**Revisiting Winnetou:**

**The Karl May Museum, Cultural Appropriation, and Indigenous Rhetorical Sovereignty**

“Yes, the Indian is a sick, a dying man, and we now stand at his miserable bedside feeling sorry, with nothing left to do but to close his eyes. It is serious enough to witness the death of any human being – how much more serious, then, is it to see the destruction of an entire race! ...The dying Indian could not be integrated into the white world, because of his unique character. Was that reason enough to kill him? Could he not have been saved? But what use are such questions in the face of certain death?...I can only lament, but change nothing; only grieve, but not bring a single dead back to life.” --Karl May, 1892 “Preface” to *Winnetou I*

The last several years have been big ones for Native activists in North America, from the Keystone Pipeline protests that have helped bring attention to land rights (for example, Simmons-Ritchie; Khan; “Rosebud Sioux Tribe…”) to the *Walking With Our Sisters* exhibition that commemorates missing and murdered Indigenous women (Belcourt). But protest and attention have slowly been spreading to less immediately tangible but no less important issues; the protests surrounding the Washington, D.C. football team mascot and other “Indian” mascots are perhaps the largest example. Rather than demanding change regarding physical assaults on Native lands and bodies, the mascot protests challenge the very rhetorical frame: the damaging narrative of Indians as noble savages, things of the past, that perpetuates itself in mainstream popular culture and has very real deleterious effects on Native self-perception (Friedman). The decades-long struggle has proven that this kind of challenge is one of the toughest to make, in large part because it strikes at the very root of where these misrepresentations of Native peoples come from: long-held constructions of American Indian peoples that exist to serve Euro-American cultures, the “white man’s Indian” (Berkhofer). In spite of their less-immediately tangible existence, these constructions are no less important to dismantle because of their influence on the thinking and action of people who use them. Native sovereignty in any form is hard for Euro-American cultures to recognize if the rhetorical frames they call on to perceive Native peoples create distortions, and so these stories need critique and dismantling just as much as degrading environmental practices or discriminatory law.

This essay is a critique of one of those stories. The narrative of the scalp repatriation controversy at the Karl May Museum in Radebeul, Germany, has been covered in multiple news outlets over the past six months, including Native outlets such as *Indian Country Today Media Network* and *Native News Network*, German outlets such as *Der Spiegel*, *Bild*, and *Die Süddeutsche*; and most recently in U.S. mainstream news in a special feature entitled “Lost in Translation: Germany’s Fascination with the American Old West” for the *New York Times* (Eddy). Once it was revealed and confirmed that the Karl May Museum is in possession of Native American human remains in the form of scalps, and some were on display, a repatriation outcry led by Cecil Pavlat (Sault St. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians) and backed by the global organization Survival International began in March 2014 (Haircrow, “Tribes Demand”). Since then Pavlat, along with Ray Halbritter (Oneida Nation) and other delegates have traveled to the museum to meet with staff there and negotiate the process of at least seeking the provenance of the scalps in question and if possible, begin the repatriation process (Haircrow, “An Agreement”). For the moment, a kind of truce has been reached. The actual scalps have been removed from display and replaced with replicas, though curator Hans Grünert has repeated that the museum owns the actual scalps by German law, and under German law the museum is obligated to do nothing unless provenance can be established without a doubt (Eddy).

While the protests and negotiation over repatriation have galvanized discussions and brought media attention to the Karl May Museum, I would argue that the problems do not and will not end with repatriation of a few (or even many) items. Far more subtle, but more far-reaching and problematic, the exhibit itself presents a rhetorical frame that distorts perception of American Indian peoples throughout Europe. The Indigenous nations and communities whose cultures are represented have a right to question what is going on there, and a visit to the “Villa Bärenfett” on the museum grounds reveals the significant problem: the display of Native American material culture as support for the fiction, attitudes, and misrepresentations of Karl May’s 19th century *Winnetou* adventure novels. While the Karl May Museum is not the only museum with such collections, it provides a case study in rhetorical display that points to larger problems of Native representations throughout Europe. A great deal of work needs to be done to address these problems, and the goal of this study of the American Indian exhibit is threefold. First, I provide some culturally relevant context for the discussion of the exhibit--including who May was and what he wrote--and to answer basic questions about how its display is situated in the broader German perception of American Indians. Secondly, I discuss the exhibit itself, providing an overview of what is on display and an analysis of how that display functions within the context of May’s fictional legacy and the Karl May Museum. Finally, I argue the rhetorical ramifications of such an exhibit through the concept of “rhetorical sovereignty” and what it implies for global Indigenous sovereignties. Overall, such an exhibit as it stands in such a context demonstrates a violation of Indigenous rhetorical sovereignty--the right to self-representation--and thus perpetuates inaccurate and potentially harmful stereotypes of American Indian peoples that serve German and European audiences at the cost of Indigenous communities and nations.

Winnetou as the [German] White Man’s Indian

From a Native (or even simply American) perspective, the existence of a museum exhibiting scalps and other American Indian material culture in Germany may seem peculiar, especially when such a display is so far from the objects’ origins and the collection is not supported by a university, a state-owned institution, or some other major museological establishment.[[1]](#endnote-1) How did they get there, and what is the interest? More specifically, in the case of the Karl May Museum’s “Villa Bärenfett” [“Villa Bearfat”], how did the collection arrive there, what is its significance there, and in what larger cultural and historical context does an interest in the “Indianer” [Indian] exist? In this section, I will briefly outline the ways in which the construct of the “Indian” has taken on particular significance within German narratives of identity, the impact of Karl May’s *Winnetou* trilogy of novels, and thus provide the frame for how the Villa Bärenfett exhibit’s existence fits within these historical constructions.

Numerous scholars have taken up the discussion of how American Indian peoples have been constructed to fit European and Euro-American narratives of themselves, using American Indians as a foil for the positives and negatives of civilization, of progress, or of manifest destiny. Two of the most-cited scholars--Roy Harvey Pearce and Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr.--have already articulated the process.[[2]](#endnote-2) Pearce’s original work in 1953 explains the construction of the “Indian” as a process of creating a foil to civilization, whatever “civilization” might mean in a given time period (Pearce xviii-xix). Berkhofer’s contribution, which comes a quarter century later, takes a historian’s perspective and further explains the process of Europeans and then Euro-Americans creating the “Indian” as the “category against [which their own] beliefs, values, or institutions they most cherished” could be measured at a given time (Berkhofer 27). Other scholars have taken up this work, including Philip Deloria, who in *Playing Indian* describes the process of Europeans and Americans donning these constructions to further function for Euro-American communities. In short, the “Indian” as a construction is a strategically created and deployed rhetorical trope used by Europeans and Euro-Americans for their own purposes at any given point in time since contact and colonization.

