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communities during the boarding school period, while in “Children of the Sun,” he describes the mythic universe of the Kiowa. Momaday’s writing is entertaining, instructive, and thoughtful; he avoids platitudes about the boarding school period and shows the resilience of the Native American spirit. Lastly, he underscores how Native Americans exemplified the values of bravery, courage, generosity, and goodness during harsh times.

Raphael Comprone
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Trail of the Red Butterfly. By Karl H. Schlesier. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2007. 288 pages. \$27.95 cloth.

Karl H. Schlesier is a former professor of anthropology and the author of several books and articles on Plains Indians. This scholarly expertise proves the strength and perhaps the weakness of his second novel. The book starts out slow—what a twenty-first-century reader would consider slow—but before long the reader is pulled into its nineteenth-century rhythms. The story, which concerns our hero Stone’s quest for his twin brother, documents the journey of a group of Cheyenne, Kiowa, and Gataka into Spanish Mexico in the early 1800s. (Schlesier based the journey on an 1805 map by Juan Pedro Walker, which is included in the book.) The reader is there as the group raids ranchos for sheep and horses; battles banditos and Spanish soldiers; negotiates for food and information; and kidnaps Spanish-speaking residents who can lead them toward their quarry—a traveling circus in which Stone’s brother Whirlwind is rumored to be performing.

The story has counterparts in two narrative tropes common to European literary history and its mythology: the physical journey toward personal enlightenment and the search for the *doppelgänger*, or spirit other. Yet the journey/quest tale has much precedent in Native literature (oral and written) as well. Schlesier not only presents Stone’s group’s voyage as a mission to recover Whirlwind but also as a travel adventure, an exploration of a foreign country and customs. To some extent Stone’s group is in the same position as the reader, as we discover early-nineteenth-century Mexico.

The red butterfly of the title is the monarch, which the prologue tells us is a Cheyenne “holy bird.” Stone and his group follow the monarch’s trail from the Great Plains to central Mexico, although they are not literally following the butterflies. Although the preface notes that “no single individual [monarch] makes the entire round-trip journey,” Stone’s group does return. On the one hand, this makes problematic the monarch’s use as motif; on the other hand, it heightens suspense: will they return? (ix).

This is a tale of Plains Indian culture, and Schlesier knows a great deal about it. The reader is introduced to Cheyenne social customs, war rituals, and what one might call “everyday life,” though this journey is momentous and strange even for the Cheyenne. Schlesier chronicles the trials, both emotional and practical, of a long, dangerous journey in the early 1800s in painstaking

detail (the bibliography lists thirty-five sources). Of particular interest is the important roles women play on this journey, especially as translators and scouts. He describes Stone and his wife Eaglefeather's tender and respectful partnership; his depiction of the couple braiding each other's hair, gently and lovingly, is especially affecting. The group's ultimate confrontation with the traveling circus is thrilling and has unexpected results. This is an unstinting portrait of an often-violent world; soon after the central conflict is resolved and peace seems to reign, a woman and child who have traveled with the party are murdered by another member of the group.

A sprinkling of Cheyenne words also lends interest and authenticity; at one point, two women sing a Cheyenne wolf song, which Schlesier offers in both Cheyenne and English (185). The novel is lightened here and there by poetic prose that underscores the writer's reverence for the people and the natural world: "They ride at a walk, listening into the silence of the night"; and "As the column moves, a feeling takes hold that spirits are depressed, weighed down by passively enduring a ride into blackness and the unknown" (141, 144). The rarity of these passages, and the fact that they are embedded in a much plainer style, makes them seem modestly lyrical, not overdone.

To be historically accurate, Schlesier must present actions problematic to contemporary readers: the killing of people who interfere with the group's mission—which, after all, is personal, not tribal. Schlesier presents these killings with only the barest explanation, as a matter of course: "Guards have been posted around the camp. Spaniards who might stumble upon them have to be killed. Stone cannot let it get around that a norteño party is hiding in these mountains" (130). Although foreign to a twenty-first-century sensibility, this practical perspective echoes the Oglala Sioux story "High Horse's Courting" (from *Black Elk Speaks*), a comic tale in which the hero proves his mettle by killing a Crow guard and stealing a herd of horses.

