

Dances With Worlds: Karl May, ‘Indian’ hobbyists, and German fans of the American West since 1912

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Abstract:

This essay discusses the German fans of author Karl May’s Westerns against the backdrop of a broader community of German hobbyists devoted to the American West, as this community developed after 1912 – examining the impact of political repression, war, and the division of Germany after 1945 on these fan communities and their interpretations of the American West. German fans of the ‘Old West’ (both ‘Indian’ re-enactment hobbyists and fans of Karl May’s more fictionalized story world) created their own bodies of knowledge and celebratory performances over the last century, reinterpreting and exploring the world of May’s novels. The historical American West is part of the ‘Primary World,’ as defined by Mark Wolf, but this essay argues that the diverse versions of the West created by German fans can be understood as partly or entirely secondary, since neither May, nor many of the first generations of German fans, ever visited the American West. Both May’s stories and fans’ interpretations of the West were partly based on fiction, even as many tried to recreate an ‘authentic’ world that they had never seen.

The story world created by May, and the broader fictionalized world of the American West created by German fans, was also transmedial before media convergence, tentatively before 1945 and increasingly so after 1960. But the German versions of Karl May’s stories and the American West that extended across varied media during the twentieth century were often inconsistent, created by a variety of producers as a result of political regime turnover in twentieth century Germany, the expiration of copyright over May’s novels, and the growing consumer culture of West Germany after 1945. The lack of any centralized editorial control over transmedia versions of both Karl May’s story world and the fictionalized American West helped German fans to make the American West their own, creating their own versions of the ‘Western’ stories, characters, and cultures suited to the politics and culture of each decade, and circulating these interpretations among other fans.

Keywords: Westerns, German ‘Indians,’ cosplay, re-enactment, Nazi Germany, East Germany, role-play, literary societies, transmedia, secondary worlds, open-air festivals

‘There are the German poets and thinkers, the German forest . . . German efficiency . . . and then there is [Karl May’s indigenous American character] Winnetou,’ a 2006 *Spiegel* magazine article on German cowboy and ‘Indian’ hobbyists observed. ‘Winnetou is the quintessential German national hero, a paragon of virtue, a nature freak, a romantic, a pacifist at heart, but in a world at war he is the best warrior, alert, strong, and sure.’¹ The article discussed, somewhat ironically, the phenomenon of German ‘cowboys and Indians,’ people who were part of a broader spectrum of German devotees of the American Old West.²

Some prophets are without honor in their own lands, but quite the reverse is true of Karl May: his characters and fictionalized version of the American West are known to almost all German-speaking adults, but have found very few readers in the English-speaking world. Almost unknown in Great Britain and the United States, May is generally considered the best-selling author in modern German history; his stories were originally aimed at a young adult audience, but have always attracted many adult fans, as well.³ The producers of derivative May-themed works that sold millions of copies or tickets, particularly after 1945 – transmedial productions that included comic books, spin-off novels, heavily-attended open air shows based on his books, blockbuster movies, toys, etc. – have also capitalized on the fact that his characters have been household names in Central Europe for more than a century.⁴

May’s most popular novels are set in a heavily fictionalized American West or in an idealized Middle East; the heroes of his Westerns, such as Winnetou (the son of an Apache chief) and his white ‘blood brother’ Old Shatterhand, became particularly beloved and mythologized. The *Winnetou* trilogy of novels (which formed the core of his imaginary West) were published in 1892 and 1893, although May continued to produce other best-selling Westerns, travel literature, stories in Oriental settings, and (late in life) philosophical and mystical fiction, including a final Winnetou novel, until his death in 1912.⁵

Karl May’s novels were only the most popular among a bevy of Western-themed stories and non-fiction publications eagerly read by nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth century Germans. His novels were preceded and followed by other best-selling German and Austrian Western writers: Charles Sealsfield, Friedrich Gerstaecker, Balduin Moellhausen, Friedrich von Gagern, Liselotte Welskopf-Henrich, and B. Traven. These authors varied enormously in their backgrounds and approaches, but in general, their stories portrayed indigenous American cultures sympathetically. May’s novels should also be seen as part of larger entertainment culture in Imperial Germany, which included traveling Wild West shows, *Voelkerschauen* (ethnological ‘people shows’ of exotic indigenous cultures), traveling exhibitions and circuses featuring people with the most varied exotic or fantastic personae.

'Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show' toured Germany for the first time in 1890, drawing large and enthusiastic crowds across Germany; other entertainment entrepreneurs soon followed.⁶ Some May fans who saw these shows as children said that their interest in his novels and in the earliest 'Indian' hobbyist groups was first sparked by seeing the real indigenous peoples performing in Buffalo Bill's show or circuses.⁷ In entering the German pulp novel market in the late nineteenth century, May was thus able to rely upon and further expand a 'ubiquitous . . . German fascination with American Indians,' and provided 'a set of easily accessible books that all children could, and most certainly did, read.'⁸

This essay examines twentieth century German fans of Karl May's world as one part of a broader community of German enthusiasts of the American West. During the second half of the twentieth century, the community of German Western fans fractured into quite differentiated segments, as many Karl May fans (one segment within the spectrum of German fans of the Old West) increasingly adopted a playful and willing suspension of belief, akin to the Sherlockians studied by Michael Saler.⁹ They engaged with Karl May's version of the American West on its own terms, as this fictionalized West was staged and restaged at annual open air Karl May festivals and other May fan gatherings that by the 1960s were becoming less interested in both historical 'authenticity' and with strict fidelity to the original May canon. By the 1980s, some Karl May fans clearly relished the liminal nature of their role play, which was often tongue-in-cheek, combining a variety of influences and performances – the completely fictional, the mystical, the historical, re-enactors, literary critical, popular commercial culture, and participation by real Native Americans – to create vivid gatherings that were a cultural and historical potpourri.

The activities of these Karl May fans were paralleled throughout the twentieth century, however, by the emergence and growth of a second, usually separate community of German Western enthusiasts who pursued the 'authentic' recreation and re-enactment of indigenous North American cultures. These communities of re-enactment devotees of the Old West – generally referred to as 'Indian' hobbyists in scholarly literature, to distinguish them from other German Western fans – immersed themselves in ethnographic detail, creating ever more serious and 'authentic' cross-racial performances and 'Indian' reenactments that connected them with the 'real' indigenous cultures of the American West.

German 'Indians,' communities of re-enactors who strongly identified with indigenous American peoples and who worked diligently to recreate those cultures' skills, lifestyles, and material artefacts, have been the object of scholars' and journalists' fascination (and sometimes, derision) for decades. Lacking the approaches and insights offered by fan studies scholarship, historians and others who have studied German 'Indians' have often been at a loss to explain such passionate cross-racial identification and performance, and have sometimes pathologized hobbyists who completely immersed themselves in a chosen 'Indian' *persona*.¹⁰ Other German Western fan communities, particularly those organized around the celebration of Karl May's world, have been

overshadowed by the scholarly focus on 'Indian' hobbyists, receiving much less attention from German cultural historians and literary scholars.

This essay considers all segments of the German Western fan community, using approaches from fan studies scholarship to consider how each segment of this community 'poached' and enacted—sometimes sincerely and 'authentically,' and other times with tongue in cheek—what its members needed and found attractive from the larger German 'canon' of Western novels, ethnological knowledge, and received history of the American West and its peoples.¹¹ As Henry Jenkins has discussed in the case of other, late twentieth century media fandoms, German fans of Karl May's novels, along with those who loved other popular depictions of the American West or who sought connection with the 'real' West and its cultures, 'broke up' their favorite texts, pulling out bits and details that they could knit together in new combinations and use as a springboard for their own interpretations and performances about what the American West had 'really' been like (or perhaps ought to have been). Some German fans, particularly the 'Indian' hobbyist re-enactors, used their gatherings to explore and come as close to indigenous American cultures (a historical 'primary world,' in Mark Wolf's terms) as they could. Others, especially fans of Karl May in particular, re-imagined a cultural setting and characters that they knew to be fictional, increasingly uncaring, in post-war West Germany, about whether these were historically 'authentic'; they were playing within an *imaginary* American West. Their creative activities thus paralleled the ways in which the contemporary fans discussed by Henry Jenkins mix and play with media cultures and texts, but within a very different historical and geographic setting, and within political contexts that changed sharply over the course of the twentieth century.¹² The activities and creations of the diverse communities of German Western fans often commented on (or could be used to escape) modernity, urbanization, consumer culture, the politics of public culture under different regimes, or some of the problems associated with postwar German national identity and masculinity. In so doing, they made the American West their own, by creating their own versions of the stories, characters, and Indian cultures suited to the politics and culture of each decade and German regime, and circulating these interpretations among other fans.

Germans thus played with (and within) the world of the American West years before media convergence. And like other popular twentieth century fictional canons, American Western stories like Karl May's were transmedial well before the advent of television. As Matthew Freeman's work demonstrates, story worlds like those created by Frank Baum (the Land of Oz) and George Burroughs (Tarzan) were branded and commodified in other media formats, such as jigsaw puzzles and board games during the 1920s and 1930s, and those worlds were fleshed out even further in these new formats.¹³ Karl May's world was similarly transmedial, particularly after 1945. But for a variety of reasons, May's world was developed beyond his novels in an *ad hoc*, sometimes inconsistent fashion that contrasted sharply with George Burrough's carefully 'braided' themes and threads, which (as Freeman demonstrates) the author created with a keen eye towards maximizing profits through the commodification of his storyworld and its extension into other media forms.

