

### **Tracing Karl May in the History of Transatlantic Indian Imagery**

Review essay of the exhibition titled *Po stopě Karla Maye / Tracing Karl May* in the Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, Prague, October 25, 2012 – April 30, 2013

Karel May created characters which were not real and placed them in a world which only outwardly resembled reality. His heroes possessed characteristics, knowledge and experience which exceeded the bounds of even the most capable people. They were brave, honest, untiring but also visionary; heedless of their own gains, they rushed into danger whenever they saw a threat to justice or to the basic rights of decent people, regardless of their race, creed or colour. They didn't hesitate to risk their lives when such threats to others – capture, fraud or theft – were undeserved. They expected no reward for their efforts, and even when it was offered, they often refused. Karel May created a world full of injustice, often of cruelty and violence, but also brought to it a sense of hope for change, for unexpected rewards. Many people, of many generations, believed in this hope, and marvelled at his heroes. And that's no small thing.

*Tracing Karl May* exhibition opening panel label.<sup>1</sup>

The opening panel of the Náprstek Museum's exhibition on the works of Karl May promises to give the visitor a tour of the worlds of this *fin-de-siècle* German novelist – with a subtext. The label and the exhibition itself not only tap into a rather obvious nostalgia for one's Central European childhood readings and movie experiences, and make a fair interactive effort to entertain and educate about the German, Christian and – through our prism, European – values expounded by May. The subtext of the exhibition is for the adult mind. It invokes the childhood ideals of superhuman heroes righting the wrongs of an ill society – at a time when our minds and policies are ineffectually grappling with the effects of global “fraud or theft” the likes of which our own world has never seen. In at least one way, the exhibition summons the fictional spirit of Old Shatterhand and Winnetou, because it seems that no one else can save us from this scrape, help us out of this mess – not even our politicians, who have promised us “hope for change.”

Its subtext aside, what the exhibit really gestures towards is the rich and problematic European tradition of using American Indian images and characters to make statements about our own Central European issues, values, identities, and relationship with certain aspects of U.S. culture. Whether published under the name Karl May, May Károly, or Karel May, the works of the German author are only tenuously about the historical reality of the settling of the U.S. West. What they reveal is rather the multiple ways in which Central Europeans have engaged with U.S. culture over more than a century – our Transatlantic cultural relations. Just as much, Karl May's oeuvre is about Central European cultural history, and about the politics of the cultural imaginary of American Indians, the European

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<sup>1</sup> Personal visit to the *Po stopě Karla Maye / Tracing Karl May* exhibition in the Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, Prague, January and February, 2013.

images projected on “the buckskin curtain.”<sup>2</sup> This essay reviews the history of American Indian imagery in Central Europe in an effort to unpack Karl May’s oeuvre in a way that the exhibition cannot be expected to do. In a variety of media, I will analyze the composite Central European image of American Indians, and I will argue that what makes for its enduring popularity is Karl May’s central ideal of a European–American Indian alliance based on mutual attraction and admiration of character.

### **Painting, Playing, Printing Indians: Karl Bodmer and George Catlin**

In a fashion characteristic of the Central European cultural landscape, the exhibition’s four panels titled “Indian Tribes – Karl May versus Reality” all feature uncredited reproductions of paintings from the early nineteenth century. Tracing the origins of these images provides us with a starting point for our intellectual journey.

The Central European forms and traditions of “playing Indian” were Transatlantic in their production and circulation.<sup>3</sup> One early example of this is the Indian paintings of Swiss painter Karl Bodmer, who in the early 1830s traveled to the Upper Missouri Valley with German Prince Maximilian of Wied-Neuwied.<sup>4</sup> While wintering at Fort Clark, present day North Dakota in 1833–1834, Bodmer created many likenesses of the Mandan and Hidatsa people. After his return to Europe, Bodmer used his sketches to make scores of paintings, which were then published in the prince’s travel account in German in 1839, and subsequently in French and in abridged form in English.<sup>5</sup> Among them were his most famous

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<sup>2</sup> “The buckskin curtain” was a term coined by American Indians and Canadian First Nations during the Cold War to describe the body of colonialist and oppressive representations of Native Peoples in mainstream North American society.

<sup>3</sup> In his 1998 book of the same title, Philip Deloria traces the centuries-old tradition of whites impersonating natives as a way to articulate their colonial and U.S. American identities. The “Mohawk” participants of the Boston Tea Party, various early national republican fraternities, Lewis Henry Morgan’s literary-turned ethnographic society in the 1840s, Earnest Thompson Seton’s Woodcraft Indians, the Campfire Girls, the Koshare Boy Scouts of the Southwest in the early twentieth century, and the re-enactment hobbyism and the New Age Indians of Cold War America all used Native cultures and personae to define their identities *vis-à-vis* British colonial rule, the meaning of the young United States, authentic American literature and lifeways, contemporary social mores, urban modernity, and consumer society. In this, Deloria establishes the surprising elasticity of Indian impersonation and fantasies for whites both in the United States and abroad. In my framework, “playing Indian” refers to the Transatlantic representations of Native North Americans in a wide variety of cultural forms. See Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> One place of departure for a more comprehensive overview is Colin G. Calloway, “Historical Encounters across Five Centuries,” in *Germans and Indians: Fantasies, Encounters, Projections*, ed. by Colin G. Calloway, Gerd Gemünden and Suzanne Zantop (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> See Stephen S. Witte and Marsha V. Gallagher, eds., *The North American Journals of Prince Maximilian of Wied I–II*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008). Also see Calloway, “Historical Encounters,” 65.

ones, the 1834 *Mató-Tópe (Four Bears)*, *Mandan Chief*, and his *Pehriska-Ruhpa of the Dog Society of the Hidatsa tribe*. Bodmer is usually credited with highly accurate ethnographic detail, and is known as a visual artist who documented Plains Indians in the early stages of European contact.<sup>6</sup> In the long run, Bodmer's prints became so popular and ubiquitous that today they are regularly used in uncredited reproductions in Central European museums.<sup>7</sup> Thus, Bodmer's visual representations of Plains Indians have become a part of the cultural landscape, serving as "raw material" or "props" for playing Indian in Central Europe.

U.S. painter George Catlin spent much of the same decade visiting and painting some of the same Native communities in the same region. Catlin and Bodmer overlapped to the extent that, for example, both painted the Mandan leader Four Bears – Catlin in his 1832 *Máh-to-tóh-pa, Four Bears, Second Chief, in Full Dress*. Much more than Bodmer, Catlin's enterprise ran the gamut of "playing Indian" in its variety of media. After spending years on the Missouri River, Catlin published his travel account as *The Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians* in 1841, then lectured and exhibited his Indian Gallery in a variety of U.S. cities before he took it to Europe.<sup>8</sup> There, Catlin first complemented his collection with *tableau vivants* of Europeans dressed up as Indians, himself masqueraded as a Sac warrior, and he exhibited groups of living Ojibwa and Iowa Indians who drew large audiences. Complete with an open air encampment and horses,<sup>9</sup> Catlin soon operated a veritable proto-Wild West Show, which he took to Brussels, Dublin, London and Paris. In London in 1848 he published a companion book to his American West travel account, this one titled *Catlin's Notes of Eight Years' Travels and Residence in Europe, with his North American Indian Collection. With Anecdotes and Incidents of the Travels and Adventures of Three Different Parties of American Indians Whom He Introduced to the Courts of England, France and Belgium*.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See William H. Goetzmann et al, *Karl Bodmer's America* (Lincoln: Joslyn Art museum and University of Nebraska Press, 1984).