German use of the “Indianer” has received particular attention in scholarship, though it should be noted that Germans are not the only ones who have done and continue to do this. In “Germany’s Indians in a European Perspective,” Austrian scholar Christian F. Feest observes that this phenomenon has occurred in literature across Europe, and he cites Swedish, French, English, Polish, and German writers and artists who either created Indian heroes with European lineage, or went so far as to attempt to claim Native lineage themselves (Feest 29). Additionally, he observes that Indian hobbyism is far from an exclusively German practice, as it has “deep historical roots in countries such as Great Britain, the Netherlands, France, and the former Czechoslovakia” (though he also notes that only a fraction of the population participates in this kind of “cultural transvestism”) (Feest 30-31). Kate Flint’s recent work on the history of British formulations of the “Indian” as it affected British perceptions of the Americas and, in tandem, its own place in the world in relationship to the America-as-British-conceived-Indian trope underscores the variation of the “Indian” over several centuries in Europe (Flint). While it might be easy to make German culture(s) the scapegoat simply because of the wider visibility of the “Indianer” and the clever and enduring marketing of Karl May’s 19th century writing, Germans are far from the only ones who engage in the construction and perpetuation of “Indian” tropes and stereotypes for their own purposes.

But Karl May, a German author, is a particularly well-known instance of this phenomenon. Famous for his adventure novels, but mostly so for the *Winnetou* trilogy of novels set in the Wild West of the United States, Karl May published the first *Winnetou* volume in 1875 (Hoffman 57). Its protagonist, Old Shatterhand, is a German-born adventurer who consistently out-fights, out-shoots, out-hunts, and generally out-pioneers the seasoned American mountain men, and through a sacred ceremony becomes blood brothers with a noble, handsome young Apache chief named Winnetou. As a pious Christian, Old Shatterhand does not support the whole-sale extinction of American Indian peoples, but as the epigraph at the beginning of this article indicates, “Yes, the Indian is a sick, a dying man, and we now stand at his miserable bedside feeling sorry, with nothing left to do but to close his eyes” (May, 1892 “Preface” xiii). The defeat of the noble savage was, to the protagonist and many 19th and 20th-century German readers’ understanding, inevitable, and so the trilogy ends with Winnetou converting to Christianity and then dying of a grievous wound earned in his final battle. Native cultures from across the continent are combined in a colorful mash-up, including Winnetou’s Mescalero Apache community living in pueblos and using totem poles as torture stakes. This trilogy is the particular story, the rhetorical frame, through which the exhibit at “Villa Bärenfett” was conceived and is displayed.

This rhetorical frame is laden with multiple meanings, and so a German historical framework is worth sketching in order to understand why the Karl May phenomenon has the staying power it does in the first place. German scholar Susanne Zantop focuses on German history and culture from 1770-1870, and argues that while Germany never had a colony in North America, and had only a limited time and space for participation in the colonialism (its own colonies in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific lasted only from 1884-1918), it still fostered “colonial fantasies” that make an impact today (*Colonial Fantasies* 192). According to Zantop, “colonial fantasies” are “stories of sexual conquest and surrender, love and blissful domestic relations between colonizer and colonized, set in colonial territory, stories that made the strange familiar, and the familiar “familial” (2). In her analysis of these German colonial fantasies, Zantop demonstrates how Germany’s (or its 300 principalities that constituted a barely-unified “Germany” in the 19th century) desire to and inability to colonize on the same scale as others led to an amplified rivalry with England and France and created space for Germans to assume an “armchair colonialist” stance. As Zantop puts it, this “armchair colonialist” was “the critical bystander who felt free to denounce and condemn the atrocities committed by others. It fostered a moral high ground, a sense of ‘difference,’ and a desire for action – ‘we’ would not repeat the mistakes that ‘they’ had made” (193). The result of this constellation is, Zantop argues, a means by which 18th and 19th Germans could identify as fellow underdogs or victims in a brotherhood with Indigenous peoples in North America and Africa even as Germans ignored and often still ignore their own participation in colonialism and further perpetuate colonialist fantasies.

The German “Indianer,” therefore, comes in part out of this powerful ideological construction, and the Karl May novels are an illustration of both Zantop’s colonial fantasy and the German “white man’s Indian”. Zantop’s concept of colonial fantasies is reflected vividly in the *Winnetou* stories, as the character of Old Shatterhand enacts precisely what she describes: the entire trilogy revolves around the loving, loyal, at times borderline homoerotic relationship between Old Shatterhand and Winnetou, Old Shatterhand’s demonstrated physical superiority as a pioneer/colonizer, and his scathing critiques of “Yankees” and their duplicitous nature and treatment of American Indians.[[3]](#endnote-3)

This rhetorical narrative and its concomitant construction of American Indians as noble but vanishing savages, a foil to the would-be German blood brother, still makes a rhetorical impact in the 21st century. To date the Karl May novels have an estimated 80-100 million in print, translated into 28 different languages (Zantop “Close Encounters” 4). The power of the narrative and its Winnetou figure is in large part driven by the consistent recycling of the “Indianer” for new purposes within German culture and subcultures. A long-term scholar of German “Indianthusiasm,” Hartmut Lutz observes that identification with American Indian nations continues to be reinforced depending on the German community and time in question, and is still frequently tied to German national identity. He defines this ever-shifting “*Indianertümelei”* [“Indianthusiasm”] as “a yearning for all things Indian, a fascination with American Indians, a romanticizing about a supposed Indian essence…[it] is racialized in that it refers to Indianness…as an essentializing bioracial and, concomitantly, cultural ethnic identity that ossifies into stereotype…Relatively seldom does *Indianertümelei* focus on contemporary Native American realities” (169, his italics).

