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Dagmar Wernitznig
University of Ljubljana, dagmar.wernitznig@oxfordalumni.org

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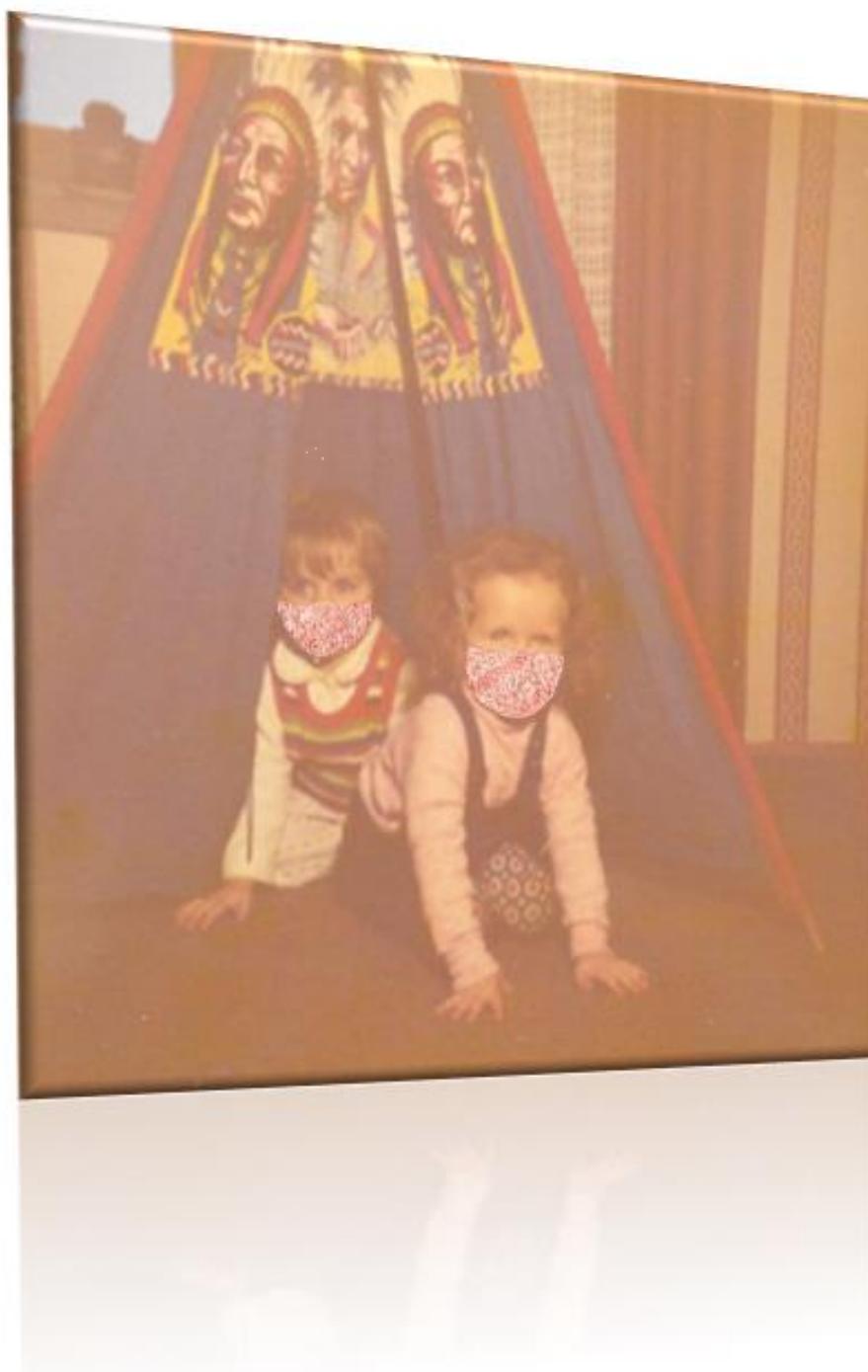
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**Pseudo-Patriotism, Polemics, and Propaganda:
European ‘*Indianness*’ and Contemporary German Populism**

Dagmar Wernitznig*

*Associate Professor, Department of History, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana
Senior Research Fellow, ERC Advanced Grant EIRENE (<https://project-eirene.eu>)
dagmar.wernitznig@oxfordalumni.org