For several reasons, there was no centralized editorial control in the development of May's world after the novels were published. The author himself died in 1912, and his estate and publisher kept a jealous, guarded control over the publishing rights, but did little themselves towards developing the stories in other media. The further development of May's series was hindered by a scandal that enveloped May towards the end of his life, and which cast a pall over the fandom for years, discussed below. After the National Socialists assumed power in 1933, they selectively allowed some of May's works to go out of print, while the East German authorities allowed no new print runs of May novels at all in the territories they controlled after 1945.

May remained one of the most popular German authors throughout this period, however, and his fans were avid consumers of other media forms of May's imaginary world still available to them: open air May festivals, which began during the Nazi period (and which could depict May's world in a way that passed muster with Nazi censors), and knock-off comic book series after 1945, with lightly-renamed versions of *Winnetou* and *Old Shatterhand*.

After the May estate's copyright expired, the transmedial growth of May's world became explosive; spin-off novels and blockbuster West German May movies like *The Treasure of Silver Lake* (1962) were closely followed by competing East German Westerns. The imaginary West created by May, and his main characters lived on in many of these post-copyright incarnations, but the original novel plots were sometimes dramatically altered. By the late twentieth century, Germany hosted many competing open air May festivals each summer—some run for profit by producers, with other, less polished festivals created by fans—which took dramatic liberties with May's world, even reversing the ending of his stories. Karl May's West thus developed as a transmedial world, and one that fans played with enthusiastically: but the transmedia extensions of Karl May's world have never been editorially consistent exercises. As May's publisher discovered, it is difficult to copyright the concepts of cowboys and Indians. And while East German authorities could forbid the printing of new editions of May's stories, they could not suppress the imaginary world of the American West among their nation's enthusiasts entirely.

The sources I have used for this article are largely historical, although my approach to these sources is informed by the work published on late twentieth and twenty-first century audiences, fan communities, and imaginary worlds by media studies and fan scholars over the last two decades. Both Karl May fans and German 'Indians' formed clubs and societies long before the advent of television, or even radio, and the sources relating to both types of German Western fans can be found in the archives of the Karl May Society. In addition to these archives, I have relied on scholarly studies of German 'Indian' hobbyists, along with sources focusing on the Karl May open air summer festivals, which grew steadily across Germany after the mid-twentieth century. I analyze Karl May fans to see how they compare to the fans of other media discussed by fan scholars like Will Brooker, Henry Jenkins, and particularly Michael Saler, whose study of mid-twentieth Sherlockians is one of the closest fan communities, chronologically, to the festivities created German Western

fans. But German Western fans operated against a very different historical and geographical framework, one which provided both opportunities and political pressures unknown to American and British fans; a historical approach thus allows us to examine how these shifting political and national contexts – including the impact of political repression, war, and the division of Germany after 1945 – shaped the ways in which German fans explored and interpreted the American West.

Creating his own American West: Karl May's Imaginary Western Career

May did not create Germans' fascination with the American West (which dated since the early nineteenth century), but he certainly understood how to make good use of it. May promoted his stories with a series of photos taken of himself as one of his most important protagonists, Old Shatterhand, in buckskin shirt, with a lasso and rifle, claiming that he had lived in the American West for years and that all his stories were largely autobiographical.¹⁴ In fact, May only visited the United States once, late in life, and never got further west than New York State: like most of the fans who formed cowboy and Indian communities long after his death, May relied on novels, maps, travelers' accounts, anthropological studies, and guidebooks for the information used in his stories. He thus offered readers a 'Western' world that was a pastiche of ethnography, fictional tropes about indigenous Americans, travelers' accounts, and wish fulfillment.¹⁵ To the first generation of his readers, however, May's stories and characters were marketed as being set in the 'real,' historical American West, with the stories' incidents and characters drawn from May's own experiences.

May's novels would thus appear to be set in Mark Wolf's 'Primary World,' but in fact May's American West was partly imaginary, and thus more a 'sub-created' world than May's early readers realized.¹⁶ The indigenous American cultures depicted by May were in many respects fantastical or inaccurate, as German 'Indian' hobbyists discovered after World War I, but his American West had all of the attributes required for a successful transnarrative and transmedial development, and for a rich fandom experience. May's Old West had that wealth of background detail needed to create believability and draw fans into deeper engagement with the sub-created worlds discussed by Wolf: material culture; governance structures; an economy that included the production of food, clothing, and artifacts; alien languages; history; and many other details of exotic (for Germans) geographies and cultures. It was a world that offered 'a high degree of saturation,' of complexity that absorbed the audience's imagination, sustaining a succession of narratives in May's novels, with many interrelated characters, tropes, and story lines.¹⁷ It was certainly connected to the 'real,' or Primary World that German fans lived in, but it was also remote enough to make its fantastic qualities believable, since even nineteenth century German readers were unlikely to have experienced it in person.

For these reasons, May's American West blurs the distinction that Wolf makes between 'sub-created' or 'secondary' imaginary worlds on the one hand, and modern movies set in the historical Primary World such as *Titanic* or *Gangs of New York* on the other. In the latter, as Wolf notes, 'the past is being meticulously built and recreated.' But

while historical fiction or movies are set in the ‘real’ past, Wolf also acknowledges that ‘there are varying degrees of what we could call ‘secondariness,’ based on how much invention a secondary world contains.’¹⁸ May’s Western world, sold to readers as based on ‘real’ experience, but incorporating many fantasy elements about a place and peoples that (until after 1945) few Germans could acquire any first-hand information about, seems more ‘secondary’ than modern transmedial narratives set in the ‘real’ past.

Thus, the historical American West was indeed a Primary World, but the American West celebrated by May and his readers was at least partly imaginary, and clearly had elements of ‘secondariness.’ May’s deception of his readers became public shortly before his death; by the mid-twentieth century, May’s deception and the ‘inaccurate’ nature of his story world were tacitly acknowledged by many German fans. The response of German Western fans thereafter was bifurcated: On the one hand, there were ‘Indian’ hobbyists who were primarily interested in ‘real’ indigenous American peoples – those who worked hard to distance their activities from May’s novels, and strived to make their recreations of indigenous American lifestyles and cultures ‘authentic’ – that is, set in the Primary World. On the other hand lay Karl May fans, who were more interested in the stories and characters themselves, and thus accepted the inaccuracies and fantasies in his stories. These fans proceeded to create their own, ever more ‘secondary’ versions of his world and stories after 1960, an imaginary world built out of the stuff of Primary World history.¹⁹

Who Can Copyright a Cowboy? Editorial Control and Early German Western Fans

German enthusiasm for the American West grew during the period between the two world wars, to include: fan tourism to the May Museum in the author’s former home, and to May’s birth home in Hohenstein-Ernstthal (similar to the late twentieth-century fan pilgrimages described by scholars like Will Brooker and Matt Hills); the cowboy and Indian clubs which attracted re-enactment hobbyists; performances of May’s stories in open-air festivals staged on large outdoor stages that drew hundreds of thousands of spectators each summer; and literary discussions and exchanges among smaller groups of enthusiasts. Collectively, these groups grew by the 1930s to form a fandom, containing communities of Western fans, both formally and loosely organized.²⁰

Several factors worked in the Weimar period to delay the formation of the quasi-erudite literary societies or readers’ exchanges in pulp magazines which tended to dominate other literary fandoms in the first half of the twentieth century (e.g. Sherlock Holmes societies or early science fiction fans), and instead pushed May enthusiasts towards cowboy and Indian role-play and the spectacle of open air festivals. May’s publisher and copyright holder initially made it difficult for an organized May literary society to develop before World War II, since they took a skeptical view of his fans, seeking to control what was published about his work and tolerating only a hagiographic depiction of him in the ‘official’ Weimar yearbook for Karl May fans.²¹ May’s lies about his qualifications and Western

'experiences' had been exposed in a series of lawsuits before his death in 1912. This formed a problematic legacy for both the publisher and the fandom, since May left behind a tangled body of claims and counterclaims about how 'authentic' his accounts were, which absorbed the energies and attentions of the first generation of May fans. Before 1933, both the problematic biography of the author and the attitude of his publisher – who held the copyright on the stories, and who threatened legal action against those who published anything critical of May's work – tended to undermine literary organizations devoted to May.

But although the copyright holder worked to restrict the creation of a large and serious body of fan magazines devoted to May's stories during the interwar period, Germans who loved Karl May and who were fascinated with the American West more generally could still create cowboy and Indian clubs. One advantage of 'Indian' hobbyist clubs is that they were generally immune to the political and legal pressures that could undermine formal May fan groups before the 1960s: no one could claim copyright over the concept of an Indian or cowboy, after all. And they were fun. Fans' ability to create their clubs and celebrations points to one advantage and attraction of a 'partly-secondary,' semi-imaginary world like the American West envisioned by German fans: it cannot be controlled so easily by the copyright holder, as a purely imaginary world can be.

Later, in both Nazi Germany and East Germany, the emphasis on 'Indian' hobbyists (as opposed to literary discussion and fan publications) helped ensure the fan community's survival, since hobbyist groups could more easily distance themselves from the (quite different) political problems that the May novels would pose under both of these regimes. Until the books entered public domain in West Germany in 1963, therefore, 'Indian' hobbyists often formed American West role play groups which might (or might not—in Nazi Germany and East Germany) emphasize their connections to Karl May's Westerns.

