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## Buffalo Bill's Wild West in Germany. A Transnational History.

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BUFFALO BILL'S WILD WEST IN GERMANY  
A TRANSNATIONAL HISTORY

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

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## THE GRADUATE COLLEGE

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**Julia Simone Stetler**

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## ABSTRACT

### **Buffalo Bill's Wild West in Germany A Transnational History**

By

Julia S. Stetler

This dissertation examines European and especially German responses to Buffalo Bill's *Wild West* show during its two European tours in 1890-1891 and 1906. It argues that the different European countries creatively adapted the content and message of the show according to their own specific cultural values and needs. By considering Buffalo Bill's *Wild West* within the specific cultural contexts of the nations it toured, we are able to better explain reactions to it, including Germany's astoundingly positive response. The show was an entertaining event for American and European audiences alike with its exoticized figures, spectacular stunts, and colorful drama; however, this study contends that it had quite a different meaning for Europeans and Germans in particular than it did for Americans.

"Buffalo Bill's Wild West in Germany" contributes new scholarly perspectives on the German reception of the American West and Buffalo Bill's version of it by providing a transnational comparison. Instead of superimposing the current American assumptions about the show onto Europe, this study offers a detailed analysis of the specifically German reactions to the *Wild West* and argues that Germans responded much more to the ethnographic and romantic elements of the show than to the struggle and appeals of Manifest Destiny that secured its success in the U.S. By including a vast array of German secondary literature, the *Wild West* show is put into a larger national context that has not

previously been made available for an English readership before. Similarly, the large volume of German newspaper articles that drive the argument in the later chapters comprise a research base that has never before been translated into English and analyzed by American scholars. Through the utilization of these primary and secondary sources, this study reshapes our understanding both of Buffalo Bill's show and, more broadly, of the image of the American West in Germany.

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The archivists at the American Heritage Center and the many libraries and archives in Europe that I visited have my gratitude for their patience, knowledge, and guidance. I am especially indebted to Karl Markus Kreis for his support, informative emails, and the long conversations about Buffalo Bill, the image of Native Americans in Germany, the cultural impact of the show, and the many myths that surround it. He and his wife also provided me with food and lodging while I was researching in Germany. Furthermore, while in France, I had an interesting conversation with Jacques Portes about the way the French received the *Wild West*.

I am thankful for my family and their never-ceasing support. My mother Karin and grandmother Karla have not only given moral and emotional support but also paid for flights, train tickets, hotel rooms, and food. My mom accompanied me to archives in Rome and Germany, babysat my daughter while I was presenting papers and gathering data, endured my every complaint, and always let me know that I was supported in every way possible. Thanks are also due to Hendrik, Uwe, Willi, Gudrun, Ann-Katrin, and Isabell for cheerful visits and care packages full of chocolate. My parents-in-law Joan and Zieb have provided countless hours of babysitting so that I could write. Thank you.

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## INTRODUCTION

For many Europeans, the American West has been and always will be a mythical place in which they can stage their own adventures, fight their own battles, and live out their own desires. Germans especially have sustained a remarkable fascination with the frontier and the myth of the American West over the last two centuries, which has drawn generations of Germans to the West as explorers, fortune-seekers, immigrants, and even today as tourists. The American Indian has developed into a prototype for everything noble, natural, and brave in German culture and has become a highly positive cultural icon. The mythical Indian past on the Great Plains still inspires the German imagination, serving as the backdrop for escapist fantasies and role play. A large body of travel literature, romanticized popular fiction, works of art, and television programs and movies have kept alive this utopian dream of the American West. Ultimately, it has helped shape the relationship between America and Germany from the formation and expansion of both countries to the present day.

One of the greatest influences on German visions of the West was William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody, whose *Wild West* show set the tone for all future thinking about the West and its inhabitants. Cody was not the first to expose Germans to a group of performing strangers or even Native Americans, since there had been a long tradition of ethnographic exhibits and entertainments that brought Germans in contact with people from all around the globe. What made Cody’s *Wild West* so unique and extraordinarily successful was the fact that it arrived in Germany precisely when the need and desire for an escapist utopia was the greatest and Germans had been sufficiently steeped in the myth

and romance of the American West to identify with and make Cody's spectacle their own.

The *Wild West* crossed the Atlantic twice for extended tours that amount to almost a third of its performative lifespan being spent in Europe. The show debuted in London in 1887 and subsequently performed in England in 1887 and 1888 before moving to Paris in 1889. After short stops in Lyon and Marseilles, Cody and the *Wild West* entertained crowds in Barcelona, Spain for five weeks. In 1890, the show toured Italy, Austria, and Germany and, by the end of 1892, had returned to the British Isles, from where the *Wild West* traveled back to the United States. Ten years later, the spectacle returned to Europe for a second tour, which opened with a performance in London in December of 1902. It then traveled Great Britain for the next three years and continued its European success in France in 1905. In 1906, the last year of its stay in Europe, the show traveled through Italy, Germany, Luxemburg and Belgium, as well as to various parts of Eastern Europe, which at that time were united under the banner of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. These included present-day Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, and the Ukraine.

Cody was well-attuned to American longings and needs and thus designed the *Wild West* to include and address the American mood. His show carried specific ideological messages that resounded strongly in a nation that was recovering from the Civil War and trying to define itself in an increasingly globalized world. When he took his "American National Entertainment" abroad, the different European countries creatively adapted the content and message of the show according to their own specific culture and values. The aim of this dissertation is to describe and contextualize Buffalo

Bill's *Wild West* historically and culturally and to explain Germany's astoundingly positive reaction to it. The show was an entertaining event for both Germans and Americans with its exoticized figures, spectacular stunts, and colorful drama; however, I argue that it had quite a different meaning for Germans than it did for Americans. Thus, this study contributes new scholarly perspectives on the German reception of the American West and Buffalo Bill's version of it by providing a transnational comparison.<sup>1</sup> Instead of superimposing the current American assumptions about the show onto Europe, this study offers a detailed analysis of the specifically German reactions to the *Wild West* and argues that Germans responded much more to the ethnographic and romantic elements of the show than to the struggle and appeals of Manifest Destiny that secured its success in the U.S. By including a vast array of German secondary literature, the *Wild West* show is put into a larger national context that has not been made available for an English readership before. Similarly, the large volume of German newspaper articles that drive the argument in the later chapters has never before been translated and analyzed; by utilizing such sources, this study makes a major contribution to the scholarship on Buffalo Bill and the image of the American West in Germany.

The separate chapters address the ways in which Germans re-appropriated the ideological messages of the *Wild West* show, which were tailored to an American context but did not correspond with German notions of the West and especially Native

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<sup>1</sup> The term transnational history is relatively new and concerns the movement of peoples, ideas, technologies and institutions across national boundaries. It internationalizes American history and offers a comparative, more global perspective. Transnational history aims to put national developments in context and explain the nation in terms of its cross-national influences. For an excellent exploration of transnational history, see Ian Tyrell, *Transnational Nation: United States History in Global Perspective since 1789* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) or Thomas Bender, *A Nation among Nations. America's Place in World History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006).

Americans. Chapter one offers a biographical picture of Cody, a discussion of his role as a mythical figure for American identity, and a brief description of his rise to stardom. It also analyses the specifically American context and the content of the show. The second chapter provides necessary context in order to broaden the framework for the German reception of the show. It draws upon an extensive body of German secondary sources and discusses the development of ethnographic exhibits in Germany, demonstrating that the *Wild West* was not without precedent in Germany but was received within a long tradition of similar entertainments. The chapter also addresses the anxieties and strains that accompanied Germany's development into a modern, industrialized mass society. Germany was thrown into the vortex of colonialism, and the emergence of racial science profoundly restructured German thinking about themselves, others, and the world in general.

Chapter three explains the German infatuation with Native Americans and the American West by analyzing the long history of romanticizing and mythologizing the American West and its native inhabitants. It discusses American and European literature and art that contributed to this trend and delineates the presence of Native Americans on German stages throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The German creation myth reinforced romantic sentiments towards the vanishing Indian and thus heightened Germans' desire to visit the ethnographic exhibits and Buffalo Bill's show. The chapter builds on primary and secondary material from both the United States and Germany in order to merge the two sides of scholarship. The fourth chapter analyzes European and American relations at the end of the nineteenth century through the lens of the *Wild West*'s presence in Europe and discusses the role it played in disseminating a particular

image of America. It describes reactions to the show in different European countries and demonstrates the plurality of European responses.

Chapter five delineates the newspaper coverage in regards to the mechanics of the *Wild West*. It grants insights into advertisement strategies, logistics, and press work, and discusses the German reactions to the arrival of the show, the camp, and the way the crowds were handled before the beginning of the performances. Chapter six offers a direct window into the German psyche and attitudes towards North America and Native Americans by providing a detailed overview and analysis of newspaper articles relating to the reception of the show in Germany. Based on primary materials as well as the scattered references to the show in Germany in various secondary works, it verifies the significance of authenticity and vivification for the German audiences and illustrates, in the voice of the reporters, the romantic and mythical affiliations of Germans with the American West and its indigenous population. It also demonstrates the general enthusiasm, criticism of American policy and cultural practices, the deeply-embedded stereotypes about “others,” and the effect the show had on, for example, Germany’s youth. Lastly, following a summary of the previous chapters, Cody’s second European tour is briefly analyzed and compared to the first tour in chapter seven. It reveals the massive changes that took place in only one decade in both the U.S. and Europe and discusses how these changes are reflected in the *Wild West*. Given Cody’s tremendous success in Europe, the chapter finishes with a survey of Cody’s imitators and “successors.”

Published material relating to William Cody and his *Wild West* show is vast and often very detailed, attesting to the enduring popularity of Buffalo Bill. It ranges from

publications by scholars and amateur historians to magazine and newspaper articles, advertisements, various websites and proceedings by fan clubs, museums, and enthusiast societies. Due to the complexity of Buffalo Bill himself and his *Wild West* enterprise, he has been analyzed and debated in many different contexts, ranging from studies in theater to mass culture, consumerism, race, American imperialism, myth and fiction, and the masses of materials on the American western frontier. These multifaceted approaches deliver a plethora of information that make the research for any new work on Buffalo Bill both exciting and daunting at the same time.

The American scholarly literature varies greatly in quality and approach. Early works on Cody relied heavily on Buffalo Bill's autobiography and are therefore laden with myths of their own and lacking in fact and thorough research. These works often uncritically repeat and consequently perpetuate Cody's legends and do not separate between fact and fiction.<sup>2</sup> More recent scholarship has recognized the existence of a dual personality—William Cody on the one side and Buffalo Bill on the other—has treated his persona and his *Wild West* through a more critical lens and attempted to separate myth from reality more carefully. Among these works are Paul Reddin's *Wild West Shows*, L.G. Moses' *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883-1933*, Joy Kasson's *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History*, Robert A. Carter's *Buffalo Bill Cody. The Man behind the Legend*, and the extensive and excellent study by Louis Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America*.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Don Russell's *The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960) is an example for this form.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Reddin, *Wild West Shows* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), L.G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883-1933* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), Joy Kasson, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History* (New



However, as well researched, framed, and written these works are, they focus mainly on the *Wild West* show as an American phenomenon and only tentatively and marginally examine the European context. While most scholars agree that the European side of the *Wild West* shows should not and really cannot be neglected in order to reach a full understanding of the impact and meaning of the show, few scholars have to date ventured much beyond the American context and paid adequate attention to the reception in Europe as a whole or even in individual European countries. Only the British tours have found their way into American scholarship.<sup>4</sup> Among the enormous body of literature on Buffalo Bill, the few works that do not entirely overlook his European tours usually apply no critical lens and repeat the common myths and misconceptions about the show abroad.<sup>5</sup> Paul Reddin's *Wild West Shows* (1999) and L.G. Moses' *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883-1933* (1999), both excellent studies in most respects, address the generally enthusiastic reception of Cody and his troupe in Europe, but mostly omit a detailed discussion of the reasons for this enthusiasm as well as a deeper and more nuanced analysis of the sources. Louis Warren's *Buffalo Bill's America* (2006) devotes an entire chapter to Great Britain and another to Europe, and John F. Sears' essay entitled "Bierstadt, Buffalo Bill, and the Wild West in Europe," (1993) provides some further valuable insights. Lastly, Robert Rydell and Rob Kroes examine

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York: Hill and Wang, 2000), Robert A. Carter, *Buffalo Bill Cody. The Man Behind the Legend* (New York: Wiley and Sons, 2000), Louis Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America. William Cody and the Wild West Show* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> The reason for this is quite obvious: British sources do not pose a language barrier and are therefore more easily accessible to American scholars. The two most recent studies on Buffalo Bill in England are Alan Gallop, *Buffalo Bill's British Wild West* (The History Press, 2009), and Tom Cunningham, *Your Fathers the Ghosts. Buffalo Bill's Wild West in Scotland* (Black and White, 2008). The British tours are the subject of a study by Frank Christianson, which is scheduled to be published in the near future.