Abstract

This article highlights and explores new nuances of colonialisms that can be witnessed in German populist politics in conjunction with public discourses about migration and *refugeedom*. In their xenophobic aversion towards aliens, ultra-nationalist organizations and parties in Germany pervert the colonial trauma of Native American peoples by projecting it onto their own existence. By drawing analogies between their own lives and the plight of Native American expulsion or forceful assimilation since the arrival of the first European settlers, right-wing individuals and groups perceive themselves as a vanishing tribe that is threatened with extinction, caused by Arabic and African newcomers on German soil. This process of incorporating and representing 'Indianness' for the sake of 'racial purity and survival' can be interpreted as the most recent step in an exceptionally intricate and problematic historiography of physical, cultural, and psychological intrusion of indigenous peoples' identities and spheres on the North American continent.

Keywords: German populism, Pseudo-patriotism, European "Indianness," Propaganda

A mixture of gullibility and cynicism had been an outstanding characteristic of mob mentality before it became an everyday phenomenon of masses. In an ever-changing, incomprehensible world the masses had reached the point where they would, at the same time, believe everything and nothing, think that everything is possible and that nothing was true.

~Hannah Arendt, *Totalitarianism* (1968: 80)

1. Introduction: Playing Indian on Both Sides of the Atlantic

When the Capitol was stormed in Washington, DC, on 6 January 2021, one image in particular went viral and global: Self-declared QAnon (Bloom and Moskalenko 2021; Rothschild 2021) Shaman, or short Q Shaman, Jake Angeli, bare-chested and sporting a potpourri appearance that consisted of a US-flag face painting and a *Jamiroquai*-inspired, neo-pagan headgear.¹ Born as Jacob Chansley and originally from Phoenix, Arizona, where he had also engaged in local right-wing circles, he strutted along the Capitol hallways, his upper body evincing numerous tattoos based on ancient Scandinavian patterns and that are commonly utilized by neo-fascism. Once in the Senate Chamber, yelling ‘freeeeeedom’ in a *Bravehardian* manner and chanting recycled rhythms, he made sure that he was always at the forefront of the rioters, hence guaranteeing (social) media coverage on all platforms, ranging from the printed press to YouTube and *fakebook*. His carefully designed outfit, displaying a collage of pseudo-patriotic and token-tribal symbols and trinkets, certainly paid off and helped him to receive the attention he so desperately seems to crave. In today’s fast-paced, super-digital, hyper-virtual age, his fifteen *seconds* of fame would perhaps have never happened as vehemently and flamboyantly, had he not dressed up as a wannabe-revolutionary savage, armed with a megaphone and potentially harboring a megalomaniac mentality that borders to a messiah-complex.²

Palpably, Q Shaman’s personal staging of a warped variant of the Boston Tea Party, spiced with elements of the Battle of the Little Bighorn and *Dances with Wolves*, harks back to a long tradition of Americans—especially white, male citizens—playing Indian for political or socio-economic reasons.³ One might just think of the white supremacist and Klansman Asa Earl Carter (1925–1979), better known by his alias Forrest Carter, the hoaxer Carlos Castaneda (1925–1998) and his fictitious *Don Juan* series, or the patriarchal primitivism of the Boy Scouts of America that romanticized wilderness by reinforcing gendered expectations of masculinities in relation to the upbringing of children (Deloria 1998: 95–127). Another illustrious figure was Grey Owl (1888–1938), going by his Christian name as Archibald Stansfeld Belaney and originally from Hastings in the United Kingdom and thus verifying

¹ Acolytes of the QAnon conspiracy believe Donald Trump to be a protector and savior against satanic cults that practice pedophilia, human sacrifice, and cannibalism, especially the devouring of infants—a scenario that is also embellished with a decidedly apocalyptic twist.

² For Q Shaman’s seemingly impulsive, yet highly calculated behavior, erratically oscillating and crisscrossing between narcissism, hubris, and standard selfie frenzy and combined with ambitions as a stage performer and high hopes for a flock of devoted groupies, see the on-site video footage of the *New Yorker* reporter Luke Mogelson: [A Reporter’s Footage from Inside the Capitol Siege | The New Yorker](#) <accessed 25 October 2021>.—From a clinical perspective, a survey of the average intoxication levels of the rioters would be quite interesting and illuminating.