The first such hobbyist group was the Munich Cowboy and Indian Club, founded in 1913. Other clubs were founded during the Weimar period, including the 'First Dresden Indian and Cowboy Club 'Manitou', a Cowboy Club Buffalo and a Wild-West Association in Freiburg, and a Karlsruhe group devoted to studying and re-enacting the customs and lifestyles of the Lakota Indians; some clubs chose one Native American culture to specialize in.²² Members of these clubs typically adopted a 'Western' name and *persona* (either a 'Westernman' cowboy or an Indian), created a costume to match the role, and set about learning the skills and crafts that their adopted role required. Some immersed themselves in indigenous North American arts and crafts, sometimes obtaining information from German ethnographic museums, where some fans worked. They trained themselves to create elaborate glass bead work, skilled leatherwork, feather headdresses, moccasins, etc., using local materials in most cases, which all helped them to recreate and interpret how members of particular tribes or white 'settlers' had 'really' looked. They practiced using throwing knives, whips, and lassos, and taught themselves how to create teepees: their accomplishments represented the fusion of ethnological scholarship, popular culture, and a profound sense of affinity with the peoples and cultures of the American West.²³ Decades

before the media fans discussed by Henry Jenkins, German hobbyists became ‘knowledge communities,’ developing ‘collective intelligence’ which in some groups came to challenge and displace some of the details of May’s original world, or the ‘Old West’ they had experienced in other popular entertainments.²⁴

These early hobbyist associations strove for ‘authenticity’ in their clothing and artifacts, gathering to practice the dances, songs, and crafts of their chosen ‘Indian’ cultures or cowboys’ skills; some club members chose to adopt both types of roles. Interestingly, club members did not role-play cowboys *versus* Indians, as Americans – accustomed to seeing the two groups as adversaries in American Westerns – might have done. Instead, like Old Shatterhand and Winnetou, both roles coexisted amiably, or members might play both roles in turn; perhaps decades of reading Westerns in Germany that featured white narrators who were allies of the ‘Indian’ characters produced this friendly co-existence. Because they strove for authenticity no matter what their *persona*, many members ultimately came to distance themselves from Karl May’s fictionalized world and stories after 1945. But before 1945, early club members often acknowledged that May was a major source of inspiration, and there was some overlap between fans of Karl May’s world and characters, and hobbyist re-enactors of indigenous American cultures. As we see in the example of the Munich club discussed below, the lure of playing with May’s characters competed with the drive for ‘authenticity’ through the 1930s.²⁵

Women were active in hobbyist groups from the beginning, although they comprised a minority of those who joined cowboy and Indian clubs. Surviving photos show that while some groups were overwhelmingly male, others included a sizable minority of women.²⁶ Still, it seems clear that the majority of German cowboys and Indians were male for most of the early to mid- twentieth century, a trait that they shared with almost all other literary fan groups of this period.²⁷ Women might have been less likely to have the resources needed to participate in such groups: money for costumes, publications, artifacts, and occasional travel, and especially the time free from household obligations. Furthermore, while many of May’s readers were women, audience surveys showed that his readership consisted disproportionately of young men, and thus the clubs’ memberships might have been influenced by the social composition of May’s readership as a whole.²⁸

Although men predominated among Western clubs, it still would have been difficult to reenact German fans’ imagined Indian cultures without women: as in club members’ daily lives, women were responsible for creating Western or Indian clothing for group members. The *Indianistik* hobbyist clubs included a significant amount of ‘arts and crafts’ work that easily included women, and some groups showcased women in their own craft and skill demonstrations. Clubs that focused largely on cowboys, as opposed to Indians, could be more homosocial, although these groups often did include women, especially those who wanted to transgress norms for women’s dress and behavior, expressing their own performative impulses by modeling themselves on the Wild West celebrity *persona* of Annie Oakley, etc.²⁹

Those interested in May's stories, or in the American West more generally, were supported and connected to each other during between the two world wars in part through the efforts of a devoted May enthusiast named Patty Frank; the name was an adopted 'American' style cowboy name for a German whose legal name was Ernst Tobias. Frank was the first director of the Karl May Museum, created in a log cabin built next to May's former dwelling, the Villa 'Shatterhand,' outside Dresden in 1928, which was already well-established as a site for fan pilgrimage. The Museum formed a focal point for May fans' activities during the interwar period, when both the publisher and (after 1933) the political climate could have worked against May's reputation and popularity, since May's most beloved characters were non-white, and his pacifism was certainly not well-aligned with Nazi values. Frank used his political and public relations skills to keep May's legacy and connections to the American West in the public eye under both National Socialism and (more discreetly) after 1945 in East Germany, where the Museum was located.

Frank had no interest in subjecting May's novels to any reality tests, and his collection of Native American artifacts bolstered the 'authenticity' of May's museum. He lived on the Museum's premises (named the Villa 'Bear Fat') and offered tours and talks to visiting hobbyists until his death in 1959. He encouraged devotees of the American West to form new fan clubs, and connected them with each other across Germany, acting as a clearing house for such information. He also invited small groups of local 'Indian' hobbyists to meet at his Museum.³⁰ Frank worked to promote May's legacy and German engagement with a semi-fictionalized American West for decades, providing a focal point for fan tourism and gatherings throughout the Nazi period and (keeping a lower profile for reasons discussed below) in East Germany.

Dressed as a cowboy, Frank was regularly photographed during the 1930s sitting next to the Western-style stone fireplace inside his log cabin, or at the bar of the 'Smiling Prairie Dog Saloon,' a part of the museum complex that could have come directly from the set of a Western movie. His anecdotes and exotic Indian artifacts continued to make good copy in German newspapers. In fact, the Museum was a favored destination for Nazi boys' group field trips. Frank was photographed for one magazine spread, for example, with a series of visitors from the Hitler Youth, as he showed them May's rifle, and how to throw a lasso. The appeal of exotic weapons and nature skills clearly transcended any single political regime.³¹

Liberated from their original texts and used in other formats, May's characters could be made to stand for diverse positions, just as celebrity images are used in advertising endorsements. For this reason, Nazi authorities were clearly much more willing to allow fans to organize around transmedial productions or derivative products and activities than to meet regularly to parse the novels themselves in group discussions, since May's novels could be assigned diverse (and sometimes anti-Nazi) interpretations. Nazi authorities only allowed the most 'acceptable' May novels to stay in print throughout the 1930s; May's later, more pacifist novels went out of print, something that his estate and publishers could no

longer prevent, since their editorial control was now overshadowed by the regime's management of popular culture.

Nazi officials acted to suppress May literary societies, therefore, while allowing film and play productions, open-air festivals, May Museum tours, and live role-play in the *Indianistik* hobbyist groups to continue.³² Cowboy and Indian clubs founded in Weimar Germany were also allowed to continue operations after 1933.³³ The 1930s witnessed exhibitions, plays, movies, and puppet shows based on May's stories, and both the 25th anniversary of his death (in 1937) and the 100th anniversary of his birth (in 1942) were widely commemorated in Nazi Germany. Summer performances of May's stories (*Freilichtspiele*) on large outdoor stages or amphitheatres attracted hundreds of thousands of attendees during the late 1930s – over 450,000 came to a 1940 two-month run of performances about Winnetou in Werder, near Berlin, and additional open-air performances were held in Rathen.³⁴

Fans of May's novels and 'Indian' hobbyists could thus present themselves as politically unproblematic, distancing themselves from May's pacifism and other controversial aspects of his story world during the Nazi period in their role-play. Living interpretations, after all, could become even more fluid than texts. And such groups no doubt served as an escape into an imaginary world that participants could render 'apolitical' and thus attractive.

Enthusiasts of the American West continued to spend a great deal of time during the 1930s researching and learning specific Indian arts or skills in an attempt to make as real as possible the world of the American West, although their insistence on 'accurate' indigenous North American ethnographic detail was often still combined during this period with enthusiasm about May's fictional world and a desire to play within it. Both impulses were on display at a 1938 celebration of the Munich Cowboy Club, described by a sympathetic local reporter:

The club might strike some as a costumed masquerade and games, and others as an expression of a passion for ethnology and deep compassion for a people who are rapidly dying out. One thing is sure: all of us who read Cooper and Karl May as children still feel the pull of the romance of a Wild West that is probably now vanished forever. Everything that they [the club members] do is authentic: the gestures and expressions, the clothing (some costumes were those worn by famous redskins), the war paint, and even how they smoke the peace pipe. And they can do everything that real cowboys and Indians can do for the celebration, Karl May Museum Director Patty Frank was invited [a film of a Karl May story was shown, possibly made by the club members] and we saw Old Shatterhand and Winnetou greet each other in a primordial forest. That was Karl May's magical world [followed by club members'] demonstrations of lasso throwing, knife throwing, archery, displays of whips and Winchester rifles. The celebration

closed with an Indian war dance; participants and demonstrators included Bob Cloud, Sitting Otter, Charlie and Blondy Nelson, Pecos Kid Daisy Gordon and Doris Cumberland [a list of the club pseudonyms of the members] In the demonstrations that displayed the athletic prowess of the members, the ‘Squaws’ showed themselves to particularly good advantage.³⁵

In some respects, this account included elements that could be found in cowboy and ‘Indian’ hobbyist clubs not only during the interwar period, but after 1945, as well as in literary fandoms in the United States both before and after World War II: the nostalgic emphasis on role play; the recreation of the arts, crafts, and customs of a ‘lost’ world; a fan-made film that offered the fans’ interpretation of May’s canon, complete with their own script, sets, and props; and varied *personas* which each member had developed to reflect his or own values and reading of May’s characters.

The 1938 celebration in Munich also pointed to the array of activities and possible interpretations undertaken by German fans of the American West. It also reflected the ways in which cowboy and ‘Indian’ role playing could simultaneously reflect or challenge established gender roles (depending on participants’ tastes), since ‘Indian’ women, cowboys, and ‘Indian’ men were all often seen in essentialized terms, naturalizing qualities ascribed to both sexes, while also allowing women in the club to transgress social norms and ‘become’ Annie Oakley, if they so choose. A variety of roles could thus be accommodated within the flexible framework of the American West, as interpreted by club members. Club members interpreted the ‘freedom’ of the Old West as granting individuals the liberty to create their own interpretive *personas*.