<sup>5</sup> These include, for example, Annie Oakley shooting a cigarette out of the German Kaiser's mouth or a very poor reception of the show in Spain. These myths will be discussed in the course of this study.

the impact of American mass culture in Europe, using the Wild West show as one of their examples in *Buffalo Bill in Bologna: the Americanization of the World. 1869-1922*

(2005). Overall, however, the American literature on the reception of the *Wild West* show in Europe is surprisingly thin, superficial and scattered throughout a wide array of works.

Since the scholarly focus has mostly avoided Europe, none of the previous studies on the *Wild West* have analyzed the ways in which the different European countries appropriated the underlying messages of the show. Moreover, none have given enough credit to the fact that Europe was not just one homogenous setting for the reception of the show. In fact, if American scholars have ventured across the Atlantic to illuminate the European reactions, they have often treated (with a few exceptions) European culture in generalized terms, as a voiceless, faceless mass, without delving into any specific cultural nuances. Only a few have given compelling reasons for the success of the *Wild West* that take us beyond the simple assumption that Europeans automatically loved everything American. Thus, the perspectives to date have been fairly one-sided and American-centered. They either rely on sources in English, such as reports from England or those about Europe published in American newspapers of the time, or, due to the language barrier, Americans have often used translated sources that by their very nature downplay audience reception. These include the English show programs, biographical information from the accompanying magazines and pamphlets, performers' speeches, and other official records of the *Wild West* Company.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The show published pamphlets that advertised its official route along with a statistic of miles traveled (for 1906 for example: MS6 Series VI: A, Box 3folder 16). The management kept detailed account ledgers that document profits made in every city, dates and number of shows held, and a note about the weather (for the first European tour, see MS 6, Box 1, folder 6) Show programs were published in English and translated into the different European languages, with slight alterations. The programs were lengthy, around sixty

Even though on the surface Europeans were just as enthusiastic as Americans and embraced Cody and his troupe with fascination and eagerness, when peeling away the outer layers of this enthusiasm the reasons differ sometimes widely among the respective countries. European responses demonstrate the complex mechanisms of identity construction and reconstruction and the impact of values and attitudes that are deeply woven into the tissue of a nation's culture. European audiences did not uncritically and unequivocally swallow the American images of the show but instead transformed them into independent entities of meaning that coincided more with their own respective identities and cultures. However, Buffalo Bill's images of the American West penetrated continental memory and blended with the Old World's own yearnings for the past. By considering such issues, the traditional tale of Buffalo Bill's *Wild West* as the exporter of American values and culture is rendered more complicated, and the standard tale of the uncritical reception of the success story of American conquest of the West in Europe has to be revised.

Consequently, a more detailed study is necessary to reveal the underlying complexities that made Cody such a success everywhere he went. This dissertation offers this kind of a deeper perspective on the German reaction to the show by taking into consideration the German mind map at the time, and by providing an analysis of the specific German cultural framework into which Buffalo Bill's *Wild West* needs to be considered. After all, his *Wild West* encountered a specific cultural background that had been formed and influenced by other ethnographic shows and exotic entertainments that had romanticized and idealized the American West and Native Americans for decades

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pages, and reflect the messages that the management wanted to convey to its audiences (an example for a program from 1893 in AHC, Buffalo Bill Collection, Box 2 folder2).

before William Cody arrived. Thus, the *Wild West* really needs to be seen in these larger contexts and not as a single and novel event without a historical precedent in Germany.

Unfortunately, much of the European scholarship relating to Buffalo Bill is available only in Europe and not listed in most American databases and search engines. In addition, it often concentrates too much on reviewing American works instead of carefully scrutinizing separate countries' reactions to the show.<sup>7</sup> Whenever the available European literature does move beyond recapping works written in English, however, it departs in significant ways from the key contours of the American scholarship. In recent years, German scholars have devoted more attention to Buffalo Bill and the image of the American West. While no comprehensive works have been published, the *Wild West* has found its way into works on the reception of Native Americans in Germany. Though not specifically framed to focus on the *Wild West*, the essay collection by Christian Feest provides some theoretical framework for the show in Germany: *Indians and Europe: An Interdisciplinary Collection of Essays* (1999) discusses several aspects of the Native American presence in Europe. In addition, Karl Markus Kreis has published several essays in regards to Buffalo Bill and his Indians in Germany, and he is one of the few scholars who has analyzed and incorporated a part of the newspaper coverage.

Another work that deserve mention in the context of specific Buffalo Bill research in Germany is Pamela Kort and Max Hollein's *I Like America. Fictions of the Wild West* (2006), a museum exhibit catalog featuring several essays on Buffalo Bill in Germany as well as on the reception of the American West in general in fin-de-siècle Germany.

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<sup>7</sup> An example is Jacques Portes' *Buffalo Bill* (Paris: Fayard, 2000), which makes the American scholarship available to a French-speaking readership but does not offer an analysis of the show's impact and reception in France.

Among them, Eric Ames' "Seeing the Imaginary: On the Popular Reception of Wild West Shows in Germany, 1885-1910" and H. Glenn Penny's "Illustrating America: Images of the North American Wild West in German Periodicals, 1825-1890" are the most pertinent. Lastly, Sibylle Spiegel's *Buffalo Bill's Wild West in München. Eine Veranstaltung von "Höherem Wissenschaftlichen Interesse"* is a case study of the *Wild West* in Munich and reveals Spiegel's extensive research on Buffalo Bill in Bavarian archives. It offers valuable details on the inner workings of the show, for example the procuring of entertainment permits in a highly bureaucratic Germany and the show's dealings with the police.

In addition to these scholarly materials relating directly to Buffalo Bill, his *Wild West*, and the image of America in Germany, this study also relies on works on the establishment of an entertainment culture in Germany and the emergence and proliferation of ethnological shows that precede Cody. Among them, Haug von Kuenheim's *Carl Hagenbeck* (2007), Stephan Oettermann's collections of essays *Schriftenreihe: Studien zur Geschichte der Vergnügungskultur* (1991-2004), and Raymond Corbey's essay, "Ethnographic Showcases, 1870-1930" (1993) have proven to be the most valuable. Furthermore, Alina Dana Weber's recent dissertation "*Indians*" on *German Stages: The History and Meaning of Karl May Festivals* (2010) has yielded important insights that helped frame some of the arguments in this study and pointed to further research material available in Germany that is difficult to procure in the United States. Lastly, David Ciarlo's *Advertising Empire: Race and Visual Culture in Imperial Germany* (2011) expands many of the arguments about race and colonialism in this study.

In order to establish a theoretical framework for the reception of the show, this study also relies on a variety of secondary literature about fin de siècle Germany.

Considering the amount of research that has been done on Buffalo Bill on both sides of the Atlantic, there is surprisingly little cross-fertilization between the two corpora. Thus, a merging of the secondary literature has to take place in order to gain a more comprehensive picture of the impact of Buffalo Bill's *Wild West* in Germany and the role it played in shaping images of the American West. An important goal of this study is to place the separate bodies of scholarship in conversation with one another in order to bridge the scholarly traditions. By doing this, a broader frame of reference is built that helps to illuminate not only the context for the reception of the show in Germany but to also reveal the divergence of approaches and emphases in the scholarship itself. While American authors tend to perceive Cody and the *Wild West* as a uniquely American entertainment and draw a significant amount of meaning from the racial struggle portrayed in the arena, the incorporation of German secondary sources in this study reveals that the *Wild West* was indeed not an unprecedented or exceptional event in Germany but instead derived a majority of its success from the already existing fascination with the American Indian and the West in general.<sup>8</sup> Lastly, the few German studies on Buffalo Bill, though neither comprehensive nor comparative, demonstrate that the European scholarly efforts seem to take cultural differences much more seriously in their interpretations of the show. As opposed to American studies which focus mainly on the American character of the show, European scholars seem to be more willing to cross

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<sup>8</sup> One of Louis Warren's central arguments for the show's success in England is the fear of racial decay. Louis Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America*, 302-339. This argument seems close to irrelevant in a German context.

the “continental divide” by taking into consideration the cultural climate in which the show was received.

Many assumptions that were drawn by mostly American scholars about the British reactions to the show and its Indians cannot be transferred into a European continental or specifically German context. It is important not to simplify and over-generalize these complex matters. In this sense, every country deserves its own study.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, not only is our understanding of German responses to Buffalo Bill distorted by a tendency to conflate all European perspectives, but also by a tendency by some scholars to anachronistically read German reactions to Native Americans through the lens of Nazi ideas.

While this study draws on the secondary scholarship from both the United States and Germany, it also rests on primary material from German and American western archives in Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen, Dortmund, Munich, and Wyoming. Newspaper articles, periodicals, journals, and postcards provide a snapshot of German reactions and personal impressions from the *Wild West* show and give essential information and detail in establishing attitudes and moods. The Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming houses extensive collections of primary materials as well as newspaper articles in the “German Scrapbooks” that form the basis of many of the arguments in this study in regards to the German reaction. This material has never before been analyzed and

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<sup>9</sup> An example of an over-generalization of European reactions can be found in Italian Daniele Fiorentino’s essay “Those Red-Brick Faces,” where she, similar to other historians, superimposed generalized European reactions to Indians onto Germany. She stated that “Germans had... almost ignored the presence of Indians in the show.” Even a cursory glance at the newspaper coverage proves this wrong. This statement about Germany is most likely based on the fact that *Italian* newspapers indeed stressed the feats of the cowboy as the main heroes of the show and regarded the Native Americans as the necessary sidekicks to provide a worthy adversary in order to show off the virtues of the cowboys.

incorporated into a scholarly work. It offers a rare and mostly unmediated insight into the mindset of Germans and their stereotypes and preconceptions as well as their fantasies and dreams about the American West. Furthermore, research in several archives in Paris and Rome yielded material for the analysis of reactions in France and Italy in order to broaden the focus of this study.

As noted, Europe was and is a complex conglomerate of cultures and values and cannot be regarded as a monolithic or homogeneous mass. Each country had its own specific ideas and history in fictionalizing and appropriating the American West. Buffalo Bill's version of the West intersected with many different ideas about the place that had already formed in earlier representations of the West, such as the novels of James Fenimore Cooper, along with works of journalism, travelogues, immigrant letters, and visual materials such as paintings, prints, and photographs. In fact, the American West often served as a projection screen for European fantasies.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the long-time German infatuation with the American Indian was deeply connected to a romantic and at times nostalgic affiliation with peoples threatened by the march of civilization, Germany's creation myth, and projections into the myth of feelings of loss of cultural bearings at a time when Germany was undergoing rapid industrial change and modernization. In fact, Germans were conscious of this connection. As Hans Rudolf Rieder stated in 1929, "the Indian is closer to the German than to any other European. This may be due to our stronger leaning for that which is close to nature."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Robert W. Rydell and Rob Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna: The Americanization of the World, 1869-1922* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 110.

<sup>11</sup> Hans Rudolf Rieder, translator and editor of Buffalo Child Long Lance's book *Longlance: A Selfportrait of the Last Indian (Langspeer: Eine Selbstdarstellung des letzten Indianers)*, 1929.



The German newspapers reflect the ways in which Germans received and appropriated the messages of the *Wild West*. Even though predominantly positive, critical views of American policy and of Buffalo Bill's *Wild West* were not uncommon, and these often very articulate reflections frequently focus on the treatment and portrayal of the Native Americans. Generally, Germans adapted and muted the American messages of imperialism, Manifest Destiny, and triumph of civilization over savagery and instead focused on the ethnographic and spectacular elements of the show. The dissertation argues that Germans saw the *Wild West* as something beyond pure entertainment and display of American exoticism, and that even though they recognized a typical American spirit, the *Wild West* did not necessarily surpass anything they had seen before. And even though many Germans certainly noticed a connection to a historical narrative of conquest and imperial expansion that they could meaningfully relate to their own world, it was more than that, too. The way Germans perceived it, it was an incarnation of their desires and fantasies, mixed with a strong link to German identity and culture, plus a healthy dose of excitement and spectacle that enthralled the German audience.

The concept of cultural transmission, therefore, is essential to the argument of this study. Culture must be regarded as a hybrid that incorporates dynamic exchanges between ideas, identities, and different groups of peoples, and is open-ended and never complete, unified, or definitive. The process of transmission of one culture to another is therefore also not a linear one but a rather complex interchange of ideas, habits, information, symbols, and stereotypes that constantly reinterpret themselves and each other. Previously held definitions and identities can become weakened and reframed, and

a constant checking and challenging of those previous beliefs and values is taking place.<sup>12</sup> Thus, whenever intricate processes such as cultural transmissions are examined, it is difficult to assume a coherent set of meaning; audiences cannot be regarded as monolithic units and meaning does not flow unilaterally from the point of production to its reception. Nonetheless, in order to establish a comparative framework, this study relies on the general media response to the show reflected in the newspapers of the time and reads that response in the larger context of German creation myths, culture and attitudes. An example of cultural transmission that will become relevant in the course of this study is the development of specific German ideas about the nature of the Indian and the American West, which found expression even in tangible objects: Germans started to dress like cowboys and Indians, and indigenous objects that accompanied the ethnographic exhibits often ended up in German museums. This study focuses more on the German side of this exchange, since the sources are more extensive and have not been mined as extensively as those on the American side.