³ I use the term *Indian(ness)* when dealing with socio-political and cultural constructs or stereotypes of native and First Nations peoples. Conversely, *Native American* is appropriated to delineate indigenous persons and cultures.

that Europe had its share of fake Indians, too (Wernitznig 2007: 95–119). Especially German-speaking countries are still mesmerized by ‘anything Indian,’ and this fascination can be almost singlehandedly traced back to one writer, namely Karl May (1842–1912).

To this day, May’s oeuvre about an imagined Wild West and especially the fabricated Indian ‘prince’ *Winnetou*, chief of the Mescalero-Apache and—as is almost mandatory—last of his kind, has an impact on young and old German-speaking readers. May’s biography is dubious, to say the least. Growing up in Radebeul near Dresden and starting out as a small-time thief, he found himself in and out of prison, until he ended up as a writer of dime novels and, subsequently, swashbuckling stories about the ‘Orient’ and the American frontier. Only finally visiting these places towards the end of his life and at the height of his success, he initially relied on second-hand sources about these territories and its inhabitants.

Consequently, his novels are a patchwork of travel reports, *atlantes*, and adventure stories. Regardless or maybe because of these ingredients, May’s books became extremely fashionable with readerships in German-speaking countries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, their popularity still lingering in this millennium.

Specifically, the substantial series of the *Winnetou* titles, all in all three volumes (i.e., *Winnetou I–III*), turned into a quasi-cultural heritage, imprinted on the minds of all ages in Germany and Austria. This literary experience was reinforced in the 1960s by a visual impact, due to movies, produced by a cinematic joint venture of the countries Germany, France, Italy, and Yugoslavia with the French actor Pierre Brice (1929–2015) starring in the title role and Lex Barker (1919–1973), playing his white ‘blood brother’ Old Shatterhand. While outstanding figures such as the author and playwright Carl Zuckmayr (1896–1977) even went as far as christening their offspring *Winnetou*, the most notorious of May’s admirers was certainly Adolf Hitler. On many occasions, Hitler mentioned May’s works as his favorite literary diet. Actually, as an aspiring painter in Vienna before the First World War, the dictator-to-be attended the last public talk given by May for the Viennese *Akademischer Verband für Literatur und Musik* [Academic Association for Literature and Music] and in front of an audience of two thousand fans on 22 March 1912 (Hamann 1999: 382–4). Rumors that Hitler made it backstage to meet his idol May are unfounded, yet widely circulated still (Buch 2003: 175–201). In her analysis of Hitler’s ideologically determining years in Vienna from 1906 to 1913, the historian Brigitte Hamann teased out the nexus between Hitler’s mindset as well as worldview and May’s black-and-white, simplistic writing style of the eternal fight between good and evil:

Hitler constructed a clear and organized weltanschauung that gave preference to bipolar theories: the theory about masters and slaves, about strong and weak, blond and dark people, accompanied by a clear distinction between good and evil, as in Karl May’s *Ardistan and Djinnistan*. ... All these theories have a distinct pattern of friends versus enemies (Hamann 1999: 234).

In fact, Thomas Mann’s son, Klaus Mann (1906–1949), matter-of-factly stated in 1940: “The Third Reich is Karl May’s ultimate triumph, the ghastly realization of his dreams” (Mann 1940: 400). Especially during the Second World War, the Nazi-Regime fostered the cult surrounding May’s persona and his literary creation for strategic and martial purposes. For example, copies of *Winnetou* were distributed to soldiers on the frontlines to enhance combat morale. Moreover, novels besides those written by May that depicted Indian warriors were incorporated into compulsory reading lists in German schools as an instrument to infiltrate, condition, and train mostly male pupils for future military service. According to Barbara

Haible, for instance, this implementation of *Indianness* served as an overall agenda of wartime motivation and mobilization, including the *Führerverherrlichung* [glorification of the Führer] as the equivalent to ‘Indian chieftdom’ (Haible 1998).