The stereotypes derived from Indianthusiasm are used as a way for Germans to critique their own culture and history, and in identifying empathetically with Native American histories and causes, Indianthusiasts furthermore create an “ahistorical and guilt-free ideological realm, far removed from the more depressing aspects of German reality past and present. Morever, it allows Germans to identify with the victims of history, rather than with the victimizers” (Lutz 169). Lutz traces the history of this tendency, from Hitler’s lauding of Winnetou as the ultimate company commander, to American Indian Movement support groups in East and West Germany before reunification in 1990, to cultural appropriation by New Age culture. Katrin Sieg further explores contemporary “playing Indian” in Germany, or “ethnic drag” as she terms it, finding that East and West German Indianer hobbyist groups had different motivations for their research and play-acting depending on location and generational attitude; for East Germans, there was a strong identification with American Indians because of a perceived alliance against the American government and capitalist exploitation; for older participants, playing Indian is a way to reclaim one’s masculinity post-WWII and post-feminist revolution (Sieg). Even the more sympathetic readings of German fascination with Native peoples still recognize the multiple ways Germans have constructed the “Indianer” framed through a given historical moment and based on a perceived mutual lost tribal past and a desire to reclaim it (Penny). Contemporary manifestations of Indianthusiasm continue, and are relatively easy to spot, be they children’s books and cartoons (the children’s show *Yakari* [2014] is a current offering on Germany KiKA programing), televised reruns of Karl May-based westerns, *Der Schuh des Manitu* (from 2001, and one of the highest-grossing movies in German history), tipis at summer camp, or dressing in Indian feathers and paint as a costume for carnival or for a Karl May reenactment.

In sum, the “Indianer” as a German construct has a powerful resonance in German and European cultures, and has for centuries. Particularly from 19th century colonialism to the present, the “Indianer” construct has been broadly deployed to be the savage foil for civilization, but more specifically to be a noble foil for German nationalistic hopes, a means to critique national rivals, a symbol through which a given political faction can articulate its values, and a fantasy ideal through which the individual can critique or escape the society they live in. Especially in the “Indianer” manifestation of the Winnetou character, the Karl May books and their continued role in German popular culture reinforce the “Indianer” construct for German audience.

The Karl May Museum, then, exists as a touchstone, a memorial, and an ongoing support to contemporary German Indianthusiasm, with rhetorical and material consequences.

The Karl May Museum and “Villa Bärenfett”

Having sketched a brief picture of German use of the “Indianer,” in this section I turn my focus to the Karl May Museum itself, and especially to the “Villa Bärenfett” that houses the American Indian exhibit. Here I outline the specific history of the institution, the construction and purpose of the “Villa Bärenfett”, and the overall mission of the Karl May Museum in order to establish its stated intentions and meaning-making frame. With a university grant, I visited the museum in June 2013, where I had the opportunity to spend two days documenting the exhibit and collecting publicity materials and exhibit guides. I also conducted interviews with André Köhler, at the time the Museum’s Public Relations officer, and Renee Wagner, the long-time director of the museum (now replaced by Claudia Kaulfuss).[[4]](#endnote-4) Given the framework already established, and despite some claims to the contrary, what becomes apparent with an examination of the exhibit in the rhetorical context of the museum and the larger German cultural history of “Indianer” is that it fails to live up to its vision of “cross-cultural understanding, compassion, and tolerance”[[5]](#endnote-5) (Wagner “Zum Geleit” 4) and in many ways operates counter to that vision. Instead, as the following reading of the exhibit space will show, because of its contexts and current configuration it reinforces stereotypes of American Indians within the broad German frame and perpetuates misunderstandings of past and contemporary American Indian peoples.

Situated in the quiet city of Radebeul, just outside of Dresden, the Karl May Museum has been developed in the house and on the grounds of the late Karl May. May published his adventure stories in the late 19th and early 20th century, and when he passed away in 1912, he was a famous and well-read author in Germany and beyond. According to the short guidebook called the *Karl May Museum Kurzführer*, his widow, Klara May, sought to preserve and perpetuate his legacy in part through the creation of a museum of artifacts from the American West, particularly American Indian artifacts (Hoffman 7). In 1926, Klara May purchased a collection of American Indian objects from Ernst Tobis, stage name Patty Frank, who was a circus performer and--inspired in his youth from reading Karl May’s books--a collector of American Indian ethnographic artifacts. With Frank’s help and the additional collections her husband and she had acquired on their visits to the United States in 1908 (and then a solo journey she undertook in 1930), she had the foundation of the present collection of over 800 objects. To house the exhibit, a log-cabin style building was erected in 1926 in the back garden of the Mays’ house, and in 1928 the “Villa Bärenfett” exhibit was opened to the public (Hoffman 7). Much later in 1985, the actual May residence was converted in part to preserve May’s study, library, and reception room, and to make a new exhibition space with the additional installation of the exhibit “Karl May – Leben und Werk” [“Karl May, Life and Work”]. This building is now known as “Villa Shatterhand,” named after the fictional German frontiersman in the Winnetou books and May’s performed alter ego. The “Karl May – Leben und Werk” exhibit was refurbished in 1992 (Hoffman 60). The “Überblick zur Museumsgeschichte” [“Overview of the Museum’s History”] on the museum’s website further explains that the “Villa Bärenfett” exhibit was remodeled in 1970, though little has been done with it since (Karl May Museum 2014).

On the museum’s website, the “Zukunftsvision” [“Future Vision”] tab provides documentation of the museum’s present plans, including an outline of the remodeling and updates the museum would like to do. So far the planned American-West-themed playground has been installed, as well as a new log cabin building for children’s and education activities, called “Villa Nscho-Tschi”.[[6]](#endnote-6) Acknowledging that the display techniques, climate technology, and multimedia features lag far behind contemporary practice, “Villa Bärenfett” is a high priority for renovation and for a new addition to be built on, apparently in an Southwest Native adobe-style architecture (Karl May Museum, “Unsere Vorhaben” tab). The intention of the new renovations is, as already noted, to bring the display techniques up to date and afford “the younger generation with more entertainment” [“wird...der jungen Generation mehr Unterhaltung bieten”] (Karl May Museum, “Unsere Vorhaben”). Donations make the contributor a “Blutsbruder” [“blood brother”] to the museum (Karl May Museum, “Werden Sie zum Blutsbruder des Karl-May-Museums”).

The overall mission frames the Karl May Museum’s work, which is squarely oriented on Karl May’s writing and legacy. The German-language tri-fold brochure for the museum (titled “Der Wigwam Old Shatterhands”/ Old Shatterhand’s Wigwam) does not provide an explicit mission statement for the overall museum, though it is clearly Old Shatterhand’s (the German protagonist’s) “wigwam” that one visits. Similarly, the English language version of the same online (retitled “A visit to the Karl May Museum”) bluntly states, “The Karl May Museum Radebeul near Dresden is dedicated to preserving the cultural heritage of Karl May” (Karl May Museum 2013). The museum’s Kurzführer provides a brief explanation up front that states both “Villa Shatterhand” and “Villa Bärenfett” are “carried by the same spirit of cross-cultural understanding, compassion, and tolerance vis a vis largely foreign cultures and world views, a spirit to which Karl May and the endowment named after him feel responsible” (Wagner “Zum Geleit” 4), though the emphasis on Karl May’s world view and view based on his writings is quite clear. The “Zukunftvision” page’s first statement of purpose and justification for the fundraising campaign reads, “We want to preserve the great Karl May legacy.” The rhetorical emphasis is well-defined: this establishment is about May and what May did, not specifically about American Indians per se.