Another point to consider is the matter of power. Whenever cultural exchanges take place, and especially when they occur between colonial powers and indigenous cultures, there is a distinct power differential that determines the nature of the exchange to a large degree. More often than not, indigenous cultures were exploited not only for the sake of entertainment, but usually also for the purpose of stressing dominion and national prowess. Whenever indigenous objects were exhibited in Germany or new opinions were forming about a certain indigenous culture as the result of German colonial explorations or contact with others, these representations were always embedded in a

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<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of cultural transfer, see Federico Celestini and Helga Mitterbauer (eds.), "Einleitung." *Ver-rückte Kulturen. Zur Dynamik kulturellen Transfers* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 2003), 11-17.

framework of inequality. As Dana Weber argues, “the power differentials between the interacting cultures were clearly in favor of the German-speaking ones, which, regardless of Germany’s *actual* colonial politics, were able to acquire American indigenous objects and to appropriate cultural elements without an equal response from Native American peoples.”<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, despite this power differential, the *Wild West* show and later representations of Native Americans in Germany made it possible for the indigenous performers to gain greater agency and engage with, shape, and challenge such appropriations.

This dissertation documents and analyzes the creative responses on the part of spectators to the physical presence and live display of Indian troupes in Germany and demonstrates that the German audience did not passively imbibe the intended messages of the *Wild West* but appropriated them on the basis of their own cultural values and dispositions. Buffalo Bill’s *Wild West* has to be seen in a larger context of ethnographic shows that exposed Germans to foreign cultures and laid the foundation for German understandings of race and identity. The Romanticization of the American West that corresponded with the development of these ethnographic shows further facilitated Buffalo Bill’s success in Germany because the *Wild West* fed off of desires and notions that were all too familiar to Germans.

Finally, a few words about terminology: William Cody never referred to his *Wild West* as a “show.” He was determined to distinguish it from general and banal show business and circuses because he drew much of his appeal from claims of authenticity and realism. Throughout this study, however, the term “Wild West show” is used

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<sup>13</sup>Alina Dana Weber, “Indians” on German Stages: *The History and Meaning of Karl May Festivals* (PhD Dissertation: Indiana University, 2010), 23-24.

frequently, which is not meant to in any way qualify the character of the show or contradict William Cody's self-perception, but it is a mere issue of facilitating the language and distinguishing between the idea of the American "Wild West" and Cody's version of it in his "Wild West show." Lastly, throughout the dissertation the words "Indian" and "Native American" are used interchangeably, even though I am aware of the controversy that these terms often engender, and of the diversity of indigenous peoples in the North American West. I use it as a generic term that is void of any offensive or demeaning connotations, just as much as I use "German" as a group term to refer to the diverse and not at all unified German population at the time of Cody's visits.

## CHAPTER 1

### William Cody, America, and the Beginnings of the *Wild West*

Much has been written about William F. Cody, a.k.a. Buffalo Bill, in the last century, and much of it has focused on his frontier adventures, life as an Army scout, and showman. Different authors have taken different sides on issues such as Cody's character and truthfulness, and marveled at and struggled with his ability to mix fact and fiction and blur the lines between myth and reality. Cody's autobiographies read like dime-novels and include all the quintessential elements of violence, triumph, and hardiness a legendary frontier scout should embody. Even though some of the stories have been proven to be exaggerated or flat out invented, Cody's admirable and astonishing ability to spin yarns about his life and keep them entangled in the cloth of myth that covers his true life has proven irresistible to scholars, who have long been delving into his life and times while trying to disentangle the different strands for generations now.

Several facts and events in Cody's life are well-documented and reflect his desire as well as ability to survive in the rugged and ever-changing environment of the American West at a time when it was in the process of being "pacified" and readied for the great American onslaught of settlers. Cody was born on 26 February, 1846 near LeClaire, Iowa, and for where his path in life would lead him, the timing of his birth could not have been any better. His family was one of those awaiting the opening of the Kansas Territory for settlement, and it seemed that the focus of the nation had shifted west and towards the fulfillment of its "Manifest Destiny." Coincidentally, this term had

been coined by John L. O'Sullivan within a year of Cody's birth. O'Sullivan proclaimed that it was "our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our multiplying millions."<sup>14</sup> The phrase invoked the idea of divine sanction for the territorial expansion of the United States. According to this concept, it was the mission and destiny of Americans to expand from coast to coast and fill the entire continent with American settlers, civilization, and democracy. If possible, this was to be done peacefully, similar to a missionary effort that would transform the wilderness into farmland and the Indians into peaceful neighbors. In case there was resistance, however, violence was equally justified to subdue the Natives and fulfill the mission.

Just as the many millions of settlers that were lured by the promise of a better life in the West and the idea that it was America's destiny to populate the continent, William Cody felt the pull of the West and the desire to venture out. Cody's autobiography abounds with adventure stories of life at the frontier, of Indian campaigns and battles, exploits with famous frontier personas such as Kit Carson and General Custer, riding for the Pony Express, slaying outlaws and buffalo, scouting and guiding, and being an expert on everything about life and survival on the Plains.<sup>15</sup> While historians are still debating which parts of Cody's early life are true and which have been generated or enhanced in order to create his mythic frontier persona, it is important to keep in mind that Cody did experience the hardship and excitement of the American settlement of the western

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<sup>14</sup> John O'Sullivan, "Annexation," *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 17 (July 1845): 5–10.

<sup>15</sup> For details on his life, see for example the newly edited biography, William F. Cody. *The Life of Hon. William F. Cody, Known as Buffalo Bill*, edited and with an introduction by Frank Christianson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011). Other general works on Cody include Don Russell's *The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill*, and more recently Louis Warren's *Buffalo Bill's America*.

territories. Even though he certainly tweaked the facts in many instances, he was a genuine frontiersman and jack-of-all-trades who was trying to get by in this precarious and ever-changing environment.

After his father's death in 1857, young William Cody worked several jobs, ranging from messenger to wrangler. During the Civil War, Cody served first as a Union scout in campaigns against the Kiowa and Comanche, and in 1863 he enlisted with the Seventh Kansas Cavalry, which saw combat in Missouri and Tennessee. After the war, he married Louisa Frederici in St. Louis and continued to work for the Army as a scout and dispatch carrier, operating out of Fort Ellsworth, Kansas. In 1867, Cody took up the trade that gave him his nickname, hunting buffalo to feed the construction crews of the Kansas Pacific Railroad. By his own count, he killed 4,280 head of buffalo in seventeen months.<sup>16</sup> He is supposed to have won the name "Buffalo Bill" in an eight-hour shooting match with a hunter named William Comstock, presumably to determine which of the two "Buffalo Bills" deserved the title. William Cody emerged as the winner. Starting in 1868, he resumed his Army career and was made chief of scouts for the Fifth Cavalry. He participated in several battles with Native American tribes and was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor in 1872.<sup>17</sup>

The images of a wild frontier teeming with violence, hostile Indians, and heroic white men had increasingly found their way into literature and popular imagination in the United States. James Fenimore Cooper popularized the frontier in his widely read *Leatherstocking* tales as early as the 1820s, depicting battles between a white hero and

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<sup>16</sup> For this and more information see <http://www.codyarchive.org/>

<sup>17</sup> The award was revoked in 1916 on the grounds that Cody was not a regular member of the Armed Forces but a civilian at the time, but was then restored posthumously in 1989.

barbaric Indians and describing the slow progress of white civilization into the untamed wilderness. Other influential image creators included western explorers and painters such as George Catlin and Karl Bodmer.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, throughout the Indian Wars of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a certain iconography of white victimization at the hands of Indians had developed that stretched back to Puritan captivity narratives and continued with captivity narratives in popular fiction. Thus, the theme of white victimization became central to the American understanding of Indian wars. Pictures of Indians attacking helpless white women and children or badly outnumbered white men became a staple of nineteenth-century popular histories.<sup>19</sup> These vivid representations were themselves augmented by actual dramatic incidents in the West that made national news; the most traumatic was Custer's defeat at the Little Bighorn in 1876. As Richard Etulain states, the "frontier was awash in startling stories of sensational conflicts", all of which provided the ideal framework for William Cody's venture into show business.<sup>20</sup>

Before he was to enter that stage, however, another development greatly enhanced Cody's role in the myth of the conquest of the West and the violent nature of the frontier: between 1869 and 1871 Cody was literarily reborn in the popular dime-novels by writer Edward Zane Carroll Judson, better known as Ned Buntline. Dime novelists such as Buntline had realized the level of drama and excitement the frontier posed for Americans and the ways in which it had captivated America. They thus perpetuated those tropes and fulfilled America's desire for strong heroes to identify with. Cody was made into a

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<sup>18</sup> A discussion of these influences on European audiences follows in a later chapter.

<sup>19</sup> Richard White, "Frederick Jackson Turner and Buffalo Bill," in: James R. Grossman, *The Frontier in American Culture: an Exhibition at the Newberry Library, August 26, 1994-January 7, 1995* (Chicago: The Newberry Library; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

<sup>20</sup> Richard W. Etulain, *Telling Western Stories. From Buffalo Bill to Larry McMurtry* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 3.



blueprint for fictionalized adventures of the West. Starting with the first adventure story, *Buffalo Bill, King of the Border Men*, he was lionized in the dime novels as the greatest frontier hero of all times. According to Richard Etulain, “more than 550 Buffalo Bill dime novels were published in the United States.”<sup>21</sup> The later ones were mainly written by Prentiss Ingraham, who worked as a press agent for Cody and wrote over two hundred stories to add to the Buffalo Bill enthusiasm. The hundreds of dime novels that bore his nickname from 1860 to 1900 cemented Cody’s legacy in the history of the West.

The dime novels not only popularized Cody’s name but also fused frontier fact with fiction that allowed them to paint Cody larger than life. Over time, he developed into an icon that embodied the spirit of the West. Since the frontier struggle and the opening of the American West were seen as events of epic proportions, they called for an epic hero who could master the wilderness and bring civilization to the West. Cody emerged as a “uniquely American person, a Horatio Alger-style hero.” Most of the novels described the “physical achievements such as shooting and riding, rather than moral and rational judgment.”<sup>22</sup> As Henry Nash Smith argues in *Virgin Land*, the dime novels enjoyed such popularity because of “clever production, marketing, and distribution strategies,” as well as an appealing content.<sup>23</sup> Frontier stories were especially popular because of their formulaic pattern of violence against Indians, which in turn emphasized racial equality among white Americans. Robert Rydell and Rob Kroes add that these stories matched “a set of ideological suppositions that insisted racism could blur class distinction among whites, giving them a shared consciousness of racial equality

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Reddin, *Wild West Shows*, 56.

<sup>23</sup> Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Harvard University Press, 1950), 102-111.

regardless of sharp differences in class position.”<sup>24</sup> Western stories became so prevalent in dime novels and so popular among Americans also because of a unique timing: the technology for printing cheap dime novels developed simultaneously with the need for a new national myth, the hunger for a unifying moment in American culture, the importance of Manifest Destiny, and the appeal of the idea of overcoming of savagery in the justification of American progress. Thus, again, William Cody hit another stroke of luck in his life-timing.

Besides his tremendous success as a dime novel superstar, Cody started to impersonate himself in plays on stage. In 1872, Cody’s theatrical persona manifested itself publicly for the first time. He started to appear in plays and dramas based on dime novels, recounting his adventures on the frontier. Cody took advantage of this unexpected fame for his stage shows and adopted the nickname Buffalo Bill as his permanent stage name, which secured instant recognition by millions of Americans. He toured through the next decade with his theatrical company, called the *Buffalo Bill Combination*, and performed frontier dramas, which were highly popular at the time. Since Cody claimed not to be a professional actor but a westerner who represented his world on stage, he was not held to the usual performative standards but could instead assert to be rather unlearned and amateurish in the skills of entertainment. He was never a polished actor, and in fact terrible at learning his lines by heart and often ad-libbed. However, he proved a natural showman, winning enthusiastic applause for his good-humored self-portrayal. He and “western entertainment” in general were able to occupy a certain niche of pretend non-professionalism that made them rather exceptional.

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<sup>24</sup>Rydell and Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna*, 35.