Sadly, and quite disturbingly, this simulacrum of *Indianness* as a racist end for totalitarian means experiences a revival with the (great-)grandchildren of these boys and young men, who came of age during the Nazi terror. This contribution will demonstrate how a concoction of Germanification and artificial *nativisms* has come to dominate the rhetoric and actions of radical-right milieus in Germany for approximately the last two decades. Particularly in debates about migration and refugeeism, hijacked by such reactionary organizations and parties, *Indianness* quite often acquires center stage concerning the protection of ‘home turf.’ The spotlight is on the vanishing element of a native race, menaced and besieged by newcomers from different continents, and the fate of ‘indigenous’—should read ‘Germanic’—residents is equated with the tragic history of actual Native Americans.

2. “We Are the Natives, So Stay Out!”—Tribal Germans and Reversed Reservations

“Patriotism is the virtue of the vicious.”

~Oscar Wilde, cited in *Conversations with Oscar Wilde* (1931: 20)

The trope of a vanishing race, replaced by foreign invaders, is disconcertingly generic in European reactionary politics, whether it is Geert Wilders’s *Partij voor de Vrijheid* [Party for Freedom] in The Netherlands or the Italian *Lega Nord* [Northern League]. For example, the Italian populist party *Lega Nord*, founded in 1991, employed a campaign poster for the parliamentary elections in April 2008, showing a ‘traditional Indian chief’ with the slogan in capital letters “*Loro non hanno potuto mettere regole all’immigrazione ora vivono nelle riserve!*” that roughly translates as “They [the Native Americans] have not been able to establish immigration rules, now they live on reservations!” This alarmist message is succeeded by the imperative “*Pensaci!*” [think about it] in red print.⁴

The following study, however, focuses on the recent developments in Germany’s political landscape. Thereby, the underlying tone in German right-wing settings since the turn of the millennium and, more gravely, since the refugee waves that started rolling in from Syria around 2013/14 is one of fear of disappearance or extinction. Frequently, the term *Parallelgesellschaft* [parallel society] of migrants is creeping up, so a parallel society of foreigners, who, in the end, would take over and become all dominant. As Bart Bonikowski put it quite poignantly:

By targeting political elites and ethnic, religious and racial minorities, opportunistic political actors on the radical right have been able to mobilize unprecedented support among ethnic majorities experiencing an acute sense of collective status threat, whether actual or perceived (Bonikowski 2017: 184).

⁴ Cf. [Corriere della Sera - Manifesto leghista con l'indiano](https://www.corriere.it/2008/04/27/manifesto-leghista-con-l-indiano) <accessed 25 October 2021>.

This climate of 'we against them,' laced with elegies about a dying German race, was particularly fueled by Chancellor Angela Merkel's decision to open German borders for some one million refugees in 2015 at the height of the Syrian crisis with the motto "*Wir schaffen das!*"—a paraphrasing of the Rosie-the-Riveter idiom 'We Can Do It!' Initially, the anti-migrant atmosphere gained momentum in states of the former German Democratic Republic. There, residents, most of them plagued by unemployment, commonly address their limited prospects, as compared to the western parts in Germany, even decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Except for major cities like Dresden and Leipzig, for example, eastern areas in Germany are characterized by demographic fluctuations also, that is, an *Abwanderung* [emigration], especially by the young and better-educated strata of the population in search for more promising options elsewhere. Those who stay, particularly in remote and rural sites that offer little infrastructure, are more than likely prone to fall prey to demagogical politics.

Nevertheless, it is imperative to emphasize that the complexity and dissemination of extremist contents with a flair of social decline, increasingly, is not merely restricted to these parts of Germany, as shall also become transparent in the following synopsis. The starting point make two writers, Botho Strauß and Thilo Sarrazin, both born towards the end of the Second World War, who particularly facilitated and contributed to the discourse about extinction theories with regard to Germans and their lifestyles or customs.