Most clubs’ activities were suspended, or at best severely affected, by the beginning of World War II in 1939, which impacted on the availability of raw materials as well as members’ participation. Many of the male club members were drafted, and resources became scarcer and scarcer to create costumes, artifacts, performances, etc. One man active in the Dresden area club, ‘Manitou 1930’, recalled that the club meetings gradually ceased altogether, since almost all the men were drafted.³⁶ The development of this fandom during the Nazi period thus underscores the ways in which fans’ ‘world exploring’ could be either facilitated or constrained within particular national and historical contexts. On the one hand, the Nazis had weakened the May estate’s effective control over the canon copyrights, and allowed a variety of transmedial May productions to flourish. But the war that the same regime began ultimately shut down fans’ activities, just as the war radically reshaped all citizens’ past times and consumption choices in each combatant nation.

Cowboys and Indians in a Divided Germany: ‘Indian’ Hobbyists and Karl May fans

The postwar partition of Germany divided German devotees of the American West, just as it had the nation itself. Over the next 45 years, ‘Western’ fan communities developed in quite different directions. The West German fan community was influenced by the steady growth of the West German consumer society, and Western enthusiasts’ activities there were liberated further when May’s work and characters entered public domain in 1963: May’s stories and characters were thus even more available for fans to celebrate and re-interpret, and many did so in an increasingly playful fashion in open-air festivals and ‘Karl May Days’ celebrations, which (over decades) developed its own fan infrastructure, complete with online magazines showcasing particularly elaborate or successful examples of ‘Western’ play.³⁷ In East Germany, the political terrain was obviously quite different, and East German hobbyists had to continue to maneuver around official disapproval of May and Westerns as an ‘imperialist’ American genre. But while the political context in each country now differed, the postwar period also witnessed a continuing bifurcation between ‘Indian’ hobbyists on the one hand – who cherished and pursued ‘authenticity’ in their personas and performances, along with connections with living indigenous American cultures – and Karl May fans on the other, who increasingly accepted or even celebrated the fictional nature of Karl May’s world and characters. As one post-war admirer commented about May’s claims that his novels were ‘autobiographical’ and based on his experience in the real West: ‘the fact that he lied, was one of the best things about him’ since that put his stories in the top rank of German fairy tales.³⁸

In East Germany, May was nearly *persona non grata* until the 1980s. May’s characters and plots in general had been tolerated by Nazi authorities before 1945, and (removed from their contexts in his novels) sometimes even made to reflect or endorse Nazi values. But although the Nazis had been able to ‘repurpose’ Western themes in their own propaganda, East German Communist authorities saw a more difficult stumbling block in the May novels rooted in Cold War antagonisms: no matter how one interpreted them, they were still set in the United States, now the ‘class enemy’ of East Germany’s patron, the Soviet Union. May’s novels were also tarred by the fact that he was known to have been Hitler’s favorite author; many East German socialists thus argued that May’s novels were incompatible with socialism.³⁹

East German cultural authorities debated the subject among themselves for a few years, but ultimately ruled that while May novels were not banned *per se*, scarce resources did not permit the printing of new copies while so many other, more worthwhile, adventure novels needed to see print. May’s books were still passed hand-to-hand among the hundreds of thousands who owned pre-war editions, however, and were often obtained from West German sources. The Karl May Museum was not shut down, but instead was quietly renamed the Indian Museum and its exhibits on General Custer and Buffalo Bill disappeared, while Patty Frank wisely kept a lower public profile. East German authorities

refused to license reprints of the novels themselves until the 1980s, although derivative works like comics and films (with thinly-veiled May characters) were approved as early as the 1960s.⁴⁰

May's novels therefore existed in a sort of cultural limbo for most of the East Germany's existence: not illegal, but not supported by the state, either. In the Nazi period, May's pacifism and non-white characters had formed a political stumbling block; but in East Germany, it was the geographical location of May's world (the United States) that was unacceptable. Certainly, no literary society devoted exclusively to the study of Karl May, similar to the Baker Street Irregulars, was allowed to form in East Germany.

But as in the Nazi period, 'Indian' hobbyist groups were still acceptable to the regime because they could distance themselves from the text of the novels. Just as Patty Frank's Museum was renamed, Western enthusiasts in East Germany shifted decisively toward *Indianistik*, i.e. 'Indian' re-enactment, and those who dressed as cowboys did so more clandestinely (often doing so only after dark, and in private). 'Indian' hobbyists had always been a strong presence within prewar Western fan community, but now they were almost the only officially tolerated form of 'Western' fan community in East German. And as in the 1930s, indigenous Americans could also be made to stand for an array of values, some of which were acceptable to East German authorities. And as 'Indian' groups grew in both East and West Germany, they cultivated closer ties to real Native American communities and activists within the United States.

The first *Indianistik* group to be refounded in East Germany was a successor group to the prewar Dresden society, the Manitou club. One of the few club members to have survived the war was a drugstore owner named Johannes Huettner, known to Indian enthusiasts by his club name, Old Powder Face. He reopened his store and it became a hangout for younger Indian enthusiasts; around 1950, Powder Face began to apply for legal registration as a club, but ran into some resistance from East German authorities. Wouldn't it be better, one local official suggested, to study instead the original inhabitants of Siberia, who now—under the inspired leadership of Stalin—were marching towards a brighter future? The Dresden 'Indians' persisted, and were finally allowed to register legally in 1956 as 'the District Cultural Group of the Central Project Bureau of the Glass and Ceramics Industry.'⁴¹

In order to prove their social value, members of 'Old Manitou' organized an Indian exhibition at the Dresden Zoo soon thereafter. In more than 55 live demonstrations, club members performed lasso and whip tricks, archery, knife throwing and riding, and exhibited teepees and costumes to interested zoo visitors. East German 'Indian' hobbyists thus replaced the traveling prewar circuses and other public exhibitions of 'real' Indians for the East German public, and began to receive small subsidies from the state as 'popular artistic collectives.'⁴² Other clubs were soon founded (or refounded) across the East Germany, and many also received modest state subsidies.

Beginning in 1958, East German 'Indians' mounted a national gathering each summer which attracted as many as 1000 hobbyists for a week of games, sports, and

costumed role-play that drew upon their collective ethnographic intelligence regarding indigenous American cultures to create ever more elaborate examples of performative consumption. Like similar clubs from before 1945, the *Indianistik* groups created elaborate feather headdresses, moccasins and other accessories to show off at such gatherings. They performed 'Indian' dances to their own original music, and practiced knife throwing as well as the use of whips and lassoes.

This type of re-enactment was even more acceptable to East German authorities when their admirers presented indigenous cultures as victims of American capitalism and colonialism, an interpretation for which there was (and is) enormous evidence. New novels presenting indigenous Americans in this light were published in East Germany, particularly the works of East German author and academic Liselotte Welskopf-Henrich, who enjoyed official approval. Welskopf-Henrich framed her characters as victims of American imperialism in language more explicitly political than the prewar tropes of the 'last Indian'.⁴³ She became a key figure connecting East German 'Indian' sympathizers to Native Americans, developing good connections with the American Indian Movement (or AIM) in the 1970s, and serving as a conduit to link East German hobbyists with Native American pen pals and AIM contacts.⁴⁴ A part of the Primary World which has been very distant for Germans in previous generations, now came closer into reach, as German 'Indians' developed greatly increased access to and connections with 'real' indigenous American communities after 1945.

The number of 'Indian' clubs grew steadily throughout the East Germany's existence, particularly when – seeking to compete with the blockbuster West German films like *Treasure of Silver Lake* (1962), *Winnetou* (1963), and *Old Shatterhand* (1964), based on May's novels produced by Harald Reinl after the copyright expired – the East German film authority DEFA released a series of very popular Indian films starting in the 1960s. East German Indian movies like *The Sons of the Great She-Bear* (1966) had scripts that were more socialist in tone, however, than contemporary West German Karl May films, presenting heroic Indians who struggled against greedy American capitalist land speculators, and often organizing collectively to assure their survival. Like the 'socialist' Indian films being made in Czechoslovakia during the same period, the DEFA films were huge hits.⁴⁵

The films and the popularity of the Native American rights movement (particularly after the occupation of Wounded Knee) inspired the creation of dozens more East German hobbyist groups during the 1970s and 1980s. The 'young savages' (as the older club members called them) did their own ethnographic research, traveling to folklore exhibits and museums in order to photograph and copy costumes and artifacts. They incorporated new 'tribes,' whose cultures had not been performed in clubs before, like the Iroquois and Pueblo Indians, and gave lectures and put on exhibits at schools and museums. By the late 1970s, they were also making their own amateur films, documentary style reenactments, to demonstrate accurate dances and techniques for creating costumes. Using their contacts with the American Indian Movement (AIM) and other indigenous American communities, younger club members obtained ethnological literature from the U.S. regarding teepee

construction and other aspects of Indian culture, and translated and distributed typewritten copies within East Germany so that even those German Indians 'who did not speak English could still get correct information about the construction of teepees.'⁴⁶

