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Wild West Germany; Why do cowboys and Indians so captivate the country?

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The northern German town of Bad Segeberg is renowned for two things: a vast cave visited each winter by twenty-two thousand bats, and an annual Karl May Festival visited each summer by three hundred thousand people. Karl May (pronounced "my") is an adventure writer from the late nineteenth century whom most Americans have never heard of but whose stories of the American West are to this day better known to Germans than the works of Thomas Mann. His books have sold more than a hundred million copies. Though May never visited the American West, he told everyone that he had, and he wore a necklace of bear teeth, as if in proof. All his life, he was a confabulator, even when it was of no benefit to him.

May's most beloved characters are a noble Apache leader named Winnetou and his blood brother, Old Shatterhand, a German immigrant to the United States. The good friends feature in fifteen of May's eighty-odd works and are central in a series of films from the nineteen-sixties which were so successful that they are said, with only some exaggeration, to have saved the West German film industry. Most Germans can hum the theme music. In 2002, in a copyright case before the German Federal High Court, it was held that Winnetou was no longer a mere character in a novel; he had become "the name for a certain human type, that of the noble Indian chief."

In the summer, you can ride a diesel "steam" train from Bad Segeberg's central square to the Karl May *Festspiele* grounds, which are up near the Kalkberg, the steep hill that was once home to the town's castle. There are faux log cabins labelled Pony Express, Sheriff's Office, Barber Shop, Saloon. One sign reads, in English, "Cold Drinks, Hot Food, and Pretty Girls." You can buy a buffalo burger, hang out in a tepee, and watch children play at panning for gold. Antique handcuffs and at least five kinds of toy gun are for sale, as are tomahawks, feathered headdresses, and all of Karl May's novels and stories, most of which are available in at least seven editions, including green-covered volumes from the century-old Karl May Verlag—a press that prints only books by and about Karl May.

In a vast outdoor amphitheatre atop the bat cave, seven times a week, one finds the festival's central attraction: the staging of Winnetou and Old Shatterhand stories. In addition to handsome and often bare-chested actors, the spectacles feature live horses, live chickens, gunfights, flaming-spear fights, and tumbling from roofs. There are thousands of children in the audience, many in face paint and feathers—most come as Indians, though a small number dress up as cowboys—and many with parents and grandparents who attended as children. Not to have fun at the festival—a Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* of sorts, with all five senses attended to—would require a real dedication to joylessness.

Europeans have long been fascinated by Indians. In 1616, Pocahontas, the "princess of the Indians," was brought to England and invited to visit the court of King James I. At Whitehall Palace, she saw a performance of Ben Jonson's masque "The Vision of Delight," in which Harmony, Grace, and Laughter greeted Spring; Europe watched Pocahontas watch. Travelling expositions of "natives" existed even earlier. In sixteenth-century France, the city of Rouen honored the newly crowned King Henry II with a re-creation of a jungle landscape, displaying three hundred Brazilian Indians. Or, rather, fifty Brazilian Indians and two hundred and fifty naked local peasants, painted brown and adorned with stone jewelry. Indians also crossed the ocean in stories. By the mid-nineteenth century, James Fenimore Cooper's "Leatherstocking Tales" were best-sellers in Europe as well as in America. Franz Schubert is said to have expressed the wish, on his deathbed, to live long enough for the next installment of Cooper's series. European colonialism, it has been observed, involved not only the decimation of native populations but also the veneration, adumbrated by fantasy, of their cultures and special powers.

By Karl May's time-most of the Winnetou novels are from the eighteen-nineties-easier transport made travelling pseudo-ethnographic shows, often put on at zoos, much more common. "They were a popular entertainment, almost like opera," Eric Ames, a professor of German history at the University of Washington, told me. "But the shows staked their appeal on claims of authenticity; a native woman breast-feeding was a major act." At the same time, people came to see what they already knew through books; if an Indian show didn't fit the image people already had of Indians, which was largely based on Cooper's work, it tended to fail. "There was a show of Bella Coola Indians travelling at the same time as a Sioux Indian show," Ames said. "The Bella Coola were from British Columbia and looked very different physically. Scientists loved it. But commercially the Bella Coola show was a complete flop."