The well-known novelist and playwright Botho Strauß, for instance, published '*Der letzte Deutsche*' [The last German], which, quite ostensibly, is echoing James Fenimore Cooper's title *The Last of the Mohicans*, in 2015.⁵ With this piece, Strauß lamented what he and his supporters understand and articulate as a decline or corruption of traditional or 'proper' German culture, values, and sovereignty. In fact, this was not Strauß's first pejorative text about social and geopolitical change. Born in 1944 in Naumburg in Saxony-Anhalt, Strauß had already held the reputation of a reactionary and ultra-conservative after his 1993 essay '*Anschwellender Bocksgesang*,'⁶ an antithesis to liberalism and pluralism and an exultation of the dismantling of the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain, peppered with a critique of society's tolerance towards new arrivals in Germany (Wiesberg 2002; Thomas 2003; Havertz 2008).

CEO-turned-writer Thilo Sarrazin, again, managed a metaphorical *coup d'état* in 2010 with his book *Deutschland schafft sich ab: Wie wir unser Land aufs Spiel setzen* [Germany is doing away (or neutralizing) itself: how we gamble with our country], selling more than 1.5 million copies and thus topping the bestseller lists for non-fiction in the post-1945 German Republic. The gist of Sarrazin's volume is that soon Germans will be outnumbered and overrun by aliens, more precisely, Arabs, Turks, and Africans, who strive to establish a parallel society with exploding birth rates, as opposed to an overaged and barren German enclave. In his dichotomous and monolithic argumentation, he differentiates between 'good' or 'useful' and 'bad' or 'parasitic' immigrants. The latter are the aforementioned arrivals from the Middle East and Africa, whereas Asians from India or China are targeted as 'trustworthy' and 'diligent' enough to fit into the first category. By using a plethora of statistical data, Sarrazin prophesized a dystopian world of poverty, lack of education, and criminality, due to

⁵ Botho Strauß, '*Der letzte Deutsche: Uns wird die Souveränität geraubt, dagegen zu sein. Eine Glosse von Botho Strauß*,' [The last German: We are being deprived of the sovereignty to be against something. A commentary by Botho Strauß] *Der Spiegel*, 41/2015; [Der letzte Deutsche - DER SPIEGEL](#) <accessed 25 October 2021>.

⁶ Botho Strauß, '*Anschwellender Bocksgesang*' [swelling buck song] *Der Spiegel*, 6/1993; [Anschwellender Bocksgesang - DER SPIEGEL](#) <accessed 25 October 2021>.

demographic shifts and a supposed upheaval of cultural and legal norms (Bellers 2010; Schwarz 2010).

Interestingly, Sarrazin himself descends from a quite heterogenous background, and his family name, as he readily admits, denotes the Saracens. He was born in 1945 in Gera in Thuringia with a multi-cultural ancestry, including relatives from Britain, France, and Italy, and to a refugee mother. An economist by training, he joined the Social Democratic Party in the 1970s and worked in the management of the German Railway, the German Bank, and as a Berlin senator for finances (Ahlheim 2011). While Sarrazin does not associate himself directly with far-right groups, his book became a substratum for several groups like PEGIDA, an acronym for *Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes* [Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident], and the so-called *Alternative für Deutschland* [Alternative for Germany] or short AfD (Decker 2015; Rosellini 2020).

Founded in 2014 by Lutz Bachmann in Dresden, the capital city of Saxony which used to belong to the German Democratic Republic before the reunification of Germany in 1990, PEGIDA holds regular demonstrations and rallies. With decidedly nationalist and racist undertones, PEGIDA sympathizers propagate a restoration of ‘old values’ of Western culture and a curtailing of ‘foreign’ influences in education, law, and politics (Dostal 2015; Virchow 2016; Vorländer, Herold, and Schäller 2018). The party AfD, again, sprang forth in 2013 with a miscellaneous party program of EU-skepticism, islamophobia, antisemitism, and an ardent and steadfast denial of climate change (Bebnowski 2015; Havertz 2019; Pfahl-Traugher 2019). A year later, they won seven percent in the EU elections and joined the European Conservatives and Reformists from whom they became excluded in 2016, due to their cooperation with the Austrian right-wing Freedom Party or FPÖ (Grigat 2017). In three state-level elections in Germany in the same year, they obtained several mandates and entered communal parliaments, reaping on average ten to twelve percent of constituents’ votes in Brandenburg, Saxony, and Thuringia, all former territories of the German Democratic Republic (Betz and Habersack 2020: 110–35). After achieving these electoral results, the AfD, quite unsurprisingly, experienced feuds and rifts between varying ideological wings and fractions, plus resignations of prominent members. These internal turbulences, however, did not diminish the party’s popularity amongst specific demographic groups of voters in other elections all over Germany, including the federal ones in 2017 (Hansen and Olsen 2019).