Cody's stage success, Louis Warren suggests, also "came from the friction between his frontier authenticity and its context of theatrical fakery."<sup>25</sup> Seeing the "real" Buffalo Bill play himself in a role that fictionalized his own life challenged and delighted the audience to debate which aspects were "real" and which were fake, when he was playing a scout on stage while *being* one, thus blurring the lines between fiction and reality; Cody was deviating from the conventional theatrical distinction between role and actor. On stage, he enacted his frontier deeds as a scout, buffalo hunter, and Indian fighter, even if their theatrical rendering did not match the facts. Off the stage, this combination of reality and fiction even confused individuals like General Carr, who was mystified by Cody's great resemblance with *imaginary* scouts at a time when Cody was also appearing in press coverage of *actual* Indian skirmishes.<sup>26</sup> Again, by looking suspiciously like representations of himself in the popular press, Cody was confusing the boundaries between public appearance and reality.

The playful yet unsolvable dilemma between actual person and theatrical persona that he embodied only distinguished him further. The fact that many Buffalo Bill impersonators played Cody in other stage productions enhanced Cody's fame and the mythical intertwinement of his real person with his stage persona even more.

Furthermore, many other scouts and frontiersmen pushed onto the national stages, and soon a new genre developed that John M. Burke, who was already Cody's publicist, called "the scout business."<sup>27</sup> Ironically, Buffalo Bill's "brand of authenticity" proved so uniquely powerful that even real scouts like Jack Crawford failed in establishing stage

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<sup>25</sup> Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America*, 164.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 92, 158.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 167, as quoted in a letter from Burke to Captain Jack Crawford, 1877.

careers emulating his.<sup>28</sup> It can be argued that in a way, the “scout business” that developed in the theaters, alongside the frontier melodramas, prepared the American audience for the *Wild West* show, just as the exotic caravans in Europe heightened the continent’s interest in everything Native American/American and spectacular. Cody’s time on the theater stage provided him with valuable training and experience for his later life in the *Wild West*.

Aside from the tall tales and adventurous stories that soon surrounded the name Buffalo Bill, Cody himself deliberately and constantly reinforced his mythical persona. As a part of that, he knew how to take advantage of his natural assets. Newspaper reports in both the US and Germany stress repeatedly the handsomeness of Cody, his tall and athletic figure, his long, flowing hair, mustache and goatee, and his “keen eyes.” He assumed the romantic appearance of frontier scouts that was postulated in the dime novels and theater melodramas, and enhanced it further by dressing in fringed buckskin jackets, knee-high riding boots, colorful shirts, neckerchiefs, gloves, and large sombrero-style cowboy hats. Even his horse was an impressive sight: tall and white, with an ornate saddle and bridle, it looked just as majestic as its rider. In fact, many newspapers commented on the impression that horse and rider seemed to be merged together into one magnificent creature, marveling at Cody’s horsemanship and command in the saddle.

Well aware of the positive effects that mingling fact and fiction had on his career and the development of a mythical persona, Cody further strengthened the “fiction” part with infusions of facts by continuing to fight at the frontier and play a part in the Indian Wars in between his stage acts. For example, after the death of his son Kit Carson Cody

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 173.

in 1876,<sup>29</sup> he left the stage in Delaware in June and returned to the “frontier.” The incident that follows is the most dramatic and revealing example of Cody’s complicated mimesis: After the dramatic and traumatic defeat of General Custer at the Battle of the Little Big Horn, Cody had joined the Fifth Cavalry as a scout. Three weeks after the death of Custer, Cody killed and scalped a Cheyenne Indian named Hay-o-Wei (“Yellow Hair,” often mistranslated as “Yellow Hand” and also often referred to as a chief, which is also still a matter of debate) in a famous duel. The facts of this encounter are heavily shrouded in myth. According to Cody’s own account, after having been challenged by the Indian, he first shot him with a rifle, then stabbed him in the heart and finally scalped him “in about five seconds.” He then shouted to his fellow soldiers that he had taken “the first scalp for Custer.” The Indians retreated after a short skirmish.<sup>30</sup> Others described the encounter as hand-to-hand combat, and still others said that Cody merely lifted the chief’s scalp after he had died in battle.<sup>31</sup> Whatever happened in reality, the most telling fact about Cody in this incident is that he had the theatrical possibilities in mind when he set out that day; in preparation for the anticipated engagement Cody had dressed in his showman’s costume—“a Mexican vaquero outfit of black velvet slashed with scarlet and trimmed with silver buttons and lace.”<sup>32</sup> Cody characteristically had the event embroidered into a melodrama: killed by a man in theatrical dress, Yellow Hair died only

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<sup>29</sup> Kit Carson Cody died from Scarlet Fever. Sadly, William Cody would have to bury three of his four children during his lifetime, and his wife Louisa witnessed the death of their last surviving child before she died herself a year later.

<sup>30</sup> See for example Mrs. Johnny Baker’s account in her biography of Cody, William F. Cody, *Life and Adventures of Buffalo Bill* (Golden, CO: published by Mrs. “Johnny” Baker, 1939), 289-291.

<sup>31</sup> For a full, yet fairly uncritical accounting of this incident see also Russell, *The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill*, 215, 219–35.

<sup>32</sup> Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s America*, 171, and White, “Turner and Buffalo Bill,” referenced to <http://www.studythepast.com/his378/turnerandbuffalobill.pdf>, 14.

to have Buffalo Bill resurrect him for the stage act entitled “The Red Right Hand; or the First Scalp for Custer.” In the nightly performance of this act, Buffalo Bill wore the exact same clothing in which he had fought Yellow Hair and repeatedly took the first scalp for Custer to the delight of his American audience. Yellow Hair’s actual scalp also played a role. In order to authenticate the encounter, it went on display in theaters where Buffalo Bill performed and later in his *Wild West* show, a prop that validated Buffalo Bill’s stories.

Cody must have recognized, at hearing the news of the defeat at the Little Bighorn, that America finally had a genuine battlefield martyr in the person of Custer. His death needed to be avenged and the course of history set straight. By incorporating this act into his show, Cody could not only affiliate himself with Custer and his heroics, but even more so become Custer’s avenger in the eyes of his fellow Americans. This legitimized his claims of being a frontier hero even more, because by “shedding symbolic first blood and returning with the scalp to the eastern stage, Cody could claim to be the embodiment of the frontier hero, the white Indian who ventures over the line between civilization and savagery to vanquish evil by adapting savage methods, and then ventures back, without ever compromising his innate nobility.”<sup>33</sup> Cody had become the ultimate frontier fighter and hero, and Americans thanked him for it with their continued enthusiasm for his theater and later *Wild West* performances.

In 1883, Cody was “the leading actor of frontier melodramas”, and he started his first attempt at a “wild west show” in Omaha, Nebraska in collaboration with Dr. W.F. Carver, a marksmen and budding showman just like Cody who later was to become an

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<sup>33</sup> Richard Slotkin. *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 11-16, 74-81.

annoying competitor to Cody in Europe.<sup>34</sup> The production featured demonstrations of riding skills and elements from rodeo, and traveled the US for a year. Even though it was successful (a reporter supposedly stated that Buffalo Bill had even “out-Barnumed Barnum”),<sup>35</sup> it did not generate enough profit and Cody split from his companions. The next year, Cody partnered with Nate Salsbury instead, a man of tremendous organizational skill and instinct for the entertainment business, who became the general manager of the *Wild West* until his death in 1902.<sup>36</sup> Together with Burke and Salsbury, William Cody invented a new form of entertainment that, within a few years, would indeed far exceed the scale of the famous circus of P.T. Barnum. Recognizing the limitations to indoor theater in reproducing large-scale battles and frontier events, the trio brought together different strands of entertainment: elements from the rodeo and the circus guided the design of the program, they framed the show as an outdoor event, and through their connections to the Army they were able to “procure” real Indians instead of having to rely on white stand-ins. Lastly, through large-scale advertisement and the invention of a market for souvenirs they boosted visitor numbers and created lasting memories of the show.

The show was a conglomerate of all the newest industrial achievements: the use of the newly developed railroads made it possible to travel the country quickly and cost-effectively, and the logistics were large and complex for the time. The outfit carried all the necessities with it, from the animals to the food, the stage and the props, the entire

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<sup>34</sup> Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America*, 157. See also the discussion on Carver and Cody's competition in Hamburg in chapter 5.

<sup>35</sup> Reddin, *Wild West Shows*, 60.

<sup>36</sup> Don Russell, *The Wild West or, A History of the Wild West Shows* (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, 1970), 8.

camp, and they even had a power generator to run lights at night and enhance the sound. All these new inventions of show business made the ideological messages of the dime novels literally visible for the audience, and in a self-reinforcing cycle both show and dime novels became even more powerful and popular.

There are multiple reasons why Americans were so receptive to frontier stories and the ideological messages that were disseminated in the *Wild West* and the dime novels at the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Much scholarly attention has been given to themes such as nostalgia, the role of the frontier in American history, and the West as a redemptive force after the Civil War. First and foremost, societal developments during this decade provided the perfect backdrop for a show about the West. According to historian David Wrobel, the emergence of “frontier anxiety” had “affected the thinking of considerable numbers of Americans.”<sup>37</sup> Deeply ingrained beliefs in an agrarian Eden in the West were uprooted and replaced with a fear of an industrialism that would destroy the salutary effects of an unspoiled relationship between man and nature, the very relationship which had formed the exceptional character of the rugged frontiersmen in the West. The disappearance of free land would ultimately change society and caused a nostalgic wave to sweep over America. Buffalo Bill’s show not only addressed these fears but offered a cure: for a few hours audiences could relive the “good ol’ frontier days.” The West had been seen as a safety valve for the discontented masses where everybody could find freedom, land, and meaning for their life. Without the restoring quality of the West, Americans feared for the survival of democracy and the American Dream.

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<sup>37</sup> David Wrobel, *The End of American Exceptionalism. Frontier Anxiety from the Old West to the New Deal* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 25.



This and other fears were pinpointed and verbalized in 1893, when historian Frederick Jackson Turner presented a paper titled “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” to the historical congress that had convened in conjunction with the Columbian Exposition in Chicago.<sup>38</sup> (Even Theodore Roosevelt credited Turner with having “put into shape a good deal of thought that has been floating around rather loosely.”) Turner’s “frontier thesis” stated that “the existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward explain American development.” He further asserted that going westward across the continent created a frontier that was constantly pushed further West from the Appalachians to the Pacific, and that in settling these frontiers, a distinctively American and democratic outlook had been created. According to Turner, the “frontiering” experience had turned Americans into practical, egalitarian, and democratic people because of the “free” land on which equality and democracy could grow as integral aspects of progress. Turner’s farmers “conquered a wilderness and extended what Thomas Jefferson had called an empire of liberty.”

Interestingly, Turner also stressed a second effect the frontier had on Americans: besides familiar themes such as conquering the wilderness and building a home on the range, the frontier experience was crucial in turning a diverse people of European heritage into quintessential Americans. As he stated in his thesis, “the frontier is the line of most rapid and effective Americanization” and “in the crucible of the frontier the immigrants were Americanized, liberated, and fused into a mixed race, English in neither

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<sup>38</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1893* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894), 199–227.

nationality nor characteristics.”<sup>39</sup> In effect, Turner had “extended the meaning of progress. Progress was not merely an increase in material well-being but was cultural as well: growing democracy, greater equality, more opportunity.”<sup>40</sup> Moreover, Turner had provided Americans with a way to become a distinct nation and break free from European restraints and quibbles over national one-upmanship. If they were all Americans, then they all (at least in theory) pursued the same goals and held the same values.

Buffalo Bill, even though he contradicted Turner in several ways, stressed this aspect of American unity and superiority in his version of the West in order to give Americans a clean, simplified, and exciting origin story that was uniquely American. In fact, while Turner gave his academic lecture, only a few blocks away Buffalo Bill was performing his *Wild West* show, now titled *Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World*. Even though the two did not meet, their presence at the Fair invites a direct comparison of the versions of the West of these two major figures in American Western history. While Turner spoke of a relatively peaceful occupation of the land by farmers, Cody stressed racial conflict: in fact, in Turner’s telling the tools of civilization were the axe and the plow; in Buffalo Bill’s, the rifle and the bullet. However, both of them declared the frontier days to be over, and its salutary effects to be lost to American society in the future.

As Richard White has convincingly argued, Cody and Turner indeed “divided up the existing narratives of American frontier mythology. Each erased part of the larger, and more confusing and tangled, cultural story to deliver up a clean, dramatic, and

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 201, 216.

