustice and "took revenge" on society, as he expressed it in his autobiography. He spent an additional three times behind bars, because he had acted as an impostor, or swindler. From 1865-1869 he was in prison in Zwickau, where he studied the prison library. He spent an additional four years at the high-security prison Zuchthaus Waldheim (1870-1874.) His last incarceration in his hometown lasted from

²¹May, Leben, p. 113, note on p. 373.

September 1 to 22, 1874. It took place after May had pretended to be authorized to investigate a friend's controversial death. Out of a "verkrüppelte[n] Rechtsbild der vom Rechte sehr lange Vergessenen,"²² as biographer Hans Wollschläger said, May developed a mixture of remorse and self-righteousness.

Nevertheless, instead of nurturing open hatred for society, Karl May claimed successful rehabilitation had taken place through his ability to write. He apparently started writing as early as 1864, but it was during his stay at the Zwickau prison where he finally discovered his vocation. The prison library provided him with enough mental food for thought that he could later say, "So verwandelte sich für mich die Strafzeit in eine Studienzeit."²³ In prison the idea of the Indian hero Winnetou was born, perhaps giving his inventor relief from the oppressive reality.

All during his life he felt short-changed, despite his tremendous success as an author. May's writing career took off in 1877 and lasted until his death. The embarrassing facts about his prison sentences became known

²²Hans Wollschläger, Karl May. Grundriß eines gebrochenen Lebens, (Zürich: Diogenes, 1983), p. 13. Hereafter Wollschläger, Karl May.

²³May, Leben, pp. 131, 135/6.

after he had achieved great fame as a popular author and "traveller," causing him great anguish and shame. Throughout his life he harbored an inferiority complex, rightly so, as some critics would argue.

As the Native Americans were being treated unjustly and oppressed, May felt that he was ostracized socially and constantly misunderstood in his quest for dignity. He had no qualms, however, about the morality of artificially enhancing his standing in society. Karl May organized a financial scheme to receive an "honorary doctorate" from the German University "Germana-Americana" at Chicago in December 1892.²⁴ He also claimed to actually be identical with his fictional hero Old Shatterhand and speak numerous languages fluently.²⁵ What drove him to be such an imposter could have been the unfortunate maxim, "mehr sein als scheinen."

A brighter side to his personality was his growing optimism about the future of the Native Americans. They captured his interest as soon as he began his writing career. Here were people, who suffered from other peoples'

²⁴Werner Raddatz, Das abenteuerliche Leben Karl Mays, (Gütersloh: Sigbert Mohn, 1965), p. 90, hereafter Raddatz, Leben Karl Mays; Wollschläger, Karl May, p. 124.

²⁵Raddatz, Leben Karl Mays, pp. 82, 87, 90; Wollschläger, Karl May, pp. 84-86.

injustice and immorality. Indians were noble, but not saintly. They had yet to forgive their enemies. Karl May thought they were capable of improvement. He wrote in the foreword to a novel in 1892:

Da behauptet man nun freilich, der Indianer besäße nicht die notwendigen staatenbildenden Eigenschaften. Ist das wahr? Ich sage nein, will aber keine starren Behauptungen aufstellen, da es nicht meine Absicht ist, eine gelehrte Abhandlung zu schreiben.²⁶

Their disposition according to May is the subject of Chapter 3. Unnoticed and mistreated, Native Americans were what Karl May wanted to be: the real owners of the land in God's eyes, more innocent than guilty, and redeemable. Secretly he held immense compassion in store for Old Shatterhand's Indian friends.

Despite professing his love for Indians, "Dr." Karl May did not yearn or hurry to meet them in person. Although he did not mention anything in his life history, it is possible that he visited Buffalo Bill's show on one of his tours during the years 1887 to 1892, or between 1905 to 1907. One of May's biographers surmised that May met Buffalo Bill and his entourage personally in 1906.²⁷

²⁶Winnetou I, p. 5; when a university professor predicts the dying out of all Indians, May retorts: "Er verwechselte ferner den seelischen Schlaf der Rasse mit ihrem körperlichen Tode." Winnetous Erben, p. 5.

²⁷Kosciuszko and Lorenz, Alte Jahrbücher, p. 156.

In fact May travelled only twice to the scene of his novels. In 1899 he took a trip to Egypt and the Near East and in 1908 he made a voyage to America. The only recorded and credible encounter with Native Americans took place on the reservation of the Tuscaroras. An extant photograph shows Karl May posing with a Tuscarora man and several children adjacent to a house made of bark. This photograph was immediately sent to Germany as a postcard, "proof" of May's remarkable connections with America's native population.

Although he most likely did not know Native Americans personally during his lifetime, his name comes to every German's mind where Indians are concerned. Admirers have not hesitated to posthumously add the ingredient of genuineness to May's memory. Oddly, twelve years after May's death, a Sioux by the name of Teshuka Tanka, employee of the circus Sarasani, "ceremoniously" lamented at Karl May's grave.²⁸ Likewise, the modern open-air theater in Bad Segeberg takes pride in inviting Native American guests to its premises, where they demonstrate native arts and crafts while Karl May's stories are performed on stage.

²⁸Ekkehard Bartsch, antiquarian bookseller and Karl May specialist, during a conversation in his home in Bad Segeberg, December, 1988. He could not say who had hired the Sioux or how his name was spelled correctly.

Modern readers of Karl May's Indian stories enjoy the illusion of authenticity, which he fell short of achieving in his life.

CHAPTER 2

THE "INDIAN QUESTION"

The encounter of Indians and Whites in North America represented a clash of cultures unlike any met by Europeans for centuries. As the Whites penetrated the Americas, they defined the Native Americans as aggressors, both victimizing and exalting them. The "Indian question" was to kill or let live. Indian-White relations were a challenge to the self-image of all involved. Even in distant Germany the fate of the native population in the Americas attracted attention. It struck a chord in the hearts of many Europeans. One German writer of dime-novel adventure stories, Karl May, wanted to author the epic drama of the American Indian, which has yet to be written.

Finding the solution to the Indian "problem" is an important aspect of all of May's writings about the West. This chapter will first outline his attempt at explaining the "problem." According to May, both the Indians themselves and some of the Whites are at fault. Next, this chapter will provide a brief overview of the historical situation. Finally there will be an analysis of the Indian-White relationship in the stories: Native Americans can benefit from "good" White influence, but "bad" Whites

can also corrupt Indians. Before going into the explication of Indian culture per se in the third chapter, the exposé of May's views attempts to explain the mystery of the Indian being.

Karl May believes to have found an answer to the "Indian question." In his travel novels as well as in reality, Native American society is under duress from internal and external forces. Far from analyzing the social or political issues, May chooses to "mythologize" Indian history instead. With only scant references to historical and anthropological information, he asserts in his last American novel, Winnetous Erben, that Native Americans have "degenerated" from a higher civilization to the unfortunate state at the end of the nineteenth century. According to May's mystical optimism, two tales are the keys to a Native American revival. One is a "myth" about the past, the other a prophecy about redemption. His views are religious, but not denominational.

The causes of change in his novels remind one of speculations about universal forces, which caused races of larger, more intelligent beings to vanish. May's theory about the advanced civilization of the imaginary country Dschinnistan is very similar to theosophical postulations about the 'lost continents,' Ur and Atlantis. Both of

May's wives gave spiritualist seances and dabbled in theosophy, the "scientific" creed in the supernatural at the turn of the century. Karl May himself never adhered to a single consistent philosophy, but rather preferred to give credit for his story-telling abilities to his maternal grandmother.¹ Most biographers agree that she was the main source of the origin "myth" about Dschinnistan, which is so pertinent to the interpretation of his work.

The first part of the story deals with a "Golden Age" in an imaginary Asian country. In his last American-set novel, Winnetou IV, May has the young Sioux Indian Young Eagle retell the myth.² It is the tale about "Sitara" from May's books on the Orient, only here Sitara is not a different star but the continent of Asia. There is a land called Dschinnistan, inhabited by self-fulfilled individuals with superhuman qualities. They are morally irreproachable, beautiful, and abundantly compassionate. Their maxim is brotherly/sisterly love. Secretly everyone is someone else's guardian "angel," watching over that

¹About his maternal grandmother May writes in his autobiography: "Und nun zu der Person, die in seelischer Beziehung den tiefsten und größten Einfluß auf meine Entwicklung ausgeübt hat. ...[Die >Ernstthaler< Großmutter] war ein ganz eigenartiges, tiefgründiges, edles und, fast möchte ich sagen, geheimnisvolles Wesen." May, Leben, p. 20.

²Winnetous Erben, pp. 142-145.

person's well-being. The ruler, an old and wise woman (May's grandmother?), sends out messengers to the other parts of the world, which experience death and war in order to bring teachings of peace.

For several centuries America benefits from the messages as well. The Bering Strait connects Dschinnistan and America. Connecting his Dschinnistan tale to the scientific Bering Strait theory on the settlement of the Americas, May hopes to gain credibility. According to the story, immortal Marah Durimeh's messengers regularly travel from Asia to the North American continent to instruct the Native American people how to achieve paradisaical conditions. Warfare ceases, and the people live happily under the rule of their kings. They build tremendous palaces and preserve their knowledge in hieroglyphic books. Heavenly conditions exist for several centuries, but not forever.

According to May's theodicy, the Native Americans are guilty of their own demise. The submergence of the Bering Strait makes visits from Dschinnistan impossible. The Indian people commit the "sin" of not investigating the cause for the interrupted visitations. With the termination of the instruction, the knowledge of unselfish love slowly deteriorates and the Indian people "degenerate"

into numerous tribes engaged in fratricidal warfare. The "Gesetz der Liebe" is replaced by envy and hate.³ The coming of the Europeans only hastens this process. In May's thinking, the White people serve as God's punishment, purging the Indians for their sins. Yet there is both a threat and a promise to the native population in this predicament: The arrival of the Whites forces the Native Americans to change. With change, redemption is at hand.

Before May's plan to "save" the Native American people becomes intelligible, some background information about the characters involved is necessary. After Winnetou's death, Young Eagle and Tatellah-Satah are instrumental in initiating a new age for Native Americans. The reader learns in retrospect that Young Eagle had already distinguished himself as a child when he courageously retrieved the valuable feathers of the mighty eagle from its nest. His rope broke. Having no way to return from the nest at dizzying height, Young Eagle chose to kill the young birds and wait for the parent eagle, which he then forced to carry him to the valley.⁴ Later in life he learned how to "fly" in California; apparently May intends

³Ibid., pp. 142-5.

⁴Ibid., p. 212.

to indicate that Young Eagle became an engineer after attending white schools. This childhood experience prepares Young Eagle for the role he is to play in the salvation of the Indians, but only with the assistance of a wise man.

May introduces this key personality abruptly. It is the medicineman Tatellah-Satah who preserves the old knowledge about the existence of Dschinnistan and the promise of a better life. He becomes the teacher of the young generation of Indians with the aim of stemming the tide of destruction and making a new beginning for the Native American people. The future belongs only to those Native Americans who make an effort not to belong to one tribe alone.⁵ Inspired by Winnetou's life, Tatellah-Satah founds a mutual help organization, the intertribal "Clan Winnetou."