<sup>7</sup> Other such examples include the permanent exhibition on the Indians of North America in the Übersee Museum [Overseas Museum] of Bremen, Germany. Personal visit, July 2007.

<sup>8</sup> See George Catlin, *The Manners, Customs and Condition of the North American Indians* (London: the author, 1841).

<sup>9</sup> For more on Catlin's European tour with these groups, see Christopher Mulvey, "Among the Sag-anoshes: Ojibwa and Iowa Indians with George Catlin in Europe, 1843–1848," in *Indians and Europe: an Interdisciplinary Collection of Essays*, ed. by Christian F. Feest (Aachen: Edition Herodot, Rader Verlag, 1987), 253–75.

<sup>10</sup> See George Catlin, *Catlin's Notes of Eight Years' Travels and Residence in Europe with his North American Indian Collection: with Anecdotes and Incidents of the Travels and Adventures of Three Different Parties of American Indians Whom He Introduced to the Courts of England, France, and Belgium* (New York: Burgess, Stinger & Co., 1848). For more on Catlin's gallery and performances, see W. H. Truettner, *The Natural Man Observed: A Study of Catlin's Indian Gallery* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1979); Brian W. Dippie, *Catlin and His Contemporaries: The Politics of Patronage* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990); and Joan Carpenter Troccoli, *First Artist of the West: George Catlin Paintings and Watercolors* (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Gilcrease Museum, 1993).

In his writings, Catlin deployed the figure of the American Indian as a foil for celebrating U.S. democracy and critiquing European Christian practice and industrial society. According to his account, the Iowa and Ojibwa in his service recurrently wondered about the great wealth and dire poverty coexisting in European cities, and even berated Christian missionaries for attempting to convert them instead of tending to the poor.<sup>11</sup> At best, actual Native agency was buried in Catlin's rendering of the cultural and literary trope of the *noble savage* of the Enlightenment and Romanticism. An account likely closer to the actual experience of the Indians was published in 1848 by Maungwudaus (The Great Hero), a member of Catlin's second Ojibwa group, titled *An account of the Chippewa Indians, Who Have Been Travelling Among the Whites, in the United States, England, Ireland, Scotland, France and Belgium*.<sup>12</sup> Another Indian critique of European and American society is provided by the very context of these encounters: as observed by Christopher Mulvey, the Iowa and Ojibwa crossed the Atlantic because of white encroachment on their land and way of life – and during their European tour, some eleven of them died of smallpox and other causes.<sup>13</sup>

### The “Wild West” Tours Europe: Buffalo Bill Cody

Karl May's productive life coincided with that of the most famous U.S. producer of Indian imagery of his age. The American pioneer who turned “playing Indian” into a long-term business venture on both continents was Buffalo Bill Cody. L. G. Moses documented how, after the tragedy at Wounded Knee in 1890, some of the members of the Great Plains ghost dance movement were allowed by the U.S. government to be hired as performers for Buffalo Bill's European tours.<sup>14</sup> This was a characteristic transfer between Indian cultures, government policy and “playing Indian” in popular culture. When a number of Native tribes engaged in the spiritual practice of ghost dancing, the U.S. government perceived this as a real threat to the status quo of Indian relations, and responded with repressive measures that culminated in the killing of Big Foot's band at Wounded Knee. As part of its crackdown on the ghost dance movement, the U.S. government then partnered with Buffalo Bill Cody

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<sup>11</sup> Catlin as quoted in Mulvey, “Among the Sag-a-noshes,” 256–58.

<sup>12</sup> An early indication of the sexual politics of such Transatlantic encounters is an episode in Maungwudaus' account where some British military officers request that the Indians allow themselves to be kissed by the officers' wives, who likely were prostitutes in reality. The Ojibwe obliged, but then commented that these women were not good for anything else, certainly not to be wives. Here, the joke first seemed to be on the Indians, then on the women – and possibly on the officers, who proved their bad taste in women, and were very rude as hosts. Maungwudaus as quoted in Mulvey, “Among the Sag-a-noshes,” 269. For more, see Maungwudaus, *An Account of the Chippewa Indians, Who Have Been Travelling Among The Whites, in the United States, England, Ireland, Scotland, France, and Belgium* (Rochester, New York: privately published, 1848).

<sup>13</sup> Mulvey, “Among the Sag-a-noshes,” 272–73. For more on Catlin's tours of Europe, see Peter Bolz, “Indian Images for the King: George Catlin in Europe,” in *I Like America: Fictions of the Wild West*, ed. by Pamela Kort and Max Hollein (München, New York: Prestel, 2006), 68–85.

<sup>14</sup> L. G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883–1933* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

to remove the troublemakers, and channeled them into performing nostalgic and exotic re-enactments of the Indian Wars in the U.S. and abroad. Moses argues that considering the circumstances, these Plains Sioux performers exercised some agency in representing their own history, and benefited financially from the arrangement.<sup>15</sup> As performances of colonial rule, Buffalo Bill's successful tours of Europe were akin to the fin-de-siècle *Völkerschau* (exhibition of "exotic" native people from far-flung European colonies) by Carl Hagenbeck, and they spawned imitators in content or form, among them the Sarrasani circus of early twentieth century Germany.<sup>16</sup>

### **Pressed in Pulp: Dime Novels and the World of Karl May**

*Tracing Karl May* commendably educates the visitors about the history of the publication of Karl May's works "in the Czech lands" from the time of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy through the early twenty-first century.<sup>17</sup> It is important to understand that much of this was rooted in the traditions of a Transatlantic popular literature publishing business. With advances in printing and transportation technology, by the mid-nineteenth century publishers were perfecting the production and mass dissemination of popular literature at low prices. In the United States, the firm of Beadle and Adams are credited with publishing the first dime novel series in 1860. Their first dime story, *Malaeska, the Indian Wife of the White Hunter*, established a major theme in the genre: pioneer and Wild West stories that featured American Indian characters. With the onset of the U.S. Civil War, the publishers established their Transatlantic arm, Beadle's American Library, which for five years reprinted some of their runs for the British market.<sup>18</sup> This was one of the early instances of the Transatlantic publishing of U.S. dime novels – a practice that not only provided Europeans with a steady fare of Western fantasies but also inspired Karl May's "native" European literature about American Indians, and thus helped provide the "script" for Europeans "playing Indian."

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 271.

<sup>16</sup> Katrin Sieg, *Ethnic Drag: Performing Race, Nation, Sexuality in West Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 125–26. For more on these shows and their Indian performers, see Rudolf Conrad, "Mutual Fascination: Indians in Dresden and Leipzig," in *Indians and Europe: An Interdisciplinary Collection of Essays*, ed. by Christian F. Feest (Aachen: Edition Herodot Rader-Verlag, 1987), 455–73; Peter Bolz, "Life Among the 'Hunkpapas': A Case Study of German Indian Lore," in *Indians and Europe*, ed. by Feest, 480–84; and Eric Ames, "Seeing the Imaginary: On the Popular Reception of Wild West Shows in Germany, 1885–1910," in *I like America*, ed. by Kort and Hollein, 212–29.