<sup>40</sup> White, “Turner and Buffalo Bill,” <http://www.studythepast.com/his378/turnerandbuffalobill.pdf>, 4.

compelling narrative.” White further stresses the importance of both Turner and Buffalo Bill to American identity and argues that their versions of the frontier have to be seen in connection with each other in order to fully understand their significance to American identity and history. Many historians (especially in Europe) still tend to trivialize Cody and his *Wild West* and disregard his influence and importance as a part of fiction and myth that is irrelevant to current scholarship, and even unscholarly in nature. Works that are considered scholarly, and Turner’s thesis falls into this category, are seen as more valuable and worthy of attention. However, as White rightly argues,

Turner’s ‘Significance of the Frontier’ and Buffalo Bill’s *Wild West* stand in complex and revealing relation to each other, a point we miss by trivializing Buffalo Bill and thus obscuring the common grounding of his and Turner’s stories. To see Turner as serious and significant and Buffalo Bill as a charlatan and a curiosity, to see Turner as history and Buffalo Bill as entertainment, to see one as concerned with reality and the other with myth is to miss their common reliance on, and promotion of, the iconography of their time. Turner and Cody followed separate but connected strands of a single mythic cloth. And as in Chicago one hundred years ago, their seemingly contradictory stories make historical sense only when told together.<sup>41</sup>

Lastly, both Turner and Cody were masters at weaving the powerful frontier icons that Americans had come to identify with into their stories. In a way, both their stories resonated with Americans in a personal and direct way that guaranteed instant success: the very “ubiquity of frontier icons allowed both Turner and Buffalo Bill to deliver powerful messages with incredible economy and resonance.”<sup>42</sup> The strength of these familiar symbols that they both so expertly employed played a major role in convincing their audiences.

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 3.

Cody's success partially rested in the fact that the audience could be a part of the *Wild West* right at the time when the census and historians were proclaiming the frontier days to be over. By playing on frontier anxiety and using powerful icons, the message of the show attached itself to the core of American identity at the turn of the century. In that sense, Cody's *Wild West* served the nation in three respects: it created a form of memory that sanitized the past, justified conquest, and unified Americans by stressing a common glorious past instead of an uncertain future. By erasing confusing elements and instead concentrating on a clean, simplified, dramatic, and compelling narrative (such as overcoming savagery) the memory of the past was sanitized and became a repository for shared meanings in the modern world. Americans could experience the frontier vicariously from their seats in the show arena without risking the consequences of struggle and conflict. Even the Indians, who can be considered the quintessential trophy of conquest, got back up on their feet and waved to the audience after having been shot.

The *Wild West* also offered an escape into a past in which the march of civilization was inevitable and exciting (much more so than city life). No matter how dangerous the situation, Buffalo Bill would always save the day in the end. He was the stable element, always reliable and recognizable. Qualities and values that seemed to be disappearing in the modernizing world were found in abundance in the colorful, dramatic, and utterly spectacular world of Buffalo Bill. Furthermore, the *Wild West* presented the conquest of the American continent in terms that enforced a positive national identity. The reenactment of the fight with Yellow Hair offered the audience a version of the past that suggested that white civilization only retaliated for previous attacks and never actively pursued bloodshed and violence.

Several scholars have argued very convincingly that the myth of the West “surpassed” reality at this time in American history and that the American West became a symbol for all of America that served a redeeming purpose. As Richard Slotkin points out in *Gunfighter Nation*, “the myth of the frontier is our oldest and most characteristic myth, expressed in a body of literature, folklore, ritual, historiography, and polemics produced over a period of three centuries....” Slotkin further explains that “according to this myth-historiography, the conquest of the wilderness and the subjugation or displacement of Native Americans who originally inhabited it have been the means to our achievement of a national identity, democratic polity, and ever-expanding economy, and a phenomenally dynamic and ‘progressive’ civilization.” The term ‘conflict’ is central to Slotkin’s argument and violence has acquired “mythic significance.” After Turner, the frontier had become a “set of symbols that constituted an explanation of history. Its significance as a mythic space began to outweigh its importance as a real place....”<sup>43</sup>

This seems especially true for Europeans, because geographically they were so far removed from the American West. Europeans did not really subscribe to the myths that form the basis of American identity. The myth had become reduced to a set of symbols and clichés that Buffalo Bill masterly employed in his show. Richard White argues similarly that the West is the most “imagined” section of the United States. Even its imagined and fictional characters have become symbols of the West, as can be seen in the literature. The Wild West shows have played an important role in identifying and defining the West, creating and strengthening the myth, and subsequently embedding it into the European imagination.

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<sup>43</sup> Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 10-13, 61.

Lastly, L.G. Moses argues that it was no accident that the Wild West shows became so popular starting in the 1880s and in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century. In America as well as in Europe, industrialization and urbanization became important factors that increasingly influenced everyday life. Americans were seeking a common narrative that could unify and bind them together after the turmoil and divisions of the Civil War. Nation-building was taking place through the adventures of frontier characters. Between the War of 1812 and the Civil War, before the settlement of the American West became the purpose of the nation and therefore cast the Indian into the role of an adversary, the Indian was portrayed as a free and noble savage that was uncorrupted by European influence and unique to America. In a way, he was the answer to European Romanticism, which was the reason why Europeans, and especially Germans, responded so strongly to him. Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett, the *Leatherstocking Tales* and Catlin's Indian Gallery laid the foundation for the myth of the American West in Europe. Thus, William Cody employed popular tropes of the time in his *Wild West* show that not only calmed American fears but also offered a way to unify the nation behind the stories and icons of the American West.

An example of the way in which the *Wild West* responded to and employed American needs and desires of the time is found in Buffalo Bill's portrayal of the relationship between white settlers and Native Americans in his arena. Richard White aptly identifies a remarkable inversion of history in Buffalo Bill's story: "Buffalo Bill offered what to a modern historian seems an odd story of conquest: everything is

inverted.”<sup>44</sup> This inversion is mirrored in almost all of the show acts of the *Wild West*. Instead of depicting the white settlers as the intruders and aggressors, the conquerors were transformed into the victims. White aptly calls them “badly abused conquerors.”<sup>45</sup> Many of the acts, especially the attack on the emigrant train and the Deadwood Stage Coach, have an Indian aggressor in common and celebrate the heroic efforts of the white settlers to defend themselves. Even more strikingly, the Battle of the Little Bighorn, one of the great military icons of American westward expansion and a defeat, not a victory, was one of the most popular acts in the US. According to White, such reenactments “open a window onto a particularly interesting aspect of American iconography of the frontier.” They claim that Americans do not plan their conquests but instead just “retaliate against barbaric massacres.” One of Buffalo Bill’s most successful, long-lasting and most memorable acts, as discussed above, was the taking of the “First Scalp for Custer” in the fight with Yellow Hair, which clearly substantiates this theory. Americans could be confident that the conquest was justified and that they indeed had paid a high price for their freedom. In this manner, guilt was erased from the narrative.<sup>46</sup>

Buffalo Bill and Frederick Jackson Turner both employed the theme of white victimization, even though Indian opposition was not nearly as central to Turner’s narrative as it was to Cody’s. While in Cody’s version of the frontier the continent teemed with murderous Indian enemies, Turner spoke of Indians as a “common danger” that kept alive “the power of resistance to aggression.” However, Turner also “presented this striking reversal of the actual history as mere conventional wisdom.” Lastly, White

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<sup>44</sup> White, “Turner and Buffalo Bill,” <http://www.studythepast.com/his378/turnerandbuffalobill.pdf>, 11.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 6.

argues that popular iconography gave this reversal of roles its power, surrounding Americans with images of valiant white victims overpowered by savage assailants.

Yet, as Joy Kasson notes, the participation of Indians in the enactment of good versus evil softened the fictionalized Indian savagery; audiences were encouraged to hate them but at the same time love the Indian performers. This painted an image that pleased Americans: they were triumphant in war but benevolent to their former enemy, especially in the light of the still recent Civil War. War became imaginatively appealing again since it was shown to be a “noble undertaking” in which “heroism and even sacrifice were justified by a righteous cause.”<sup>47</sup> By locating the wars and conquest in the realm of memory they lost some of their immediacy in the real world and served to reestablish romantic patriotism. The American West was a place that everybody could remember in terms of glory and grandeur, no matter if it was the romantic wilderness that inspired one’s imagination or the forces of American industry.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, this region of the country lent itself to this purpose especially well because it was the only one that was ideologically untainted by the struggles of the Civil War. Even though the conflict spread into some Western states, after the Civil War it became the neutral ground on which both sides could come together again and overcome their differences. The struggle against savagery turned the West into a suitable vehicle to unite Americans as a nation once again.<sup>49</sup>

The reenactments of conflict and constant change and improvement at the frontier served a last important purpose for Americans at the turn of the century. It provided an

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<sup>47</sup> Kasson, *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*, 248.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>49</sup> See also William Deverell, NEH seminar “The Redemptive West: Nationhood and Healing in the Post-Civil War American West” (Huntington Library), 2005.



imaginative coherence for a nation that was increasingly diverse and changing at a pace never before experienced. The memory of a shared past, glorious and heroic, in which change was considered a part of a process of improvement gave hope and direction for the future that would be just as sublime as that memory. Thus, for Americans the message of the *Wild West* included the sanitizing of the past, propagating a newfound unity and creating a shared identity, and disseminated American ideals. Filled with drama and excitement, Buffalo Bill created a compelling origin story for Americans.

The emphasis on elements of struggle, violence, and masculine virtues at the frontier found its expression in the program of the show, which, in its core attractions, remained unchanged for over a decade. Reddin categorized the acts into five groups: the first one is horsemanship, featuring trick riding and rodeo-style demonstrations, followed by marksmanship, which consisted of trick shooting and liberally applied dosages of gunpowder throughout the show. Third, Plains animal exhibitions were also an important part of the entertainment. A herd of buffalo accompanied the troupe on their tour, as well as wild broncos and deer. The last two forms of acts included such scenes as a demonstration of how the mail was distributed via the Pony Express and Plains Indian scenes that mostly juxtaposed Indians with white settlers in a struggle of life and death. The most popular of these were the “Prairie Emigrant Train Crossing the Plains,” the “Capture of the Deadwood Mail Coach by the Indians,” the “First Scalp for Custer” and the “Attack on the Settler’s Cabin.”<sup>50</sup> Such scenes of frontier struggle between the forces of so-called civilization and savagery replicated sensational renditions circulated in dime novels, thus building on the rich frontier iconography.

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<sup>50</sup> Reddin, *Wild West Shows*, 67.

Compared to other shows that toured the United States and displayed Indians or showcased rodeo performances at this time, Buffalo Bill's reenactment of frontier scenes took the stories of struggle much further. One reason for the success of his version of the West and the fact that in American popular consciousness it became synonymous with historical memory of the old frontier days is the claim of authenticity that permeates it. This emphasis on authenticity of the *Wild West* in contrast to a circus performance was of the highest importance to Buffalo Bill. The *Program* that accompanied the show through the U.S. and Europe clearly reflects this concern: "It is the aim of the management of Buffalo Bill's *Wild West* to do more than present an exacting and realistic entertainment for public amusement. Their object is to PICTURE TO THE EYE, by the aid of historical characters and living animals, a series of animated scenes and episodes, which had their existence in fact, of the wonderful pioneer and frontier life of the Wild West of America."<sup>51</sup>

To further underline the claim of authenticity, Buffalo Bill made sure that audiences were aware that the artifacts utilized in the show such as the stagecoach, the clothing, and much of the stage props directly originated from the frontier. For the same purpose, Buffalo Bill exhibited the items and scalp procured from Yellow Hair. Secondly, the scenes reenacted by the *Wild West* were considered part of American history and thus absolutely "real" and "true". Many of the cast could claim personal frontier experience, ranging from army scouts and rodeo cowboys to Annie Oakley and Buffalo Bill to the Indians. By drawing on resources from both realism and romanticism

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<sup>51</sup> Buffalo Bill's Wild West Program, 1886, as cited in Richard Slotkin, "Buffalo Bill's Wild West and the Mythologization of the American Empire," in: Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, ed. *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), 165.

Cody intentionally blurred the lines between reality and fiction and linked his stage performance to the real West. As White remarks, “this ambiguity gives the *Wild West* its power.”<sup>52</sup> The content of the show and the arrangement of acts catered to the same purpose: live demonstrations of skill were paired with fictionalized historic events, extending their “realness” onto those acts. Moreover, the use of real animals, guns, and frontier characters provided not just visual stimulation but also imprinted the experience into peoples’ minds and memories by the loud whooping and gunshots as well as the smell of dust, gunpowder, and animals.

This authenticating frame contributed to the cultural significance of the *Wild West* and its impact on American (and later European) collective memory. Joy Kasson asserts that Buffalo Bill can be considered an “apt hero for the modern era, an age when images have become indistinguishable from what they purport to represent.”<sup>53</sup> Accordingly, the management of the *Wild West* “declared it improper to speak of the performances as a ‘Wild West Show’” because the *Wild West* was to be identified as a “place” rather than a staged entertainment, as historian Richard Slotkin points out.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, the announcer informed spectators that they were about to experience not a “performance” in the sense of a sequence of rehearsed scenes but instead be transferred back into the “real” American West in which even accidents could happen due to the fact that men and beast were interacting with each other.