In this voluntary association, mistakenly called 'clan,' every member has to become someone's secret "guardian angel" and wear a twelve-pointed star sewn to his/her clothes. The first few hundred members flock around Tatellah Satah and end his solitary living. Although his name derives from the language of Taos pueblo

⁵Ibid., pp. 13, 14.

and means "A Thousand Suns,"⁶ Tatellah Satah used to live without affiliation to a particular tribe. Finally a growing movement of clan members called "Winnetous" and "Winnetahs" joins him. This development is in agreement with May's "mythology." It stipulates that tribal distinctions are an outcome of the "degeneration" which set in after the Dschinnistan delegations stopped coming. They live in perfect harmony, the nucleus of a new society based on love.⁷ It is the goal of the "Clan Winnetou" to spread this message.

The preconditions for redemption are based on a second ancient prophecy, second only to the Dschinnistan myth. It tells of a young eagle returning the lost good fortune to the Indian people.⁸ Young Eagle is predestined to fulfill this role. Tatellah Satah taught him this myth, but it is sufficiently well-known among all the assembled Indians of

⁶Ibid., p. 14.

⁷Ibid., pp. 85, 89, 110, 148.

⁸Ibid., pp. 212, 296. This story exists in slightly different versions among the White Mountain Apaches. What Karl May disparagingly called a "Münchhausenniade" is really part of the trickster cycle about mischievous, but resourceful Ba'ts'oossee, who gets the young boy into trouble and then abandons him. Nats'ili'sane, the Grandmother, saved the boy's life by carrying him down from the nest in her burden basket. The significance of the story is not the same as Karl May's version. The number three is more significant in Western European than in Native American culture, where the four figures more prominently.

the great intertribal council in Winnetou IV. Soaring three times around a particular mountain, Mt. Winnetou, Young Eagle descends to the valley with the help of a self-designed flying apparatus. White knowledge of engineering contributes to this otherwise pan-Indian endeavor. The story ends about 1908 with the promise of peace among the various Indian peoples.

The last Winnetou novel is not the only one in which Karl May mixes historical reality and phantasy. He utilizes dates and geographical details to make his writings appear like authentic travel accounts. The following discussion will highlight May's emphasis as opposed to historical events. His counsel on Indian affairs stressed peacefulness and justice. As he was far removed from reality, no one in the American West heeded this well-wishing advice. His knowledge of the real conditions was cursory at best, but he never failed to moralize about the "wrongs" he perceived.

Contrary to historical evidence, the Indians of Karl May's fictional 1870s are still the owners of the land, the lords of the prairies. They react very strongly against encroachment and demand fair treatment in a government-to-

government relationship with the United States.⁹ May concedes that the government breaks treaties or cheats tribes by issuing bad food rations¹⁰. These were themes which he could hardly have missed, as they caused great political scandals in Washington, D.C. at the time. In the foreword to the first *Winnetou* novel he mentions agony caused by the extermination of the buffalo and the construction of the railroad.

The railroad survey in *Winnetou I* is based on reality. The Atlantic and Pacific Railroad Company built a track from St. Louis to the Pacific coast. The subsidiary "Atchinson Topeka & Santa Fé R.R." merged their track with the "Southern Pacific R.R." in the 1880s in the land of the Apache Indians.¹¹ Karl May describes the planning of the railroad tracks with some historical accuracy.

Although May condones the classic Indian dissatisfaction with the White Americans' intrusion, he does not advocate violent resistance. In *Winnetou I* the

⁹*Winnetou I*, p. 65; Euchar Albrecht Schmid, ed., *Old Firehand und andere Erzählungen von Karl May*, (Bamberg: Karl-May-Verlag, 1967, "Karl Mays Gesammelte Werke," Volume 71), p. 62. Hereafter Schmid, ed., "Old Firehand."

¹⁰May deplores the slaughter of the buffalo and subsequent starvation of the Native Americans in *Winnetou I*, p. 6; *Old Surehand II*, p. 250.

¹¹Lutz, "*Indianer*," p. 336.

conflict concerning the survey of a railroad track finds a peaceful solution. However May's White protagonist, Old Shatterhand, leaves the profession of surveyor in the following novels. With the exception of the first *Winnetou* novel, Indian ownership of the land is not the focus of the stories. May allows his characters to mention their chagrin about land swindles, yet their speeches seem futile.

Railroad-hating is an even less noble cause in "Old Firehand," where the Sioux Indians plot to stop and rob a train. In the epilogue to the third *Winnetou* novel, written in 1893, May deplores the Apaches' "unwise choice" to fight the Whites. The historical Geronimo of the Chiricahuas, according to May,¹² failed to follow the fictional *Winnetou*'s spiritual heritage demanding conciliation. Geronimo thereby thwarted the peace process for another decade and a half. Karl May commends the pursuit of education and good-will.¹³ The topic does not find a satisfactory answer.

American political and legislative history is not

¹²*Winnetou III*, p. 319.

¹³*Winnetou I*, p. 5-7; two accounts of frustrated train robberies by Ponca Indians in Schmid, ed., "Old Firehand," p. 44, and by Oglala Sioux in *Winnetou III*, chapter 1.

May's strength either. The changes in United States Indian policy are completely missing in May's novels. Indian policy was regarded as foreign affairs by the young American Republic. It developed the economic "factory system," which rendered the tribes dependent on the fur trade in exchange for metal goods. As soon as the Indians were no longer economically independent, American politicians pressed for the tribes' removal for the benefit of White settlers. The Removal Act of 1830 accomplished the well-known ousting of the Five Civilized Tribes in the Southeast. In the attempt to break up tribal life, the American Indian policy culminated in the establishment of reservations and allotments during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The Bureau of Indian Affairs was initially under the dictates of the War Department, then the Department of the Interior. The Bureau's aim was fuzzily called "pacification" and "civilization;" its means to achieve these ends varied widely. Of all legislation affecting Indians remotely May mentions only the Homestead Act of 1862. In May's words it is the "Tomahawk Improvement,"¹⁴ i.e. the provision for a claim on

¹⁴Karl May, Der Ölprinz, (Stuttgart: Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1897. The limited facsimile edition: Bamberg und Braunschweig: Karl-May-Verlag und A. Graff, 1974), p. 315. Hereafter Ölprinz.

a piece of land, if the settler builds a permanent house on it and raises a crop.

A brief history of the Mescaleros will illustrate the discrepancy between historical reality and May's fictional account of their life. Contrary to their image, the Mescalero Apaches had by 1870 become dependent on the food issued by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Their tribe's land possessions were coveted by Whites. In 1846 General Kearny took possession of New Mexico, heartland of the Apacheria.¹⁵ Between 1863 and 1865, the tribe was in confinement at the Bosque Redondo, a stockade on the Rio Pecos in New Mexico just north of the site where Karl May has his fictional Indians reside.

Although the names of individual headmen before the 1870s are known, the most famous Mescalero was the leader of bloody fights during the following decades. Chiefs by the name of Santana, Simon Manuel, Simon Porode, Josecito, Lobo, or Cadete, have been almost forgotten. The name of Victorio, on the other hand is well-known. For about a year he took to the warpath. The U.S. Army tracked him and 86 warriors down and shot him on October 10, 1880. By 1885 the Indian agent counted merely 464 Apaches on the only

¹⁵C. L. Sonnichsen, The Mescalero Apaches, (Norman: university of Oklahoma, 1958), pp. 62, 64, 135. Hereafter Sonnichsen, Mescalero.

Mescalero reservation.¹⁶ Karl May does not mention any of these historical chiefs and notoriously overestimates the number of warriors at their chiefs' command.

Not concerned with politics, May nevertheless claims that the impact of White culture on Native Americans was tremendous. According to his simplistic philosophy, there are "good" and "bad" Whites. The former have a beneficial impact on Native Americans, whereas the latter hasten the process of "degeneration." May sees a correlation between the nationality of his White characters and their moral soundness. As the following paragraphs will demonstrate, the portrayal of the Germans is one of moral uprightness. Yet the characterization of the American Whites is very unfavorable.

The "Yankee" mentality of materialism provides a bad example to the Indians and is inferior to their inborn dignity. The story of "Inn-nu-woh" provides a telling example. Some of the American passengers on a Mississippi steamboat cannot refrain from betting on the behavior of a caged Bengal tigress. Greedy for the money put up in his favor, the owner of the animal opens the cage. The tigress in turn gets loose and terrorizes the whole ship. In this case, the only Indian present remains contemptuous of the

¹⁶ibid., pp. 159, 188, 231.

whites' folly and therefore "unspoilt," but not unaffected. He saves the situation by an audacious feat, jumping into the water and luring the wild tigress into her wet grave (alligators tear her apart.)¹⁷ Inn-nu-woh escapes unhurt and disappears in a huff from the ship full of ungrateful gamblers.

White American villains teach the Indians how to gamble and rob trains, while they seduce the natives to drink brandy. Curiously May determines that brandy is an "evil" drink, whereas beer, preferably German brew, is acceptable even for his prominent characters, Indian and non-Indian alike. Seedy characters are brandy drinkers.¹⁸ Immoral Whites induce the naive Indians to commit crimes along with them. For instance Parranoh, only ostensibly a Ponca Indian chief, leads the warriors in a derailment venture against an unsuspecting train. Of course in reality he is the wanted White murderer Tim Finnetey, who

¹⁷Euchar Albrecht Schmid, ed., Old Firehand und andere Erzählungen von Karl May, (Bamberg: Karl-May-Verlag, 1967, "Karl Mays Gesammelte Werke," Volume 71), it contains the narrative "Inn-nu-woh." Hereafter Schmid, ed., "Inn-nu-woh."

¹⁸Winnetou II, p. 34; Bancroft in Winnetou I is the first brandy-drinking villain, whose drinking habit endangers the safety of everyone; drinking beer is more honorable than brandy, Old Surehand II, pp. 6, 17; negative mixed-blood characters drink brandy in Winnetous Erben, p. 194.

is responsible for killing Winnetou's former love, the Assiniboin Ribanna.

Other "bad" White men, who have adverse effects on Indians, include Santer, seducer of the Kiowas and murderer of Winnetou's father Intschu-tschuna and his sister Nscho-tschi, Old Wabble, the self-proclaimed Indian-hater, who ill-advises the Osages, and Tibo-taka, alias Thibault, the French who lives disguised as a Comanche medicineman after having killed the Indian preacher Derrick.¹⁹ The "Yankees," and by this term May refers to all White Americans, not Northerners specifically, generally think little of an Indian's life and tend to act lawlessly.

Their main mistake is a misguided value system. They are too materialistic, as the widespread greed for gold shows. The Indians, particularly the Apaches, on the other hand, know of limitless gold depositories, which they hesitate to use. Villain Whites prey on Indians in order to get to the gold. Historically accurate is that in the 1880s many Whites believed the Apaches knew where fabulous gold deposits were, but refused to tell the Whites. May probably interwove a contemporary rumor into the fabric of

¹⁹Parranoh appears in Schmid, ed., "Old Firehand;" Santer in Winnetou I and III; Old Wabble and Tibo-taka in Old Surehand II.

his stories.²⁰ It symbolized the low morality of White materialistic social misfits.