Insofar as East German 'Indians' were critical of American imperialism and the U.S. government's persecution of the AIM, they had the approval and support of the East German state. Members of some clubs, like Old Manitou, staged public performances almost every weekend, at town fairs and children's festivals, or at the 750th anniversary celebrations of Berlin. State subsidies of some East German Indian hobbyist clubs were substantial enough that they even helped to finance clubs' construction of 'Western towns' or 'Indian villages' by clubs. 'Stetson City' was the name of the small settlement built by Club Manitou members in the woods outside Dresden, for example. Members built log cabins where they could spend weekends or holidays in the settlement, which included a 'Sheriff's office' and a saloon for evening gatherings, and a field for practicing crafts and skills.⁴⁷

By this time, and since the 1950s, the range of possible interpretations of Indian roles in East Germany had expanded considerably. The more conservative club members, who were often older and more critical of the regime, stayed closer to Karl May's story world in their interpretations, and sometimes played the roles of cowboys (at night) as well as Indians by day. Other, younger enthusiasts completely rejected Karl May's characters as insufficiently authentic, had no interest in cowboys, and were interested in linking their roles and groups to a more politically progressive critique of U.S. imperialism: these groups cultivated contacts with the AIM. And finally, a third group emerged during the 1970s and 1980s: people who wanted to use an Indian *persona* and club to 'drop out' and escape from daily life in East Germany as much as possible, and also to express a 'green' critique of their government's ecological record. For this last segment of the hobbyist community, life as an Indian would be a vehicle to go 'back to nature'. They, too, built Indian settlements in forests where they could live naturally, as Indians. But they abjured state subsidies, tried to escape state scrutiny as much as possible, and sometimes even built their weekend settlements in remote wooded areas, in order to keep them secret.⁴⁸

Newcomers to the *Indianistik* movement in East Germany could choose any of these approaches, or seek out new interpretations by modeling themselves on the indigenous North American culture of their choice. Harmut Felbers' club, founded in 1980 in Brandenburg, was an example of a group driven by a desire to find Native American models that allowed more activities for female members. Felbers was aged 22 when he helped found the group, and was the oldest member. He had read some novels about Indians while doing his mandatory military service after finishing school, and organized a group of younger enthusiasts after his discharge to study and recreate Indian life, as an escape from what members considered to be a gray sort of daily life. Felbers ran a small classified ad in a local paper, and twelve Indian buffs (most in their teens) responded, creating a group that lasted for more than a decade. The group chose the Mohawks as 'their' culture for several reasons. 'That was something special', Felbers recalled later:

not every club chose the Mohawks . . . and there were more pair dances to do [compared to other indigenous American cultures]. Among the Dakotas [*Indianistik* clubs], the women just stood on the sidelines and chattered while the men played the role of great warriors in the center. We had a lot of girls in our group, and they weren't interested in that [the Dakota roles for women] . . . They also liked the sewing and crafts a lot [which used leather, beads, and other exotic materials] . . . they really looked special [when costumed], and everyone in the school knew who they were.⁴⁹

At first, some of his neighbors thought that Felbers and his group were 'nutjobs,' he said; clearly, fans could be pathologized on both sides of the Iron Curtain. But after the group was invited to perform their Mohawk dances in full costume at a local agrarian fair to entertain some visiting Native American activists, and the performance was broadcast on TV, Felbers' standing with local townspeople rose considerably. 'After that, they didn't call me 'crazy' again', he recalled proudly. 'We had to be something special, they all decided, since we had been shown officially on TV and everything'.⁵⁰

The American Indian Movement gained support in West Germany during the 1970s as well, since left-wing West Germans also sympathized with indigenous Americans as an oppressed minority. But West German re-enactors didn't need Native Americans to provide political justification for their hobby, since the authorities never sought to suppress them in West Germany. 'Indian' hobbyist groups expanded after 1945 in both Germanies, therefore, but against very different political contexts. In West Germany, the entire continuum of Western fan activities created during the 1920s and 1930s had resumed after the war and grew rapidly after 1950. Increasingly, fans who focused explicitly on the works of Karl May organized themselves separately from those hobbyists who were interested in creating an authentic 'Indian' *persona* and lifestyle.

The growth of West German fan activities and organizations, like other hobbies that depended on disposable income, kept pace with the expansion of West Germany's consumer society. West Germans increasingly had the funds and time to spend on travel and new consumer goods, and many of those who were May fans could now afford to celebrate May's world in varied ways. West Germans could undertake fan pilgrimage tourism abroad, traveling to destinations associated with May's life or even to locations in America mentioned in his stories, or to sites where May movies had been filmed. West German fans also flocked in the hundreds of thousands to now-revived and ever larger open-air performances of May stories held each summer, which were the focal points for Karl May summer festivals.

And when they were at home, West German enthusiasts could purchase a plethora of May-related products: comics, Western or Indian clothing sold at chains of 'Westernstores', May records, posters, and every sort of memorabilia. In the absence of any copyright holder after 1962, a variety of producers could commodify May's world, selling

transmedial extensions of his canon, but without the centralized editorial control imposed by the copyright holders for the Oz and Tarzan story worlds discussed by Matthew Freeman. West Germans who loved Westerns could wear their Western gear (commercial products purchased at 'Western' stores) to Western-themed bars, such as those on the Reeperbahn in Hamburg – a capitalist, consumer culture alternative to the more homespun 'Stetson City' created by the East German Club Manitou outside Dresden. The growth of West Germany's consumer culture combined with the expiration of the May estate's copyright to facilitate the steady growth of commodified, semi-fictional Western past times among West German fans. Wearing Western gear to themed bars was cosplay, in a limited sense, but done in a very different context than American or British cosplay of a later period.

Besides Western-themed bars, fans could wear their costumes at Karl May festivals; some devoted fans would attend twenty Karl May themed performances at such festivals each summer, sometimes spending their entire vacations traveling from one festival to another. Open-air festival performances began again in Bad Segeberg, north of Hamburg, in 1952. The annual festival in Bad Segeberg remained the largest and most professional, drawing over 900,000 visitors in its first ten years, and between 250,000-300,000 annually in recent years. But the number of annual Karl May festivals expanded steadily after German reunification in 1990. Some were highly professional productions, run by nonprofit corporations, while others were smaller, more amateur local festivals put on by fans. By the late twentieth century, much of the Karl May fandom's activities revolved around these open-air festivals and associated performances.⁵¹

The expansion of a commercial market for Western and May derivative products, and indeed the explosion of a consumer culture in West Germany more broadly, was a key factor – along with the quite different political climate and the entry of the novels into public domain – in opening up different choices and experiences for West German May fans, compared to their predecessors before the war, or their counterparts in East Germany. Both before 1945 and in East Germany, fans of May and the Old West had created an essentially 'homemade' experience: like their costumes, their interpretations tended to be non-commercial and individual. Crafting costumes and artifacts for oneself or for friends was part of the hobby, and the range of May-related commercial entertainments and products offered to fans had been much more limited. But in West Germany, by the 1960s the stories and *persona* of Karl May were no longer politically problematic, and copyright restrictions were no longer a consideration. The room for 'free play', for a greater range of more explicitly fictional expression and experiences, thus expanded rapidly, and the May fan community came to include a spectrum of groups and hobbies that were often referred to as the 'May scene'.

The expansion of the West German Karl May fan base was underwritten by the enormous success of Western novels and movies during the 1950s and 1960s: over 200 Western films were released in West Germany between 1948 and 1953, even before the May novels were filmed in the 1960s. The boom in Western films was paralleled by the growth in cheap Western novels in West Germany; like May's original novels, however,

these films remain largely unknown in the English-speaking world, despite being known to almost all Central Europeans.⁵² Fans who couldn't afford to buy these dime novels could borrow them, with West German libraries loaning 626,000 copies of Westerns in 1964 alone.⁵³

Some German fans bought Western or Indian clothing, listened to records or bought May comics, flocked to see Karl May films, or traveled to Bad Segeberg to see live performances each year of Karl May plays in West Germany: others also organized clubs, film festivals, or created their own May-themed performances or publications. The organization of a more formal May literary society was made easier when the works entered public domain at the end of 1962. May enthusiasts who were sophisticated in terms of literary scholarship and the canon had long been dissatisfied with the 'popular' (expurgated) editions offered by the publisher, and had circulated mimeographed newsletters that analyzed May's life and works in some detail; in 1969 sixteen of them founded the Karl May Society (or KMG). The KMG became the most serious-minded of the postwar May fan organizations – although there were also groups devoted to the study of May films, and many less formal clubs – and is the largest literary society in Germany today.⁵⁴ In its first thirty years, the KMG publications amounted to over 33,000 pages of material: essays and scholarly editions that aimed to illuminate but also to rehabilitate Karl May's literary legacy.⁵⁵

Like contemporary literary fan groups in the English-speaking world, the KMG hosted an annual weekend and dinner. The tone of its meetings tended to be earnest and scholarly, setting this segment of the May fan community apart from the (usually more playful or droll) role-playing 'Western days' gatherings. Compared to many other Karl May enthusiasts, the members of the KMG were also distinctly bourgeois. The 1973 KMG gathering held in Regensburg was typical, in that participants gathered in a hotel for a good meal, followed by a lecture, music, sociability, and May-related conversations. A lecture given by a university professor fan was followed by music, as a member played pieces by Debussy. In its account of the gathering, the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* noted dryly that 'a large, somewhat darkened photo of the 'storyteller from Radebeul' graced the top of the concert piano – which resembled a sarcophagus – and which lent the meeting a suitable dignity.' There were also tables where visitors could purchase KMG publications and other fan memorabilia.⁵⁶

Karl May fans did more than create their own interpretations, publications, costumes, and crafts: they became fan tourists, participating in a variety of May-related tours. Like other sorts of fan consumption, the increase in fan 'pilgrimage' tourism paralleled the expansion of the larger tourism industry in West Germany. During the 1960s, devoted Karl May readers could and did begin traveling to the American West; one company catered to West German May fans by offering what it called 'Winnetours' of the regions where May's Westerns were set.⁵⁷ Visits to locations in Croatia where the popular Karl May movies of the 1960s were filmed could also be compelling for May enthusiasts.⁵⁸

The expansion of summer May festivals after the 1980s offered a springboard for fans' gatherings and creative productions, as well. There are about a dozen such annual festivals in Germany today, ranging from large, professional open-air theater productions (like those in Bad Segeburg or Rathen) to smaller productions and festivals hosted by a local sporting or fan association. Each festival is organized around (but is usually not limited to) theatrical performances that are loosely based on Karl May's stories. They combine other entertainments and performances as well: most feature quasi-fictional 'Western' towns next to the open air theater, where spectators can buy Western merchandise and foods, sometimes crafted to reflect local tastes (e.g., the pink alcoholic rhubarb juice sold at one festival, billed as 'firewater'). The Western towns include many of the locales familiar from movies and May stories – a saloon, a jail, a Chinese laundry, etc. – and occasionally 'Indian' hobbyists.

