

Abstract for the GKS website of a presentation at the University of Trier, June 11th, 2013

Bi-National “Mythbusters”-Project

The former GKS-president Hartmut Lutz, Prof. emeritus of the universities of Greifswald and Szczecin, is presently a visiting professor at the “International Research Training Group (IRTC) Diversity” at the University of Trier. Since last fall, when he served as Killam Visiting Scholar at the University of Calgary, Lutz is part of a small transatlantic research team consisting of three scholars, Florentine Strzelczyk (German Studies, University of Calgary), Renae Watchman (North American Native Literatures, Mount Royal University Calgary) and Lutz. Their joint project under the working-title “**‘Mythbusters’: Canadian Indigenous Refractions on German ‘Indianthusiasm’**” explores a recent transatlantic phenomenon, i.e. the growing network of knowledge exchange between Canadian Aboriginals and people in the German speaking countries.

On June 11th 2013 Lutz gave a guest lecture at the University of Trier entitled “‘Mythbusters’ and ‘Indianthusiasm’: (De-)Constructing Transatlantic Others”, which drew on his previous research in the field and presented first results of the current joint project with his Calgary colleagues, i.e. the transnational and transatlantic phenomenon of increased communication between Canadian First Nation and people in the German speaking countries. Here is an abstract of that presentation:

Based on few actual encounters but a growing amount of visual and textual (re)presentations, people in German speaking countries have constructed, expanded, romanticized, and ossified “their” image of American “Sa(l)vages,” resulting in a phenomenon described as “Deutsche Indianertümelei” (German Indianthusiasm). But in the course of more than five centuries, and especially after the Second World War, there have been multiple personal encounters between “North American Indians” and “Germans.” Native American and Canadian Aboriginal visitors to Austria, Switzerland and Germany, reacting to “Indianthusiasm”, developed their own strategies to cope with the stereotypes and to deconstruct (or “bust”) the myths they encountered. Lutz’ presentation briefly scanned the development of Indian stereotyping and then focused on the growing diversity of visual and textual responses by Aboriginal artists and writers, intellectuals and entrepreneurs. In conclusion, the presentation shared some of the “mythbusting” reactions by Canadian Aboriginal sojourners in Germany. They are agents in a growing transnational network of power exchange. They are not only deconstructing the hegemonic ideologies underpinning “Indianthusiasm” and proving that the “the subalterns can speak” (Spivack; Eigenbrod), but this network shows that discursive power flows simultaneously in different reactions and allows both sides to profit from the “Other’s” knowledge systems and historical experiences.