Another common object for White greed is the competition about exploiting a reservoir of oil. Peter Uwe Hohendahl²¹ interpreted May's anti-business attitude as a form of criticism of capitalism. Yet May's complaint is apolitical and rather moralistic. In his stories, if the white "bad" men hear of gold or oil, there is no moral constraint to prevent them from lying, cheating, and murdering anyone. Morally upright Indians, like Winnetou and a few others, consciously resist this bad influence. Winnetou even goes so far as to seek redress for the wrongs committed. Other, less far-sighted Indians, give in to the White entrepreneurs, however, and join forces with the Whites in order to gain war honors and weapons. Materialism or commercial thinking is not originally an Indian vice, but it catches on among them through the detrimental influence of "bad" White people.

"Good" White people try to balance the damage done by the "bad" ones. May does not hide his ethnocentrism when

²⁰Sonnichsen, Mescalero, p. 211; Winnetou I, pp. 245, 249.

²¹Peter Uwe Hohendahl, "Von der Rothaut zum Edelmenschen: Karl May's Amerikaromane," Amerika in der deutschen Literatur, Sigrid Bauschiger, ed., (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1975), p. 232/3. Hereafter Hohendahl, "Rothaut."

he proclaims that not all Whites are after tangible rewards. The ones who are moral, thoughtful, and responsible are most frequently Germans. One possible reason why May attempted this unabashed self-aggrandizement is that in real life he felt undervalued as a person and German national. This "inferiority complex" has been called a German trait, as it provided the necessary ingredient for the sudden change toward a bloated German self-esteem under Hitler two decades after May's death.²² When he was writing, Germans were still looking for a sense of national identity and pride, and saw none. Germany only had a comparatively small colonial empire and did not rule the destiny of numerous foreign peoples. Perhaps May wanted to indicate what Germany could give to the world: not much besides self-righteousness. A lengthy analysis of the German characters would require a study in itself, particularly of the narrator and main hero Old Shatterhand. Yet other Germans interact with Indians as well.

German Whites have a profoundly positive effect on Indians. Superficially similar to Tibo-taka, the "false"

²²Gertrud Oel-Willenborg, Von deutschen Helden. Eine Inhaltsanalyse der Karl-May-Romane, (Weinheim, Baal: Beltz, 1973), p. 149. Hereafter Oel-Willenborg, Helden.

medicineman of the Comanches, Klehki-petra²³ lives among an Indian tribe after a life of crime. The difference lies in his attitude. He wants to atone for his revolutionary "sins" and therefore becomes a missionary among Intschu-tschuna's band of the Apache people, who affectionately call him "White Father." His convictions about what constitutes civilization deeply influence Karl May's Apaches. He "teaches" them to speak flawless English, use pottery, eating utensils, and live in houses. None of these elements were part of the historical Apache culture, as Chapter Three points out. May treats culture change in this context as desirable.

While Klehki-petra uses assimilation techniques of gentle persuasion, however unlikely the outcome may be, there are other German people among Indians who have a more Germanizing effect than he does. The only White woman married to a non-White in May's books is a German, a "simple girl,"²⁴ wife of the Navajo chief Nitsas-Ini. She not only induces her son Schi-so to study forest management in Germany, but also teaches her husband how to speak German perfectly. Schi-so returns from his studies in the company of several German families looking for farm land,

²³Winnetou I, pp. 67-9.

²⁴Ölprinz, p.82.

which the Navajos gladly cede them. When Old Shatterhand and other (German) "good" Whites visit Nitsas-Ini, the conversation is in German. The German nationality of White settlers in May's stories translates to righteousness and religiosity, which have a profound effect on the equally righteous, if superstitious Indians. According to May, German civilizing influence on Native Americans is always laudable.

Without much in-depth knowledge of the political issues, May nevertheless attempts to "solve" the "Indian question." In their critical studies, Lutz and Frigge bemoan May's deficit of reflection. Because he chooses to neglect essential historical facts, he has ample space to fill the gaps with creations of his own imagination. The "origin myth" of Dschinnistan serves as the foundation of May's argument for moral rejuvenation. According to this tale, all people are capable of unselfish love for one another. Therein lies the plan for salvation of the Native Americans.

The Dschinnistan myth is only the background for the scenery which Karl May creates in all of the Indian novels. Native Americans live in the geographical area of the North American Southwest, where they interact with Whites and other Indian tribes. Outside influence is

instrumental in either advancing the Indians' cause or intensifying their "degradation." Yet Native American cultures feature intrinsic values, which will be the subject of the Third Chapter of this study.

CHAPTER 3

THE "VALUE" OF INDIAN CULTURE

This chapter takes a look at the nature of May's Indian societies. Having established that Karl May's Indians are susceptible to outside change, it is necessary to analyze what makes them particularly "Indian," and how May values this. One must always bear in mind that his ultimate goal is change for the better. The Indian way of life has some "good" aspects and some bad. The "good" are attributed to the lasting, if decreasing influence from Dschinnistan delegations. The "bad" are caused by the process of "degeneration." Most aspects of Native American culture have this dual nature. The belief in the peace pipe and medicinemen contains "kernels of truth," according to May, but also despicable "superstitions." Distinguishing between amenable and unacceptable values, May sometimes cannot make up his mind and merely ridicules what he does not understand.

All descriptions of Native American cultures are part of the narrative. Certain subjects recur, for instance Indian leadership, warfare, and women. Many of the characteristics May employed have rightly been attacked as racist and sexist stereotypes. On the other hand he clings

to the distinction between the tribes and uses words or names from Indian languages. His sympathy for the little understood Native Americans should not disguise his proposition that the Indian way of life must change, culturally and even biologically. The discussion of Mixed-bloods at the end of this chapter is a case in point.

The custom of smoking the calumet, or peace pipe, exemplifies one positive aspect of the Indian culture. It symbolizes the sanctity of a promise or assurance, which ought to be honored. Like the Germanic swearing of an "oath," the smoking of the pipe stands for absolute dependability and dignity. Karl May repeatedly and accurately describes the solemn procedure much in the same way this ethnological account does:

He blew the first puff of smoke toward the sun, the second toward the earth, and one in each of the four directions. The pipe was then passed to the other men who smoked likewise. This was an oath by which the smoker bound himself to speak truthfully.¹

Valuable pipes consisted of red clay from a sacred quarry in Minnesota. According to May, the tobacco was a blend of pulverized herbs such as coltsfoot, carrot leaves, acorns,

¹Ernest Wallace and E. Adamson Hoebel, The Comanches, Lords of the South Plains, (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1952), p. 62, hereafter Wallace and Hoebel, Comanches; Karl May's descriptions of the ceremony are in Schmid, ed., "Old Firehand," p. 45, Ölprinz, p. 414, 471, 547, Winnetou II, p. 135, Winnetou III, p. 84, 123, 202, and in Winnetou IV, passim.

and less appealing items, certain to get the attention of the description-weary readers, "a piece of felt shoe" and "finger nail clippings." Although this mixture "stank," it fulfilled the sacred purpose. One did not merely inhale, but "drank" the smoke of this tobacco, called "Kinnikinnik."² The pipe is a necessary accessory of all respectable Indians in May's books.

The negative aspect of the pipe ceremony is that it ensures peace only temporarily and has to be repeated as often as possible. Peace lasts only during the physical presence of the smokers and as long as no new developments occur. Whenever Old Shatterhand and Winnetou meet, they share the pipe as part of their welcome ritual. It seems that the pipe smoking has more profane aspects. May refers to the speech making in "blumenreicher Sprache"³ during the pipe ceremony as pleasant, but unnecessary activity. Yet it continues to serve an agreeable peaceful purpose.

The second frequent Indian custom, which May half-respects, half-humors with tongue-in-cheek, is the widespread belief in the sanctity of medicine bags. Every warrior carries them around his neck, hangs them at his

²Winnetou I, p. 93/4, 105; the clay quarry at the upper Mississippi is mentioned in Winnetou II, p. 252.

³Winnetou III, pp. 123 ff.

belt, or keeps them in his tent. A medicine bag, according to May, represents the spiritual identity of its owner. It consists of several ingredients wrapped up in a leather pouch, e.g. pieces of fur or animal teeth. In one case, the medicine bag consists of two parts, the skin container and a pair of dogs' feet. Without all of the ingredients, the power of this talisman is nil. The carrier collects the contents of the bag during a vision quest or "höhere Eingebung,"⁴ which gives him direction in life. Stealing someone's bag is equivalent to killing him, as he will be socially ostracized. The warrior's good fortune is identical with the "medicine."

The anthropological account on the Comanche Indians confirms May's description of both the medicine bag and the vision quest. In May's works, however, the term "medicine" is one-dimensional and lacks certain important aspects which anthropologists point out. The warrior's objective is not only to ensure future success, but also to gain spiritual power, like becoming bullet-proof or bringing about rain when necessary. Each power is potentially dangerous to its user. In order to avoid negative side effects, the user or owner of the power must observe

⁴Winnetou I, p. 128; Old Surehand II, p. 122; Winnetous Erben, pp. 280-283.

specific taboos.⁵ Because of a lack of deeper understanding, Karl May does not refer to the philosophy behind the belief in "medicine bags." He pretends to take it seriously, but lacking in respect he makes fun of it.

The description of preponderant Native American ideas about spiritual power looks deliberately ludicrous in May's novels. On the one hand the narrator praises the natives' religiosity, on the other he often refers to their beliefs as superstition. To show this superior attitude in the last *Winnetou* volume, this episode is sufficient: Old Shatterhand steals the medicine bags from several hostile warriors and hands them to Young Eagle. In the course of events as retold in chapter two, Young Eagle impersonates the old messianic myth and brings the medicines, which stand for good fortune, back to their dumb-founded owners. Naturally the use of fraud (stealing and deceiving) is only acceptable to lead the onlookers into thinking that the old prophecy has been fulfilled.⁶ Young Eagle, Tatellah-Satah, and all of the detribalized members of the "Clan *Winnetou*" know how this seeming miracle had been staged. In this case, May allows what he perceives as an impersonation of an unrealistic myth to coax the naive

⁵Hoebel and Wallace, Comanches, pp. 159/160, 165.

⁶Winnetous Erben, p. 310.

Indian population into receptiveness of a "higher" state of mind, namely peacefulness.

Matching his views on "medicine bags," May has an ambivalent attitude towards Native American medicinemen. In his earlier novels they deserve no respect at all; all they do is hocus-pocus and their motivation is base. In Winnetou I, a jealous medicineman predicts ill-fortune to be brought about by the presence of the "good" White, Old Shatterhand. In a clown-like response to this threatening accusation another "good" White, Sam Hawkens (a German with an anglicized name,) produces an alternative prediction contradicting the first one.⁷ His is clearly a hoax, but so was the medicineman's, according to May's reasoning.

Sam Hawkens' performance is not the only example to illustrate the extent to which Indian medicinal knowledge has "degenerated." A Comanche medicineman in Old Surehand I deceives particularly the women and children with his hocus-pocus, something May regrets deeply.⁸ Occasionally the White protagonist interferes himself. In one such episode, Old Shatterhand pretends to be a medicineman to achieve a desirable end. Later in the same book, Old

⁷Winnetou I, pp. 234-238.

⁸Old Surehand I, p. 289.

Shatterhand can revive a fainting Kiowa woman, whom the medicineman, "ein alter, häßlicher Kerl," could not help.⁹ May's approach to Indian religion is very insensitive, since he views it as a corruption of an older, nobler kind of learning.