When Buffalo Bill Cody went to Munich in 1890 with his Wild West show-which featured two hundred cowboys and Indians, Sioux Ghost Dance performances, and reënactments of the battle of Little Bighorn with "the people who were there!"-hopeful attendees camped out overnight to get tickets. King Ludwig attended. The arena, which seated five thousand, sold out for each of the eighteen shows. The shows were advertised in the same sorts of magazines in which Karl May was serially publishing his tales of Kara Ben Nemsi, an adventurer-at-large in the Ottoman Empire. The Winnetou and Old Shatterhand stories followed shortly thereafter.

May was born in Saxony, in 1842, the fifth of fourteen children of a poor weaver. In later life, he claimed that he had been blind until age six, when he was mysteriously cured; the story has a typically May-like ring of both truth and falsehood. He was certainly underfed. When May's family came into a tiny inheritance, his father decided to become a pigeon dealer. His first investment was in two pairs of expensive "blue-striped" pigeons, whose feathers, he learned too late, had been glued on. His next was a pigeon that turned out to be blind from old age.

In his teens, May was kicked out of school for stealing candles; his autobiography claims that he merely wanted to give his sister scraps of candle wax as a Christmas present. He was later fired from a teaching job for stealing a pocket watch. May spent six weeks in jail, his reputation further damaged by rumors of an affair with a married woman.

During a four-year jail term in his twenties-for stealing furs-May ran the prison library, where he read a lot of Baedeker. Though he did not write stories, he did write a list of synopses of stories he might one day write. Finally, in his thirties, May actually wrote. There were further incarcerations for petty crimes, but he managed to make a modest living writing pulp fiction-crime stories and romances and tales of travel. He also wooed and married a girl, Emma Pollmer, whose grandfather didn't approve of the lowly Saxon suitor, so she ran away to Dresden to join him. May often wrote under a pseudonym, which enabled him to publish (and get paid for) the same story under different titles, in different magazines. In 1893, when he was fifty-one, he published his first Winnetou and Old Shatterhand novel; this was his late, big break. But, by that time, his marriage was falling apart, he was having a hard time getting royalties from earlier works, and his health was deteriorating. Soon, he was attacked in the press for having written for Catholic magazines as a Protestant, for having obfuscated his criminal past, and for having lied about where he had and hadn't travelled. May never escaped financial and reputational distress, even after becoming rich and famous. His money went to lawyers and his last years went to proclaiming his honesty.

In 1910, two years before his death, at the age of seventy, Karl May published Volume I of his autobiography, "My Life and My Efforts." It resembles a defense statement in a trial. "Does not 'My Life and My Efforts' already read like a fairy-tale?," he complains. "And are there not almost innumerable fables and fairy-tales, my opponents have built up around me! And whenever I protest against this, I am believed just as little as some people believe in the fairy-tales. But as for every genuine fairy-tale, there will finally come the time, when its truth will be evident, so all of my truth will eventually become evident."

It is perhaps not a coincidence that May's fiction often involves wrongful accusations being cleared, and justice prevailing. In the first volume of the Winnetou series, "Winnetou, the Apache Knight," Old Shatterhand works as a surveyor for a railroad company that plans to build (unbeknownst to him) on Apache land; the Apache think he is a thief, "just like the rest of the pale-faces." Trouble ensues, including false alliances with the no-good Kiowa Indians, but eventually Winnetou brings peace among the Indians and the whites. Most important, Old Shatterhand's true character is exposed: twice, he bravely saves Winnetou's life.

May's prose is less purple, and less populated with good cowboys, than the writing of Zane Grey, the famous American author of Wild West stories. May's work has a chatty, as-told-to narrative voice, and a wit reminiscent, at times, of another American, Mark Twain. Yet, for all their echoes of setting and voice, May's stories read as distinctively German, not only because of their occasional greenhorn errors. (The Apache and Kiowa were allies and not enemies, for example.)

Nineteenth-century German literature often explores the extreme. While the English were thinking about upper-middle-class Dorothea at home in a middling marriage in Middlemarch, and the Americans were grounded in the naturalism of country folk drifting into city life, German writers thought about Kaspar Hauser, a man raised in dungeonlike isolation, almost completely unexposed to human language. E. T. A. Hoffmann's early seminal story "The Sandman" is about a man who falls in love with an automaton; Hoffmann also wrote a novel from the alternating perspectives of a mad composer and a cat. These are the descendants of the revered poet Hölderlin, who embraced the role of madman and wrote his poems while living isolated in a tower. It's as if for the Germans character is revealed only in extreme situations; only there do you find out who you really are.