<sup>17</sup> "Published Works of Karl May" panel. Personal visit to the *Po stopě Karla Maye / Tracing Karl May* exhibition in the Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, Prague, January and February, 2013.

<sup>18</sup> Beadle and Adams Archives online finding aid. University of Delaware Library Special Collections Department, <http://poole.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/findaids/beadle.htm>.

While James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* were published in German as early as 1845,<sup>19</sup> the foremost and most influential example of home-grown Central European stories about American Indians remains the *Winnetou* cycle of novels written by German author Karl May around the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century.<sup>20</sup> Karl May's formula of positioning a German hero in an alliance with noble Indians against greedy and evil whites and warlike Natives proved to be immensely successful in Central Europe. Over time, the author's oeuvre developed into veritable "culture industry," with between 80 and 100 million copies sold in 28 languages.<sup>21</sup> As the Náprstek Museum's exhibition attests, May's works have served as "scripts" to whole generations of Central Europeans for playing Indian in a variety of cultural forms from stage performances to feature films and cultural hobbyist re-enactment.

One of the most fascinating endeavors of the *Tracing Karl May* exhibition are its four panels titled "Indian Tribes – Karl May versus Reality," which contrast the profile of the Indian "tribes" in May's novels with approximate historical reality.<sup>22</sup> While the specific Indian nations featured in his novels suggest that they are set in the Southern Plains region of the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century,<sup>23</sup> both scholars and ordinary Germans point out that Karl May's stories are purely fictional and not based on much (if any) personal experience with American Indians.<sup>24</sup> He was more likely influenced by

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<sup>19</sup> Irmgard Egger, "The *Leatherstocking Tales* as Adapted for German Juvenile Readers," in *James Fenimore Cooper: His Country and His Art*, ed. by George A. Test (Papers from the 1984 Conference at State University of New York College – Oneonta and Cooperstown.), 41–45. Also an excerpt online: <http://external.oneonta.edu/cooper/articles/suny/1984sunny-egger2.html> (accessed September 10, 2011).

<sup>20</sup> The figure of Winnetou first appeared in Karl May's writing in 1875, and subsequently became a more refined and idealized character. See Sieg, *Ethnic Drag*, 88. In the early 1890s, May's stories were republished in three major volumes: *Winnetou I–III. Karl May – Life And Works. The Years 1875–1912*, <http://www.karl-may-stiftung.de/engl/biograph2.html>. For more on Karl May's creation of Winnetou, see Karl Markus Kreis, "German Wild West: Karl May's Invention of the Definitive Indian," in *I like America*, ed. by Kort and Hollein, 249–73.

<sup>21</sup> Sieg, *Ethnic Drag*, 81.

<sup>22</sup> Four panels titled "Indian Tribes – Karl May versus Reality." Personal visit to the *Po stopě Karla Maye / Tracing Karl May* exhibition in the Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, Prague, January and February, 2013.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* I base this observation on the scholarship of Jacki Rand on the mid to late-nineteenth century life of the Kiowa, Comanche and other native nations in the region of the Southern Plains. Personal communication, November 2011.

<sup>24</sup> Conversations with Germans about Karl May's Winnetou novels. In July 2007, a tour guide at the Karl May Museum in Radebeul claimed that by the time May visited the United States for the first time, he had already written several of his Winnetou books; and his journey took him only as far as a Tuscarora reservation in New York State. Author's personal visit to the Karl May Museum in Radebeul, Germany, July 2007. Likewise, the timeline of Karl May's life in the Náprstek Museum's exhibit states that May visited the United States only in 1908, by which time he had already written most of his Winnetou novels. Panel "Karel May – His Life." Personal visit to the *Po stopě Karla Maye / Tracing Karl May* exhibition in the Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, Prague, January and February, 2013.

popular literature's accounts of the Wild West and the Indian Wars of the late nineteenth century, and their renderings in the transatlantically circulating dime novels.

Combined with his lack of personal experience, this inspiration allowed the author a liberty to "play Indian" as a German in more than one way. May deliberately blended his own personality with that of his narrator and protagonist: he masqueraded as the hero of his own Wild West adventure stories. The two rifles on display in *Tracing Karl May* are, according to the explanatory label, "literary invented firearm[s] on the border between fiction and reality."<sup>25</sup> From a Dresden arms maker Karl May commissioned replicas of Winnetou's silver studded rifle and the Henry carbine, and posed for photographs in costume as Karl/Sharlee/Old Shatterhand.<sup>26</sup>

The exhibition's imagery and paraphernalia most often portrays a white man and an American Indian standing side by side. In his stories, Karl May positioned his German hero in a peculiar alliance with his fictional American Indian characters. The inherent skills, strong body and character of Karl/Charlie, a German immigrant to the U.S. West, soon allow him to outperform the Americans in frontier skills, and his feat of knocking out a man with his bare first earns him the nickname "Old Shatterhand." After his early encounters with good and evil frontiersman and Indians, Shatterhand soon chooses sides and strikes up a friendship with the Apache warrior Winnetou. With his Indian "brother," Old Shatterhand lives through a series of adventures in which he battles white bandits and the hostile Kiowa and Oglala Sioux.

May's literary partnership between German frontiersmen and American Indians has a peculiar politics that I argue is a key reason for their endurance in popularity for over a century. Scholars have observed that in the process of Karl's (almost overnight) transformation into Old Shatterhand, the frontiersmen who are key allies to him and the Apache all turn out to be German immigrants.<sup>27</sup> In an especially emotional scene of the first story, the white Klekih-petra, who had spent decades with the Apache and had taught their chiefs the tenets of Christianity, is fatally wounded by the bullet of a drunken white surveyor. Dying in the arms of his beloved pupil Winnetou, Klekih-petra turns to Karl/Old Shatterhand, whom he had met only hours ago, but whose German origins he shares. Speaking in German which the Apache do not understand, Klekih-petra asks Karl/Shatterhand to take his place and be a friend and teacher to Winnetou. Karl vows to fulfill this role.<sup>28</sup> Through this

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<sup>25</sup> Winnetou's silver studded rifle and Old Shatterhand's Henry cabine in display cases. Personal visit to the *Po stopě Karla Maye / Tracing Karl May* exhibition in the Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, Prague, January and February, 2013.

<sup>26</sup> Personal visit and tour of the Karl May Museum in Radebeul, Germany, July 2007. For more on the museum, see <http://www.karl-may-museum.de/web/start.php>.

<sup>27</sup> Klekih-petra, friend of the Apache and teacher of Christianity to Winnetou, came to the Wild West to atone for his sins of inciting terrorism with his demagogy in his native Germany. Sam Hawken, trapper, scout for the railroad surveyors, and tutor and friend to Karl, also turns out to be German. Karl May, *Winnetou* (Translated by Michael Shaw. New York: The Seabury Press, 1977), 82–86.