Karl May boldly calls for the dismantling of some Native American religious beliefs, which he would not suggest for his own religion. An example of apparently silly superstitions nourished by self-interested medicinemen and chiefs is concerned with keeping the common Indians out of the ancient ruins in the Southwest. The commoners' instilled and irrational fear of the spirits of the dead in these buildings makes them a safe haven for secret gatherings by corrupt chiefs. They think they can carry on their nefarious activities there, but the "enlightened" daughter of a chief and the "good" White discover the evil plot.¹⁰ Because of possible betrayal of their own good, it is in the interest of the Native American people to discard superstitions, like the one about Anasazi ruins.

This view does not take into account that the avoidance of contact with the dead and with things

⁹Winnetou III, pp. 122, 295.

¹⁰Winnetous Erben, pp. 180, 187-190.

belonging to the Anasazi are an integral part of a wider philosophical system. In another story May has some friendly Navajos collect the bodies of their fallen tribesmen. This would have been unthinkable, because there is a Navajo taboo on touching the dead, if they had died from violence.¹¹ Although May claims to harbor tolerance toward foreign beliefs, he treats them as inferior or ridiculous. His own religious convictions, however, are not beyond doubt. The fact that he himself believes in divine retribution and in guardian angels makes his stand against "superstition" contradictory.¹²

Only in Winnetous Erben does he mention worthy Indian medicinemen. In this last novel about the American West he declares his credo in the future of the Native Americans. It rests on the cooperation with Whites and on the incorrupt rendition of ancient Indian traditions. The three worthy medicinemen are Tatellah-Satah, a Seneca without name, and a Sioux named Wakon ("Sacred" in Sioux.) The characteristics which make these individuals "real" wielders of spiritual power, as opposed to mere quacks have

¹¹A vivid description of these observances is in Frances Gillmor and Louisa Wade Weatherill, Traders to the Navajos, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983,) pp. 130, 174; May's narrative of Navajos retrieving dead bodies is in Ölprinz, p. 558.

¹²Old Surehand II, pp. 111-115.

to do with their being "civilized:" First, Tatellah-Satah owns a huge library of Toltec and Aztec texts, catalogued in Maya numbers. Second, the Seneca receives attention, because his people build longhouses; third, Wakon reads books about the history of Native Americans and even writes himself.¹³ Clearly there are "real" and "fake" medicinemen in May's work. The former are very rare. In theory good medicinemen are the theologians, historians, doctors, and astronomers of the Native American people. The reason for the rise of hocus-pocus performing individuals wrongly claiming to have spiritual power, according to May's explanation, is the "degeneration" of the Indians, which needs to be stopped.

Ancient superior wisdom enabled the rise of the former high civilization attained by Native Americans; negligence by the people brought about the subsequent demise. Proof of the existence of this noble culture are the widely scattered ruins of cliff houses in the Southwest. They are impressive enough for May to spend many lines in print to describe them realistically in detail, according to Oel-Willenborg.¹⁴ They consist of solid material, i.e. adobe. The multi-room structures feature several platforms

¹³Winnetous Erben, pp. 78/9, 82, 238.

¹⁴Oel-Willenborg, Helden, p. 48.

reached by ladders. Some are eight or nine stories high. The fact that they are uninhabited disturbs Karl May little: In his imagination he populates some of them with people of his choice.

A chosen race they are, particularly the band of Mescalero Apaches under the leadership of Winnetou's father Intschu-tschuna. This group is a first hint (1892) at May's conviction that Indians can stop the process of "degeneration" by helping themselves. A few hundred Apaches had moved into the nine-storey-high abandoned ruins in a side canyon of the Rio Pecos at the suggestion of their German "civilizer," Klehki-petra. The remainder of the tribe still lives in tents.¹⁵ These surroundings and Klehki-petra also induce the pueblo-dwelling Apaches to make pottery, for instance a "tassenähnliches Gefäß aus braunem Ton, wie es eigentlich nur die Pueblo-Indianer anzufertigen pflegen."¹⁶ It keeps the water cool. Eating utensils like spoons and clay bowls are a sign of their recently "elevated" way of life. One sure way of "improving" their situation is to freely imitate ancient Indian cultures.

¹⁵Winnetou I, pp. 153, 155, 161/2, 189; Winnetou III, p. 310.

¹⁶Winnetou I, p. 154.

The more "advanced" pueblos merely had had more time to develop than the Mescaleros. Therefore it is no coincidence that Tatellah-Satah is originally a member of the old town-dwelling Moqui (Hopi) tribe, who accumulated a large amount of ancient wisdom on their high mesas in northern Arizona. He is the perfect teacher of the less developed Indian nations, who have the advantage of a "clean slate." After Tatellah-Satah renounced membership of his tribe, he moved into an old cliff palace. It is there that he keeps his library, entertains guests, and offers living quarters to the young Indians of the "Clan Winnetou." Called the "Schloß", this building is a magnificent series of houses, stone bridges, towers, and cellars. Built in the times of the Toltecs and Aztecs, the complex even houses remnants of altars and graves.¹⁷ If one visualizes it, this pueblo is the largest, oldest and most beautiful in all of May's works. Its purpose is to symbolize every achievement of Native American sciences throughout the ages.

A few pueblos May mentions are historic, but he mixes historic information with imagined tribes so that none of his novels is historically accurate. The Zuñi, Moqui (Hopi) and six of the northern New Mexico pueblos do not

¹⁷Winnetous Erben, pp. 212-214, 295, et passim.

figure prominently in his stories. His description of their towns is correct, however, and probably stems from one of the encyclopedias he used as sources.¹⁸ The imaginary Nijora pueblo is five stories high and over 500 years old. Uncharacteristically for a "half-civilized" pueblo-dwelling tribe, the Nijoras are treacherous and unfriendly toward the "good" Whites. Bad influence from the money-hungry oil-prince is the explanation for this inhospitable behavior. Generally sedentary Indians are superior to nomads in May's West, but all are capable of improving. May's style of writing keeps direct references to political or social matters to a minimum. A comparison of the Apache and Comanche tribes in May's novels and in ethnological literature will illustrate this point.

Particularly on the question of leadership Karl May betrays his disinterest in reality. His description of Intschu-tschuna and Winnetou's reign over the Mescaleros reminds one more of Prussian officers who bellow out orders and expect no dialogue with their men. After his father's death, Winnetou at an early age receives recognition as the "oberster Häuptling aller Apatschen," which includes the Navajos and the Nijoras.¹⁹ May briefly

¹⁸Ölprinz, p. 198.

¹⁹ e.g., Winnetou I, pp. 59, 210; Ölprinz, p. 410.

mentions a council of the elders but does not explain its function or political impact. It only advises on civil matters.²⁰ There are no tribal differences in the organization of government. Winnetou's Comanche counterpart is Apanatschka, whose name sounds very close to 'Apache' reminding the reader that he is a friendly Indian. As the story progresses, Apanatschka collects honors like being named the highest chief of the Pohonim Comanches.²¹ He has a White father, but his political position among the Comanches is equally absolute as Winnetou's among the Apaches.

War leadership is the task of the absolutist chiefs. "Wenn Winnetou ruft, bleibt kein Apatsche bei den Frauen zurück," says Winnetou self-assuredly. At any time he commands about 600 warriors.²² Although they are not involved in the decision making, they do express themselves with inarticulate shouts of approval. The common warriors are an obedient class of people, who need leadership to keep them from wandering headlessly into their destruction. Following the murder of Intschu-tschuna, the leaderless Apache warriors react angrily, but without sense of

²⁰Winnetou I, pp. 158, 196.

²¹Old Surehand II, p. 84.

²²Winnetou II, p. 167.

direction:

Die Roten rannten wütend umher, schwangen ihre Waffen und schnitten die fürchterlichsten Gesichter, um ihrem Grimm Ausdruck zu geben. Erst nach einiger Zeit war es meiner [Old Shatterhand's] Stimme möglich, ihr Geschrei zu übertönen. "Die Krieger der Apatschen mögen schweigen!" gebot ich ihnen. "Wir müssen fort, um den Mörder zu fangen." "Fort, ja fort, fort!" schrien sie, indem sie zu ihren Pferden sprangen. "Ruhig doch!" befahl ich abermals. "Meine roten Brüder wissen ja noch nicht, was sie tun sollen. Ich werde es ihnen sagen." Nun drängten sie sich so an mich, daß ich mich vorsehen mußte, nicht umgerissen zu werden.²³

Indian warriors act confusedly, requiring the sensible orders from a higher Indian officer. In this case, the white Old Shatterhand fulfills this necessary role only because he had been adopted into the tribe in the rank of a chief. Summing up the underlying thinking, the Americanist Hartmut Lutz has sarcastically pointed out that "ein Volk ohne Führer ist machtlos," thus accusing May of leanings toward totalitarianism.²⁴ The image of the all-powerful chief is present in Karl May's stories everywhere.

This portrayal of Mescalero tribal life is partially inaccurate. According to the anthropologist Morris E. Opler the Mescaleros had no well-defined moiety or band system. Theirs was a matrilocal society, a fact May does not account for. C.L. Sonnichsen credits the tribe with a

²³Winnetou I, pp. 258/9.

²⁴Lutz, "Indianer," p. 408.

"democratic" spirit, "Submitting only to temporary control of a chief elected for the occasion." Even though the leadership was male, the office of the chief (nant'á) was not hereditary as May suggests with the transfer of power from Intschu-tschuna to Winnetou. No record exists of any historic tribe to move into Anasazi cliff houses. The Mescaleros lived in 'wickiups,' frameworks of sturdy but pliable branches covered with grass thatching or hides. They also used skin tipis like the Plains tribes.²⁵ Versatile as they are, the Mescalero Apaches are smarter than the other tribes, particularly the Comanches.

The second most important tribe are the Comanches. They are a southern Plains tribe, probably the first to introduce horses to this area. In Karl May's books the Mescalero horsemanship surpasses the Comanches' without historical foundation. Maybe in order to give credit to them at last, his two most well-known Comanche brothers, Apanatschka and Old Surehand, successfully raise horses as a commercial venture in the last of the Indian novels, Winnetou IV. Hoebel and Wallace call the Comanche bands "autonomous" and unwilling to submit to the leadership of a

²⁵Morris E. Opler, "Mescalero Apache," Handbook of North American Indians, v. 10, Alfonso Ortiz, ed., (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1983,) pp. 419-439, hereafter Opler, "Mescalero;" Sonnichsen, Mescalero, p. 22.

single chief as May claims for the Comanches under Apanatschka. During warfare, the warriors painted their faces black, yellow, or red, and wore their hair in two braids.²⁶ In May's account of a Comanche war party the Indians' faces are painted with black streaks on yellow background. Unlike the more "civilized" Mescaleros the fictional Comanches are only scantily clad and have rough manners.

Moreover, May spends time to discuss Comanche domestic habits and name several bands. Their women do all of the hard labor, e.g. making tipis and erecting them. This is historically correct, but in May's view regrettable. When the white hero eats in To-kei-chun's tipi, the reader is informed about both the uncleanliness of the dish and the lack of salt.²⁷ To-kei-chun is chief of the Racurroh band, which I could not verify as a historic appellation. May also names the Naiini Comanches, who are probably identical with the Nauniems, Naünis, or Na-unis in the anthropological literature.²⁸ Apanatschka's chiefdom over

²⁶Hoebel and Wallace, Comanches, pp. 22, 288.