In Karl May's work, that extreme situation is the American West. Back home in Germany, Old Shatterhand was Jack Hildreth, a fourth child, and, by his own confession, "a dull kind of person, especially on a rainy day when I have to sit in the house alone with him." But then he goes West. He earns his new name. One pressured situation after another makes clear, to others but also to himself, Old Shatterhand's true and extraordinary nature: "And so I found myself in a new and strange life, and beginning it with a new name, which became as familiar and as dear to me as my own."

For Americans, the West was a frontier and a place of new rules, but it could never be as distant a land of wonder and transformation as it was for May; it just wasn't far enough away. Which may be part of why Karl May's stories have never met with much success in English translation. "Americans would be more likely to get the stories if they were set on another planet," Michael Michalak, the head of Nemsis Books, a South Dakota press that publishes Karl May in English, said. Michalak told me that it is German immigrants to the U.S. whose children can't read German who most often thank him for his work. Even in America, May is enjoyed mostly by Germans.

Readers in May's time were often confused about whether Old Shatterhand was an alter ego of Karl May. The same doubts attended the travel writings of Herman Melville, Daniel Defoe, and, as the story goes, Dante. But May's response to the confusion was distinctive. He commissioned a gunsmith to make two of the rifles imagined in his novels—Winnetou's Silberbüchse and Old Shatterhand's Bärenlöcher. He claimed to understand "more than 1,200 languages and dialects." He was fond of dressing up in a fringed leather frontiersman's jacket and wide-brimmed felt hat. For anyone with remaining doubts as to the veracity of his stories, he said, "I really am Old Shatterhand . . . and have experienced the stories I tell." Flaubert may have said, "*Madame Bovary, c'est moi*," but he never went so far as to wear a housedress.

Once May became famous, when real Indians came through Germany in Wild West shows May not only avoided them but defamed them as "outcasts from their tribe" who played "vile, lying roles." Meeting travelling Indians might have been awkward for May, especially if he couldn't speak their language. In 1898, May told admirers that Buffalo Bill was responsible for the death of May's "companions" (a.k.a. characters) Old Firehand and Old Surehand. In his autobiography, he cites two books as having been most influential in his life: one was a collection of folktales that his grandmother read to him; the other was a tale of a split soul, given to him by a good priest while he was in prison. Neither book exists, it turns out, though both almost certainly were big influences on him. Just ten days before May died, he travelled to Vienna and gave a lecture attended by thousands. "What I have created up to now, I regard as preliminary studies, as études," he said there. "I have, in a manner of speaking, tested my audience. Only now, I want to approach the actual work of my life." He obfuscated to the very end.

It goes without saying that both Buffalo Bill and Karl May purveyed farragoes of historical misrepresentation. May's idealizations and errors have inspired countless fans to undertake detailed cultural investigations. At the festival, I found myself talking to an older woman from Lübeck who wore a Yellowstone National Park sweatshirt over a handmade patchwork skirt. She explained the distinction between the Ho-Chunk tribe of the Winnebago and the tribe known simply as the Winnebago; she had had visitors from

both tribes over for a barbecue. She went on to tell me that certain battles from the Indian wars that May presents as having taken place in the eighteen-sixties actually happened in the eighteen-tens. A housewife from Koblenz pointed out to me that the two totem poles marking the entrance to the outdoor amphitheatre were problematic, because Winnetou was a Plains Indian and Plains Indians did not make totem poles. (Of course, as an Apache Winnetou was not even a Plains Indian.) Another woman, and she was not alone in this, explained that although Winnetou is an Apache, Winnetou's characteristics really suggest those of a Sioux. Part of being a Karl May fan, it seems, is correcting Karl May.

A number of German and Austrian towns have Karl May festivals, but the festival in Bad Segeberg is the largest, the most magnificently staged, and probably the most financially successful. It began in 1952, a year after the Wagner festival was revived in Bayreuth.

Mining of gypsum from the town's Kalkberg, or chalk mountain, created a natural outdoor amphitheatre. Officials of the Third Reich decided to build a *Thingplatz* there, a gathering place where *Volk* could congregate to watch *Thingspiele*-Nazi-favored theatricals-and other *völkische* events. After the war, occupying Brits staged boxing matches. A few classics were put on. "Then someone had the idea of doing Karl May," Ute Thienel, the current director of the festival, told me. "It was a huge success."

