

Birdtalker

Steven Garcia

(August 2007)

Softcover \$9.95 (251pp)

978-1-4259-5969-2

"It was a time when cultures were colliding and destiny intertwined the lives of men together in unique complex patterns of life" Garcia writes. In this detailed novel which takes place in mid-nineteenth-century America Josh Taylor and his family and friends—like many people during this time of expansion—are traveling west. When his family encounters Indians Josh is the only one of his family left alive.

At first glance *Birdtalker* may not seem to have wide appeal however it is definitely worth the time. While some readers may find themselves wanting the story to move along more quickly those who persevere will find that the book actually benefits from the apparent surplus of details.

The first few chapters describe how Josh survives the attack and is adopted by Indians. The novel's many details help the reader to visualize what is happening to Josh: "The cold penetrated his body as he cautiously made his way back toward the still smoldering wagons ... Most of the bodies had been stripped of their clothing although he did find a young man wearing a buckskin jacket which was only partly gone."

Josh is rescued by a Pawnee woman and taken to her village to live. He finds that he enjoys his life with the Pawnees more than life before with his aunt and uncle. He has many adventures among the various Indian tribes such as the Pawnee the Kiowa the Cheyenne and the Utes. The way that Josh acquires the name "Birdtalker" is a fascinating story in itself.

Josh becomes a scout for the Mormons traveling to Salt Lake City. While in Salt Lake City he meets a half blood named Art who becomes a major presence in Josh's life. From their exploits along the journey to New Orleans and back Josh learns a great deal about life. His encounters with a varied assortment of men such as Art Joaquin and Jimmy Jim (Tom) teach him valuable lessons and in the end Josh discovers the purpose of his life: "the awareness of strength to overcome death."

Birdtalker is an enjoyable read full of adventure friendship and love.

(August 21, 2009)

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