Beyond the 'Western' town, some festivals include encampments of diverse re-enactors, some of which hardly appeared in the May novels; German 'Southern Confederate' re-enactors have become particularly numerous since Germany's reunification, even though May's novels are set after the end of the U.S. Civil War, in the far American West. 'Confederate' troops are often used to fire fusillades and open festival performances in some venues; they and their costumed 'Southern lady' female members sometimes join parades that form part of the festivals. Other festivals feature 'settler' re-enactors, and occasionally even 'Indian' hobbyists, although these groups also often distance themselves from Karl May festivals. To the extent that they do participate in Karl May festivals, 'Indian' hobbyists see themselves as serving an educational function, by 'correcting' the inaccuracies of May's fictional world. They also hope to recruit new members from the participants.⁵⁹

Larger festivals with bigger budgets pay for 'real' indigenous American artists and performers to travel to Germany. One of the most variegated festivals, held in Radebeul each year, invited Native American artists in 2006-2007 to create impressive rock art on the walls of a local quarry, and to teach festival visitors their culture's dances. Overall, the festivals create an eclectic carnival atmosphere, combining costumed (or partially-costumed) spectators, indigenous Americans, Confederate or 'settler' re-enactors, costumed actors and stage hands, country-western music bands, vendors selling Western-themed food and merchandise, and occasionally even a steam-powered railroad engine (which is then attacked by 'bandits'), theater, dance, and both serious and tongue-in-cheek role-play. As one festival organizer noted, their festival 'take[s] the liberty to deal with May[']s novels] in a freer way but we don't think it is bad for him ... in a festive atmosphere ... [we seek to make a festival where] everything is vivid, touchable.'⁶⁰

At these festivals, both the producers and spectators re-interpret Karl May's world to suit contemporary values and individual needs. Festival productions insert strong female leads (such as a female doctor) to compensate for the lack of female roles in May's novels; they also sometimes feature cross-dressing female actors in male roles. Modern festival plays and associated performances often explicitly promote themes of respect for other

cultures or races, or ecological concerns. On occasion, festival performances intervene in and rewrite key features of May's novels. Thus, a recent production in the Elspe festival surveyed spectators to see whether they thought that Winnetou should really 'die,' and when the majority voted against the loss of the character – who is as popular among May fans as Spock is among Star Trek fans – the festival then brought an actor costumed as Karl May on stage, who was persuaded to 'rewrite' the story to allow the resurrection of Winnetou.⁶¹

May fans build communities at and around the summer festivals, sometimes visiting several in turn, or spending their entire vacations at a single festival. The festivals also offer enthusiasts the chance to share their own creations. Fan organizations have created paper or online magazines with impressive production values – like *Karl May & Co.*, for example – which feature photos of the festivals and articles analyzing or critiquing aspects of each festival.⁶² Others create their own audio plays, which are shared in podcasts.⁶³ The community divides over the question of whether festival productions ought to be *Werktrue* (true to May's novels), and so discussions over the question of the festival scripts' fidelity to canon vs. adaptation are lively. But unlike 'Indian' hobbyists, May fans seem to care little about whether the festival productions and stories are true to the history of the West, i.e. historically 'authentic.' The fictional nature of May's American West, along with his fabricated persona and claims that his novels were based on his own travels, was invariably assumed, if not explicitly celebrated.⁶⁴

The tone of such costumed Karl May fan gatherings is sometimes droll, a tongue-in-cheek approach to staging characters and events from Karl May's world that is much less earnest than the KMG's literary scholarship and quite different from the dogged insistence on 'authenticity' of the 'Indian' hobbyist clubs, which by the 1980s had thoroughly distanced themselves from May's fictional world. Rather than seeking to recreate a 'lost' historical world, costumed Karl May fans in at May festivals are engaging in an exercise of ironic imagination akin to role-play at an American Renaissance Faire.

As Michael Saler has observed of mid- and late-twentieth-century Sherlock Holmes fans, these Karl May fans 'were not so much willingly suspending their disbelief in a fictional character as willingly believing in him with the double-minded awareness that they were engaged in pretense.'⁶⁵ In pursuit of their 'Great Game,' the Sherlockians seek to "prove" the reality of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson by 'reconciling [that canon's] apparent contradictions, and filling in its lacunae.' Karl May fans suspend disbelief as well, but without the focus on reconciling canonical inconsistencies. Like Sherlockians, however, their 'collective effort often heightened each individual's emotional investment in an imaginary world, as the world became a shared, ongoing project rather than a transient private encounter.'⁶⁶

This ironic 'belief' in the reality of Karl May's stories and characters gave these fans an imaginary and enjoyable world to immerse themselves in. The performative aspects of costume, artifacts, horses, playing with whips, lassoes, or knife throwing, recreations of scenes and activities from the novels, etc. – role-play and performance – created (and still

create today) a sort of time warp effect, as assemblies of costumed fans evoked a quaint, fun, and heavily fictionalized pocket of the past.

Although the Karl May festivals and other May gatherings continued to flourish after Germany's reunification, the more 'authentic' *Indianistik* hobbyist clubs have suffered some decline, particularly in the former East German provinces. The end of travel restrictions on East Germans after 1990 meant that many more ordinary Germans could travel to the United States and thus be exposed to modern Native Americans, particularly those in the Great Plains states, who have developed a lucrative industry catering to German tourists. In the process, their earlier, sometimes fictionalized images of indigenous American cultures were challenged. German 'Indians' were often disillusioned by the reality of American reservation life, where they witnessed poverty, alcoholism, and also how Native Americans had acquired 'un-Indian' objects, including pickup trucks and refrigerators. 'They aren't real Indians anymore,' members of the Old Manitou club assured visitors in 2007. 'Anyone who wants to know what the 'real' Indian life is like would be better off coming here.'⁶⁷

'Indian' hobbyists' careful preservation of accurate cultural recreation and authenticity still provided no guarantee of popularity, however. The number of such hobbyist clubs has declined steadily over the last 15 years across Germany, and the spokesman for the Munich Cowboy and Indian Club noted a few years ago that their own Indians are simply dying out: 'we don't have more than three anymore.'⁶⁸ During the same period, American Civil War re-enactor groups have become popular among German fans, while medieval role-play societies – including so-called 'Hordes of Huns' – have grown across Germany.

The affinity expressed in popular German culture with indigenous American peoples continues unabated, however, although the *Indianistik* clubs seem to be declining in favor of other types of historical reenactment role-play. But the 'Karl May scene,' focused more specifically on the fictionalized Old West of his novels, still continues to be lively a century after the creation of the first Karl May fan group. These communities revolve around collective discussion, play, amendment and interpretation of May's world and stories along with other fictional Westerns, as told in an array of media forms: picking them apart, recreating them, and reworking them according to the interests of the moment.

Conclusion

German devotees of the American West offer an interesting case study showing how geographical, historical, and national contexts help shape fans' exploration of (and opportunities to extend) a particular canon world. Much more so than in Britain or America, German Western fans' opportunities were constrained (or sometimes supported) by the impact of politically repressive regimes, war, and Cold War antagonisms. Western enthusiasts who found themselves in East Germany after 1945, for example, were 'pushed' by both state repression and public financial support towards a focus on 'authentic' reenactment, and were forbidden to form groups specifically devoted to Karl May's world. During the same period, West German fans could pursue not only 'Indian' hobbyist

reenactment, but also play within the semi-fictional version of the Old West offered by Karl May's stories, since both types of Western worlds were seen as politically unproblematic in West Germany.

The experiences of West German fans after 1945 also reflects the steady growth of a 'leisure culture' in modern consumer societies, and the ways that leisure increasingly became the site for the creation of personal identities during the twentieth century. West German fans were the market for (and sometimes themselves the producers of) a variety of transmedial commodities and entertainments set in May's world, since this canon was never under strict editorial control from the copyright holder after the Nazis took control in 1933, a constraint that disappeared entirely when the copyright expired in 1963. The versions of May's world that appeared in films, comics, and open-air festivals after the 1960s therefore extended or even amended May's world to reflect fans' or audiences' desires, allowing attendees at open air festivals to vote on whether an important character should die, for example, or reworking the original canon stories to include more modern sensibilities on topics like women's roles. These newer incarnations of May's world could thus subvert or rework key events or themes of his novels.