<sup>28</sup> May, *Winnetou*, 88.

and subsequent scenes,<sup>29</sup> May positions Germanness as a commitment to an alliance with American Indians, in particular with the Apache.<sup>30</sup> This, however, is not a commitment to mass and violent resistance: after the Apache warrior's father and sister are shot dead by another white outlaw, Old Shatterhand successfully talks Winnetou out of convening all the Indian tribes and waging war on the whites.<sup>31</sup>

At the core of Old Shatterhand's alliance with the Apache is attraction. Karl is immediately drawn to the "noble" appearance and behavior of Winnetou, and he later finds that the feeling is mutual.<sup>32</sup> However, the fulfillment of the two men's secret hopes for friendship is delayed for a long time by the fact that the Apache consider Karl an enemy not only because he surveys their land for the white railroad, but also because one of his fellow surveyors has killed Klekih-petra. What follows is a series of adventures in which Karl and white hunter Sam Hawkens successfully manipulate the Apache and a band of Kiowa marauders in order to survive and punish the evildoers. These adventures are rich in reversals which successively feature Winnetou and Karl as each other's prisoner and jailor. Throughout, a combination of pride, cunning and misperceptions keep the two men from disclosing their strong sympathy for each other. Only after Karl/Old Shatterhand fights a series of duels – including one against Winnetou that leaves him severely wounded – is his allegiance adequately proven, and is he reconciled with the Apache leaders. Now Old Shatterhand and Winnetou swear blood brotherhood and, in the words of Apache chief Intshu-tshuna, become "[a] single person and warrior with two bodies, howgh!"<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, Old Shatterhand also admires the beauty of Winnetou's sister Nsho-tshi, whose love for the German hero is nipped in the bud by her untimely death from a bullet of a white bandit.<sup>34</sup> Thus, May's German hero experiences attraction and becomes the subject of desire for both an Indian man and an Indian woman. This trope of attraction and desire informed successive forms of Central Europeans "playing Indian."

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<sup>29</sup> These include the narrator's reference to the historical context and the moral position of Germanness: "It was the eve of the Civil War. [...] As a German, I could not see eye to eye with the Southerners regarding the slave question, and might arouse suspicion. And I did not feel inclined to involve myself in complications whose resolution I could not foresee." May, *Winnetou*, 411.

<sup>30</sup> Such a literary positioning of a European hero in alliance with American Indians may not have been unique to Germany. In the 1980s, a Polish solidarity group derived their initial interest in American Indians from *Tomek na wojennej ścieżce* [Tomek on the War Path], a novel of Polish juvenile literature published in 1959 by Alfred Szklarski. Here young Tomek's alliance with American Indians is motivated not only by his upright character and sense of justice, but also his observations that the Polish and American Indians share a history of oppression by other nations. Ewa Nowicka, "The 'Polish Movement Friends of the American Indians'," in *Indians and Europe*, ed. by Feest, 606–607.

<sup>31</sup> May, *Winnetou*, 331, 364.

<sup>32</sup> May, *Winnetou*, 71, 92.

<sup>33</sup> May, *Winnetou*, 271.

<sup>34</sup> May, *Winnetou*, 202, 288, 328–29.

## Staging Indians: The Karl May Festivals

Besides their mass marketing in dozens of languages, Karl May's novels have been also adapted in a variety of other media and cultural forms. One of the most remarkable of these is the dozen or so Karl May stage festivals scattered throughout Germany and Austria.<sup>35</sup> Mostly established in the post-World War Two period, these venues usually feature a Wild West theme park with vendors, merchandise, an Indian "village" or "reservation," and other attractions. The main event, however, is invariably the performances of the adaptations of the *Winnetou* stories on a "natural" stage, with horses, amplifiers, stuntmen and pyrotechnics. Held in amphitheatres that can seat up to thousands, these performances are always carefully choreographed for spectacular visual effect and action. According to Katrin Sieg, over time the stage plays have used Karl May's novels to amplify or advocate a variety of successive and sometimes contradictory attitudes that include imperialism and anti-imperialism, racism and multiculturalism, anti-materialism and commodity fetishism.<sup>36</sup> Commodifying a peculiar German fantasy of American frontiersman and Indians, these stage performances and the surrounding industry<sup>37</sup> have entertained and shaped the attitudes of generations of German-speaking Central Europeans towards the history of Native Americans.

## Into the Woods: The Central European Re-enactment Hobby

An Indian suit inspired by the film dress of *Winnetou*. The author formed it in 2003 during a stay in the U.S. as a symbol and honor of values that were personified by *Winnetou*, and which have become determinative for him on his life journey: courage, truth and an open mind.

*Tracing Karl May* exhibition label for a buckskin shirt and pants.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> The author's research on the Internet in 2007 revealed at least a dozen such locations in the German-speaking countries of Central Europe. In July 2007, the author also personally visited for field research two such locations: Elspe, and Bad Segeberg.

<sup>36</sup> Sieg *Ethnic Drag*, 76. Sieg's analysis of the theater festivals as well as German cultural hobbyism leads her to argue that Germans, who after the Second World War had to banish the issue of race from their public discussions, used Karl May's Western fantasies to exonerate themselves from the collective feeling of guilt over the Holocaust. In Sieg's reading, the German immigrant-turned frontiersman Old Shatterhand's brotherhood with the Apache chief *Winnetou* is a *Wiedergutmachung* – the use of a distant American historical era and its native characters as a proxy or *surrogate* to finally right the wrongs committed against Jews by Germans in the Second World War. I disagree with Sieg's analysis because it attempts to subsume in its framework the *multiple* ways in which the postwar generations of Germans produced and consumed fantasies about American Indians in a variety of media.

<sup>37</sup> Another of these forms of playing Indian at the theme parks is a store where the visitors can have their photos taken in the surplus Wild West costumes of the stage plays. Personal visit to the Karl May stage festival in Elspe, Germany, July 2007.

<sup>38</sup> Personal visit to the *Po stopě Karla Maye / Tracing Karl May* exhibition in the Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, Prague, January and February, 2013.

The beaded buckskin shirt and leggings on display in *Tracing Karl May* are only one example of the impressive array of self-made paraphernalia shown in the exhibition. Parallel to the more business-oriented cultural forms, playing Indian in Central Europe<sup>39</sup> also developed into a “grassroots” movement with its own material and performance culture. The fans of dime novels, Wild West shows, and Karl May books became cultural producers and authors/performers in their own right by organizing Western and Indian clubs, circulating newsletters and journals, and holding conventions and performances. While these societies ran the gamut from literary to social, the German and Central European hobbyist re-enactment of American Indian cultures received some scholarly attention in the last twenty years.<sup>40</sup>

Some of Central European Indian hobbyism dates back to the 1910s, but by the early twenty-first century its groups numbered in the hundreds.<sup>41</sup> One Central European tradition of re-enacting Indian cultures initially existed within the German Wild West clubs: established in 1913, the members of the Cowboy-Club München Süd studied history of the American West, collected books and artifacts, and learned Indian songs and dances, as well as the cowboy skills of riding and lassoing – to prepare for the Wild West shows staged by their and other clubs.<sup>42</sup> German clubs founded in the 1930s included one named Manitou (likely after Winnetou’s designation of the Great Spirit), and the Indianerklub Frankfurt West.<sup>43</sup> Inspired by the popular literature sent by his brother Raul from the U.S., in the 1930s Hungarian Orientalist Ervin Baktay created a “saloon,” held “meetings” in cowboy regalia, annually re-enacted the battle of the Little Big Horn, camped out on the

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<sup>39</sup> It is important to point out that while the strongest sources of such fan cultures were the German-speaking countries (Germany, Austria and Switzerland), other Central European countries such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary also had Western or Indian clubs or societies. As Katrin Sieg observes, the annual Indian hobbyist meetings in Germany came to have participants “from almost every other European country.” Sieg, *Ethnic Drag*, 123.