I emphasize that the rhetorical framing of all activities and displays using American Indian material cultural within the Karl May Museum exist to support the legacy of Karl May and the fiction writing that made him famous, not to support Native American communities or their cultural and rhetorical sovereignty. Köhler explained that far from being an institution that reinforced colonial mindsets, the museum exists to support May’s final vision as developed in his later writings, especially in the fourth *Winnetou* volume that was published long after the first three (Köhler, personal interview). Though he admitted that book is not widely read, widely translated, or well known even within Germany, it is a philosophy based on peace and mutual understanding that he claims the museum means to support (Köhler, personal interview). At the same time, the “spirit of cross-cultural understanding, compassion, and tolerance” appears to be lost in the effort to maintain the stature of May himself and the denial of what May’s full legacy is in terms of German colonial fantasies and Indianthusiam, and in how the Native collections are used to support those fantasies.

Rhetoric in the Details: The Exhibit Itself

The contradictions in the rhetorical frame have already been demonstrated in the way the museum describes itself and in how “Villa Bärenfett” remains locked into a 18th/19th century scaffolding: Indian peoples are generally objectified for the pleasure of tourists, and visitors access it through the lens of the popular and well-known *Winnetou* trilogy and Winnetou as a tragic, noble, vanishing Indian. The “Villa Bärenfett” exhibit thus exists to educate, but to educate in terms of the fantasy, in terms of the imagined German “Indian.” Here lies the crux of the problem, as I will demonstrate with an analysis of the exhibit space itself.

As already noted, a visitor accesses “Villa Bärenfett” after having first crossed the gardens behind the original May residence/“Villa Shatterhand.” The visitor passes several wooden Indian sculptures (including a life-sized depiction of a man and a woman in a canoe, with his hand reaching under her robes), some other artwork (mostly not Native-made), and totem poles positioned as garden art before gaining access to the log cabin-style building. Upon entering, the first room a visitor sees is the “Wild-West-Raum” [“Wild West Room”], which is arranged to look like a room in a log cabin complete with fireplace, and American flag, a painting of Patty Frank, and hunting trophies from North American moose, bear, and elk, a Jackalope, and black “scalps” made of horse hair that are designed to replicate human scalps. The labels here identify the objects, and the label for the Patty Frank image explains the history of the “Villa Bärenfett” collection and Frank’s role in its existence. Here also begin the scavenger-hunt-style labels designed for children to keep them interested in the exhibit (Köhler, personal interview). The first is labeled “Indianermärchen” [“Indian Fairy Tales”], and is marked with the image of a cartoon bear in a Plains-Indian eagle feather headdress and breastplate, named “Grosser Häuptling Kleiner Bär” [“Big Chief Little Bear”]. Each children’s label draws attention to particular aspects of each exhibit display, and also marks the path of the children’s exhibit tour of the same name (which is advertised as also including a human “Grosser Häuptling Kleiner Bär” tour guide in fringed costume, complete with feather headdress).

The next room is the special exhibit/traveling exhibit space, and in the summer of 2013 it was dedicated to a display of Winnetou movie memorabilia. The exhibit, sponsored in part by the “Karl May (Film) Fan Gruppe, Berlin” [“Karl May Film Fan Club, Berlin], covered the history of Karl May’s Winnetou character and stories as they were translated to film, from the 1930s to the 1990s, with special attention to the movies produced in West Germany in the 1960s. The exhibit included movie posters in several languages, photographs from the sets, marketing memorabilia, movie props (particularly weapons), life-sized photo cutouts of stars Pierre Brice as Winnetou and Marie Versini as his doomed sister Nscho-Tschi, and two display cases with the beaded costumes and black wigs worn by Brice and Versini in their roles. The exhibit space was next occupied from May-September of 2014 by an exhibit entitled “Klara May als Fotografin: Eine Frau und ihr Hobby” [“Klara May as Photographer: A Woman and her Hobby”], highlighting Karl May’s second wife, Klara, and the photo documentation she provided of their trip to the Middle East in 1900 and their later trip to the United States (Karl May Museum 2014, “Sondernaustellungen”). It now displays an exhibit pitched to children and fans of the Swiss/French *Yakari* comics and show, in “celebration of the tradition of Karl May and James Fenimore Cooper in today’s popular culture” (Karl May Museum “Neue Sondernausstellung”).

Following the “Wild-West-Raum” and the special exhibits space is the American Indian ethnographic exhibit, which takes up substantial space. The visitor first encounters a diorama on the right entitled “Heimkehr von der Schlacht” [“Homecoming from Battle”], which Köhler argues is meant to provoke some self-reflexivity in the viewer (personal interview). The small label that goes with it states that this diorama is meant to represent the German perceptions and stereotypes based on books and film. Translated, the label reads:

(an image of the Indian produced/reinforced by German language books and films)

A group of warriors rides in on wild mustangs, swinging tomahawks, lances, and collected scalps. Dignified, the tribal chief American Horse approaches them dressed in festival-day clothing and a magnificent feather decoration as a show of his dignity.

Facing him in front of the tipi, the typical housing of the Prairie Indians, sits a Squaw, busy with her beadwork. Her red face paint signifies the victorious homecoming of her husband.

Against the tent stands the child carrier, within which a child is wrapped.[[7]](#endnote-7)

Directly to the left and continuing through the rest of the space, material is organized roughly according to geographic regions first, then thematically in following display cases (“Musik und Tanz” [“Music and Dance”]; “Medizin und Medizinbündel” [“Medicine and Medicine bundles”]; “Friedens-/Zeremonialpfeifen” [“Peace-/Ceremonial Pipes”]; “Skalpe als Kriegstrophäen” [Scalps as War Trophies] (with actual human scalps); “Männerkleidung” [Men’s Clothing]; “Frau und Kind” [Woman and Child]; and “Indianische Schuhe” [“Indian Shoes”]. The final exhibit space is devoted to perspectives on the Battle of Little Bighorn, providing historical documentation of major figures in the battle and German artistic interpretation of the event (including a large triptych painting by artists Elk Eber und A. Roloff). Distributed throughout the main ethnographic exhibit space are life-sized mannequins representing various regional and tribal styles of dress, with particular emphasis on Apache and Plains cultures – the main tribal groups depicted in the *Winnetou* novels.