²⁷Winnetou II, pp. 105, 109, 132; Winnetou III, p.119.

²⁸John R. Swanton, The Indian Tribes of North America, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1952,) p. 313; Hoebel and Wallace, p. 171; Albert Samuel Gatschet, "Indian Languages of the Pacific States and Territories,"

the Pohonim Comanches mentioned above designates probably the historic Pohoi band listed in John R. Swanton. May never explains the nature of tribal organization and tends to associate negative traits with it.

The traditional enmity between tribes is historically correct and a central theme of May's novels. According to May, intertribal hostilities are part of the "degeneration" of Native Americans. They fight each other childishly without serious reasons.²⁹ As mentioned above, the pipe ceremony ensures peace only temporarily. For one's own security, the traveller ought to enquire locally before setting out between two tribes. In Old Surehand I Winnetou does not need to avoid the Comanches, because they are at peace with the Apaches at the moment. May does not elaborate further.

Sadly May does not give much thought to the causes of warfare. Sometimes the negative influence of immoral Whites results in hostilities, as in the case of an outbreak of war between the Mescaleros and the Kiowas. The immediate cause was that four Kiowas were killed in the attempt to steal Apache horses, which they intended to sell

Magazine of American History (March 1877): 155, hereafter Gatschet, "Indian Languages, 1877."

²⁹Ölprinz, p. 558.

to Whites.³⁰ Whites are not always the cause of wars between the tribes. Ignoble Indians are capable of provoking war. In these stories, Comanches barbarously abducted women from the Apaches, or a Sioux insulted Winnetou.³¹ Actions like these lead to the unearthing of the "war hatchet" or retributions in form of exchange of women, killing, or horse stealing until the parties smoke the peace pipe again.

Karl May's Indian women are more sensitive than the men and frequently targets of abuse. When the Kiowas capture the White hero Old Shatterhand and intend to torture him, the daughter of a prominent warrior secretly helps him to escape.³² Besides being more tender, Indian women's weakness makes them often the victims of kidnappings or murder. Two examples illustrate their subsequent fate, abandonment. After the Comanches had stolen women and horses from the Apaches, Winnetou declares that "Pferde nimmt man zurück, aber Frauen nicht."³³ In the second example the Moqui (Hopi) tribe seems to share this attitude. Two Moqui women, Tokbela and Tahua,

³⁰Winnetou I, p. 95.

³¹Winnetou II, p. 170; Winnetou III, p. 203.

³²Winnetou III, p. 290.

³³Winnetou II, p. 168.

disappear after the murder of their brother, the Christian preacher Diterico. The Frenchman Thibault abducts Tokbela and lives with her among the Comanches, where they take on the Comanche aliases Tibo-taka and Tibo-wete. Tokbela loses her sanity and Tahua roams the prairie alone disguised as a man. Their Moqui kinsmen never search for these lost tribal members.³⁴ The women's lot is drudgery.

Apart from references to tribal names and use of Indian words, the ethnographic description is disappointingly shallow. It is doubtful whether May deserves recognition for observing the following social custom. Although the narrator, Old Shatterhand, has been adopted into the tribe and is the "Blutsbruder" of Winnetou, he never mentions Winnetou's mother or grandparents. This seeming neglect could correspond with the prescribed avoidance of mothers-in-law and grandparents-in-law in Mescalero culture, as Winnetou's sister Nscho-tschi has expressed a desire to marry Old Shatterhand.³⁵ If this is the case, May's use of ethnographic detail would support the theory that Nscho-tschi represented a "danger," the potentially equal partner, and had to be "murdered." More likely, however,

³⁴Old Surehand I and II.

³⁵Opler, "Mescalero," p. 430.

May's failure to refer to mother or grandparents is a coincidence.

Indian women's femininity corresponds to their lifestyle. Normally, they age fast and lack taste in adornments. May writes, "die alte [Indianerin] hatte Runzeln im Gesicht und war häßlich, wie die meisten roten Squaws."³⁶ She wears "cheap" jewellery made of glass pearls. Another one has a broad face inducing May to make fun of her looks. He aptly calls her Kliuna-ai, which is Apache for "Beautiful Moon."³⁷ Arno Schmidt, the literary critic, suggested in his controversial study that Karl May's writings are sublimations of homosexual phantasies, because so few women are sexually attractive.³⁸ If there is mention of their beauty, e.g. Nscho-ttschi's or Kolma Puschi's, it sounds very much like a description of the male characters, especially Winnetou's. Little wonder that some of the beautiful women, for instance Kolma Puschi, Kakho-oto, and Ellen, live like a male Indian.

Despite dangers, many native women look for alternatives to the unattractive way of life as an Indian

³⁶Winnetou I, p. 153.

³⁷Ibid., p. 223.

³⁸Arno Schmidt, Sitara und der Weg dorthin. Eine Studie über Wesen, Werk und Wirkung Karl Mays, (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1985), pp. 44, 261. Hereafter Schmidt, Sitara.

woman. In May's stories they have three possibilities. Dressing up as a man has just been discussed. The two others are getting the education of a White woman or marrying a white man. Both are risky operations and several of May's female characters do not survive the attempt. Winnetou's sister Nscho-tschi, the model Apache woman, decides to go to the cities of the East to become like a White. In order to finance her trip, she needs some gold from the ores on "Nugget Tsil." Greed for gold is the immediate motivation of the evil White Santer to kill both her and her father.³⁹ On a deeper level, one may assume that Karl May "murdered" her before she assimilated to white society in order to avoid the awkward situation of an educated Indian girl in his future novels.

Most of his "intelligent" Indian women married to White men meet a tragic end. For instance Ribanna, the Assiniboin, marries the White trapper Old Firehand. She is so attractive to white men that one murders her out of jealousy.⁴⁰ That May lets White passion for gold kill Nscho-tschi possibly has a second reason. She voiced her intent to marry Old Shatterhand upon her return from the East. In May's description of her she is the most worthy

³⁹Winnetou I, p. 252.

⁴⁰Schmid, ed., "Old Firehand," p. 73.

Indian bride a White man could have, but Old Shatterhand, sharing his thoughts with the reader, refuses her. She may be the best, but she is still not good enough for him. Her timely death solves his predicament. Although the story of Aschta, daughter of the admirable Seneca medicineman above, ends happily, it does not contradict this pattern. She is courted by two White men and an Indian, like Ribanna. Her survival in May's novel depends on the circumstance of her choice in favor of the Sioux medicineman Wakon.⁴¹ One of her White suitors commits a crime of passion, but she survives and leaves with her Indian husband. Interestingly May makes more Whites guilty of love-related crimes than Indians. Women are the victims nevertheless.

Because of their oppressed status, Indian women of all social classes, not only the daughters of "prominent" men or chiefs, show an interest in White men. As early as 1875, May mentions the "Anzahl der Squaws" living with White trappers in Old Firehand's stronghold.⁴² He does not explain the nature of this arrangement. In Winnetou I, Kliuna-ai falls in love with the White man Sam Hawkens. She is quite persistent in her pursuit, but ultimately

⁴¹Winnetous Erben, pp. 78-82.

⁴²Schmid, ed., "Old Firehand," p. 79.

fails to achieve her end, marriage.⁴³ A third example comes from the Winnetou III. Kakho-oto (Dunkles Haar) finds herself worthy to become the wife of the white prisoner of her tribe, Old Shatterhand. Intermarriage into the tribe would free him. He refuses her, because he does not want to give up his "future." The narrator-hero explains that Kakho-oto cannot offer Old Shatterhand the kind of marriage he expects and that he is not one of those White men who have a wife in each tribe.⁴⁴ These assumptions are racist.

Indian women in the novels blatantly show their preference for White husbands. In one of the stories, several Sioux "Squaws" opt for leaving their tribe with the white hero, who refuses their company.⁴⁵ Similarly the two Moqui (Hopi) sisters Tokbela and Tehua prefer a life outside their tribe. They had both married Whites, because they were Christians. Their husbands turn out to be selfish scoundrels. Obviously Indian men could be Christians too. Their brother Diterico, for example, was a Christian minister.⁴⁶ Racism, however, makes marriage to a

⁴³Winnetou I, p. 223.

⁴⁴Winnetou III, p. 290.

⁴⁵Winnetou III, p. 24.

⁴⁶Old Surehand II, pp. 187, 299.

White man more desirable. The presence of White men impairs the virility of Native Americans.

Therefore the combination of Indian husband and White wife is very unlikely. The only exception is the marriage of the Navajo chief Nitsas-Ini and the German woman. May says about the beginning of this relationship that the Navajo had rescued the German girl from another tribe and she had married him out of gratitude. Furthermore, she is only a common girl by May's standards. She nevertheless had become the teacher of all Navajos.⁴⁷ Among the Navajos, ethnologists emphasize, women indeed have a great deal of influence. Navajo culture is matrilineal. Even if May knew this, he did not give it much thought. An intermarried woman would have less rights than a native woman with relatives. May did not dwell on the circumstances of the White-Indian marriage. The German wife of the Navajo does not even have a name.

The second time a biracial love affair involves an Indian man and a White woman, it is not what it seems. In the semi-autobiographical novel Winnetou IV, May's wife Klara and a Kiowa become close friends. The Kiowa is the woman Kakho-oto disguised as a man. Following Old Shatterhand's rejection just mentioned, she had remained

⁴⁷Ölprinz, p. 418.

unmarried. Dressing and acting like a man had enabled her to avoid molestations, presumably from Indian and White men alike. Old Shatterhand's rejection had almost made her a saint. Her inner beauty attracts Klara's love. Naturally Klara notices that Kakho-oto is not a man.

Klara's intimate friendship with the Kiowa "man" is against the etiquette of the time. Her husband condones Klara's and Kakho-oto's mutual love, because he recognizes the Kiowa. Kakho-oto is intellectually inferior to Klara and clings to her lovingly in order to profit from Klara's "civilizing" influence. This relationship between a White woman and an Indian, who looks like a man, bothers a White man in their company. Pappermann exclaims about Klara's seeming infidelity,

wenn nur wenigstens ich es wäre! Oder irgendein
 anderer Weißer! Aber Euch [addressing Old Shatterhand-
 Karl May] um einer Rothaut willen untreu zu werden, das
 ist stark!⁴⁸

White women stoop too low, if they become enamoured with Indian men, according to this racist argument. It explains even better why Native American women would choose non-Indian husbands to improve their social standing. If mixed marriages were a way out of "drudgery" for Indian women, the children of such unions would fare even better.

⁴⁸Winnetous Erben, p. 176.

Male Mixed-bloods have a wide range of occupations in Karl May's novels. Access to education is an important aspect. Schi-so, the son of Nitsas-Ini and the German, gets a higher education in forestry in Germany. His younger siblings receive instruction in German/ White civilization from their mother at home.⁴⁹ The brothers Old Surehand and Apanatschka, half-White and half-Comanche, are successful horse breeders, who send their own sons to the cities in order to become sculptors and architects.⁵⁰ In another story, a Comanche chief summons a nameless Mixed-blood to read a document to him.⁵¹ Mixed parentage seems a virtual guarantee for higher education.