<sup>40</sup> These include Peter Bolz, “Life Among the ‘Hunkpapas’: A Case Study of German Indian Lore,” in *Indians and Europe*, ed. by Feest, 475–90; Yolanda Broyles Gonzales, “Cheyennes in the Black Forest: A Social Drama,” in *The Americanization of the Global Village: Essays in Comparative Popular Culture*, ed. by Roger Rollin (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1989), 70–86; Birgit Turski, *Die Indianistikgruppen in der DDR: Entwicklung, Probleme, Aussichten* (Idstein: Baum, 1994); John Paskievich, director, *If Only I Were an Indian* (Winnipeg: National Film Board of Canada, 1995); Marta Carlson, director, *Das Pow-wow* (2001); “Germans Playing Indians,” in *Germans and Indians*, ed. by Calloway, Gemünden, and Zantop, 213–16; Katrin Sieg, “Indian Impersonation as Historical Surrogation,” *ibid.*, 217–42; and Katrin Sieg, “Winnetou’s Grandchildren: Indian Identification, Ethnic Expertise, White Embodiment,” in Sieg, *Ethnic Drag*, 115–50; Friedrich von Borries and Jens-Uwe Fischer, *Sozialistische Cowboys: Der Wilde Westen Ostdeutschlands* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2008); and Petra Tjitske Kalshoven, *Crafting the Indian: Knowledge, Desire and Play in Indianist Reenactment* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012).

<sup>41</sup> Sieg *Ethnic Drag*, 82, 122; Von Borries and Fischer, *Sozialistische Cowboys*, 17.

<sup>42</sup> Bolz, “Life Among the ‘Hunkpapas,’” 484. Other clubs established in the 1910s included the *Cowboy Club* of Munich, and the *Wild West* and *Cowboy Club Buffalo* of Freiburg, Germany. Von Borries and Fischer, *Sozialistische Cowboys*, 17.

<sup>43</sup> Respectively, *ibid.*, 14, and Bolz, “Life Among the ‘Hunkpapas,’” 480.

Danube near Budapest, and posed both as a sheriff and as Plains Indian chief “Buffalo Lying Down.”<sup>44</sup> Another example of the Transatlantic circulation of ideas and forms of performance, one of the influences of the Czech and Slovak hobbyist groups was the Woodcraft Indian movement launched by Ernest Thompson Seton’s books for boys published in the first two decades of the twentieth century.<sup>45</sup>

After a hiatus imposed by World War Two (although the Hungarians held a camp as late as in 1943), Central European Indian hobbyism picked up again. In the postwar period the Hungarian Danube group saw increased attendance at their events.<sup>46</sup> Old Manitou, the first Indianist club of East Germany was founded near Radebeul in 1956; it was followed in 1958 by a group of Mandan re-enactors who called themselves Hiawatha and lived near Leipzig. The town of Meißen saw the emergence of The Dakota in 1961; and the Sieben Ratsfeuer (Seven Council Fires) established their own club in Magdeburg in the year 1963.<sup>47</sup> Inspired by the *Leatherstocking Tales* and the *Winnetou* stories, Hungarian singer-songwriter Tamás Cseh and his friends started playing Indian shortly after they graduated from high school, and by the mid-to late-1960s had launched the second Hungarian hobbyist group, known for their annual camps in the Bakony hills.<sup>48</sup> By the time John Paskievich made a documentary of the Czech and Slovak Indianist hobby in the early 1990s, that movement had been going strong for several decades.<sup>49</sup>

In his seminal treatment of embodied representations of Indians by white Americans, Philip Deloria explains how, as the result of a new discourse of cultural relativism and a crisis of individual identity, Cold War white hobbyists began engaging Native American cultures by dancing and singing with Indians.<sup>50</sup> Here Deloria distinguished between two groups of hobbyists. “Object hobbyists” replicated Indian artifacts as their objects of desire without engaging living Indians, who they considered part of the past and racially other. “People hobbyists” engaged in intercultural encounters with live Indians on the pow-wow circuit, and negotiated the differences between Native agency and Euro-American

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<sup>44</sup> Raul Baktay made at least one trip to Montana, where he studied the traditions and history of the Blackfeet. The photos of Baktay’s “cowboy” meetings used props and were posed to look much like scenes from the early Western films. Baktay’s own Indian name is possibly a reference to Sitting Bull, the famous Hunkpapa Lakota Sioux chief of the late nineteenth century. Personal visit to the Baktay Ervin Museum of Cowboy and Indian / Western Games, Kisoroszi, Hungary. Tour and conversation with tour guide, himself a veteran re-enactor, July 2, 2011.

<sup>45</sup> John Paskievich, director, *If Only I Were an Indian* (Winnipeg: National Film Board of Canada, 1995). For more on Thompson Seton’s ideology and forms of playing Indian, see “Natural Indians and Identities of Modernity,” in *Playing Indian*, by Deloria, 95–127.

<sup>46</sup> Personal visit to the Baktay Ervin Museum of Cowboy and Indian / Western Games, Kisoroszi, Hungary. Tour and conversation with tour guide, himself a veteran re-enactor. July 2, 2011.

<sup>47</sup> Von Borries and Fischer, *Sozialistische Cowboys*, 14, 29.

<sup>48</sup> László Bérczes and Tamás Cseh, *Cseh Tamás: Bérczes László beszélgetőkönyve* [Conversations with Tamás Cseh by László Bérczes] (Budapest: Palatinus, 2007), 71–72.

<sup>49</sup> John Paskievich, director, *If Only I Were an Indian* (Winnipeg: National Film Board of Canada, 1995).

<sup>50</sup> Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 128–35.

imagination.<sup>51</sup> It is important to point out that while postwar Germany underwent a suppression of racist discourse of identity that was more forceful than the one in the United States,<sup>52</sup> German and other Central European hobbyists did not have access to living Native people the way Euro-Americans did.