Buffalo Bill’s *Wild West* satisfied and perpetuated an iconic image of Cody and the West and reactions in America confirmed the successful merging of Buffalo Bill and

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<sup>52</sup> White, “Turner and Buffalo Bill,” 29.

<sup>53</sup> Kasson, *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*, 273.

<sup>54</sup> Slotkin, “Wild West and Mythologization,” 165.

the wild, violent West that could only be subjugated by a special breed of man: “It is a bold and original idea, this of reproducing, in mimic, the scenes which have been blood curdling realities” a reporter stated. Another observer wrote that “Buffalo Bill’s ‘Wild West’ is wild enough to suit the most devoted admirer of western adventure and prowess,” and that “one can easily understand the dangers which beset and checked the pioneers... and whetted their appetite for blood and strife.”<sup>55</sup>

While America was dealing with these identity issues, other important changes were also under way. The beginnings of mass culture played a major role in boosting William Cody and his enterprise in becoming one of the most recognizable phenomena America has ever created. As opposed to popular culture, mass culture is defined as an industrially produced, standardized cultural form produced for cheap sale to ‘mass’ audiences. It also means “the mobilization of cultural and ideological resources on a scale unimaginable in a preindustrial society lacking mass transportation and communication facilities.” Similar to all forms of culture, it can never be understood as a static construct or a monolithic monoculture, but has “constantly shifting boundaries.”<sup>56</sup> We have to think of it, Rydell and Kroes explain, “along fluid, symbiotic, and dialectical lines, rather than in terms of mutually exclusive categories that decontextualize complex historical processes.”<sup>57</sup> Thus, it is as pluralistic and malleable as the people who consume it. After all, they are the ones who choose what they want to see and who give life to the industry- if there is no demand, the provider will go under.

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<sup>55</sup> Reddin, *Wild West Shows*, 62.

<sup>56</sup> Susan Davis quoted in Rydell and Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna*, 12.

<sup>57</sup> Rydell and Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna*, 6.

In turn, mass culture also responds to public taste due to these very reasons, and Cody was a master at tapping into the cultural needs and desires of his time. Because consumers make their own meanings out of commodities and adapt them to their realm of knowledge and expectations, it was crucial for Cody to keep on top of the tastes of the time and continually reassess and renegotiate the content and message of his entertainment. Certainly, not all people can be equally pleased with the same experience, and mass culture affords contradictory experiences depending on one's social position. Still, Cody's most important key to success was the congruence of his stories with the ideas and concepts that Americans were yearning for. Moreover, it is important to remember that the pleasures afforded by mass culture are rarely unmediated. William Cody and his team molded and shaped opinions of the West and had a profound influence on the image of the West in both the United States and later in Europe. While the *Wild West* can perhaps be seen as one of the earliest forms of mass cultural production in the U.S., it fits many essential features of mass culture: the posters and advertisement along with the souvenirs, program and concession sales were produced in mass and targeted a large audience, and by means of newspapers and propelled by the dime novels, the ideological message of the show reached millions of Americans. The railroad made it not only possible for the *Wild West* to travel around the States and visit many different places, but it also brought masses of spectators from the outlying areas to the show grounds.

The *Wild West* show served to remind Americans of their unique and shared past, present, and future and the importance the West and the conquest of the continent played in the history and memory of this nation. Yet, as mentioned, the nineteenth century was

not yet characterized by the mass culture phenomena that the next century witnessed. Instead, America searched for and developed a national culture that would eventually even “override local and regional cultural loyalties.” Circuses and Wild West shows, dime novels and vaudeville, all “facilitated the commercialization of American culture and its packaging for a mass, ethnically diverse, transcontinental audience.”<sup>58</sup> They were ancestors and contemporaries to such events as the World Fairs held between 1876 and 1916, which clearly paved the way for mass cultural forms to take over. Among them, Chicago’s World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 and the American exhibits at the 1900 Paris Universal Exposition are especially noteworthy in this endeavor.<sup>59</sup> The emergence of movies was the next step to consolidate mass culture as a cultural phenomenon, especially around and after World War One. Incidentally, William Cody was one of the first to take advantage of this new technology as well, and produce several short movies that were set in the West and depicted Native Americans and Americans in conflict with each other.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>59</sup> For a detailed discussion of World Fairs, see Robert Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair. Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).



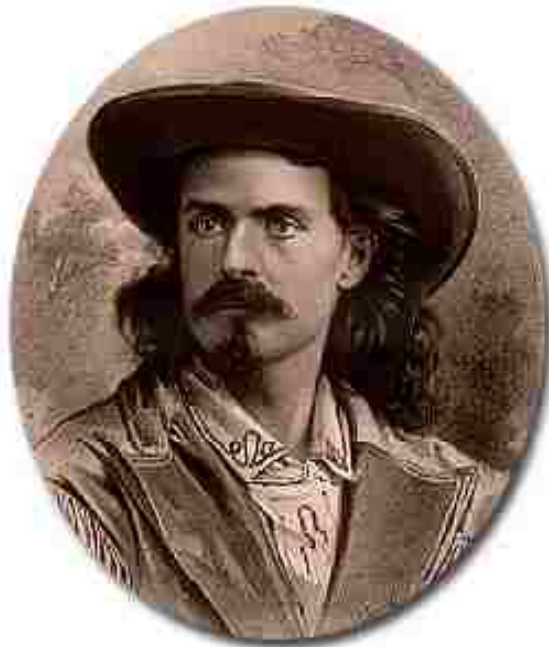
**Image 1:** Robert Ottokar Lindneux, painting, oil on canvas, First Scalp for Custer, 1928.



**Image 2:** Show poster, Buffalo Bill's Wild West in the Madison Square Garden, 1886.



**Image 3:** Photograph, William F. Cody with eight Native Americans, ca. 1875.



**Image 4:** William F. Cody  
1846-1917



## CHAPTER 2

### Exotic Entertainment and Völkerschauen in Germany

The interest in the exotic and later in Native Americans that still holds sway over German culture today did not appear suddenly but grew over centuries. The process has been influenced by complex exchanges between popular and elite cultures, political, scientific, and social factors, and in general attitudes towards “Others,” which were often determined by colonial interests. These and other factors all contributed to the historical (and current) stereotypes and representations about Indians in Germany. The fascination with the exotic and the cultural processes involved in forming these stereotypes are an important factor in understanding the fascination with Buffalo Bill and the *Wild West* in the past and in the present. Exotic people’s shows or *Völkerschauen* (“ethnographic exhibits”) dramatically increased the exposure of Europeans to those strangers and facilitated the process of stereotyping and categorizing. In addition, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century marked a period of intense intellectual, political, and social shifts that profoundly changed the course of European and world history. Buffalo Bill was able to tap into and manipulate some of those changing currents for the benefit of his show, and thus offers us a glimpse of the values and anxieties of the time through the reactions his show evoked in the German population (a topic more directly illuminated in chapter five).

Undoubtedly, entertainment is a human basic need. No matter when, where, or how a people have gathered together in groups and formed a larger society, expressions of entertainment have accompanied the cultural development. It can therefore be

considered an innate constant when viewed from a cultural anthropology perspective. Moreover, entertainment has to be seen in context of the culture. In fact, it seems that through the lens of entertainment, many traits of a society appear more clearly, reflecting the “reality” of a society much more nuanced and direct than the “everyday” life, which often tends to cover and blur certain traits. In entertainment, during “down time,” when people are freed from their work and repetitive chores, those needs and wants come to the forefront that cannot otherwise be satisfied in everyday life.<sup>60</sup> Thus, entertainment acts like a magnifying glass. It is about the stimulation of the senses and usually idle impulses, the release of excess energy and tensions, about variety and distraction. The reactions to entertainment and the forms of entertainment that are successful give a glimpse into a society and its fears and desires. It can take on many facets: joy and laughter, awe, curiosity, thrill, fright, shudder and shock, the desire for taboos and their breach, magic and illusions, being moved and touched, the thrill in things erotic, exotic and forbidden, the incomprehensible and stunning, the plight of others, jokes, situational comedy and surprises, colors and sounds, and in general the unusual, unthinkable, never-before-seen. Because all this involves energies and impulses, especially when pursued in public, these forms of entertainment are usually accompanied by sets of rules.<sup>61</sup>

The earliest forms of ruler-sanctioned and organized entertainment for the masses in Germany were the annual fairs that can be traced back to the Medieval Ages. These fairs served multiple purposes: they were places where people could buy necessary goods as well as “luxury” items and rare goods, conduct business, meet far-flung kin and friends

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<sup>60</sup>Ulrich Borsdorf, “Vergnügen im Museum. Vorworte.” In: Stephan Oettermann, (ed.): *Schriftenreihe: Studien zur Geschichte der Vergnügungskultur* (Gerolzhofen, 1991-2004), 1.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

and attend dances, which were also a bidding ground for marriage. For many, these fairs marked the highlight of the year. Smaller, local “market days” in between fulfilled the rural population’s need for everyday goods (such as animals, meat, bread, alcohol, tobacco, tools, clothes and fabrics, shoes, jewelry, and toys).<sup>62</sup> The dates for these smaller fairs often coincided with “Kirchmessen” (parish fairs), religious celebrations that commemorated saint’s days or church anniversaries, or coincided with events in the church calendar such as Easter or Pentecost. These were celebrated with a catholic mass, followed by a dance and other festivities. In a way, this was a God-sanctioned excuse to mingle and take a break from work. Whereas market and trade happened on the one side, entertainment made up the other half. Trained monkeys, bears, and other animals were displayed; people could attend theater performances, be entertained by musicians and jugglers, try their luck at betting games and in shooting galleries, and ride swings and Ferris wheels. Food and drink was also plentiful. Slowly, the entertainment side of these fairs eliminated first the religious components and then even the trade components, which attracted substantial criticism from the churches.<sup>63</sup> The range of goods changed from essential items to luxurious, instant consumer goods such as candy, fruit, cigars and pipes, as well as alcohol, which often clashed with the law and moral codes.

Between 1870 and 1914, the German Reich was transformed from a predominantly agrarian loose assembly of territories into a modern, industrialized nation state. While in the 1850s most people still lived in rural communities, many of these communities turned into agglomerations of people surrounding factories, marked by inadequate infrastructure, food, housing and supply shortages, the destruction of the

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<sup>62</sup> Lisa Kosok, “Jahrmarkt und Vergnügungspark.“ In Oettermann, *Schriftenreihe*, 130-151.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 142-143.

surrounding environment, and in general poor living conditions.<sup>64</sup> Not only did the economic structures change during this time, but the process also directly impacted all areas of society.<sup>65</sup> Together with the increased urbanization after the economic boom of the *Gründerjahre* (1871-1873),<sup>66</sup> the traditional annual fairs slowly disappeared. Goods could now be purchased in the cities' large stores, and special areas were designated for entertainment purposes. Furthermore, leisure choices did not have to be geared towards the semi-annual pay of the agrarian worker anymore. The factory worker was paid weekly and satisfied his food, goods, and entertainment needs in the city. Mass production lowered the prices (and often quality) of goods, which could be bought cheaper and more frequently at the large stores.

The Industrial Revolution also caused a radical change in the understanding of time and its use. Work and living space separated, and time was measured more precisely in an effort to economize and streamline industrial production. Natural rhythms of time changed also: shift work caused night labor and work on Sundays, and even the seasons that dominated rural life before now became blurred in the monotone life of industrial production. Factory workers had few prospects: they worked long hours with no

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<sup>64</sup> Lisa Kosok, "Die Ordnung des Vergnügens: Kontrolle und Kommerz." In: Oettermann, *Schriftenreihe*, 266-293, p.266.

<sup>65</sup> Inner-German migration, the emergence of social classes (mostly based on economics), people parties and interest groups and the youth movement are just a few of the major changes. For more general information on industrialization in Germany, see for example Hans Ulrich Wehler, *The German Empire, 1871-1918* (Berg Publishers, 1997).

<sup>66</sup> *Gründerjahre* (the Founding Years) refers to the years 1871-1873, that is the founding of the German Reich to the Economic Depression. These years are marked by a particularly strong growth of the German economy and a positive attitude concerning the future of Germany. Germany had just won the war against France (1870-1871), which promised reparation money to flow into the German economy as well as allowed the German industry to use the war resources for civil purposes. Policy changes in the stock market stimulated growth of credit institutes and growing confidence in investments, and many companies were founded in these years. The railroad was expanded, and a building boom followed. Retrieved on 11/28/2011 from (<http://www.nrw2000.de/gruender/gruenderzeit.htm>)

vacations and were helplessly exposed to unpredictable changes in pay, temporary unemployment, and loss of wages due to sickness or injury.<sup>67</sup> With the separation of “work time” and “free time,” workers and their families were eager to use their free time as intensively as possible. At the peak of the Industrial Revolution at the turn of the century, most celebrations and entertainment events were not defined in the traditional, religious, and agrarian sphere of the past anymore but had morphed into a mass-leisure time culture that offered an escape from the monotony of the factory, a counter-world to the new work life. Commercial entertainment and leisure-time offers expanded into a more varied and broad genre of entertainment, which was not restricted to traditional holidays or antiquated conventions but available locally and on a regular basis.