Similar to the *Lega Nord*, the AfD appropriates a second-hand construct of Native American cultures and flashy themes to transmit their messages across public fora and the social media. The extinction of the Teutonic race features heavily in their fearmongering protests and programs about migration and asylum for refugees on German premises. In 2014, for instance, they tweeted a picture of Sitting Bull (c. 1831–1890) without any indication of copyright but with the headline “*Die Indianer konnten die Einwanderung nicht stoppen. Heute leben sie in Reservaten.*” [The Indians could not stop immigration. Today they live on reservations.]⁷ This tweet is eerily familiar to the *Lega Nord* election poster of 2008 mentioned before, yet the source the AfD drew on was not Italian. Instead, they plagiarized a post by the *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands* [National Democratic Party of Germany] or NPD. Established in 1964 in Hannover with a distinct heritage of Nazi-ideology and Third Reich nostalgia, the NPD is a reasonably small political party that successfully

⁷ <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article129330115/AfD-kopiert-die-NPD-und-blamiert-sich.html> <accessed 25 October 2021>. —This iconic image of Sitting Bull with a stern expression on his face originally derives from David F. Barry’s photo collection, taken in the early 1880s on Dakota territory.

dodged its legal prohibition by the German Federal Constitutional Court in 2017 (Nagle 1970; Leggewie and Meier 2002; Philippsberg 2009).

The NPD, again, seems to have matter-of-factly used the *Lega Nord* poster as a template for their posting in 2012. Hence the AfD's tweet is problematic and paradoxical on many levels: Not only did they nonchalantly proliferate an assembly-line, shallow illustration of an 'Indian chief' for spiteful and racist purposes, but they also managed to be associated with the NPD, a group that they officially claim to be distanced from in order to maintain a democratic appearance. Similar to the Brexit-enforcing UKIP (United Kingdom Independence Party) in Great Britain that tries to avoid interfaces with the extremist British National Party, the AfD is very careful not to liaise with the NPD, albeit they frequently accept NPD members into their midst.⁸

When it comes to demonstrations and public rallies against various causes, such as climate change or cultural and religious diversity, AfD supporters even go a step further in their appropriation of Indian clichés. Quite often, individual AfDerians can be spotted impersonating 'traditional' Indian chiefs themselves, while waving banners or the German flag on street marches. This was the case, for instance, at a demonstration against the building of a mosque in Rostock in the spring of 2019.⁹ Many AfD followers assembled on Rostock's *Markt Reuthershagen*, staging anti-Islamic protests while facing a stand-off with pro-Muslim demonstrators at the same time. One disguised AfD man stood out in particular and therefore was also a welcome motif for journalists and photographers. Wearing a fantasy garb of a 'typical' Sioux chief that can be easily purchased in any German costume store, he made sure to be always first in line in order to be seen and heard, similar to the Q Shaman during the Capitol attack. Being anything but stoic, this enigmatic 'Sioux chief,' accordingly, featured prominently on the AfD front during their marches and speeches for a mosque-free Rostock. Their accessories were plenty of German flags and an oversized banner, reading: "*Für eine sichere Heimat. ISLAMISIERUNG STOPPEN!*" [For a safe homeland. STOP ISLAMIZATION!]¹⁰ The startled onlooker of these bizarre scenes is left to wonder whether the AfD in their enthusiastic embrace of 'everything Indian' versus 'anything Oriental' would actually be tolerant and hospitable, if—hypothetically speaking—Native Americans decided to express their spirituality and cultural heritage via hosting Ghost Dances or powwows in Rostock, for example.