With the dearth of opportunities for interaction with live Indians, the Germans became “object hobbyists” by default. Like the Hungarians,<sup>53</sup> many German Indian hobbyist groups self-admittedly transitioned from rather crudely acting out popular culture fantasies of American Indians to a kind of Native impersonation that was based on what they regarded as rigorous research.<sup>54</sup> The German hobbyists emphasized the authenticity and ethnographic detail<sup>55</sup> of their activities to set themselves apart both from their less rigorous fellow hobbyists and from the general public, who they aimed to educate about false stereotypes and the “real” cultures of American Indians.<sup>56</sup> These discursive and embodied practices of “authenticity” conferred authority and legitimacy, but they could also disrupt the hobbyist movement. As their chief measure of acceptance and esteem, the authenticity of hobbyists’ bead- and quillwork and dancing and singing were also often subject to dispute, and such policing of the hobbyist movement sometimes led to the splintering of groups.<sup>57</sup>

The creator of the Winnetou costume allowed the Karl May exhibition to display his pieces only on condition that he remains anonymous in the credits.<sup>58</sup> This caveat points to the vexed interpretation of such Indian imagery. In the Performance Studies terminology of Katrin Sieg, the West German Indian hobbyists progressed from self-admittedly amateurish play acting, or *masquerade*, to what they considered masterful and accurate replication, re-enactment, or *mimesis*.<sup>59</sup> We have seen that this origin narrative was professed by other Central European hobbyist groups as well. Thus, as Katrin Sieg observed, Central European hobbyists positioned themselves as *the* heirs and guardians of American Indian history and

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>52</sup> Katrin Sieg observed that this suppression of notions of race opened the door for hiring Germans to perform Indians on stage – and claimed that this also transferred to German Indianist hobbyism. Sieg, *Ethnic Drag*, 2, 4, 22, 128.

<sup>53</sup> Cseh recalls cutting up an unused leather sofa set owned by the parents of a friend to make buckskin clothing as seen in a French Wild West comic book – and then later meeting with two other hobbyists, whose accurate replicas of Plains Indian objects and clothing taught him humility about his hobby. Bérczes and Cseh, *Cseh Tamás*, 72–73; Personal visit to the Baktay Ervin Museum of Cowboy and Indian / Western Games, Kisoroszi, Hungary. Tour and conversation with tour guide, himself a veteran re-enactor. July 2, 2011.

<sup>54</sup> Sieg, *Ethnic Drag*, 123.

<sup>55</sup> The words “accuracy” and “authenticity” are used not as analytical terms, but are descriptive of the notions important to the German Indian hobbyist movement.

<sup>56</sup> Sieg, *Ethnic Drag*, 118; Michael Schubert quoted in Bolz, “Life Among the ‘Hunkpapas’,” 477; Von Borries and Fischer, *Sozialistische Cowboys*, 42, 56.

<sup>57</sup> Sieg, *Ethnic Drag*, 122.

<sup>58</sup> *Tracing Karl May* exhibition label for a buckskin shirt and pants. Personal visit to the *Po stopě Karla Maye / Tracing Karl May* exhibition in the Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, Prague, January and February, 2013.

<sup>59</sup> Sieg, *Ethnic Drag*, 118.

cultures. I agree with her assessment that this kind of positioning in effect supplanted live Indians and their living traditions with a German identification with and authority over the Native past.<sup>60</sup> This is indeed a colonialist practice. However, Sieg's theoretical conclusion needs to be qualified in the context of early Cold War Central Europe, where Native American presence was small at best. To use Diana Taylor's analytical framework<sup>61</sup>: without the embodied repertoire of living Native Americans, the Central European (object) hobbyists utilized white-made popular and artistic representations and ethnographic scholarship as the archive for their own performances of Indian authenticity. The Central European hobbyists of the early to mid-Cold War did what they enjoyed doing and rationalized it a service to American Indians, the Western world, and their own societies.

### Indians as Ideology

As the Cold War intensified and expanded to the realm of cultural production and consumption, Wild West and Indian fandom first became subject to state control, then they were turned into a battleground of ideologies. The government-controlled *Kulturbund* association of the German Democratic Republic seized on the figure of the American Indian as a tool of anti-American propaganda.<sup>62</sup> At the same time as it elevated American Indians, the East German state proceeded to "purge" Western fandom in the country. Cowboys, white pioneers and frontiers people were designated as the historical "henchmen" of U.S. imperialism. Originally opened in 1928, the Karl May Museum of Radebeul was renamed "Indian Museum" in 1956, and references to Indians killing General George Custer, or playing in Buffalo Bill's show were removed from the exhibits. Finally, the Museum was moved to Bamberg one year before the Berlin Wall was completed.<sup>63</sup> As part of the ideologically correct realignment of popular culture, East German and Hungarian authorities also made sure to remove any firearms from Wild West fan communities,<sup>64</sup> and the former also suppressed cowboy fandom. In response, re-enactors of white frontiers people pretended to impersonate Indians in public, and indulged in playing cowboys in private.<sup>65</sup> Clandestine

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<sup>60</sup> Sieg, *Ethnic Drag*, 130–131.

<sup>61</sup> In her 2003 book *The Archive and the Repertoire*, Diana Taylor theorizes the categories and relationship between forms of knowledge fixed in objects, and embodied practices. Taylor defines the archive as containing "documents, maps, literary texts, letters, archaeological remains, bones, videos, films, CDs, all those items supposedly resistant to change." On the other hand, the repertoire "enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing – in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge." Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 19, 20.

<sup>62</sup> Sieg, *Ethnic Drag*, 122.

<sup>63</sup> Von Borries and Fischer, *Sozialistische Cowboys*, 18–19, 31–32.

<sup>64</sup> Von Borries and Fischer, *Sozialistische Cowboys*, 32–33; interview with long-time member and leader of the Bakony group, June 2011. Source kept anonymous due to research ethics regulations.

<sup>65</sup> Von Borries and Fischer, *Sozialistische Cowboys*, 31–32, 54.

cowboy life largely came to an end after some clubs were shut down and others reorganized into Indianist fan circles.<sup>66</sup>

The Cold War's re-evaluation of the ideological elements of culture extended to the realm of publishing. After the war, the *Winnetou* novels had become suspicious because Hitler and his Nazi youth movement had admired Karl May's oeuvre; now people in East Germany were discouraged from reading them.<sup>67</sup> A potential candidate for elevation, a cycle of novels about the life of early nineteenth century Shawnee Confederacy leader Tecumseh written in the 1930s by Fritz Steuben, was likewise reviled for being proto-fascist.<sup>68</sup> The author who became East Germany's literary spokesperson for the historical experience of American Indians was Liselotte Welskopf-Henrich, professor of ancient history at Humboldt University, Berlin, and subsequently a member of the German Academy of Sciences. Beginning in 1951, Welskopf-Henrich wrote a six-book series of historical novels titled *The Sons of the Great Mother Bear* about the odyssey of the Teton Sioux during the gold rush in the Black Hills.<sup>69</sup> Buttressed by her day-job as a scholar and professor, Welskopf-Henrich's novels were regarded as "historically accurate"<sup>70</sup> – for example, the Sioux chief at the beginning of her story bore the name *Mattotaupa* or "four bears" – obviously taken from Bodmer and Catlin's 1830s paintings of the Mandan chief Mah-to-toh-pe / Mató-Tópe (Four Bears). With her books translated into several other Central European languages, Welskopf-Henrich "self-consciously created a socialist tradition of Indian literature,"<sup>71</sup> and distinguished it from the "clichéic" stories of Karl May, J. F. Cooper, and Fritz Steuben.<sup>72</sup> Starting in the early 1960s, Welskopf-Henrich also paid visits to reservations in the U.S., and in the 1970s she would become a node in the Transatlantic alliance for American Indian sovereignty.

