

Book Review: El Tigre by John H. Manhold

There are two very different schools of thought about historical fiction. One school rationalizes that it is an easy genre to write, the plot already exists, all you have to do is put it in your own words. The second school says that this genre is very hard to work in, much of the story line is cast in stone, the author needs to weave his characters into the fabric of the historical facts.

I am a member of the latter group, I believe that good historical fiction is very difficult to write. John H. Manhold has done a magnificent job with *El Tigre*, combining fast action into a very well researched and historically accurate canvas.

El Tigre is set in the early and mid 1800's and chronicles the life of Johann Heinrich von Manfred, born of Prussian aristocracy at the age of 16 he finds himself without friends, family, or country following an unfortunate event at the prestigious military academy he was attending.

We follow Johann on his odyssey of discovery. It takes almost no time before young Johann has his first adventure, assisting a band of Roma that are being blackmailed by an unscrupulous mayor. Then it is on to Spain where he is enlisted in the support of Don Carlos, The Royal Pretender To The throne. He may be young, but he has a natural instinct for the art of war, and rapidly proves his value. Alas his cause becomes a failing one, his patron is killed, and it looks like Don Carlos had a hand in it. Once more he resumes his nomadic quest.

Europe seems to offer little in the way of sanctuary and Johann opts for the potential riches of the New World.

Starting in Florida and Georgia, Johann first becomes a jailer of Indians, and soon learns the harsh reality of the culture clash between the settlers and the native bands. Unhappy to be part of this inhumanity he next moves to Texas, and once more finds himself embroiled in controversy, this time with the establishment of the Republic of Texas. Problems with Indians, problems with Mexico, Problems with Spain, and even problems with the United States all lead to frustration and bloodshed. Johan however has by now become a seasoned veteran of conflict, and quickly makes a name for himself not only for his fighting abilities, but also his selflessness, along the way earning the respect of all, and the nickname *El Tigre* (The Panther). It is not long before the tales of *El Tigre* spread across the land.

His final journey is to California, where he discovers ranching, romance, and gold. Has he found he finally found his Shangri-La?

While I am not a huge fan of books about the wild west, Manhold has written a captivating novel, and one that will keep you glued to the pages. What I particularly admire is his attention to historical detail. This book was clearly very well, and extensively researched. That combined with a story line that moves at a break neck pace this book should appeal to a very wide audience.

Grab yourself a copy of *El Tigre* from Amazon or from John Manhold's web site, you will not be disappointed.

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About the Author

Simon Barrett is an adult educator in Calgary, Alberta. With the 11 months a year of winter, he reads a lot of books! He is also a contributing editor for [Blogger News](#) and maintains a personal blog at [Simon B.](#)

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