Labels (all in German) overall tend to lean toward ethnographic interpretation, explaining what each region or tribal community ate, wore, hunted, or how they used the objects in question. The labels’ text is maintained in the past tense, and references to the destruction of Indigenous cultures are a part of the narration from the beginning. There are also inaccuracies and ambiguities in several of the labels which, though it may appear on the surface to be an attempt at splitting hairs to address them, actually have subtle and important rhetorical consequence for those who take those labels as truth. Also distributed through the collection, as noted above, are the “Grosser Häuptling Kleiner Bär” labels for children.

There is no doubt that this is a beautiful and valuable collection, with materials that span the 18th and 19th centuries – pottery, masks, clothing, weapons, weaving, saddles, beadwork, feather work, a Sundance robe, and, as can be guessed from the thematic list above, sacred objects and until recently, human remains. At the same time, there are significant problems with the effects of the rhetorical intention – using a collection of American Indian artifacts to support and celebrate Karl May – in terms of the meaning-making consequences of the frame, contents, and arrangement. What becomes apparent in a survey of “Villa Bärenfett” is the purposeful focus on those who supported the creation of the museum itself (Patty Frank and Klara May exhibits), the fascination with fantasies – particularly Karl May’s – about the American West (the “Wild West” room; honoring the movie westerns, the *Yakari* exhibit), and an effort to illustrate and support those fantasies with actual ethnographic evidence (the extensive artifact displays). As I argue here, the exhibit has little relevance in Radebeul, Germany, except to exist as a prop to Karl May’s fiction. While a desire for a cross-cultural exchange and education might be part of the vision, in actual execution the exhibit – and its future vision – mostly reinforces cultural appropriation.

Because the immediate first two stops for a visitor have specifically to do with those who created and supported the museum and the legacy of Karl May’s fiction, be it Patty Frank, Klara May, or a film club, the rhetorical frame of *Winnetou* is set from the beginning – this is about the German and European fantasy story, not American Indians themselves. Köhler claimed that this was self-understood, that no one actually takes the Indians of May’s fictional world seriously except as they are symbolically significant or idealized (personal interview). However, his observation points precisely to the problematic nature of the exhibit. Knowing that May’s Indians were not and are not real, but desiring to have their symbolic worth (whatever that worth happens to be for a given reader or generation of readers) reinforced using *actual* American Indian peoples, their histories, and their material culture is a direct act of distortion and appropriation. Given the present Karl May frame, whatever self-reflexive critique might be implied with one small label will fall short because the entire collection is framed through Karl May’s fantasy.

For example, though the “Heimkehr von der Schlacht” diorama (Figure 1) is meant to comment on the stereotypes Germans have about American Indian peoples, it is difficult to imagine that it accomplishes the goal of self-reflexivity that Köhler hopes for. The diorama makes use of all of the same kinds of actual Native artifacts that the rest of the exhibit does, including clothing, beadwork, mannequins, and a feather warbonnet. The figures are posed in a similar way to the other mannequins in the exhibit, and because there is another family grouping (the “Prärieindianerfamilie in Festtagskleidung um 1880” [“Prairie Indian Family in Celebration Dress circa 1880”] immediately nearby that is seriously meant, the difference is hard to tell. There is nothing to set the first diorama apart as a German caricature of American Indians except for one line on the label (see above). In fact, the professional photograph of the “Heimkehr” diorama is the image used to advertise “Villa Bärenfett” in the tri-fold visitor’s brochure (“Der Wigwam…”), and is itself not labeled by its exhibit title but instead as a factual “Indianer Nordamerikas” [“North American Indians”]. Furthermore, that same photograph is the recommended image for the press to use in representing “Villa Bärenfett” (Karl May Museum, “Pressebilder zum Herunterladen”). Any potential irony or critique of the Indianer stereotype is lost in the way this diorama is actually used, and the rhetorical consequence is that the fictional May frame takes the place of actual history.

Figure 1: Titled "Indianer Nordamerikas," image of “Heimkehr von der Schlacht” Dietmar Berthold, 2002.

The exhibit techniques and labeling of the displays provides another point of illustration of the subtle and not-so-subtle ways the collection’s interpretation under the May frame creates problems. The exhibits themselves are outdated by museology standards in their emphasis on regional organization, thematic organization that lumps multiple Indigenous cultural groups into one ideal, and choices in how and if to display sacred or potentially controversial items. As Evan Maurer has observed, curator Stuart Culin of the Brooklyn Museum set the early 20th century standard for the display of Indigenous objects by dividing them by region, choosing one tribe to represent it (regardless of diversity), filling display cases according to function, providing some ethnographic background, and using mannequins and dioramas to demonstrate objects’ wear and use (Maurer 24). At the same time, he argues, the effect of the display techniques was to freeze the Native subjects in time, in effect helping to “deny American Indians a modern experience” (Maurer 24).

The exhibits of “Villa Bärenfett” currently follow these techniques, in spite of the advances of the museological world and the techniques developed to work in and with Indigenous communities. There are no discussions of American Indian peoples today, or as survivors. The May frame, as suggested by the epigraph above, requires a dying Indian, a Winnetou who is fascinating to examine and worthy of lament but doomed to perish except as he might be preserved in story and through collecting. Therefore, the exhibit remains focused exclusively on the 18th and 19th centuries, with little reference to the present. A few labels make oblique references to the present where they must – for example, the label for the totem pole admits that it is a contemporary Indigenous work – but the narrative presented to visitors is one of cultures frozen in time.

Other labels point to the ways in which American Indian culture is narrated for the sake of supporting the May frame, or are simply erroneous. The label that explains the significance of feather headdresses claims that after the move to reservations around 1870, “the feather headdress lost its character as a marker of a successful warrior and became a festive decoration that any respectable man could wear”[[8]](#endnote-8) (“Adlerfederhauben” [Eagle feather headdress]). The resulting suggestion for an unsuspecting reader of the label is that it is ok for anyone to wear a feather warbonnet, because they don’t mean anything anymore. The sale of feather headdresses in the gift shop reinforces this.