Besides the occasional fair or traveling fair or circus, German cities started to boast specialty theaters, vaudeville shows, circuses, and movie theaters. These offered, for money and for a certain, restricted time, a varied program with the sole purpose of taking the audience into a different world, away from their own life and work reality. This new emphasis of German cultural life was reflected in the increase of theater buildings and small stages, as well as outdoor areas that regularly hosted entertainment. Most of these venues did not aim to educate or be scientific but simply to satisfy the curiosity of visitors. The popular waxworks museums displayed figures and heads of dignitaries and other celebrities from the past and present. They often had a special room in which the more grisly specimens were exhibited (the “chamber of horrors,” usually displaying of medical “monstrosities,” various diseases and malformations, and people that had gained an “evil” reputation throughout history). The biggest of these in Berlin

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<sup>67</sup> Borsdorf, “Vergnügen im Museum,” 6-7.

was Castan's Panoptikum, which operated from 1869 until 1922. Besides the staples of wax museums, visitors could also see there members of foreign races, an extended chamber of horrors with medieval torture equipment, and a variety of likenesses of murderers, in some cases complete with relics ranging from a piece of wood from the gallows to the cup they last drank from.<sup>68</sup>

In addition to these forms of entertainment, another strain developed that stimulated a different set of senses. Much more so than at the "chamber of horrors" of the wax museums, visitors of the "Damenkapellen" (Ladies Bands"), "Abnormalitätenkabinetten," and especially "Völkerschauen" could revel in the sensational, strange, exotic, and erotic that was featured there. "Damenkapellen" (ladies bands) became popular at the end of the nineteenth century. Many members of such ensembles originally had been traveling musicians, often hailing from musical families and forced to contribute to the family's income. The women of these bands chose instruments that were unusual for women, such as trumpet, trombone, percussions, cello, or guitar. For a limited time and with a set program, they were hired to appear in music and concert halls, dance bars, and hotels that served food. Part of their job was also to encourage the mostly male audience to eat and drink. Strange costumes or exotic origins of the members only heightened their appeal. These Ladies Bands were fairly popular until after World War I.<sup>69</sup> An example for an "Abnormalitätenkabinettt" or a "Chamber of Abnormalities" is Rudolf Virchow's pathologic-anatomic collection of human organs and

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<sup>68</sup> Angelika Friederici: *Castan's Panopticum. Ein Medium Wird Besichtigt* (Berlin, 2008). Most of the wax museums died in response to the rise of the movies.

<sup>69</sup> An account of these bands is given by Dorothea Kaufmann: "...routinierte Trommlerin gesucht." *Musikerin in einer Damenkapelle. Zum Bild eines vergessenen Frauenberufes aus der Kaiserzeit* (Karben 1997). For pictures, see <http://www.bildpostkarten.uni-osnabrueck.de/index.php?cat=55>

other body parts that was opened to the public in 1899 in Berlin. Virchow himself wanted it to be accessible to the public in order to inform the common people about the causes and effects of diseases. By the time of his death in 1902, the collection consisted of 24,000 specimens. It was the most extensive collection of malformations in Europe. Visitors could see the effects of diseases that doctors were battling at the time, as well as one-eyed fetuses, or those with fused legs, Janus heads or multiple limbs, which, so the visitor was told, served as the prototype for mythical creatures such as sirens and Cyclopes in Greek mythology. In World War II, all but 2,000 of the specimens were destroyed.<sup>70</sup>

“Völkerschauen,” exhibits of exotic peoples, originated with the discoveries of new worlds and peoples and grew steadily throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>71</sup> The phenomenon started in England, where explorers brought peoples from its colonies back to the Isles in order to prove the degree of danger they faced from opponents in the effort to colonize the world. The presentation of foreign peoples were made to kings and the nobility at first, and then slowly spread to the general public in exchange for money. Expedition reports and travel descriptions fueled the fire and the demands: the more strange people were exhibited, the more insatiable the audience became. This trend soon spread to Germany, although the exhibits were less colorful and sensational in the beginning. The period between the founding of the Wilhelminian Empire in 1871 and the beginning of World War One in 1914 coincides with the most intensive presence of *Völkerschauen* in Germany, with developments in the natural

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<sup>70</sup> <http://www.berlinonline.de/berliner-zeitung/archiv/.bin/dump.fcgi/1998/0123/lokales/0025/index.html>

<sup>71</sup> The term *Völkerschauen* roughly translates to “people shows,” with a connotation to ethnography and anthropology. Perhaps the most accurate translation would be “exhibits of exotic peoples.”

sciences, the appearance of new types of museums and exhibition-forms, the advent of audiovisual media, and the emergence of the leisure and entertainment industry.<sup>72</sup>

In order to understand the deep infatuation with wild peoples and especially later the fascination and identification with the American Indian, one must consider concepts such as mythical landscapes and creation and origin myths that play a profound role in the shaping of German culture and understandings of “Self” and “Other.” The origin stories and cultural beliefs and identities of a society ultimately are embedded into a landscape that gives shape to them and defines their boundaries. William Cronon has argued that landscapes are not empirically defined objects; instead, there are cultural processes and discourses at work that frame the human perceptions of and emotional attachments to these natural settings.<sup>73</sup> Similarly, Simon Schama has noted that natural landscapes are not just products of geological evolution but also imbued with a set of cultural myths and meanings that define the way a culture conceives the natural settings around it, like the wilderness or forests. A deeper reading of these underlying mythologies of landscape reveals the underlying beliefs and ideas of the culture viewing the landscape. Most importantly for this discussion, Schama sees in the romanticized German forests clues to the inherited cultural mythologies and values held by Germans.<sup>74</sup>

These mythologies and values are closely connected to the inhabitants of these German forests. Schama and others alike argue that before the discovery of first-century Roman historian Tacitus’ *Germania* in 1473, German scholars and writers had traced their origins to Trojans, Romans, and even to fictional Amazons from the Caucasus.

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<sup>72</sup> See also Weber, *Indians on German Stages*, 117-118.

<sup>73</sup> William Cronon, “A Place for Stories: Nature, History and Narrative,” in *Journal of American History* 78 (March 1992): 1347-1376.

<sup>74</sup> Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1995).



However, in *Germania*, Tacitus fuses the folkloric wild man as inhabitant of the periphery of the German-settled world with the “*ur*-German,” who was used in the ancient text, and uses this conflation as a justification for a collective national identity. With his proto-ethnographic methodology of describing the appearance, customs, and religious beliefs of barbaric peoples, Tacitus supported the idea that it was in fact the “wild men” of the German forests who were the ancestors to contemporary Germans. Moreover, Tacitus attributed to them sterling qualities in pointed contrast to the softened, Romanized Gauls: Germans were the uncorrupted, primitive, but fierce and belligerent counterpart to Roman culture on the European continent, who inhabited the vast woodlands to the North. By inference Tacitus was criticizing his own Roman culture for getting away from its roots. His Germans did not inhabit a “Golden Age” of ease but were tough and inured to hardship, qualities which he saw as preferable to the decadent softness of civilized life.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, as Stephanie Leitch explains, elements of the “wild man” folklore mixed with the image of Hercules, who “became ‘Hercules Germanicus,’ wearing a lion’s pelt, a crown of leaves and carrying a club in one and bow and arrow in the other hand.” This image of the Hercules Germanicus was then turned into a heroic visual prototype with an “articulated classical anatomy,” which elevated the virile barbarian “to an acceptable template for any respectable German emperor.”<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> See also Karen Kupperman, *Indians and English: Facing Off in Early America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000). Kupperman explicitly links Tacitus’ view of early Germans to British views of Native Americans.

<sup>76</sup> Stephanie Leitch, “The Wild Man, Charlemagne and the German Body,” in *Art History* 31, Issue 3, (June 2008): 283-302, as discussed in Weber, *Indians on German Stages*, 31-32.

This idea of a born aristocracy of natural origins led almost directly to the emergence of the concept of the “noble savage.”<sup>77</sup> Under the influence of Christianity and Romanticism, the wild men were turned into noble savages of the woods and equated with “holy hairy men: the anchorite saints and hermits of early Christianity.”<sup>78</sup> They were still considered as being one with nature; however, this equation no longer required scenes of bestiality. Instead, images of simple families living off the land replaced the old stereotypes. These origins form the basis of the German creation myth, which is therefore strongly connected to its forests and a romantic nostalgia for the uncorrupted life in the wilderness. In fact, “by the middle of the eighteenth century the ancient mystique of rustic innocence, martial virility, and woodland nativism had all converged to create a fresh generation of patriots” which considered itself to be the heir of these early forest-dwellers.<sup>79</sup> The noble savage, therefore, was not the barbaric opposite to the civilized European as the other types of “wild people” had been, but in a way was civilization’s pure and unspoiled archetype. The Germans’ concept of the noble savage was not exclusive to their own Germanic tribes but also extended beyond the borders of Europe. Some of these noble savages came from the South Seas (however, they were also often considered cannibals), others originated from the jungles of South America and from the North American continent, where they lived freely in a type of earthly paradise. They aroused an erotic allure for Europeans and were considered noble, helpful, and good-natured.

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<sup>77</sup> For a detailed analysis of this concept see Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>78</sup> Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 97.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 102. See also “In Germany, Wild for Winnetou.” *New York Times*, September 12, 2007.

Initially, the term “noble savage” did not apply exclusively to the Indians of North America. However, in the mid-nineteenth century, the noble savage and the American Indian began to merge in a parallel development with the historical and political re-conceptualizing of the European figure. The concept acquired a considerable cultural significance for Germany’s national self-image. Therefore, there seems to be a special “tribal affinity” between Germans and Indians that is rooted deep within the tissue of the German cultural imaginary. It denotes German self-conceptions of closeness to nature, inborn natural nobility, and pride in simplicity. According to Dana Weber, there is even a visual overlap between Wild Men and the American natives that surfaced in broadsheets depicting “Indians” soon after contact. German printers began to recycle old woodblocks representing Wild Men and Women to print images of American natives. Blocks depicting Adam and Eve were also occasionally used for the same purpose, “not only offering a naked couple that could be easily re-cycled as ‘Indian,’ but also carrying the connotation of the American ‘terrestrial paradise and its inhabitants’ as an idealizing, positive version of the stereotype.”<sup>80</sup>

Another indicator for this close connection of Germans and Native Americans can be found in the Teutonic Germ Theory that dominated European and later also American thought. The idea of the emergence of a noble people from an ancient warrior race was part of the theory, which claims that democratic ideas and institutions had germinated in the wild German forests, from which they were carried across the ocean and into the American wilderness by the first settlers.<sup>81</sup> For a long time, Americans saw themselves

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<sup>80</sup> Weber, *Indians on German Stages*, 32.

<sup>81</sup> The etymological connection between “Germany” and “germ” is very close: “Germany” is derived from “gemen” (gen. geminis) = sprout, bud. Note also the grammatical base, “gene-” = to give birth, beget.

as the continuation of European tradition, having inherited Germanic blood and with it the strong democratic and Darwinian virtues connected with the forests. As already noted, landscapes are culturally constructed and encoded with values and norms of a given society. Germans were quick and eager to appropriate the American wilderness, imbue it with their own distinct values, and turn it into a uniquely German landscape mythology (this can be seen especially strongly in Karl May's novels, which will be briefly discussed in chapter six). Analyzing Germans' conceptions of an explicitly non-German landscape, or the American West, provides valuable insights into Germany's cultural make-up and self-image as well as the longings and fears that Germans projected onto this constructed landscape. Buffalo Bill's *Wild West* offers such a window into the German mind; the German audience is invited to experience a living American landscape and even to participate in it.

These theories and constructions of self did not translate into the American context at all but instead clashed with the new conditions: whereas Germans considered themselves to have originated from the forest dwellers, settlers in the American West were suddenly confronted with the American Indian who embodied nature more fully than they did. The Indians were the true Natives of *this* land and thus could not become an object of identification and cultural association for Americans. The fact that they not only were closely connected with nature but also considered to be of an inferior race further strengthened this opposition. Therefore, the Indian became an obstacle that had to be overcome if Americans wanted to "germinate" in the New World. It was Frederick Jackson Turner who finally cut the connection between German and American origin myths once and for all. By stating that the American character was formed at the frontier

where the settler was transformed from a European into an American, he consciously set Americans apart and stressed new beginnings instead of old allegiances.