After a century of fans' engagement, it is the celebration of the books and films themselves (both May's and other Westerns) at Karl May Gatherings and open-air festivals that remain attractive to many fans. Perhaps the May story world remains compelling precisely because of its romantic, fantastical, 'inauthentic' content: because it remains a somewhat 'secondary' and semi-imaginary world, based on a local German understanding of Primary World history. The Karl May fandom also still flourishes because it is a community where fans can become expert enough to join in collective play simply through reading the novels or even just seeing the movies. By contrast, German 'Indian' hobbyists' creative work requires a greater amount of research and effort; perhaps also they have declined somewhat in size because their views of the American West have been overtaken by the modern reality of life on Native American reservations. In the end, the world of 'Indian' hobbyists is perhaps not secondary and imaginary enough to sustain the playful fan engagement, exploration, and world extension that Karl May's world offers. After all, 'Indian' re-enactors operate under the checks and constraints of a Primary World setting; Karl May's world, free of any centralized editorial control since 1963, offers fans much more elbow room.

In a 2009 *New York Times* article, an American reporter interviewed one of the remaining East German 'Indians,' an unemployed 50-year-old man who had taken his teepee to live in the yard behind the Karl May house Radebeul. Unlike some local hobbyists, he also participated in the Karl May open-air festivals in Radebeul.⁶⁹ Juergen Michaelis showed the reporter his homemade deerskin suit. 'The Indians made these out of the cotton that perfidious Americans sold them', he said, referring to his teepee. 'This one's better. It's acrylic. From Saxony.' He also told the reporter what his chosen name was. 'My Indian name,' he said, 'is Lonely Man.'⁷⁰

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Notes:

¹ Dirk Kurbjuweit, 'Im Lande Winnetous', *Spiegel*, 2. Juni 2006, 24. For vivid examples of German hobbyist 'Indian' *personas* and performances, see the video of a recent Black Forest Pow wow posted here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-v9KM1MUJ> (accessed July 19, 2013) and a 2011 Pow wow in Saarland complete with a variety of other 'Western' *personas*, including Union and Confederate cavalry participants here <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rS0lIX7BoQ8> (accessed July 19, 2013).

² Scholars of indigenous American cultures today are often divided about what term to use to refer to their subjects: 'Native Americans' was hegemonic for some years, while today 'Indians,' or sometimes 'First Peoples' are often used. 'Native American' has also come under criticism since many indigenous cultures transcend the U.S.-Canadian border, and it is therefore inappropriate to refer to indigenous peoples living north of this border as Native Americans at all. I have chosen to use 'Indians' here when discussing both the German fans and also the characters in May's imagined world, since this is the term that May fans themselves most commonly used in reference to both themselves and their object of fandom. By contrast, 'indigenous peoples' is here used to refer to the 'real' peoples from North America who were the inspiration for May's novels, and whose cultures German 'Indians' continue to re-enact today. Where the indigenous cultures are in fact located in the United States, I have sometimes used 'Native Americans.'

³ See Gerhard Klussmeier, *Karl May: Biographie in Dokumenten und Bildern*, 2nd ed. (Hildesheim: Olms, 1992); Colleen Cook, 'Germany's Wild West: A Researcher's Guide to Karl May', *German Studies Review* 5, no. 1 (1982): 67-86; Christian Heermann, *Old Shatterhand ritt nicht im Auftrag der Arbeiterklasse: Warum war Karl May in SBZ und DDR 'verboten'?*, (Dessau: Anhaltische Verlagsgesellschaft, 1995); Reinhold Frigge, *Das erwartbare Abenteuer: Massenrezeption und literarisches Interesse am Beispiel der Reiseerzahlungen von Karl May* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1984) May is usually said to have sold more than 100 million copies in German-speaking Europe alone during the twentieth century. For estimates of May's sales and surveys of his audiences, see Jochen Schulte-

Sasse, 'Karl Mays Amerika-Exotik und deutsche Wirklichkeit' in Helmut Schmiedt, ed., *Karl May : Studien zu Leben, Werk u. Wirkung e. Erfolgsschriftellers*, (Königstein/Ts.: Hain, 1979), 101-129.

⁴ Twentieth century transmedial May productions and commodities are comprehensively cataloged in Michael Petzl's fan-oriented reference work, *Das grosse Karl May-Lexikon: [von der Wüste zum Silbersee : der grosse deutsche Abenteuer-Mythos : alles über die Winnetou-Welt]* (Berlin: Lexicon Imprint, 2000).

⁵ The *Winnetou* trilogy, originally published in 1893 as *Winnetou, the Red Gentleman I, II, and III*, is nowadays published under the simpler titles of *Winnetou I, II, and III*.

⁶ See Anne Dreesbach, *Gezähmte Wilde : die Zurschaustellung 'exotischer' Menschen in Deutschland 1870-1940* (Frankfurt am Main: New York: Campus, 2005); Katinka Kocks, *Indianer im Kaiserreich : Voelkerschauen und Wild West Shows zwischen 1880 und 1914* (Gerolzhofen: Oettermann, 2004).

⁷ See Borries, *Sozialistische Cowboys*, 16; Kocks, *Indianer im Kaiserreich*; Pamela Kort, Max. Hollein, and Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt., *I like America : fictions of the Wild West* (Munich and New York: Prestel, 2006); Cook, 'Germany's Wild West: A Researcher's Guide to Karl May'. See also Jeffrey Sammons, *Ideology, Mimesis, Fantasy: Charles Sealsfield, Friedrich Gerstäcker, Karl May and Other German Novelists of America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1998);

⁸ See H. Glenn Penny, *Kindred By Choice: Germans and American Indians Since 1800* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 65-68. Penny's magisterial study of Germans' fascination with the American West over the last 200 years, which focuses particularly on German 'Indian' hobbyists, is both compelling and provocative. I am more interested in this article in Karl May fans specifically, and their place in what I would argue is a spectrum of German hobbyists and fans who engage with the American West which includes, but is not limited to, 'Indian' hobbyists. I also seek to analyze Karl May fans here using the insights of a broader scholarly literature on fan communities, which historians have not usually drawn on in forming their analyses.

⁹ Michael Saler, *'As If': Modern Enchantment and the Literary PreHistory of Virtual Reality* (Oxford University Press, 2012)

¹⁰ Penny's *Kindred By Choice* offers a useful corrective to earlier work that sometimes tried to "solve" the problem of German 'Indian' hobbyists through psychoanalysis, and explores the communities created by such re-enactors (and their engagement with indigenous American cultures) sympathetically.

¹¹ The literature on the dynamics of modern fan communities and the 'liminal' performance spaces created by genre fans is extensive. Pertinent examples from this literature for the purposes of this essay include Gary Fine, *Shared Fantasy: Role Playing Games as Social Worlds* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Camille Bacon-Smith, *Science Fiction Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); and Matt Hills, *Fan Cultures* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

¹² For a discussion of this phenomenon among television and literary fans today, see Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 1992), 51. See also ----, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: NYU Press, 2006).

¹³ See Matthew Freeman, 'The Wonderful Game of Oz and Tarzan jigsaws: Commodifying Transmedia in Early Twentieth-Century Consumer Culture,' *Intensities: the Journal of Cult Media*, 7 (2014): 44-54.

¹⁴ May posed for and circulated many photos of himself posed in Western costume, to support his claims of having lived in the American West. The Karl May Society hosts a collection of them here: <http://www.karl-may-gesellschaft.de/kmg/fotos/kostuem/index.htm> (accessed March 2016).

¹⁵ Cook, "Germany's Wild West: A Researcher's Guide to Karl May", 72. May fans today aren't troubled by this self-invention, but the first generation of fans had accepted his self-representations at face value, and tended to deny any evidence to the contrary. The scandal among readers and the public, when the 'truth' about May first came out, was therefore substantial.

¹⁶ Mark J.P. Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2 and 40-50.

¹⁸ See Henry Jenkins' interview with Mark Wolf, which touches on the distinction between Real and 'secondary' world-building exercises here: <http://henryjenkins.org/2013/09/building-imaginary-worlds-an-interview-with-mark-j-p-wolf-part-one.html> (accessed March 2016).

¹⁹ I am indebted to Billy Proctor for this insight.

²⁰ Karl May fans' activities offer an early twentieth century example (still ongoing today) of the 'touristic pilgrimages' undertaken by fans of cult texts, as well as their 'performative consumption' of such texts through the creation of costumes, role play, etc., akin to the past times of Sherlockians during the same period. For other examples see Saler, 'As If,' and Hills, *Fan Cultures*, 157-171; for fan tourism, see also Will Brooker, 'Everywhere and Nowhere Vancouver, Fan Pilgrimage and the Urban Imaginary,' *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 10, no. 4 (2007): 423-444.

²¹ For the complex and often tense relationship between the May publisher and his fans before 1962, see Heinemann, *Dreissig Jahre Karl-May-Gesellschaft*.

²² See Herrmann, *Karl May ritt nicht im Auftrage*, 84; Borries, *Sozialistische Cowboys*; and the newspaper clippings section of the *Archiv der Karl-May-Gesellschaft*, 'Karlsruher Indianer feierten Geburtstag'.

²³ Penny, 'Elusive Authenticity', 807-810 and ----, *Kindred by Choice*, 158-159. This approach foreshadowed closely the development of the Society for Creative Anachronism in the United States, starting in the mid-1960s. In these groups—devoted to recreation and role play of medieval European cultures---participants also developed their own *personae*, along with culture and period appropriate arts and crafts, often devoting considerable amounts of time to historical research in order to achieve 'authenticity' or even (as the SCA's motto has it) the Middle Ages 'as they ought to have been,' turning a historical world into a partly-imagined one.

²⁴ See the discussion of similar dynamics among television viewers today in Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, 57.

²⁵ See Penny, 'Elusive Authenticity' and also 'Munich Cowboy Club 25th anniversary', <http://www.in-der-helle.de/kmg/scan2.php?litNr=2031> (accessed July 18, 2008); see also Herrmann, 84-85.