Katrin Sieg has observed that in postwar Germany, Wild West fandom redefined the German position from conquered oppressor to a friend to the resistance to oppression.<sup>73</sup> At first, Karl May's novels may have worked analogously, reflecting the new political and economic alliance: *Winnetou's* blood brotherhood with Karl / Old Shatterhand may have recast German-U.S. relations from an adversarial relationship into a new alliance sealed with pledges and in-kind assistance. This may have well been a reason why West Germany upheld the esteem of Karl May. With the East German state rejecting the same tradition, it

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>67</sup> Sieg, *Ethnic Drag*, 82; Von Borries and Fischer, *Sozialistische Cowboys*, 18–19.

<sup>68</sup> Gonzales, "Cheyennes in the Black Forest," 78; Glenn Penny, "Elusive Authenticity: The Quest for the American Indian in German Public Culture," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 48, no. 4 (October 2006): 800.

<sup>69</sup> *Die Söhne der Großen Bärin* – *The Sons of the Great [Mother] Bear* cycle of books were as follows: *Über den Missouri* [Over the Missouri] 1951; *Der junge Häuptling* [The Young Chief] 1951; *Heimkehr zu den Dakota* [Return to the Dakota] 1951, 1963; *Die Höhle in den schwarzen Bergen* [The Cave in the Black Hills] 1963; *Der Weg in die Verbannung* [The Path in Exile] 1962; *Harka* 1962.

<sup>70</sup> Penny, "Elusive Authenticity," 800.

<sup>71</sup> Sieg, *Ethnic Drag*, 144.

<sup>72</sup> Glenn Penny, "Elusive Authenticity," 800.

<sup>73</sup> Katrin Sieg, *Ethnic Drag*, 24.

was only a matter of time before the two sides would start using such popular culture for ideological propaganda.

### Screen Indians: The *Winnetou* Movies and the *Indianerfilme*

The two single largest images in the *Tracing Karl May* exhibition are Miroslav Pospíšil's life-size paintings of the movie characters Winnetou and Old Shatterhand, "borrowed from the Restaurace u Raušů."<sup>74</sup> These point to the cinematic tradition of Transatlantic Indian imagery. With the increasing availability of audiovisual technology, by the early to mid-1960s the cultural front of the Cold War had moved into cinema and television. Beginning in 1962 and through most of the decade, West German studios produced a dozen movies based on Karl May's Winnetou stories.<sup>75</sup> Made in West German, Italian, and Yugoslav co-production, these movies starred an athletic, blond and blue-eyed Lex Barker as Old Shatterhand opposite a genteel and graceful Pierre Brice as Winnetou – both dressed in fringed buckskin.<sup>76</sup> From the mid-1960s through the early 1980s, the East Germany's government-owned DEFA studios responded by releasing a dozen of their own so-called *Indianerfilme*, which it co-produced with fellow Communist and non-aligned countries like the Soviet Union and Romania.<sup>77</sup> The lead actor in these films was Serbian physical education student Gojko Mitič, who had been an extra in some of the early *Winnetou* movies.<sup>78</sup> Through partial nudity, Mitič's manly physique was emphasized in almost all of the *Indianerfilme*, and his physicality and facial structure made for a more erotic and exotic Indian warrior.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> "Miroslav Pospíšil: VINNETOU. Borrowed from the Restaurace u Raušů." "Miroslav Pospíšil: OLD SHATTERHAND. Borrowed from the Restaurace u Raušů." Personal visit to the *Po stopě Karla Maye / Tracing Karl May* exhibition in the Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, Prague, January and February, 2013.

<sup>75</sup> These films included the 1962 *Der Schatz im Silbersee* [Treasure of Silver Lake], the 1963 *Winnetou 1*. [Apache Gold]; the 1964 *Old Shatterhand*; the 1964 *Winnetou 2*. [Last of the Renegades]; the 1964 *Unter Geiern* [Frontier Hellcat]; the 1965 *Der Ölprinz* [Rampage at Apache Wells]; the 1965 *Winnetou 3*. [Winnetou: The Desperado Trail]; the 1965 *Old Surehand 1*. [Flaming Frontier]; the 1966 *Winnetou und das Halbblut Apanatschi* [Half-Breed]; the 1966 *Winnetou und sein Freund Old Firehand* [Thunder at the Border]; and the 1968 *Winnetou und Shatterhand im Tal der Toten* [Winnetou and Shatterhand in the Valley of Death].

<sup>76</sup> Sieg, *Ethnic Drag*, 103–104; Von Borries and Fischer, *Sozialistische Cowboys*, 46.

<sup>77</sup> These films included the 1966 *Die Söhne der Großen Bärin* [The Sons of the Great Mother Bear]; the 1967 *Chingachgook, die große Schlange* [Chingachgook the Great Serpent]; the 1968 *Spur des Falken* [The Trail of the Falcons]; the 1969 *Weißer Wölfe* [White Wolves]; the 1969 *Tödlicher Irrtum* [The Fatal Mistake]; the 1971 *Osceola*; the 1972 *Tecumseh*; the 1973 *Apachen* [The Apache]; the 1974 *Ulzana*; the 1975 *Blutsbrüder* [Blood Brothers]; the 1977 *Severino*; and the 1983 *Der Scout* [The Scout].

<sup>78</sup> Von Borries and Fischer, *Sozialistische Cowboys*, 49. For more on the East German *Indianerfilme*, see Gerd Gemünden, "Between Karl May and Karl Marx: the DEFA *Indianerfilme*," in *Germans and Indians*, ed. by Calloway, Gemünden and Zantop, 243–56.

<sup>79</sup> Sieg, *Ethnic Drag*, 105.

These two sets of Central European Westerns competed over their shared German-based identification with American Indians. Many of both sets of movies were shot on location in Yugoslavia, thus both sharing and contesting the very landscape of their setting – the same rocky scenery displayed in the diorama of *Tracing Karl May*. In the person of Gojko Mitič, who had been an extra in some of the early *Winnetou* movies before becoming the perennial star of the *Indianerfilme*,<sup>80</sup> these movies also shared a technical expertise and screen presence that migrated across the iron curtain.