In the volumes used for this study there is only one female Mixed-blood. With regard to May's attitudes on the subjects of romance and morality it is surprising to find that in one of the earliest stories, "Old Firehand" from 1875, the White hero falls in love with the Mixed-blood heroine, Ellen. She is the daughter of Old Firehand and the Assiniboin Ribanna. Ellen's facial features are soft,

⁴⁹Ölprinz, p. 84.

⁵⁰Old Surehand and Apanatschka married "ein schönes, intelligentes Schwesternpaar" of the Mescalero tribe. Their sons are only a "quarter" White. Winnetous Erben, p. 11.

⁵¹Winnetou II, p. 138.

but her character is unfeminine. She lives among her father's men, who treat her as an equal. The "Anzahl von Squaws" referred to above is of no concern to her. Ellen shoots and fights like a man. May attributes this to her mixed parentage and bemoans her wild behavior,

Ich konnte die Ansicht nicht von mir weisen, daß Büchse [i.e. rifle] und Messer in den Händen des Mannes Waffen, in denen eines Weibes aber Mordinstrumente seien.⁵²

She is capable of learning, however, and at the end of the novel understands perfectly what Old Shatterhand means by femininity.

As she is the only Mixed-blood woman in the scope of this study, it is significant to point out that she later simply disappeared from May's conscience. Old Firehand's and Ribanna's child turns into a boy, when May rewrote the story in 1892 to form chapter 12 of Winnetou II. In this rendition romantic love is obviously absent, and Harry, the boy, is sufficiently young to be less cruel than his female predecessor. May's attitude toward Mixed-blood women was ambiguous. When Ellen asks the White hero, "Ist ein weibliches Wesen hassenswert, wenn es dasselbe tut, was sonst nur dem Mann gestattet ist?" his answer is evasive

⁵²Ibid., p.95. Translation: "I could not dismiss the argument that rifle and knife in the hands of a man are weapons, whereas in the hands of a woman they are instruments for murder."

and unsatisfactory, "hassenswert, nein."⁵³ He felt more comfortable with her as a boy.

Whereas racism in Karl May is undoubtedly present, it is subdued when he discusses people of culturally mixed parentage. Contrary to literary critic Gert Ueding's opinion, Mixed-bloods are not always depicted as having inherited only the wicked traits of each parent's culture.⁵⁴ In the material used in this study there are more "good" Mixed-bloods than "bad" ones. They tend to ameliorate the "sharp" Indian facial features and appear "softer." Two prominent and thoroughly positive Mixed-bloods are Old Surehand, who lives as a White man, and his brother Apanatschka, culturally a Comanche.⁵⁵ "Good" Mixed-bloods do not associate with their kind. They choose either the Indian or the White culture.

The unworthy Mixed-bloods are culturally undecided. They are more frequent in his stories about Latin America, which are not analyzed here. Those who do appear in the stories studied here include the half-Armenian, half-Sioux

⁵³Schmid. ed., "Old Firehand," p. 96.

⁵⁴Ueding, Handbuch, p. 539.

⁵⁵May gives Apanatschka a peculiar, but positive description: "Ich muß sagen, außer Winnetou noch keinen so eigenartigen Indianer gesehen zu haben." Old Surehand I, p. 267.

treasurer of the committee May despises in Winnetous Erben. His name is Antonius Paper and he is a greedy materialist with no Indian virtues.⁵⁶ Others are some nameless shady characters, who drink brandy in the same novel⁵⁷. There one also finds the person whose mother was Black and the father Indian. He is untrustworthy without further explanation. The image of the "evil" Mixed-blood exists in May's books, but the good always endures.

May uses the characters of Mixed-bloods, Indian women, and men to illustrate how he views Native American culture. He sees "good" and "bad" aspects. Religiosity is a praiseworthy trait, but untutored it only develops into "superstition." In the area of military leadership, May's Indians lack no skills. When he describes their treatment of women, however, May finds very few kind words. The plight of the mothers, the Native American women, could easily be the subject of a separate study. Although Mixed-bloods partake of both cultures, they need instruction and guidance just as much as their Indian relatives.

May is always concerned with the question of halting "degeneration" in his stories. Intermarriage is not a

⁵⁶Winnetous Erben, p. 190.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 194, 284.

feature of degeneration, although it can expose the individual Mixed-blood to detrimental influence from morally corrupt Whites, according to May's world of fiction. Struggling with materialism and persuing a path of righteousness is May's prescription for a better life. May asserts that White civilization offers the Indians education, which is rich in spiritual teachings. Therefore they should give up about half of their culture, learn from the Whites, and combine both ways of life fruitfully. His Indian main character, Winnetou, exemplifies the life of an ideal Native American according to Karl May.

CHAPTER 4

FIRST AMONG EQUALS: WINNETOU

The previous chapters pointed out that Indian society according to May is not static. Likewise the individual's personality is capable of improvement; Winnetou is a case in point. In the novels he develops from a bloodthirsty to a noble savage. Karl May accomplished this change in Winnetou partly deliberately, partly by retouching Winnetou's personality after-the-fact. In the last book of the Winnetou-tetralogy May elevates Winnetou "posthumously" to the status of a red messiah, who brings the message of Dschinnistan back to the Native Americans by living it.

Although May advocated de-tribalization for all Native Americans, seeing no value in tribal life, he did not de-Indianize Winnetou as literary critic Hartmut Lutz surmised. The Apache remains an increasingly idealized Indian standing out from the crowd, but he is not intrinsically different from other Indians in the novels. A short 'biography' of the character will follow the discussion of his physical appearance.

Winnetou's description has been ridiculed because of its repetitiveness and supposed inaccuracy. Like a Plains Indian, Winnetou always wears a white deerskin suit and

fringed leggings with quill ornaments. His hair is long, but held together with a rattlesnake band. As a matter of fact, one anthropologist and one historian agree with May on this point.¹ Plains Indian culture did influence Mescalero clothing. Men wore buckskin shirts, breechclouts, and leggings with low-cut, hard-soled moccasins. Their hair was braided and wrapped. In May's novels the outfits of other Indians look like this too, for instance Apanatschka's. The reader can only be sure it is Winnetou if the description follows the familiar introductory pattern of suspense.

When May describes Winnetou's face, his racist prejudice breaks through again. Winnetou and other important Indians do not have protruding cheek bones nor slanted eyes. Winnetou's look-alike sister Nscho-tschi looks European and "Greek," her brother's features are "Roman."² Their skin color is slightly darker than that of a northern European. These attributes of Winnetou and his sister are commonplace in May's novels.

Contrary to popular belief, May's descriptions are not very artistic. The impressive young Comanche chief

¹Opler, "Mescalero," pp. 419-439; Sonnichsen, Mescalero, p. 14.

²Winnetou I, pp. 59, 153; Ölprinz, p. 241.

Apanatschka resembles Winnetou very much. One is tempted to agree with Arno Schmidt's thesis that May repeatedly, though subconsciously, describes the same bisexual phantasies, attributing them to the perfect faces of Greek sculptures. Schmidt likes to refer to Winnetou's smooth and beardless face as a "küßliche[s] Gesicht."³ Perhaps Schmidt went a step too far in this sexual association, as most Native American men in fact grew no beards. The lack of a beard was no impediment to their masculinity. Nevertheless, taking the shortcut of referring to "Greek" and "Roman" looks, May devaluates his main characters' descriptions, denying them individuality.

A glance at the development of the novel-character Winnetou identifies him as the Indian male May wanted to perfect in lieu of all Native Americans. Some of the 'noble' characteristics were premeditated. Generally speaking, however, May failed to single out Winnetou while he is still alive. Only after Winnetou's death does he turn into someone with a message which fills five hand-written booklets. During his lifetime Winnetou is taciturn.

The origin of Winnetou's name is mysterious. It either derives from a Native American language or a

³Schmidt, Sitara, pp. 35, 129; Old Surehand I, p. 267.

personal name. According to Gatschet's tables, which were in May's possession, "vintu" is a word from the Digger language of the Great Basin, meaning "Indian." Although the two words seem similar enough to warrant such a thesis, it is unlikely that the description of the Wintoons, or Digger Indians, was an incentive for Karl May to adopt their tribal name for his main character, as Gatschet wrote in 1877:

Winton: The timid, superstitious, and grossly sensual race of the Wintoons is settled on both sides of upper Sacramento and upper Trinity rivers.⁴

This unfavorable description by Gatschet, and the fact that Karl May never used any other words from the Winton language, indicates that it is not the source for Winnetou's name.

Striking a compromise between the sound of the name and a possible historical model for its bearer, it appears likely that Karl May christened Winnetou after Waneta, also spelled Wahnaataa or Wanotan, "The Charger" (born in 1795; died in 1848 at the mouth of Beaver Creek near the Standing Rock reservation, N.D.) He was a Yanktonai Sioux of the Pabaska or Cuthead band and a son of Shappa, "Red Thunder." Like his fictional counterpart, Waneta "was a

⁴Gatschet, "Indian Languages (1877)," p. 160.

dominant chief of the Sioux."⁵ The proximity of the names and the fact that Winnetou's first appearance in May's novels is as the Sioux chief Inn-nu-woh make it quite likely that Waneta is his historical 'godfather.'

The difficulty in writing about a fictional character's life lies in the fact that he has two 'biographies,' the fictional one according to the author and the developmental one traceable in the stories. In answer to a letter from a curious reader, Karl May asserted that Winnetou was born around 1840 and died on September 2, 1874.⁶ However, in May's stories a predecessor to Winnetou first appeared in 1875.

This first Indian hero of Karl May is Inn-nu-woh. He is a Sioux warrior at the age of about fifty, who boards a Mississippi steamboat along with predominantly White passengers. His conduct is noble, manly, and dignified. Yet he is also revengeful and proud. Some of the passengers call him a coward. Inn-nu-woh answers this insult not with words, but with a heroic deed, and then leaves in a huff without making friends.⁷ May's physical

⁵Dictionary of Indian Tribes of the Americas, volume 3, (St. Clair Shores, Michigan: Scholarly, 1978), p. 199, s.v. "Waneta."

⁶Wollschläger, Karl May, p. 86.

⁷Schmid, ed., "Inn-nu-woh."

description of Inn-nu-woh is not only reminiscent of his later standardized versions of Indian looks, but also of a dormant admiration of "otherness."

In this episode May exhibited the familiar fascination of Europeans with Native Americans on casual encounters. Historian W. David Baird noted an event on a steamer, which matches May's fictional account with regard to the impression made by the Native American on the boat. British author Charles Dickens took a trip on the Mississippi, when he discovered the presence of the Choctaw chief Peter Pitchlynn:

"He was a remarkably handsome man," the novelist wrote, "with long black hair, an aquiline nose, broad cheek bones, a sunburnt complexion, and a very bright, keen, dark, and piercing eye." To him Peter was "as stately and complete a gentleman of Nature's making as ever I beheld, moving among the people in the boat as another kind of being." Dickens saw the American Indian as a romantic being, and he so described Pitchlynn.⁸

This description seems to be an expression of the typical European exhilaration with things "Indian."