In another example, the exhibit of human scalps--beyond the simple fact that it was a display of human remains--misrepresents a controversial practice, its label claiming simply in two sentences that pre-contact, American Indian peoples (such as the Iroquois and Muscogee, it claims) already practiced scalping because they believed it gave them “magische” (magical) power.[[9]](#endnote-9) The next two sentences claim that white people made scalping a practice that stands as a “bloody documentation of the gruesome extermination of the Indian” in how bounties were set. While this does have some documented basis in historical fact, the emphasis on “extermination”--“Ausrottung”-- again places American Indian peoples as extinct relics of the past. The final sentence endeavors to explain the American Indian ceremonial use of scalps (again, all American Indians) and how the women danced with them, without contextual references (“Skalpe als Kriegstrophaeen” [Scalps as War Trophies] label). The rhetorical consequences of these particular labels are multiple: the mislabeling or vague labeling further divorces the objects from their context and appropriate significance; the feather headdress label excuses white appropriation of feather headdresses and their “festive” use; and the scalp label oversimplifies and sensationalizes a historical practice, overgeneralizes about who did what, and makes Indians absolute [extinct] victims. (It should be said that even if the scalps are replaced with replicas, as is the present plan after Pavlat’s visit, the replicas still symbolize precisely the idea the label describes.) Through the May frame, then, American Indians are again noble, savage, dead and gone, and their remains can be appropriated for whatever uses a respectable man sees fit.

The single point of somewhat visible cooperation with contemporary American Indian contributors to the exhibit is the Little Bighorn exhibit at the end of the tour, though even this is enmeshed in the Karl May narrative. Situated as a kind of exemplar of an actual historical event instead of ethnographic narration, the display provides a history of the Battle of Little Bighorn, complete with images of the battlefield as it stands now, photographs of the major leaders from the US cavalry and Native bands, samples of weapons, and a short video documentary from the battle site, dated 1993. The centerpiece of the display, however, is a juxtaposition of a large triptych painting of the fight at “Little Big Horn” by two German artists, positioned over a glass case displaying an equally large Native ledger-style painting account of the battle entitled “Custers letzter Kampf” [“Custer’s Last Battle”]. What sets this Native piece aside from the rest of the work in “Villa Bärenfett” is the fact that it was recognized in 2002 by a Native visitor and artist, Arthur Amiotte (Oglala Lakota), as a work by his great-grandfather. After testing and reanalyzing, with the help of Amiotte, the museum altered its original erroneous declaration of the piece’s provenance and has since built a better display case and relabeled it appropriately. The painting now lies in a horizontal glass case, with the German triptych displayed above it in juxtaposition. The exhibit further works through significance of the Indian Wars as the “end of Indian freedom” (“Das Ende indianscher Freiheit”) and highlights a display case featuring a Ghost Dance shirt, the archeological reconstruction of the battleground, and the conflict over its commemoration. The video documentary, featuring elder Joseph Medicine Crow (a descendant of White-Man-Runs-Him, a scout for Custer) singing a battle song, provides both a sampling of oral history and a sense of actual Native voice.

Yet the display and the exhibit as a whole come to a close with a final quotation from Karl May’s *Winnetou I*:

“Wenn es richtig ist, das alles, was lebt, zum Leben berechtigt ist, und dies sich ebenso auf die Gesamtheit wie auf das Einzelwesen bezieht, so besitzt der Rote das Recht zu existerien, nicht weniger als der Weisse und darf wohl Anspruch erheben auf die Befugnis, sich in sozialer, in staatlicher Beziehung nach seiner Individualität zu entwickeln.”

[“If it is true that every living thing has a right to life, and if this applies to whole nations as well as to individuals, then the Indian (literal translation, the “Red one”) has no less a right to his existence than the white man and is entitled to his chance to develop socially and politically in his own way.”]

While this is ostensibly a statement in favor of equality for American Indian peoples, it is taken out of context within May’s preface to the novel; this particular excerpt is preceded by the clear statement that “The Indian is dying” and followed by the epigraph as above. May clearly believed Native peoples to be a vanishing race, and so this attempt to salvage the *Winnetou* novels-as-frame is deceptive. At the same time, given the clear narration of destroyed cultures and lost freedom in the exhibit itself, this last label stands as the 19th century lament over the American Indian who is “thrown to the ground, crushed, trampled on by a fate that knows no pity” (*Winnetou I* xi) that it is. Whatever attempt at grounding a museum visitor’s steps in actual history and the influence of Native voices is colored--if not trumped--by this final assertion of the May frame.

In short, this rhetorical meaning generated by the exhibit does little to forward rhetorical sovereignty or cultural sovereignty. First and foremost it is a footnote and a prop to “the Karl May legacy” as a legacy of colonialism and cultural appropriation. “Villa Bärenfett” blends the collections with the Karl May fictional world, erasing almost all Native voices in order to support the Karl May fiction and to fulfill Karl May fans’ expectations. As both Wagner and Köhler observe, it is meant to be seen as an educational, cross-cultural support that broadens visitor perspectives and gives them authentic American Indian culture to consider (Wagner and Köhler 2013). Perhaps there is a chance for that, but the current exhibit is not cross-cultural--it is appropriative, and it doesn’t promote Native voices, with the exception of the Little Bighorn exhibit (and that happened only by accident when Amiotte saw something that belonged to his great-grandfather there). The exhibit techniques lock people in the past, and therefore safely in the Karl May narrative, unable to challenge or change it and its vanishing Indian.

Ramifications for Indigenous Rhetorical Sovereignty on a Global Scale

In *The Truth About Stories*, Cherokee writer Thomas King asserts that because stories have so much power, we need to be careful of the stories we tell and the ones that are told – in short, the stories that we accept. If he were to meet someone from far away (in this case, Pluto) he writes, “Personally, I’d want to hear a creation story, a story that recounts how the world was formed, how things came to be, for contained within creation stories are relationships that help to define the nature of the universe and how cultures understand the world in which they exist” (10). Given the way that story/narrative/history shape these relationships, museums are one of the most powerful purveyors of story; their status as institutions of science and education, and thus the narratives they provide to the public, should not be underestimated. Knowing full well the impact that past museological attitudes and displays have had on the public and on Indigenous communities, museum scholars and curators--both Indigenous and Indigenous-allied--have already been arguing for alternative methods and critical perspectives for years (see Mihesuah; West; Kreps; Cobb-Greetham and Lonetree; Sleeper-Smith; Coombes; Lonetree). At the same time, the problematic stories that have historically been told are also connected to societal systems of colonialism and oppression that support the status quo and carry emotional weight for all involved. These popular colonial stories die hard, however slanted or downright false they have been proven.

While the Karl May Museum may seem like a relatively small and insignificant site, it rests at the epicenter of one these defining stories for Germany and Europe at large, wherever Karl May has been read. Therefore, the problems with its use of American Indian material culture, especially as they are so far from homelands, cultural contexts, and people who gave them existence, are worth considering as part of a larger pattern, or if anything, the center of that pattern. Every public display, every museum exhibit tells a story that defines, in some way, “the nature of the universe” and how cultures understand each other in relation to each other and the world. Every public display, every museum exhibit, is an opportunity for Indigenous peoples to reassert themselves, to narrate their own lives and histories in ways they have not previous had. And no, not all stories are created equally; as the Karl May narrative and museum amply demonstrate, narratives are created and disseminated as part of a culture’s fabric, for particular purposes, often at the expense of other cultures or peoples. The alternative of simply providing an array of perspectives as though each were equal distorts history. It is not a matter of everyone having his/her own opinion; Indigenous rhetorical sovereignty is at stake.