The method of cementing their interpretation of Christianity and Christian religion in Germany or who might be permitted to practice it resurfaced on other occasions with agents of the AfD. For instance, in the same year, around Christmas time of 2019, the AfD's reaction to the newly nominated *Nürnberger Christkind* [Nuremberg Christ Child], seventeen-year-old Benigna Munki, resulted in scandalous headlines. The narrative and iconography of the Christ Child and the festivities of the *Christkindlesmarkt* [Christ Child's Market] in the Franconian town of Nuremberg in Bavaria are a century-old tradition. Overall, this Christmas market,

⁸ Notably, UKIP used a campaign poster in the same tradition as the *Lega Nord* in Lancaster in 2010, showing an unidentified man with an Indian headgear and the line: "He used to ignore immigration ... now he lives on a reservation." Cf. [Ukip 'Unhappy Native American' Immigration Leaflet Brandished In Debate By Nick Clegg \(VIDEO\) | HuffPost UK \(huffingtonpost.co.uk\)](#) and [UKIP compares immigration with oppression of Native Americans - Left Foot Forward: Leading the UK's progressive debate](#) <both accessed 25 October 2021>.

⁹ For news coverage of the demonstration on 25 March 2019, including pictures, see [AfD-Demo gegen Moscheebau und Gegendemo in Reutershagen | Rostock-Heute](#) and <https://www.nnn.de/lokales/rostock/Am-Markt-Reuthershagen-trafen-AfD-Demonstranten-und-Linke-am-Montagabend-aufeinander-id23121987.html> <both accessed 25 October 2021>.

¹⁰ Capital letters by the AfD.

promoting the Christ Child as a key figure, is generally hailed to be the best known worldwide.

Amongst twenty-five candidates, who competed to play this pertinent role of the Christ Child, Benigna Munki was voted for unanimously by the fifteen persons on the jury on 30 October 2019. Besides officially opening the market on 29 November from a balcony of the *Frauenkirche* in Nuremberg, wearing a halo-like, sparkling crown and a golden cape that resembles angelic wings, the Christ Child is expected to fulfil representational and charitable duties, like visiting childcare facilities, homes for senior citizens, or hospitals and by acting as a quasi-ambassador of the city of Nuremberg for a two-year period.

The announcement of Benigna Munki as this new Christ Child, in 2019, was greeted by the local AfD headquarters in the rural outskirts of the Bavarian capital Munich by posting an unauthorized picture of the girl on Facebook that was accompanied with the comment: “*Nürnberg hat ein neues Christkind. Eines Tages wird es uns wie den Indianern gehen.*” [Nuremberg has a new Christ Child. Some day we will share the fate of Indians.]¹¹ This disrespectful remark, rightfully, triggered an avalanche of criticisms of AfD tactics, which, in turn, caused their spokesperson in Bavaria, Christina Specht, to distance the party from the (already deleted) posting, claiming it to be the brainchild of an (already resigned) individual. Incidentally and ironically, Benigna Munki is half-Indian in the truest sense of the word: Her father, an IT specialist by profession who is now working for the German Bureau for Migration and Refugees [*Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge*; BAMF], emigrated from India to Germany at the age of nineteen, studied in Berlin, and obtained German citizenship in 1999.

As the Nuremberg Christmas market is quite famous in Europe and overseas, Benigna’s slandering by the AfD also attracted attention in the international press.¹² Nevertheless, despite gestures of solidarity or proclaimed assurances of democratic principles for an open, liberal, and pluralistic society, no pro-Benigna voice, whether domestic or foreign, seemed to have been at least perturbed if not outraged by her actual Christ Child apparel. Showcased with a blond wig and thus sanitized of her genuine physiognomy beyond recognition, her Christ Child ensemble clearly suggests a ‘Germanized’ profile that ‘passes’ during the Christmas period. Pleasing normative, Western expectations of what a ‘proper’ *Christkind* is supposed to look like, this two-year engagement certainly was a helpful steppingstone in her planned acting career. Similarly, Benigna’s response to the base and appalling AfD attack was sophisticated and spot-on: “*Es tut mir leid für die Menschen, die mit so einer Sicht durch die Welt gehen und sich nicht auf das fokussieren können, was wirklich wichtig ist.*” [It makes me sad for people who go through life with such a perspective, which means they can’t focus on what’s important in the world, above all at Christmas time.]¹³

¹¹ See a video about the already deleted post at: [AfD postet rassistischen Beitrag zum neuen Nürnberger Christkind - WELT](#) <accessed 25 October 2021>.

¹² For the BBC: [Outrage after AfD scorn mixed-race girl playing ‘Christ Child’](#); for CNN: [German teenager chosen to open Christmas market object of racist slurs](#). <both accessed 25 October 2021>.