Unlike Dickens' real-life encounter and instantaneous fascination, May's interest in Native Americans grew from a distance. In the same year Inn-nu-woh appeared in print, May wrote the "Old Firehand" story. It features Winnetou, the Apache, for the first time. He is a bloodthirsty

⁸W. David Baird, Peter Pitchlynn. Chief of the Choctaws, (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1986), p. 63.

warrior with a non-European "scharfgezeichnete[m] Gesicht," who counts the scalps on the walls of his wigwam, wears human hair-locks on his belt, and is greedy for cigars.⁹ In this early narrative about life in the American West Winnetou is rather more ferocious and ignorant than gentle and noble.

The early versions of Winnetou betray a leaning toward hatred and cruelty. In a short speech Winnetou wishes his enemy Parranoh awful tortures as these, "Der Mund der Erde soll sein Blut trinken, und die Kralle des Geiers soll zerreißen den Leib des Verräters; aber sein Skalp wird zieren den Gürtel des Apachen!"¹⁰ Although Winnetou's wrath is thoroughly understandable in the light of Parranoh's crimes, it is not the attitude of a 'saintly' person. Even in the trilogy titled after Winnetou, he still kills, steals horses, and even threatens to swear an oath of eternal revenge on all White people for murdering his father and sister.¹¹ The presence of the White hero prevents Winnetou from doing that.

Under the beneficial influence of Germans, Winnetou

⁹Schmid, ed., "Old Firehand," pp. 39, 40, 41.

¹⁰Interestingly May spelled Apaches in its Anglicized version. Later he Germanized it to "Apatschen." Schmid, ed., "Old Firehand," pp. 6, 59.

¹¹Winnetou III, p. 203; Winnetou I, p. 254.

develops into a nobler being. His teacher Klehki-petra already had the effect of keeping Winnetou from wearing a medicine bag around his neck or feathers in his hair.¹² Furthermore, Klehki-petra taught Winnetou to speak "reines Englisch."¹³ According to May's assertion, Winnetou can write and always carries paper. His writing skill is not calligraphic, but resembles the effort of a "vierzehnjährige[n] Schulknabe[n], der sich Mühe gibt schön zu schreiben."¹⁴ German teaching influences Winnetou.

Voluntary change is the second factor in Winnetou's development. Apparently he kicked the habit of cigar smoking. A self-assured Winnetou laughs about Old Wabble's addiction to cigarettes.¹⁵ Winnetou only rarely drinks a German beer and never brandy.¹⁶ While most Indians in May's stories smell "dirty," Winnetou washes himself at a lake when he can.¹⁷ May wrote unspecifically that Winnetou 'frequently' travels to the cities of the whites. In the last novel May claimed that Winnetou even

¹²Winnetou I, p. 59.

¹³Winnetou I, p. 65.

¹⁴Winnetou III, p. 258; Old Surehand I, p. 6.

¹⁵Old Surehand I, p. 173.

¹⁶Winnetou II, p. 34.

¹⁷Old Surehand I, pp. 143, 178.

had kept a half-Indian, half-European furnished apartment in Tatellah-Satah's cliff palace.¹⁸ Winnetou seems to have assimilated extensively.

The desirability of accommodation notwithstanding, May intended Winnetou to remain culturally Indian. Winnetou's 'Indian' characteristics are for instance his position as the highest chief of the Apaches, his ability to know his way around even in the land of the Oglalas, and his friendship with distant tribes like the Shoshones.¹⁹ Winnetou is also knowledgeable about healing with herbs and has the capability to foresee the time of his own death.²⁰ A final characteristic identifying Winnetou's Indianness is his punctuality.

This last point is especially hilarious, because nowadays Native Americans take a reverse pride in keeping "Indian time," which means guaranteed lateness and delay at work or recreation. Not so May's Indians, they are punctual! Winnetou makes an appointment with the White hero Old Shatterhand in this fashion:

"Mein Bruder kennt das Wasser, das Clear Brook genannt

¹⁸Winnetou II, pp. 5, 34; Winnetous Erben, p. 219.

¹⁹Winnetou I, pp. 59, 210; Winnetou III, pp. 173, 233.

²⁰Winnetou II, p. 117; Old Surehand II, p. 201; Winnetou III, pp. 217, 235.

wird. Wir haben dort miteinander gejagt. Besinnst du dich auf die Lebenseiche, unter der wir damals des Nachts lagerten?"-- "Ganz genau."-- "So können wir uns nicht verfehlen. Der Wipfel dieses Baumes ist verdorrt, wächst also nicht mehr. Wenn um die Mittagszeit der Schatten der Eiche grad fünfmal die Länge meines Bruders hat, wird Winnetou dort ankommen. Howgh!"-- Ich mußte das nun in unsere Zeitrechnung übersetzen.²¹

According to May's idea about Native Americans, their way of specifying time may sound unreliable, but it is in fact very accurate.

The most controversial aspect about Winnetou has been the fact that he dies as a Christian. Dying, he confesses that he had secretly adhered to the faith of the Whites because of its insistence on "love."²² Somehow this pro-Christian attitude seems to have taken away some of Winnetou's appeal as an Indian in the minds of many of May's critics and readers. This condemnation of May for his pro-Christian attitude is a matter of taste, which itself is judgmental. At the end of his own life, Karl May felt that he had portrayed Winnetou as a shallow human being. The author remedied the situation by assigning Winnetou a second will, which was to be eternally impressive beyond Winnetou's grave.

Interestingly May had Winnetou make two separate

²¹Old Surehand I, pp. 5/6.

²²Winnetou III, pp. 219, 241.

bequests. The first one provided for half of all the gold deposits to be given to the poor, the other half apparently to his white friend Old Shatterhand.²³ The circumstances around this first will made its fulfillment impossible. It was Winnetou's noble thought that counted. The second "Testament" becomes the subject of May's last novel. This will is buried beneath the site of the first one in order to show that even May himself had judged Winnetou too superficially.²⁴

Winnetou's character traits developed from shallow in the earlier novels to the idealized version in the last, Winnetous Erben. Here he is to be the Native American messiah, who had lived according to the principles of the Dschinnistan legend, i.e. morality, generosity, and faithfulness. These requirements are related and complementary to the basic teachings of Christianity, or every religion, for that matter. Whereas the Dschinnistan myth is Karl May's original contribution, its syncretistic application in the novel corresponds to historical reality.

Recorded historically there were several Native American prophets in the nineteenth century who attracted

²³Winnetou III, pp. 238, 315/6.

²⁴Winnetous Erben, pp. 132-136.

large numbers of followers across tribal boundaries. They preached immediate relief from conditions of starvation and disease. Their messages contained elements from tribal religions and traces of Christianity. Syncretism is an important aspect in tribal adaptation to a changed environment.²⁵ Due to their appeal to renewal and healing, anthropologists have called these phenomena revitalization movements.

May's description of the "Clan Winnetou" is faintly reminiscent of such a movement. Karl May could have heard of several, particularly about Seneca Handsome Lake's Code or Wovoka's "Ghost Dance Movement."²⁶ These Native American prophets could possibly have inspired May to refer to these precious few "worthy" medicinemen in Winnetous Erben. Yet no historical nativistic movement grew to the extent of May's "Clan Winnetou" after the death of its founder. More frequently they subsided in membership to a small if dedicated following.

In Winnetous Erben, the Heirs of Winnetou, the dead Winnetou becomes synonymous with all Indians. Written two

²⁵A classic in anthropological theory is Anthony F. Wallace, "Revitalization movements," American Anthropologist 58 (January 1956): 264-281.

²⁶Edward H. Spicer, A Short History of the Indians of the United States, (New York: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1969), pp. 48ff., 88ff.

years before May's own death and immediately after his only travel to the United States in 1908, the last Winnetou novel was clearly May's farewell statement about the fate of Native Americans. The main theme is the conflict over the nature of a planned memorial monument to Winnetou. Karl May included himself and his wife Klara in the story by openly identifying himself as Old Shatterhand, his main white hero. His own travel and impressions overseas inspired him to write this story.

A summary of the novel will facilitate its correlation to actual events. According to the narrative, May-Old Shatterhand, Tatellah-Satah, and the members of the Clan Winnetou mentioned in chapter two take a stand against misrepresenting Winnetou's personality in the form of a colossal statue holding a rifle and a revolver. Perhaps a persiflage of American reformers at the turn of the century, May describes a "committee" of well-meaning and materialistic university professors, businessmen, and even criminals, who champion the idea of a lucrative stone memorial to the model-Indian Winnetou. They organize a large Indian council at Mount Winnetou. Instead, in May's opinion, the spiritual aspect of Winnetou's life ought to be the center of attention.

Winnetou's last will and the myth of Dschinnistan

complement each other perfectly. The latter has already been discussed in Chapter Two. In the story, May-the-novel-character unearths a will by Winnetou consisting of five manuscripts. In nightly reading sessions Winnetou's intellectual bequest is gradually revealed. He is concerned with peace. Unfortunately May the author put off his readers until a later volume, which he never wrote. Winnetou's Erben ends with the admonition to Native Americans that their role is to simultaneously fulfill Winnetou's will and the myth of Dschinnistan.

May's inspiration about a colossal statue to an outstanding Indian derived from his travel to the United States. On September 9, 1908, Karl May travelled to New York State, Niagara Falls, and Massachusetts. In Buffalo, N.Y., he visited the Seneca Sa-go-ye-wat-ha's grave in Forest Lawn Cemetery.²⁷ The site features a "handsome memorial... unveiled June 22, 1891," after the re-interrment of the Seneca chief by the Buffalo Historical Society. This statue to an Indian impressed May deeply.

A brief digression is in order here. The fame of this Native American individual raises the question whether he influenced Karl May's conception of Winnetou. One argument

²⁷Ueding, Handbuch, p. 321; Wollschläger, Karl May, p. 156.

in favor of this theory is that George Catlin painted a full-length, life-sized portrait of Sa-go-ye-wat-ha. It represented him on Table Rock, Niagara Falls, according to the Indian's wish. Catlin's paintings were widely circulated in nineteenth century Europe. Winnetou's fictional life history, however, is too different from the Seneca's to make him a historical predecessor.

A closer look at the Sa-go-ye-wat-ha's biography makes it doubtful that Karl May modelled his Winnetou after him. This Native American orator was also known as Red Jacket, who was born in 1756 and died on the former "Buffalo reservation" of the Seneca, on lands now within the limits of Buffalo, N.Y., on January 20, 1830. The Seneca's remarkable gift for debate attracted the attention of British officers, one of whom gave Sa-go-ye-wat-ha a red jacket. When worn out, the British replaced it so that this distinctive dress became a characteristic feature of its wearer. This seeming 'vanity' is missing from Winnetou's characterization in May's novels.

Sa-go-ye-wat-ha was a morally upright man, even if his opinions about cultural matters did not match Karl May's. The Seneca became famous because of his pacifist speeches

at various Indian councils.²⁸ His tribe, one of the Six Nations, remained at peace with the United States following the treaty of Ft. Stanwix in 1784. No threats or bribes moved him to change his opinions. Later in his life he became increasingly conservative, unyieldingly opposing schools, churches, and other White innovations.