The lines of battle over the two Germanies' shared professional savvy and popular cultural heritage of "playing Indian" were now drawn with ideology. If the *Winnetou* movies rehearsed the cultural equivalent of the postwar West German – U.S. political alliance, the *Indianerfilme* were a socialist cultural assault on U.S. imperialism and capitalism, including its product the cliché Western,<sup>81</sup> as well as a claim of a more "just" and "authentic" German identification with Indians. Through portraying the Indians' heroic but ultimately doomed resistance to white Americans' ruthless encroachment on their land for gold, the socialist Westerns used historical materialism to critique the genre of the classic American Western, and to condemn not only U.S. colonialism, but also to indict American capitalist expansion<sup>82</sup> in the past, and, by implication, in the present. As Gerd Gemünden pointed out, these screen Indians stood in for East German and other socialist responses to American imperialism.<sup>83</sup> In the 1973 East German movie *Apachen* (The Apaches) Indian resistance raises class awareness: the Mexican miners gradually come to question the wisdom of the white American company, and the relations of production in which they participate. Likewise, in the 1971 *Osceola*, the Seminole leader negotiates decent wages for all plantation workers. As Gemünden's observed, *Osceola*'s rallying cry "Indians of all countries, unite!" is at the same time a banner for socialist solidarity against American imperialism.<sup>84</sup> Here, the historical call for an all-Indian ethnic coalition (espoused by other figures like the Shawnee leader Tecumseh and later by the actual sovereignty movement) is made "red" in a different sense by a Marxist class-based movement. In the absence of Native critiques, the *Indianerfilme* assimilated historical American Indians into the struggle of the working class against capitalist exploitation.<sup>85</sup> This ideologically motivated identification with Indians and the resulting openness for cooperation would in time become a component in the Transatlantic alliance for American Indian sovereignty.

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<sup>80</sup> Von Borries and Fischer, *Sozialistische Cowboys*, 49, 50–51.

<sup>81</sup> As Gemünden shows, the *Indianerfilme* were just as guilty of stereotyping American Indians as the classic Western. See Gemünden, "Between Karl May and Karl Marx," 245–46.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 244–45.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

<sup>85</sup> For a more nuanced scholarly analysis of the Eastern Westerns and their context, please see Anna Bánhegyi's recent dissertation "Where Marx Meets Osceola: Ideology and Mythology in the Eastern Bloc Western." History Department, Southern Methodist University. Personal communication.

## Conclusion: Karl May's World and a Transatlantic Alliance for Social Justice

By the late 1960s, a longstanding Central European cultural fascination with American Indians converged with a variety of commercialized forms of popular culture, and the use by national governments of the figure of the American Indian for ideological propaganda. Importantly, the above variety of Transatlantic cultural forms and their consumption have made for a curious specificity in playing Indian in Central Europe. The Indian tribes played for and by Central Europeans were overwhelmingly either the Apache of the Southern Plains or the Sioux peoples of the Northern Plains – in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>86</sup> Whether it was Tecumseh, Mató-Tópe, Sitting Bull, Winnetou, Osceola or Ulzana, the specific figure most available for identification was invariably a male warrior or chief. Karl Bodmer's 1835 painting of *Pehriska-Ruhpa of the Dog Society of the Hidatsa tribe* was admired and re-enacted by Central European hobbyists enamored with the Indian warrior ethos.<sup>87</sup> Different from most U.S. white representations, the Central European figure of Indian was stereotyped positively as an exotic noble savage<sup>88</sup> and a subject of desire and identification. In general, this figure came to stand for a “beleaguered yet defiant” heroic resistance to overwhelming forces, whatever they be.<sup>89</sup>

Heroes of Karl May were brave and courageous, honest and fair, truth-loving and truthful. WILL YOU ALSO BE A PERSON OF THAT KIND?

*Tracing Karl May* exhibition closing panel label.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Peter Bolz traces this image back to what he calls the “massive appearance of Sioux Indians in Germany between 1890 and 1914” in ethnic shows, zoos, and Wild West shows. See Bolz, “Life Among the ‘Hunkpapas’,” 483.

<sup>87</sup> While a definitive claim requires more research, it is likely that during the Transatlantic reworkings of the image of the Indian warrior in the late twentieth century, this painting was the source of much glorification and vilification of the so-called dog soldiers or dog society of the Cheyenne and other tribes. The assertions of radical sovereignty activists that AIM was a warrior society that any Native community could call for help, as well as the 1976 “dog soldiers” memo of the FBI seem to have resonated with this image. In the early 1980s, the annual gatherings of West German Indianist hobbyists over the Pentecost weekend also featured “men’s societies like the Dog Soldiers, who exercise[d] a kind of police power.” See Bolz, “Life Among the ‘Hunkpapas’,” 487; also Von Borries and Fischer, *Sozialistische Cowboys*, 141. In the early 1990s, the author heard a Hungarian Indianist hobbyist explain that in a battle, the members of the dog society would pin their train into the ground to signal that they will fight until they win or die – and that they would do this in order to cover the withdrawal of their fellow warriors.

<sup>88</sup> Gemünden, “Between Karl May and Karl Marx,” 245–46.

<sup>89</sup> In Sieg’s words, some German hobbyists saw themselves as a community of the “persecuted yet defiant.” I generalized and complemented her model to apply across a variety of forms of playing Indian. The “overwhelming forces” was an interchangeable component of the meaning of whites playing Indian. It could be a communist bureaucracy, the oppressive state, consumer society, U.S. imperialism, big corporations, or modern society in general. See Sieg, *Ethnic Drag*, 144.

<sup>90</sup> Personal visit to the *Po stopě Karla Maye / Tracing Karl May* exhibition in the Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, Prague, January and February, 2013.

What sounds like a didactic benediction to the children among *Tracing Karl May's* visitors is itself a trace of Karl May's potential to inspire his readers to pursue social justice in earnest. The identification of Central Europeans with imaginary Indians articulated the potential for a variety of alliances. Karl May's novels positioned their German-turned American hero in a latently Christian alliance with the Apache that he had earned through the performance of frontier feats, and which was based on mutual sympathy and a blood brotherhood that practically meant adoption into the tribe. This alliance, however, precluded mass organized ethnic resistance. Central European hobbyists asserted their guardianship and authority over North American Indian cultures (again, primarily Plains Sioux in the late nineteenth century) through their "research-based" replication and performances of "authentic" representations of these societies. In their turn, the popular *Indianerfilme* portrayed American Indians as a group in a potential class-based international coalition against U.S. imperialism in the past and present. These tropes of playing Indian enabled the building of a Transatlantic network for Native sovereignty in the Late Cold War.<sup>91</sup> As Lakota medicine man Archie Fire Lane Deer explained about his travels in Central Europe in the 1980s, "I have to thank this man called Karl May, even though it was a world of fantasy that he had written about, never seen Lakotas, and made ridiculous things like Navajos with Mohawk haircuts – but he still raised the consciousness of the people, about the Indian people."<sup>92</sup>

While this latter alliance between live Indians and Central Europeans across the iron curtain awaits its own exhibition, to some extent it was definitely inspired by Karl May's oeuvre. And *that's* no small thing.

György Tóth

Francis D. Raška, **The Long Road to Victory: A History of Czechoslovak Exile Organizations**. Boulder, CO: East European Monographs No. DCCXCIX, Distributed by Columbia University Press, 2012. 251 pages. ISBN 978-0-88033-706-9

The political collapse of the communist system in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 and the demise of the Soviet Union continue to attract scholarly attention. A number of studies have been published on the subject. Much remains to be done, especially due to the fact that there are many documents in Russian archives that are still waiting for

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<sup>91</sup> For a history of this alliance, see György Tóth, "Red Nations: The Transatlantic Relations of the American Indian Radical Sovereignty Movement of the Late Cold War." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. The University of Iowa, 2012.

<sup>92</sup> Box 135, Folder 631. "Archie Fire, Tape 3; Wolakota." Audio recording, 1/2. March 2, 1986. Richard Erdoes Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.