²⁶ The Karl May Society has posted a number of photos of early fans and members of 'cowboy and Indian clubs' both on the society website and in its archive. See the two women dressed as a cowboy and 'Indian' here: <http://www.karl-may-gesellschaft.de/kmg/fotos/leser/345.jpg> (accessed March 2016). Photos of 'Indian' hobbyists are also reprinted in Penny, *Kindred by Choice*, and in Borries, *Sozialistische Cowboys*.

²⁷ The fandom that emerged around *Little House on the Prairie*—a women's fandom---was a notable exception to this rule.

²⁸ For estimates of May's sales and surveys of his audiences, see Jochen Schulte-Sasse, 'Karl Mays Amerika-Exotik und deutsche Wirklichkeit' in Helmut Schmiedt, ed., *Karl May : Studien zu Leben, Werk u. Wirkung e. Erfolgsschriftellers*, (Königstein/Ts.: Hain, 1979), 101-129.

²⁹ Annie Oakley, an American sharpshooter who toured Europe with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, offered a (somewhat fictionalized) example that transgressed the gender norms of the period.

³⁰ Borries, *Sozialistische Cowboys*, 17

³¹ For examples of press reports on Frank and the tours he gave of his museum (including to Nazi youth groups) see 'Pimpfe bei Karl May' in *Hilf mit!* (n.d., 1938); 'Wer war uns Old Shatterhand?' in *Schwarze Korps*, (the SS official newspaper) April 1 1937; 'Auf Winnetous Spuren Großzügiger Ausbau des Karl-May-Museums in Radebeul' in *Freiheitskampf* Feb. 21, 1937; and 'Aus dem Reiche Old Shatterhands' *Hannoverscher Anzeiger* Oct. 1, 1933; see also the magazine clipping 'Hitlerjugend auf dem Spuren Karl Mays', n.d., in the the newspaper clippings section of the *Archiv der Karl-May-Gesellschaft*.

³² Heinemann, *Dreissig Jahre Karl-May-Gesellschaft*, 18.

³³ None of the cowboy and Indian clubs I found information on were dissolved after 1933, since they were evidently (and unsurprisingly) seen as completely 'unpolitical'. Like all other parts of German civil society, they must have been *gleichgeschaltet*, however: presumably Jewish members were asked to resign, or dropped out under pressure. See also Penny, *Kindred By Choice*, 148-149.

³⁴ See the many press reports on diverse theatrical and other derivative productions of May stories in *Zeitungs- und Zeitschriftenartikel-Archiv der Karl-May-Gesellschaft*, Part II (1913-1969), at <http://www.in-der-helle.de/kmg/> (accessed May, 2008). See Weber, "'Indians" on German Stages' 212-215.

³⁵ See 'Das ist „Wild-West' wie's im Buch steht! 25 Jahre Münchner Cowboy-Club' in the *Münchner Zeitung*, April 4, 1938.

³⁶ Borries, *Sozialistische Cowboys*, 17.

³⁷ One of the most successful of these is *Karl May & Co*, which began as a short photocopied fan newsletter in the 1980s, but which today is a magazine with professional production standards, published by a fan club. The magazine reports on the entire May fandom, with many photos of May summer festivals and other celebrations and fan activities. See the photogallery here: <http://www.karl-may-magazin.de/aktuell/galerie/> (accessed March 2016).

³⁸ The quotation comes from May enthusiast and author Heinrich Spoerl, see here: <http://www.karl-may.de/pages/service.php?sub=stimmen> (accessed March 2016).

³⁹ Borries, *Sozialistische Cowboys*, 19

⁴⁰ Heermann, *Old Shatterhand ritt nicht im Auftrag der Arbeiterklasse*, 36-58, 82; Borries, *Sozialistische Cowboys*, 19

⁴¹ Heermann, *Old Shatterhand ritt nicht im Auftrag der Arbeiterklasse*, 84

⁴² Borries, *Sozialistische Cowboys*, 25-29

⁴³ H Penny, 'Elusive Authenticity: The Quest for the Authentic Indian in German Public Culture', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 48, no. 4 (October 1, 2006): 811.

⁴⁴ Penny, 'Elusive Authenticity'.

⁴⁵ See Gerd Gemuenden, 'Between Karl May and Karl Marx: The DEFA Indianerfilme (1965-1983)', *New German Critique* 82 (2001): 25-38; Briel, 'Native Americans in the Films of the GDR and Czechoslovakia'.

⁴⁶ Borries, *Sozialistische Cowboys*, 57-61. See also Penny, 'Elusive Authenticity,' 807-810.

⁴⁷ Borries, *Sozialistische Cowboys*, 13 ff

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 77-84

⁴⁹ See the interview with Felbers, who looked back on years of *Indianistik* activism in East Germany, in Jan Sternberg, 'Wilder Osten', in the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, March 23, 2005.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Michael Petzel, *Das grosse Karl May-Lexikon: [von der Wüste zum Silbersee : der grosse deutsche Abenteuer-Mythos : alles über die Winnetou-Welt]* (Berlin: Lexikon Imprint, 2000), 33-34; see also 'Besucherrekord in Segeberg' in *Schleswig-Holsteinische Volkszeitung*, Aug. 22, 1961; and a year by year tally of visitors to Bad Segeberg given in the Karl-May-Wiki at http://igbserver.wiwi.tu-dresden.de/~thomas/wiki/index.php/Bad_Segeberg (accessed July 18, 2008). See also Weber,

'"Indians' on German Stages'

⁵² For an overview of the range of commercial products and entertainments that became available in West Germany during this period, see Petzel, *Das grosse Karl May-Lexikon*. This cornucopia was only one example of the array of new consumer goods available for all sorts of hobbies in West Germany, extending even to Beate Uhse's chain of sexual aids and toy stories.

⁵³ For a discussion of sales of Westerns in West Germany during this period, see Gerald Nash, 'European Image of America: The West in Historical Perspective', *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 42 (1992): 2-16. See also Ashliman, 'The American West in Twentieth-Century Germany. Authorities in both Germanies were initially uncomfortable with the notions of masculinity ('Halbstarken') they associated with Western fans. See Uta Poiger, 'A New, 'Western' Hero? Reconstructing German Masculinity in the 1950s' in Hanna Schissler (ed.) *The Miracle Years. A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 412-427.

⁵⁴ See the account of the KMG's foundation in Heinemann, *Dreissig Jahre Karl-May-Gesellschaft*; membership information is from p. 230-231. The relationship between the KMG and the Karl May Verlag was always complex and contentious.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁵⁷ Heinemann, *Dreissig Jahre Karl-May-Gesellschaft* and also Penny, *Kindred by Choice*, 279.

⁵⁸ Michael Petzel, 'Der letzte Drehort', in Jürgen Wehnert, *Karl-May-Welten* (Bamberg: Karl-May-Verlag, 2005), 198.

⁵⁹ Weber, '"Indians" on German Stages', 139-155.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 293.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 303.

⁶² For Karl May & Co, see here: <http://www.karl-may-magazin.de/> (accessed Sept. 15, 2015).

⁶³ Weber, '"Indians" on German Stages', 195, 246.

⁶⁴ From a list of comments by fans about May collected by the KMG, <http://www.karl-may.de/pages/service.php?sub=stimmen> (accessed Sept. 14, 2015). See also Erwin Müller, 'Die Karl-May-Szene in Deutschland: Ein Überblick', in *Karl-May-Gesellschaft-Nachrichten*, No. 108 (June, 1996). For hundreds of photos of costumed role play at 'Karl May Festivals' in recent years, see the photo gallery hosted by the fan magazine *Karl May & Co* at <http://www.karl-may-magazin.de/galerie/pixlie.php> (accessed April 7, 2008).

⁶⁵ Saler, Michael, '"Clap if You Believe in Sherlock Holmes": Mass Culture and the Re-Enchantment of Modernity, c. 1890-c. 1940,' *The Historical Journal*, 46, 3, 2003, 606. Saler, in 'As If' offers a more extensive examination of the growth of literary fan communities during the twentieth century, in which fans of some imaginary worlds began to practice a detached immersion in that world,

enjoying it “as if” it were real. The annual ‘Karl May Gatherings’ that began in the last half of the twentieth century in West Germany clearly fall into this category of ‘as if’ tongue-in-cheek suspension of disbelief.

⁶⁶ Saler, ‘As If,’ 18.

⁶⁷ Borries, *Sozialistische Cowboys*, 15. See also See Sieg, ‘Indian Impersonation as Historical Surrogation.’

⁶⁸ Penny, ‘Elusive Authenticity’, 817. For an example of the more recent re-enactment fan communities, see the video of a 2011 medieval re-enactment gathering at Burg Hanstein here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5eigAGqNmA> (accessed July 19, 2013). In Western Germany, some ‘historical’ fan groups (e.g., the Hun Hordes) exist primarily to participate in Mardi Gras carnivals, while others meet and celebrate year round. Sieg estimated that there were 156 clubs in the (West-German based) Western League in 1998, but by 2013 only 109 were still in existence, while the decline in the Eastern-based *Indianistikbund* was of comparable magnitude. See Sieg, ‘Indian Impersonation’, 223; for the membership list of the Western League today at <http://www.westernbund.de/%C3%BCber-uns/mitgliedsvereine/> (accessed July 22, 2013).

⁶⁹ Weber, ‘“Indians” on German Stages,’ 288.

⁷⁰ See Michael Kimmelman, ‘In Germany, Wild for Winnetou’ at <http://www.spiegel.de/international/0,1518,505494,00.html> (accessed March 21, 2009).