The novel's weaknesses are caused by the omniscient narrator's distance from the story—we're never really made to feel part of Stone's group. A perspective that seems un-self-consciously European, despite the many detailed references to historical Plains Indian and Spanish dress, war and travel rituals, sustenance, and interpersonal interactions, exacerbates this narrative distance. At times the exposition sounds like nothing so much as a placard beneath a museum of natural history diorama depicting "Early Native Life." A description of a scalping ceremony employs the passive voice, detailed description of generic ritual behavior, a summary style, and the cautiously formal language of the outside observer: "Pipes are smoked and the ashes emptied on the sweetgrass. Flesh particles are shaved from the scalps and placed on the ashes. Each scalp, in size a little larger than a silver dollar, is stretched inside a hoop made from a soft twig and is tied to it" (112). This is quintessential museum speak; the reader remains behind the glass.

In a similar vein, the book's opening reads like a bare-bones narrative supplemented with footnotes from an anthropology text, the latter distinct from the story: "Vovetas, Whirlwind, is mounted, holding the chestnut mare back. Cheyennes are shy, rarely showing emotion. Men cry only when performing in religious tribal ceremonies, in the presence of the sacred" (3).

A few sentences later, Whirlwind says, in the stilted speech of a Central Casting Indian, "It is a good day to ride" (3).

Historical novels describing cultures and events unfamiliar to most readers present a difficult problem: the conscientious writer wants to share his or her knowledge, but in order to maintain realism the writer must do so within the context of a compelling narrative. How much exposition is needed? How does one depart from the story to explain customs and beliefs without abandoning the story?

James Welch, in his historical novel *Fools Crow* (1986), solves this problem by immersing his reader in late-nineteenth-century Pikuni (Blackfeet) life through a subtle use of Pikuni perspective. For example, he refers to whites primarily as Napikwans, white soldiers as blue-coated seizers, buffalo as blackhorns, and cattle as whitehorns. There is little explanatory exposition in *Fools Crow*. The reader, compelled to take the Pikuni perspective, is forced into the fray, not allowed to remain above or at a distance from the narrative. Still, through dreams and stories told by elders, Welch manages to allude to Pikuni history, past (pre-1870) and future, while retaining verisimilitude and focusing on the central narrative.

Schlesier, by contrast, uses a somewhat disruptive and confusing combination of European and Cheyenne references, without explaining the shift. For example, exposition on page 54 speaks of a journey of ten miles; on page 55, Sun Boy points toward his camp, "three rides this way." Similarly, exposition on page 58 describes a campsite "two bowshots south," while exposition on page 59 tells us that Trampas Peak is 12,175 feet.

Schlesier's attention to mundane detail, invaluable in anthropology, bogs down the narrative at times. Throughout the novel, for example, Eaglefeather, who speaks Gataka and Cheyenne, acts as a translator between Maria, who speaks Spanish and Gataka, and Stone, who speaks only Cheyenne. This circumstance reveals the complex interaction of cultures at this time. Virtually every time Maria says something, however, it is noted that Stone waits for the translation. These constant interruptions cause an otherwise interesting interchange to lose momentum. A purist might argue that this slowing of the narrative replicates the process of translation, bringing us accurately into Stone's world. Still, poetic license should allow some excision of ultrarealism in the service of narrative flow.

Trail of the Red Butterfly is a valuable resource for scholars or aficionados of Native culture and of the early North American west. Its wealth of well-researched history of Plains Indians and the American and Mexican West should satisfy scholars, while its sometimes exciting, always easy-to-follow story, unassuming style, and clear explanation of an unfamiliar culture and time will reward novices.

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