Thienel is from Bad Segeberg, but for many years she lived and worked in Munich and Berlin. When friends asked her if she planned on returning, she would joke, "I'll come back if a Karl May job shows up." Then it did, and she returned. "The first show cost just fifty thousand Deutsche marks to put on"-then about twelve thousand dollars-"and it was done with local actors and local livestock and local housewives sewing the costumes." Today, the budget is about 3.9 million euros.

I asked her about the actors, most of whom are famous from German movies or television. "Winnetou is being played by Erol Sander," she said. "He's a Turkish actor; he was also a model for Jil Sander." (No relation.) "The oil prince is Marek Erhardt. The other Apache leader is played by the German actor Nicolas König. The Colombian actress Clara Vélez-she lives in Hamburg now-she is the Indian princess, Shara-Noa. And Lisa Fitz-she's this wonderful Bavarian actress; she has a cabaret background, and everyone knows her from television-she's playing Rosalie Ebersbach, the German settler."

In the West German Karl May movies of the sixties, the French actor Pierre Brice played Winnetou, and the American actor Lex Barker played Old Shatterhand; the movies were filmed in Croatia. Brice also played the Bad Segeberg festival for a number of years; then the Winnetou of the East German films, Gojko Miti, a Serb, played the part. Thienel said that Native American actors had performed in the festival, but it was hard to find people willing to be away from home for the whole season.

The show that night was "The Oil Prince," a tale of an evil man who sells rights to oil he does not have, and then kills off the buyers so he can sell the rights again. I attended with Ingrid Altner, a woman in her sixties who has lived in Bad Segeberg for thirty years and is now the chairperson of the city council. "Sometimes the shows are romantic, and sometimes they are about what we call Indian philosophy, and sometimes they are comedies," she told me. "I like the romances best. This show is really a comedy, but it has a little bit of everything." The sun hadn't quite set over the background of real and fake red rock when the first banker to buy from the oil prince died in a fiery explosion. Approaching hoofbeats-"Palomino horses!" Altner exclaimed-heralded the players in the primary subplot: the Nijora and Navajo Apache tribes have been warring, and the Nijora want to kill Winnetou, because he "makes peace with the palefaces."

As hostilities are being coordinated, Winnetou, in fringed and beaded leather, arrives on horseback and on musical cue. We all cheer. His long black hair is held off his olive-skinned face with a thick red headband; he is not smiling. My companion's hand goes to her heart. "He's so handsome," she says. "All of us German women between thirty and seventy love him, because he also plays in a really romantic soap opera." Winnetou's devoted protector, an eagle named Manitou, flies in. Finally, Old Shatterhand-in fringed but not beaded leather-rides in; again we cheer. Old Shatterhand announces that his heart is full of joy, because he is meeting his brother again. Conflict is briefly averted; we see early bits of a Romeo and Juliet story of Indian lovers from the opposing tribes. There is a burst of Prokofiev. Then the German settlers arrive on the scene, unaware that they have entered hostile territory. "This is the comic part," Altner tells me. One of the settlers, Matthäus Aurelius Hampel, comes in, with a donkey he calls Rigoletto, singing a song proclaiming his courage, to the tune of "Oh! Susanna." He has come to the Wild West because he is going to write an epic opera about it. Lisa Fitz, the Bavarian cabaret star playing Rosalie, also gets a cheer. Altner tells me, "She says she's come to Arizona because it's too boring to stay in Germany." When a cuckoo clock sounds from the stagecoach, Rosalie shoots it. There are other settlers, too, and, just as they start to sing and dance, bandits arrive, there are gunshots and the scent of gunpowder, the stagecoach is set on fire, Old

Shatterhand and Winnetou return, there is a musical reprise. This is the first ten minutes of the show.

A couple of months earlier, I had visited Radebeul, a small town in the former East Germany which suffers from a problem all German towns seem to have: the overwhelming number of notable Germans. Goethestrasse, Kantstrasse, Schillerstrasse, Einsteinstrasse, Gutenbergstrasse, Anne-Frank-Strasse-two blocks in, Hölderlinstrasse turns into Karl-May-Strasse, where one finds the Karl May Museum, in his former home, Villa Shatterhand. Behind Villa Shatterhand is Villa Bärenfett, a log-cabin structure modelled after a place imagined in one of May's books. There I met André Köhler, the museum's public-relations manager. He was wearing a white button-up shirt with an Indian-head bolo tie, Wranglers, a mustang belt buckle, and leather moccasins.