Scholar Scott Richard Lyons defines “rhetorical sovereignty” as the “the inherent right of [Indigenous] *peoples* to determine their own communicative needs and desires in this pursuit, to decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles, and languages of public discourse” (Lyons 449-450, his italics). Based on an understanding of Indigenous communities as nations-peoples rather than nation-states, Lyons argues that the exercise of rhetorical sovereignty--Indigenous self-representation--eschews the European-based individualism of the nation-state and rather supports both self-government and “the affirmation of peoplehood” (456) that moves Native nation-peoples toward an overall sovereignty that, like the Haudenosaunee that he cites as an example, includes “the right of a people to exist and enter into agreements with other peoples for the sole purpose of promoting, not suppressing, local cultures and traditions, even while united by a common political project--in this case, the noble goal of peace between peoples” (456). Self-representation is part of the project of Indigenous sovereignty, however sovereignty comes to be defined by an Indigenous nation or community, and by changing and challenging the historical representations made of them (the white man’s “Indian”) Indigenous peoples can also challenge the policies and material consequences these historical representations have supported.

Rhetorical sovereignty, the claim to self-representation, is therefore key in building Indigenous sovereignty, though arguably not necessarily restricted to homelands, or even the Americas. The “United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples” (UNDRIP) clearly states that basic rights include “the right to maintain, protect, and develop the past, present, and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artefacts [sic], designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature” (UNDRIP Article 11 (1)); “the right to the use and the control of their ceremonial objects; and the right to the repatriation of their human remains (UNDRIP Article 12 (1)); and “the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories, and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information” (UNDRIP Article 15 1); “the right to maintain, control, protect, and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions…” (UNDRIP Article 31 (1)).

There is no question that Indigenous peoples have a recognized right to their cultures, past and present. Within this frame of Indigenous rhetorical sovereignty, the Karl May Museum starkly illustrates the need for museums to reconsider and keep considering their relationship to colonial narratives and their lasting, present consequences, even if those institutions are far from the collections’ original homes. Any museum that houses Indigenous or American Indian artifacts has an obligation to work as far as it can with the communities they wish to represent, as best they can in the context of Indigenous or American Indian material culture, in cooperation with Indigenous and American Indian communities and nations. At the very least, such a museum would need to be self-critical and conscious of the way it uses it Indigenous collections to attempt avoiding appropriating these objects’ rhetorical, meaning-making potential.

The further away from origins or homelands these collections are, the more they need appropriate context to make them accessible. In *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian L. Ott outline the intersections of rhetoric, memory, and place as they conceive them to meet in museum and memorial spaces. One concept that emerges from this discussion is “rhetorical legibility,” or “a sense of readability or understanding of an expression” in public sites (4). But far from being transparent, rhetorical legibility is “predicated in publically recognizable symbolic activity in context. That is, rhetoric typically understands discourses, events, objects, and practices as timely, of the moment, specific, and addressed to – or constitutive of – particular audiences in particular circumstances” (4). Rhetorical legibility also presupposes a multiplicity of meanings based on social norms, accepted cultural practices, accepted histories, and orientations toward the symbol or meaning-making in general (4). In the case of American Indian collections far from home, making them “rhetorically legible” in a way that is in line with Indigenous rhetorical sovereignty is a particular challenge. As the Karl May Museum amply illustrates, what is made legible is the German narrative of “Indianer” while the other potential meanings, including Indigenous meanings, for these objects and displays are largely invisible.

Conclusions – Where the Conversation Stands

As the protests against “Indian” mascots have already argued, to simply change the name from the “R-word” is not enough; the very image of the Native as a mascot is the problem. Likewise, repatriating a few items from the Karl May Museum collections will not fix the larger problem. The May frame in “Villa Bärenfett” needs a new vision and a new way to make this collection legible, though it requires more than an updated display, better climate control, and more interactive and entertaining features for visitors. If the Karl May Museum wants a new vision, one that actually and tangibly promotes peace, tolerance, and cross-cultural understanding, it should be a long-term plan that uses its current fundraising to attempt an actual partnership with Indigenous peoples, not the colonial fantasy. It will need to slough off the desire to be a “blood brother” or to play Indian (or even protector of the Indian), and instead recognize the realities and consequences of colonialism of which the Karl May story is a part. It has the potential to use the evolution of May as a writer, however still couched in the early 20th century that he was, to actually illustrate how to act and become active in this endeavor. It will need to use the Karl May evolution, such as it is, to illustrate how paradigms can shift. The human remains need to go home, without question. The Indigenous material culture that might remain in the collection can be reimagined in tandem with the communities they represent, not an illustration of the Karl May fiction but rather a properly contextualized counterpoint to it, a place to begin the conversation of colonialism, Germany’s role in that, the power of representations and the distortions of “playing Indian,” and what contemporary partnerships look like. It also has the opportunity to bring its narrative visibly into the 21st century, perhaps with an expansion of the collection with new and contemporary work, to show living Indigenous artistic traditions, not vanishing Indians.

In my interviews with Wagner and Köhler, both lamented the drop off in visitors to the museum in the last decade, and voiced a strong desire to make May’s legacy relevant for the next generation. They recognized that the current May narrative played to “Indianthusiasm,” but could not think of what could be done to make the museum more relevant to a broader swath of the population. Köhler, however, insisted that the current museum had plenty of Native visitors, and most were impressed with the exhibit and none had complained (Köhler, personal interview). Currently, the museum has been maintaining that line in spite of the now-publically documented efforts since 2010 to repatriate human remains (and also technically with the exhibit label that was admittedly caught in error by Amiotte on the provenance of the Little Big Horn painting).

In her response to a letter from Survival International arguing for repatriation during last spring’s protests, the new director of the museum, Claudia Kaulfuss, asserts “it has never been and never will be the Karl May Museum’s aim to show disrespect to any Native American or First Nations culture” (Kaulfuss 1). At the same time, she firmly denied any conclusive provenance that would allow her to return the scalps, and insisted that the display of the scalps was a demonstration of “a part of Native American cultural history. If you saw our exhibition, you would know that there is a special focus on the misuse of scalps” (Kaulfuss 1). (It should be noted that, as the labeling discussion above already reveals, the “special focus” is problematic at best.) The collection, in the meantime, is “one of the most valuable in Europe” and “symbolize Native American life, struggle, and suffering. We are aware of Native Americans/First Nations not being extinct, having Native American visitors and guests to our Museum every year who know about and also like the exhibit” (Kaulfuss 2) She closes her letter by articulating an interest in “intensifying the dialogue with Native Americans” and her appreciation of “critical views” (Kaulfuss 2).