Unlike the fictional Winnetou, who has a naive faith in the goodness of all mankind, Red Jacket's life experience had taught him bitter lessons. In an explanatory speech he expressed his reservations about the establishment of missionaries, which May would not have shared:

Because they do us no good. If, they are not useful to the white people, why do they send them among the Indians; if they are useful to the white people and do them good, why do they not keep them at home?... These men know that we do not understand their religion. We cannot read their book; they tell different stories about what it contains, and we believe they make the book talk to suit themselves... The black coats tell us to work and raise corn; they do nothing themselves and would starve to death if somebody did not feed them. The Indians can never be civilized; they are not like white men... We are few and weak, but may for a long time be happy, if we would hold fast to our country and the religion of our fathers.²⁹

²⁸Clark Wissler, Indian of the United States, revised edition by Lucy Wales Kluckhohn, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), pp. 141-143.

²⁹Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico, N-Z, Frederick Webb Hodge, ed., (Grosse Pointe, Michigan: Scholarly, 1912), no page number, s.v. "Red Jacket."

Red Jacket's philosophy of life was the opposite of Karl May's ideas about 'solving the Indian problem.' May believed in the benefit of missionaries, schools, and other White influences on Indian society. The grave of Sa-go-yewat-ha merely demonstrated to May that statues of Indians were not unheard of. He used this idea in Winnetou's Erben.

The assembly of Indians of all tribes in this novel has many historical antecedents, but its most likely precursor is the "last great Indian council," convened in September of 1909, just one year after May's return to Germany. May even makes reference by name to its main organizer, Rodman Wanamaker, a White reformer during the presidency of William Howard Taft.³⁰ According to May's information, this council planned to erect a statue of an Indian with arms outstretched in greeting. It was to be positioned opposite of the Statue of Liberty. This "last great Indian council" was indeed not May's invention.

It took place on the battlefield in Montana, where General Armstrong Custer's Seventh Cavalry had lost to a superior force of Sioux and Cheyennes in 1876. the convention's participants were the "last great Indian chiefs and the white men of good will," among them Rodman

³⁰Winnetous Erben, p. 318.

Wanamaker and Joseph K. Dixon.³¹ May could not have known what became of the plan for a statue, although the actual events were very similar to what became of the one in his book: Embroiled in controversy, it came to naught.

The statue was to have been larger than the Statue of Liberty, made of bronze, and portraying an Indian with his hand raised in a sign for peace. Congress actually passed the bill and President Taft signed it into law in December 1911. In 1913 there was a ground-breaking ceremony in Ft. Wadsworth on Staten Island, with many dignitaries and Indian delegates attending. Due to a lack of money and an abundance of controversy, the monument was never built. Its site now serves as a bridge terminus.

The similarity of this actual council and May's fictional assembly goes beyond the conflict about the statue. The historical account of the council mentions that Indians are "spiritual seekers," not concerned with tangible things. May could not have written it better himself. In Montana there were even exchanges of war stories and a pipe ceremony, resulting in the promise of keeping the peace, just as in May's novel, which he

³¹Joseph Kossuth Dixon, The Vanishing Race: Record of the Last Great Indian Council of 1909, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Co., 1913.)

finished in 1910.³² In this case, his imagination was not far removed from reality.

If Winnetou is a prominent chief with intertribal connections, who sparks off a posthumous revitalization movement, a brief look at the secondary literature on Winnetou in the following paragraphs will show the widespread erroneous assumption that Winnetou is in a separate category, all by himself. The fact that there are other Indians in the novels, who are virtual clones of Winnetou, contradicts the thesis of Winnetou's singularity, which seems to be the most wide-spread conception among Karl May's literary critics. Many writers have thought that Winnetou is a unique character, because his name forms the title of four novels. There are many other characters in May's novels, whose names appear in the titles. Winnetou is not unique in this. Rather the Apache symbolizes the potential of all Indians.

No literary study has dedicated itself to the image of Native Americans and Winnetou in May's books exclusively, yet many researchers sometimes carelessly

³²A statue to a Native American is still a possibility. Korczak Ziolkowski began building the Crazy Horse Memorial in the Black Hills near Custer, South Dakota, in the 1940s. This giant sculpture is to become 563 feet high and 641 feet long. Crazy Horse was a famous Sioux warrior.

comment on Winnetou. As previous chapters have demonstrated, May's Indians are "inferior" to Whites, particularly Germans, but they can and want to change for the better. Winnetou is most successful in this attempt. In his recent monumental study about Native Americans in German literature, Hartmut Lutz disparaged May's Winnetou because of his capability of assimilation, which Lutz decidedly valued negatively. He wrote:

Winnetou, der 'rote Gentleman,' entpuppt sich bei näherer Betrachtung als deutscher Kleinbürger im Indianerkostüm.³³

However, Lutz' study did not provide a close examination of this Indian character and even mistakenly assumed that May dressed the Apache in the wrong tribe's clothes.

Criticizing Winnetou because of ideological differences with his inventor, Karl May, is possible and necessary.

The main shortcoming of Lutz' discussion of Karl May in his study is its brevity. Many of his postulations may be correct, but he does not tell the reader how he arrived at his conclusions, and he generalizes too much.³⁴ All of his indignant wrath about stereotyping focuses on

³³Lutz, "Indians," p. 354.

³⁴Lutz proudly affirms that his knowledge of Karl May's books was limited ("begrenzt"), as if he feared contamination. Superficiality makes his academic evaluation of May less compelling than Lutz' otherwise convincing rhetoric would merit. See Lutz, "Indians," p. 21.

Winnetou, whom he calls a de-Indianized individual without history.³⁵ As the previous chapters of this study have demonstrated, much the same can be said about all of May's Indians. Why single out Winnetou? Perhaps the reason is that in him the progressive theory of change-for-the-better, which May wished for all Native Americans, becomes more plainly visible.

Many more critics have written about the supposed 'singularity' of Winnetou. For instance Oel-Willenborg in her study of German heroism assigned him a static category of his own. Unchanging, he is "between the categories" because he is unsurpassable, perfect, and noble. Sincere, self-sacrificing, and non-materialistic, Winnetou is a man of two worlds, a marginal man.³⁶ Likewise, literary critic Peter Uwe Hohendahl concedes without much proof that Winnetou is an "Ausnahmegestalt."³⁷ These critics do not address the question: If the Apache is the exception, what

³⁵Lutz even calls Winnetou an "apple," which in the political language of the Red Power movement refers to a "sell-out" Indian, who is "red outside, white inside." Unfortunately there is no authority recognized by all Native Americans on who is an "apple," and who is not. As far as I know, no Native American has read Karl May and commented on his image of Native Americans. See Lutz, "Indians," p. 352, 354.

³⁶Oel-Willenborg, Helden, pp. 53/4.

³⁷Hohendahl, "Rothaut," pp. 231, 237.

is the rule? The past two chapters have attempted to provide the background to this discussion on Winnetou.

Franz Hoffmann, a researcher in the German Democratic Republic, was one of the few who admit that Winnetou gains his profile as moral agent gradually. When talking about the development of characters, however, Hoffmann provided his own assumption about a utopian Christianity instead of directly referring to Karl May's ideas. According to Hoffmann's assertion, Winnetou became the bearer of an unorthodox, "johannitische" Christianity.³⁸ As another discussion of May's Dschinnistan "myth" will point out, the belief in a past Golden Age and a messiah is not exclusively Christian.

Even though May's biographers differed in details about the interpretation of the phenomenon 'Winnetou,' they also pointed out the Apache's special role in the novels. The greatest controversy arose with Arno Schmidt's analysis of May's works in the 1960s. He found that Winnetou and many more fictional characters reflected their inventor's repressed homosexuality. As amusing as it is to read Schmidt's criticism, its inference is beyond the scope of this study. Most importantly Schmidt also refers

³⁸Hoffmann, "Schwierigkeiten," p. 2087/8; Reinhold Frigge devotes two pages to the gradual formation of Winnetou's character, Frigge, Abenteuer, pp. 193-195.

to Winnetou as the male ideal of May's American-set novels.³⁹ The Apache is outstanding, but not unique in the novels.

With the exception of Arno Schmidt's thesis of homosexual bonding, no literary critic has yet examined the relationship between Winnetou and Old Shatterhand. A close reading of Winnetous Erben reveals that the narrator-white hero Old Shatterhand, who clearly is May himself, and Winnetou are at least 'soul-mates,' if not identical. In the novel just mentioned, Old Shatterhand-May says, "Ich war stets er, und er war ich." Later Tatellah Satah, the mysterious medicineman, remarks to Old Shatterhand-May, "es ist als ob du Winnetou seist."⁴⁰ Such an interpretation could neither gain much popularity among May-lovers of adventure stories nor among May-haters with a political agenda.

An example of literary reaction to Winnetou's ascribed Messianic role, which set him apart from the normal Indians 'posthumously,' featured the ring of disappointment. Werner Raddatz, in his ironic account of May's adventurous life claimed that in the last novel on

³⁹Schmidt, Sitara, p. 261.

⁴⁰Strange that these quotes have eluded critics so far. Winnetous Erben, pp. 217, 247.

Winnetou the hero's character underwent serious retouches, which actually compromised his former character traits. With this accusation Raddatz revealed a sense of betrayal many readers felt, when Winnetou became too 'saintly' in May's late works.⁴¹ He and the other positive Indian characters no longer were merely brave heroes of adventure novels.

This interpretation that Karl May's last novel bears more than one meaning was carried further by Dieter Sudhoff. He showed in his 1981 study that Winnetous Erben can be entirely read on an autobiographical level. The aspect of complying with the genre 'adventure literature' becomes obsolete. According to Sudhoff, Winnetou had been the first, though not the only, human being to have achieved self-realization, in a sort of religious ecstasy. Of course in this novel he is already dead; therefore the deceased Winnetou does not function as an allegory to any of May's living contemporaries, wrote Sudhoff.⁴² His interpretation concentrated on May's biography alone, leaving out intra-textual puzzles.

⁴¹Raddatz, Leben Karl Mays, pp. 156, 163.

⁴²Dieter Sudhoff, Karl Mays "Winnetou IV". Studien zur Thematik und Struktur, (Ubstadt-Weiher: Serden, 1981, Materialien zur Karl-May-Forschung, Volume 6), pp. 63, 66, 86, 149-154.

Whatever Winnetou's significance, all critics have agreed that he is particularly outstanding. Annette Deeken found space to remark on Winnetou's singularity by asserting his leadership ability. Deeken discussed Winnetou in her study on the similarity of May's fictional travel accounts to commercial tourist travel brochures, a topic which requires no earnest discussion of the Apache.⁴³ Deeken's book concentrated on May's novels set in the Near East and she made little effort to back up her statement about the Apache. She merely followed the apparent agreement of literary research on May.

Before closing this section on literature about Winnetou, one more author merits discussion, as he pointed out the hitherto neglected "progressive" aspect in May's thinking. Gert Ueding has recently edited a voluminous study on Karl May and his works, in which he referred to Winnetou's changed image in Winnetous Erben and a historical antecedent to the planned memorial monument to Winnetou, which May used. From his careful reading of May's works, Ueding concluded quite differently from Lutz that no matter how racist and naive, May was convinced of

⁴³Annette Deeken, "Seine Majestät das Ich". Zum Abenteuerismus Karl Mays, (Bonn: Bouvier, 1983, Abhandlungen zur Kunst-, Musik- und Kulturwissenschaft, Volume 339), p. 174.

the resurgence of the "red race."⁴⁴ With this I conclude that May's belief in the 'renascence' of Native Americans was his reason for singling out Winnetou in the last novel.

⁴⁴Ueding, Handbuch, p. 324.

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