"I like to say," he said, "there's been the Empire, the Weimar, the Third Reich, the G.D.R., and now the Bundesrepublik; Karl May's stories have survived them all." The Karl May Museum was founded in 1928, by May's widowed second wife, Klara, and Patty Frank, a former stablehand for Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. From 1956 to 1984, it was called the Indianer Museum, because Karl May and his work were not favored by the German Democratic Republic; for the same reason, the East German Westerns made in parallel to the West German Winnetou films were mostly presented as "Indianer" films, unrelated to the work of Karl May. "I think there were three reasons the G.D.R. didn't like Karl May," Köhler told me. "One is that the books made people want to travel to places where they weren't able to travel. Two is that there was too much Christianity in the books." Much of this was edited out of various editions, and to the modern reader the religious imagery and asides seem much milder than those in, say, C. S. Lewis's Narnia books. "Finally," he continued, "it was known that Hitler had liked Karl May's books. Albert Einstein also liked Karl May, and so did many of the Communist leaders, but no one ever bothers to mention that. They always just mention one of Karl May's fans: Hitler. I hate that."

The G.D.R. did not forbid the reading of Karl May, but one could not print or sell his books. (Just before the Wall went up, the Karl May Verlag, which had been in Radebeul, quickly relocated to Bamberg, in the West.) "You would only loan a Winnetou book," Köhler told me, "to a very, very good friend." One West German woman who had family in East Germany recalled mailing Karl May books to Prague, where her relatives would travel in order to pick them up. She also remembered smuggling the pieces for a Winnetou jigsaw puzzle in a box for a puzzle of a picture of rabbits. But gifts went from East to West as well. In an expression of empathy for people they saw as victims of capitalist imperialism, some East Germans sent care packages of food and clothing to Native Americans living on reservations in the United States.

Köhler suggested that we go to see May's grave. On the walk over, he told me how the May museum regained its original name. "In the nineteen-eighties, the G.D.R. took an interest in figures it had previously written off—Martin Luther, Otto von Bismarck, King Friedrich II, and also Karl May. They came up with new ways of thinking about these people, officially. May wrote about the West, so that could be problematic, but they said, Here was this impoverished Saxonite; he came from the oppressed class and he rose to glory. And he wrote about the Indians, an oppressed people who resisted.

"The G.D.R. allowed some Karl May books to be printed again," he went on. "I imagine they needed the money. They printed two hundred and fifty thousand copies; I think it was 'The Treasure of Silver Lake.' They sold out in something like a day. My father was lucky in that he was working at a factory, and there was a factory bookstore, and he knew the woman there; so I had 'The Treasure of Silver Lake' under my Christmas tree in, let's see, I think it was 1982."

I asked Köhler how old he was, meaning how old he was when he got the book.

"I was born a hundred years and one week after the death of Winnetou," he said.

Karl May's grave is a four-columned pavilion with a high relief of a woman being received by an angel at the gates of Heaven. There were fresh flowers there. Two marble rectangles mark the remains of May's wives. Köhler told me that, in 1942, to celebrate May's hundredth birthday, a ceremony had been planned at the grave. Nazi officials were expected to attend. Then authorities found out that May's dearest friend, buried next to him, was Jewish, and so "the event was cancelled," Köhler said. The friend's remains were removed to another cemetery, in Dresden.

Back at Villa Shatterhand, Köhler introduced me to René Wagner, the director of the museum, who has been there since 1985. Wagner, an honorary citizen of Tombstone, Arizona, took off his cowboy hat to sit down and talk with me. He showed me the building plans for a new visitor center. They had recently had a great event with Sitting Bull's great-grandson, he said, attended by more than three hundred people. I asked Wagner if he had a favorite exhibit or event from all his years.

"Well, there are shows, and there are shows," he said. When the G.D.R. reclaimed May, the museum put on an exhibit centered on him, after years of almost no mention of him. "The opening day was in February. The line to get into the exhibition went down to the end of the street. People waited in the cold for three hours." Wagner's eyes teared up. "We had four thousand visitors a day." Before the Wall fell, the museum drew about three hundred thousand annually; now it's about sixty thousand. "Until 1990," Wagner said, "the Karl May Museum was maybe the only source of knowledge we had about American Indians. Now Germans can go and travel to the real America." Many ranches and reservations have special arrangements with German tourist agencies.