It is true that the value is in many ways beyond estimating, and the Karl May Museum is on the cusp of a developmental shift. The question remains whether it will finally attune itself to the protests and concerns and the “critical views” that are now coming across the Atlantic, even after the problems with the scalps are settled, or whether it will insist on the value of the collection as valuable insofar as it continues to serve the Karl May fiction. The Karl May Museum also raises continued questions about how other European museums rhetorically frame themselves, and their American Indian collections. Sorting out matters concerning ownership, representation, and what should ideally happen at the Karl May Museum or any other is without question a complex task, and cultural differences, translation issues, cost, and physical distance complicate matters further. Yet if Karl May’s words as they are mounted at the end of the exhibit are to be relevant at all--if there is an actual recognition that American Indian peoples have a right to develop in their own ways--then it is past time for the Museum to set an example for other institutions by offering itself as a partner to the communities it represents, not a blood brother, and by becoming critically aware of its story’s impact in Germany, in Europe, and all the way back to the Americas.

1. Not that academic institutions are automatically better in their care or stewardship of American Indian material culture; it is simply more conventional that such places should house these kinds of collections. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. I spend some time on these two scholars’ well-established work in order to foreground the rhetorical nature of the “Indian” as frame, as well as to fully acknowledge the theory that is so frequently footnoted in German and American scholars’ analyses of the “Indianer.” [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. It should be noted that May himself never set foot on American soil until 1908 – long after the Winnetou novels were published – and even then did not go further west than New York state. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. In December 2013, Wagner was suddenly replaced by Claudia Kaulfuss, who is the current director; Kohler was still listed as the public relations manager up until April of 2014 (shortly after the story and Native protests over the museum’s display of Native scalps broke in German media), though the website no longer shows him on staff. Email efforts to reach both of them and the museum itself for comment have been met with silence. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. “Beide Ausstellungen sind vom Geist der Völkerverständigung, der Nächstenliebe und der Toleranz gegenüber uns weitgehend fremden Kultur- und Lebensauffassungen getragen, einem Geist, dem sich Karl May und die nach ihm benannte Stiftung verpflichtet fühlen.” [“Both exhibits are carried by the same spirit of cross-cultural understanding, compassion, and tolerance vis a vis largely foreign cultures and world views, a spirit to which Karl May and the endowment named after him feel responsible.”] [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. The building is named for the character Winnetou’s younger sister, who in the first volume of the trilogy falls in love with Old Shatterhand, seeks to go east to get a white woman’s education in order to be more palatable to him (a doomed endeavor given that Old Shatterhand cannot see himself marrying an Indian), and dies a tragic death at the hands of deceptive “Yankees” on her way (*Winnetou I*). [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Label text for “HEIMKEHR VON DER SCHLACHT”:

   “(ein durch Bücher und Filme im deutschsprachigen Raum geprägtes Indianerbild)

   Eine Gruppe Krieger kommt auf wilden Mustangs heran, Tomahawks, Lanzen un erbeutete Skalpe schwingend. Würdevoll tritt ihnen ihr Stammeshäuptling American Horse entgegen, angetan mit Festtagskeidung und dem prächtigen Federschmuck als Zeichen seiner Würde.

   Ihm gegenüber vor dem Tipi, der typischen Behausung der Prärie-Indianer, sitzt eine Squaw, beschäftigt mit einer Perlenstickerei. Ihre rote Gesichtsbemalung bedeutet: siegreiche Heimkehr ihres Mannes.

   Am Zelt steht die Kindertrage, darin eingewickelt das Kind.”

   HOMECOMING FROM THE BATTLE

   (an image of the Indian produced/reinforced by German language books and films)

   A group of warriors rides in on wild mustangs, swinging tomahawks, lances, and collected scalps. Dignified, the tribal chief American Horse approaches them dressed in festival-day clothing and a magnificent feather decoration as a show of his dignity.

   Facing him in front of the tipi, the typical housing of the Prairie Indians, sits a Squaw, busy with her beadwork. Her red face paint signifies the victorious homecoming of her husband.

   Against the tent stands the child carrier, within which a child is wrapped. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. German label text for “ADLERFEDERHAUBEN” (English is in text above):

   “Im Zug der Ansiedlung in Reservationen nach 1870 verlor die Federhaube ihren Charakter als Kriegerausezeichnung und wurde zu einem festlichen Schmuck, den eigentlich jeder respektable Mann tragen konnte.” [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. The full text of the scalp display label is as follows:

   “SKALPE ALS KRIEGSTROPHÄEN

   Schon in vorkolumbischer Zeit wurde bei einigen Stämmen, z.B. bei den Irokesen und Muskhogee, dem besiegten Feind der Skalp genommen. Sie glaubten, damit die dem Kopfhaar innewohnende magische Lebenskraft auf sich übertragen zu können.

   Mit der Erschliessung des Inneren von Nordamerika machten die Weissen den Skalp zu einem blutigen Dokument der grausamen Ausrottung der Indianer. Hohe Geldprämien –1764 zahlte man für einen männlichen Skalp 134 Dollar, für einen weiblichen 50 Dollar—dienten als Anreiz zur systematischen Niedermetzelung von Männern, Frauen und Kindern.

   Beim Skalptanz, einem zeremoniellen Tanz, mit dem die Seele des skalpierten Feindes versöhnt werden sollte, trugen die Frauen die auf Rahmen gespannten Skalps auf langen Stangen tanzend mit sich.”

   SCALPS AS WAR TROPHIES

   Already in pre-Columbian times, some tribes, for example the Iroquois and Muscogee, took the scalps of their defeated enemies. They believed that with the hair from the head they could transfer the magical life power they [the scalps] possessed.

   With the development of the interior of North America, the Whites made the scalps a bloody documentation of the gruesome extermination of the Indian. High bounties—in 1764 one paid 134 dollars for a man’s scalp, and 50 dollars for a woman’s scalp—gave incentive for the systematic butchering of men, women, and children.

   In the Scalp Dance, a ceremonial dance through which the souls of the scalped enemies should be reconciled, the women carried scalps stretched on frames on long sticks and danced with them.

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