¹³ Cited at: [Nürnberger Christkind äußert sich zur AfD-Hetze - Bayern - SZ.de \(sueddeutsche.de\)](#). For the English translation, see: [German teenager chosen to open Christmas market object of racist slurs - CNN](#) <both accessed 25 October 2021>.

3. Conclusion: Of 'New' Indians and Old Ideologies

“Man is a credulous animal, and must believe something; in the absence of good grounds for belief, he will be satisfied with bad ones.”

~Bertrand Russell, *Unpopular Essays* (1950: 99)

The colonization and persecution of Native Americans was not simply brutal but also manifold: First came the removal from fertile lands to make way for European, farming settlers, followed by subsequent relocations from what turned out to be mineral-rich territories. All this culminated in a final usurpation of native cultures and spirituality by white or plastic shamans and pretend Indians with surges of esotericisms and diverse New Age trends since the 1960s, experiencing a particular heyday during the eschatological 1990s with the new millennium on the horizon (Wernitznig 2003). Whereas some tribes now resort to hunting the ‘New Buffalo’ by welcoming non-natives in their casinos and gaming halls, European tribes of Indianized right-wingers who claim to have an entitlement to nativism revert to re-colonize or neo-colonize the historical heritage of those same indigenous peoples.

Judging from the images and messages these European ultra-reactionaries use and that have been deconstructed in this article, their preferred tribe-of-choice, apparently, are the (Lakota) Sioux with the prototypical ‘longhair’ chief and his most important accessory, the unmistakable, feathery, and lavish headdress. In the dualism of noble versus ignoble savage, the Sioux are commonly cast in the role of the ‘goodies,’ hence juxtaposing the obligatorily villainous—and in Hollywoodian imagery usually bald—ones, like, for instance, the Pawnee, as exemplified in Kevin Costner’s blockbuster *Dances with Wolves*. Playing the devil’s advocate, one could easily argue that neo-Nazis and skinheads might have more inclinations towards these hairless and stereotypically evil and mischievous specimens, alas this is not the case. Indeed, extremists in Germany and elsewhere in Europe have chosen to identify with the noble tribe that is doomed to ride towards the proverbial sunset, when it comes to cater to white extinction fantasies and migration hysteria.

Within this irrational setup, the idiosyncrasy of neo-fascist populism by personifying victims of one discriminated ethnic group as a tool to denigrate others, as demonstrated with the case of Germany, prevails most potently. In *Reproductions of Banality: Fascism, Literature, and French Intellectual Life*, Alice Kaplan listed an etymological assessment of the origins of the term fascism from several Indo-European language families, all deriving from the meaning ‘bundle’ (Kaplan, 1986: xxvii). By ‘bundling up’ and intertwining anti-liberal and retrogressive convictions with inherent contradictions, German and other ultra-nationalists in Europe precisely comply with this adequate definition that stems from basic linguistics.

This contribution attempted to provide a first glimpse of how European extremists, on the one hand, stigmatize and mimic indigenous peoples of North America in an almost pathological endeavor to forge imagined communities (Anderson 1983) and collective identities (Bonikowski 2017: 147–174), while, on the other, are steeped quite ruthlessly in xenophobia, even uttering genocidal criteria, as, for instance, so toxically epitomized by the vile statement by the former AfD press officer Christian Lüth about migrants: “We can always shoot them later, that’s not an issue. Or gas them, as you wish. It doesn’t matter to me.”¹⁴ Essentially,

¹⁴ [German Jewish leaders worried after far-right surge in Thuringia | News | DW | 28.10.2019](#) <accessed 25 October 2021>. This website contains a summary in English of gruesome assertions by AfD members, most of whom hold or used to hold leading positions.

future dynamics in European politics and amongst its voters have the power to calibrate for how long and intensely this comfortable surrogate identity of *Indianness* and orchestrated victimhood that resonates with *völkisch* individuals or organizations as a modus operandi to marginalize and vilify aliens and exiles will last.—As Benigna Mumsi’s astute comment already signified, with their reactionary reservations against others, right-wing radicals have already maneuvered themselves onto an ideological and intellectual wasteland.



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