Much of the cultural tourism is coordinated by Native Americans living in Germany, or by Germans living in the American West. (Köhler, for example, did an internship at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, in Wyoming.) A number of Native American soldiers stayed in Germany following the Second World War and married German women. During the G.D.R., some East Germans, especially women, did political work with the American Indian Movement, and hoped to be able one day to move to a reservation, marry a Native American, and have Native American children, but getting a visa out of the country was nearly impossible. "Hobbyist" groups developed, in which people would get together to study Indian crafts and languages, and dress up and role-play in Indian clothing, usually of their own making. A native of the tiny Kaska tribe of the Yukon told me of recently visiting a classroom of German primary-school students who greeted him in his native tongue.

"Today the relationship is complicated," Wagner said. "We have a man here who is an expert at making Native American flutes. Native Americans in the United States buy them. He went there to teach people how to make them. But it can make people angry if a German hobbyist sells his work in a Native American craft fair. They say it's not genuine, and maybe in a sense that is right. The relationship was more simple during the G.D.R."

Of the relation between Native Americans and Germans today, the historian H. Glenn Penny, of the University of Iowa, told me, "When Germans think through certain problems, they also think about those problems through and in terms of Indians. So in the nineteen-sixties this thinking had a lot to do with political protest, with the image of Indians as resisters. In the anti-nuclear protests of the nineteen-seventies, they flew in a lot of Indians from the Pine Ridge Reservation. Then, in the nineteen-eighties, the esoteric Indian was hot-the idea of the medicine man, of a deep knowledge of nature. Now it's Green politics. In some ways," Penny said, "the Indians are being instrumentalized, but also they get to shape their own image, at least somewhat." At the 2009 Berlinale film festival, plans were announced for another Winnetou film, one that would feature mostly Native American actors, but plans have since stalled, in large part over disagreements over how Native Americans would be depicted in the film.

A few weeks before my visit to Radebeul, a professor and students at a university in nearby Mittweida had put together a seven-week around-the-clock reading of the entire corpus of Karl May. They chose the time frame because it matched the amount of time that May had spent in prison there, in 1870, for (among other things) pretending to be the American ambassador. The students divided the May corpus into twenty-minute sections. In the beginning, they had to read many of the sections themselves, especially through the night, but as word of the project spread-it was streamed on the Internet-more and more volunteer readers arrived. Some were children, some were octogenarians, some were Czechs, and some were people who travelled seven hours from Frankfurt, read, and then took the train back.

I asked Wagner if he thought May might again become as popular with young people as he had been for his generation.

"There will be another peak," Wagner said. "Maybe this time with his late books. They are probably the most well-written-the fantasy books." These are stranger, sadder, and less popular stories. They take place on the warring planet of Sitara. Sitara can be reached, the novels explain, by travelling from Earth three months to the Sun and then another three months further-which sounds a lot like a round trip.

In 1908, when he was sixty-six, May at last made some of the travels that he had claimed already to have made. He didn't make it out West, but he did visit upstate New York. He met Indians at a reservation near Niagara Falls. On his return, May wrote the last volume of his Winnetou series. In it, Old Shatterhand helps plan a monument for the murdered Winnetou.

While I lived in Germany, a number of Germans asked me why there was a museum of the Holocaust in Washington, D.C., but no museum about slavery or about the Native American genocide. When I returned from Bad Segeberg to New York, I saw that a new series of Shepard Fairey posters had gone up on East Twenty-second Street in Manhattan. They showed a Native American standing alongside a horse, and announced, simply, "We Are Still Here." That poster would make no sense in Munich, where such a basic

assertion goes without saying.

It has been said of the Karl May festivals that they are expressions of repressed homosexual longings, and it has been said that they are a working through of the trauma of the Nuremberg trials. It has been said that they tap into fascist nationalist sentiment; that they provide a positive blueprint for dealing with the Other; that they don't provide a positive blueprint for dealing with the Other. It has been said that they are an escape from the troubling ethnic tensions of Germany today. This is all probably true.

As Americans, we tend to find the German infatuation with Native Americans campy and naïve. But the comfort of Karl May fans with May's historical inaccuracies surely comes in part from their confident knowledge of the actual history. Whereas we know almost nothing. We do not proclaim our innocence; we do not feel we are on trial.

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