Simon Schama draws another very revealing parallel between American and German formative events: he equates the Varus Battle of 9AD, in which Germany's first folk hero Arminius slaughtered four Roman legions led by Publius Quintilius Varus, with General Custer's defeat at the Little Bighorn in 1876. At first, this might seem a little far fetched; however, there are some striking parallels: both were "catastrophic ambushes" conducted by a band of supposed savages against a superior, civilized force which was consequently obliterated. Stories about Custer's arrogance and disdain for Native Americans are widely known. In the same fashion, sources about Varus tell of his racial and cultural arrogance, describing the Germans as "benighted savages, living in trees and bogs, brutes that required civilizing..." and "having nothing human about them but voice and limbs."<sup>82</sup> Under closer scrutiny, however, these two events can also be regarded as another example of the differences in perception between Germany and the US. In the Varus Battle (which took place in one of the most mythically laden forests of Germany, the Teutoburger Wald), Germans were fighting against a superior, civilized force, justifying their status as the wild and untamed children of the forest. The Battle of the Little Bighorn, however, assigns this position to the Indians and instead depicts the Americans as the civilized and invading force. This again demonstrates the aforementioned discrepancy between the American and German creation myths and their view of the American Indian.

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<sup>82</sup> Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 88.

Whenever a new part of the world was discovered, the European public was confronted with the sudden perspective of an alien world touching it. First, this happened from a distance by hearsay and mediation. Then, the contact became potentially physical, as exotic individuals and groups came so close that they could be seen, heard, and touched. This had a deep impact on how the world was perceived by Europeans and non-Europeans, and they both left their imprints on structures and processes of imagination everywhere in the world. The ideological superstructure that informs a culture and its perceptions of the other of course differ across cultural boundaries, and it is not stable but subjected to change over time. In general, Europeans distinguished between different kinds of races and “wild” people: first, there were the cannibalistic heathens that came from the edges of the known world. They were mostly naked, lived in hordes or tribes, were strong and belligerent, and acted in beast-like fashion, especially in the area of sexual activity. This was reckoned to be particularly true for black Africans. To European sensibilities, their language consisted of weird, unpleasant utterances that were incomprehensible and un-learnable. In short, they were considered completely different and repulsive.<sup>83</sup>

Then of course there were the “wild men” discussed above, a concept of otherness that draws on the fauns, satyrs and forest gods and demi-gods associated with nature and fertility in the Greco-Roman pantheon. They inhabited the vague zone in between the world of man and the animal kingdom. A variation of the wild man were the “Forest People” (*Waldmensch* or *Homo Sylvestris*). Reports about “wild girls” and the capturing

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<sup>83</sup> Stephan Oettermann, “Fremde. Der.Die.Das.Völkerschauen und ihre Vorläufer.“ In: Stephan Oettermann, (ed.), *Schriftenreihe: Studien zur Geschichte der Vergnügungskultur* (Gerolzhofen, 1991-2004), 81.

of people who live in the woods characterized them as “shy and naked, immediately taking off clothes, especially shoes.”<sup>84</sup> They “walk skillfully on all fours, climb well like squirrels and swim like fish. In fact, they find it hard to walk upright.” Furthermore, they were usually “vegetarian and detest cooked, spiced, and especially salted meats.” Their languages were characterized by “grunting or incomprehensible stammering,” if they were not completely mute, and “as opposed to the roaring cannibals they seem to be incapable of learning language, even in a rudimentary manner.”<sup>85</sup> Because they were usually found living alone, experts wondered about reproduction. The theory was also that these people had become wild, not because they were created that way, but rather because of the hostile environment, being raised in the wilderness, and their lack of reason.”<sup>86</sup> Such faults, it was believed, could be corrected by acculturation, and especially by the Christian faith. Forest people often became the guinea pigs for pedagogues who tried to teach them the ways of civilization because they were supposedly untainted by any form of socialization. Not surprisingly, this was mostly unsuccessful.

The most famous of these “finds” was the teenaged Kaspar Hauser, who appeared in Nuremberg in 1828 and claimed to have lived in the woods all his life. Attempts to educate and “humanize” him eventually resulted in his death in December of 1833. Other strange people reportedly lived in the seas (mermaids) and in inaccessible regions of the world (Yetis). When Darwin’s theories gained popularity, the *Homo Sylvestris* became part of the “missing link” theory between animal and man, and many more “specimens”

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>84</sup>Susi Colin, “The Wild Man and the Indian in Early Sixteenth-Century Book Illustrations.” In: Feest, *Indians and Europe*, 5-36, p.7.

<sup>84</sup> Oettermann, “Völkerschauen und ihre Vorläufer,” 83.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Colin, “The Wild Man and the Indian in Early Sixteenth-Century Book Illustrations,” 7.

of this kind were found in other parts of the world.<sup>87</sup> One example is Julia Pastrana, the “Ape Woman,” who was also called a “human monster.” It turned out that she was actually intelligent and friendly, spoke multiple languages, “danced prettily,” and could sing. Her “owner” married and impregnated her in order to increase his profit, but mother and baby died in childbirth. He had them prepared by a taxidermist and exhibited them all over Europe, even surpassing his original prospects and generating tremendous revenue.<sup>88</sup>

A last category of exotic strangers warrants mention: the Ignoble Savage.

Obviously, he was closely related to the wild men and the concept of the noble savage. Whereas the noble savage comprised all the positive character traits of the wild man, the ignoble savage embodied the negative ones: ungodliness, bestiality, the inability to control his desires and sexual lust, the lack of speech and reason, and also the tendency towards senseless violence all reflect the subconscious fears of civilized European society itself. Parallel with the development of the wild man into the positively imbued noble savage, the ignoble savage absorbed the negative stereotypes and projected them onto much of the American Indian of seventeenth century colonial America. In fact, as Susi Colin argues, “the American Indian described in the earliest published reports following the discovery of the New World shares quite a number of qualities characteristic of the Wild Man of European literary and pictorial tradition.”<sup>89</sup>

For spectators, the exhibition of such strange peoples offered the opportunity to satisfy a variety of needs. In a time with only limited exposure to “otherness,” the exotic shows brought the “strange” within their reach, but not without certain safety measures.

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<sup>87</sup> Oetterman, “Völkerschauen und ihre Vorläufer,” 85.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Colin, “The Wild Man and the Indian in Early Sixteenth-Century Book Illustrations,” 9.



Whenever wild men and strangers were allowed to enter the city, “they had to remain at its geographic and ethical limits as they were allowed to perform on the streets and in public houses, i.e. in relatively liberal or in licentious environments, in which their extraordinary status was already permitted or acceptable. This means that they were allowed to penetrate the city but on the city’s terms, i.e. that their disruption of norms was regulated and limited to times and spaces of convenience.”<sup>90</sup> They were monitored very closely also due to the strict moral and behavioral codes that regulated much of Victorian society during the nineteenth century. Those codes, along with the Victorian values of family, frugality, moderation, work discipline, and conscientiousness could be circumvented at the fairs and exhibits, allowing spectators to project their needs and desires onto others that were different and considered inferior.<sup>91</sup> No matter how much money somebody had or to what social class someone belonged, they could gain a feeling of power and superiority at the exhibits by gawking at ”niggers,” ”malformed,” ”strange,” or “abnormal” people. Furthermore, beneath open racism, they could experience private feelings of fear or erotic attraction (even if unwanted or un-admitted) and still enjoy strange worlds and the thrill of the unknown. With these and other attractions, spectators could give into and play out tabooed fantasies because it was on the level of play and the “unreal.”

One of the absolute taboos concerned the issues of erotic attraction and sex outside of marriage, which was strictly forbidden and suppressed in any form. Not surprisingly, participants of the exhibits frequently were the objects of erotic fantasies.

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<sup>90</sup> Weber, *Indians on German Stages*, 33.

<sup>91</sup> Kosok, “Jahrmarkt und Vergnügungspark,” 150, see also Katinka Kocks, *Indianer im Kaiserreich. Völkerschauen und Wild West Shows zwischen 1880 und 1914*. Heft 7 der Studien und Quellen der Geschichte der Vergnügungskultur (Gerolzhofen: Spiegel & Co, 2004), 9.

Male visitors often tried to buy sexual favors from female members of the exhibits. Purposefully dressed in clothes as “aboriginal” as possible, the clear intention of the shows’ organizers was to please the male audience. However, the erotic attraction of the “muscular and brawny, slender and smooth people, who were almost naked” did not escape the female visitors, either.<sup>92</sup> In accordance with the strict moral code, the press especially emphasized the fascination of the female visitors with the “Herculean and animalistic bodies of the ‘Neger’” (a derogatory term for blacks, which translates into “nigger”), which was especially dangerous in the minds of those who were concerned with racial purity. However, sexual potency imagery also competed with feelings of disgust due to the alleged unrestrained bestial lust of the strangers that was considered an ever-lurking threat to white womanhood.<sup>93</sup> Consequently, whenever white women from the audience stepped outside the boundaries of accepted behavior, the outcry was tremendous, as is clearly visible in the newspaper coverage. In several instances, the German readers were confronted with the immoral and scandalous behavior of women, so much so that one reporter lamented that “there are those women who follow the Indians through Europe, which unfortunately cannot be prevented through any measure of the law.”<sup>94</sup> There are indeed several recorded instances of the “mutual sexual attraction of white women spectators and show Indian men” and interracial romantic relations as well as mixed marriages.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Oettermann, “Völkerschauen und ihre Vorläufer,” 95, footnote 51.

<sup>93</sup> Hilke Thode-Arora. *Für fünfzig Pfennig um die Welt: Die Hagenbeck’schen Völkerschauen* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 1989), 115-119.

<sup>94</sup> Oettermann, “Völkerschauen und ihre Vorläufer,” 95.

<sup>95</sup> Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*, 390-396. An example is the marriage of the Minneconjou Sioux Standing Bear and the Austrian Luise Rieneck.

The law, in fact, was on the watch. In order to maintain order, protect the morals and values of Imperial Germany, and insure the general welfare of the people, the police and other authorities slowly introduced strict rules that regulated every aspect of the entertainment world. The more the fairs targeted an entertainment-seeking crowd, the more problems arose for authorities to uphold the law and manage the crowds. Between 1850 and 1894, extensive rules emerged to control any form of entertainment, including the exact regulation of what was allowed in the streets and on public property. The rules forbade any form of assembly of people that was characteristic of the former agrarian lifestyle: no playing kids, no youth gatherings, no parties, parades, demonstrations, no masked people, no brawls, no drinking alcohol, no standing around, no singing, dancing, shouting, whistling, or making noise of any kind, and even funeral processions without a permit and police monitoring were illegal. Musical instruments were only allowed to be played at certain times during the day (including inside the houses), and bars and restaurants had to adhere to a set of special rules that included a 10 pm curfew.<sup>96</sup> If an event received a permit, it was usually taxed heavily, and the organizer had to submit the program to the officials. If he deviated from the rules or even dared to change the program, heavy fines were to be expected.<sup>97</sup>

Authorities were haunted by the fear of the immoral, drunkenness, and sin. Entertainment-seeking crowds were considered breeding grounds for immorality, and were held responsible for a decrease in productivity of the work force. This was especially noticeable in the factories, which monitored workers' efficiency and lamented that the workforce was more focused on drink and festivity than on discipline and

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<sup>96</sup> Kosok, "Die Ordnung des Vergnügens," 268.

<sup>97</sup> Borsdorf, "Vergnügen im Museum," 13.

“worker fitness.” In fact, among the different regions in Germany, the worker-heavy Ruhr area saw the most rigid laws, and it is probably safe to argue that the emerging entertainment industry served as a safety valve from the discipline and monotony of the factory. Not surprisingly, the restrictive rules often created tension between the people and the authorities, but, as Ulrich Bosdorf argues, it will probably remain debatable “whether the strength of the entertainment culture in the Ruhr area was merely compensatory or even had a subversive-emancipatory character.”<sup>98</sup>

As a response to the restrictive rules, Germans became creative and started founding *private* clubs that lay outside of the grasp of the law. Under the umbrella of their private organization, they were able to arrange entertainment venues that circumvented police intervention and taxes.<sup>99</sup> The authorities slowly realized that it was useless to enforce their rules for merriment, and they eventually were obliged to simply control and patrol heavily. In the 1890s, the eye of the law moved to monitor women especially. The main targets of these restrictions were waitresses and show personnel, who were automatically suspected of prostitution and sexual temptation. In this typically patriarchal society, it was not the men who dominated society that were held responsible for good and moral behavior, but the female employees. The other group that experienced increased monitoring was the youth of the working class, which was always under the suspicion of planning a radical revolution in particular and mischief in general.<sup>100</sup>

The practice of exhibiting foreign peoples to gawking audiences has a centuries-long tradition in Europe. As early as the sixteenth century, different groups of foreigners

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<sup>98</sup> Kosok, “Die Ordnung des Vergnügens,” 276.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Kosok, “Jahrmarkt und Vergnügungspark,” 151, and “Die Ordnung des Vergnügens,” 275.

were exhibited on the European continent, sometimes with, sometimes without their consent.<sup>101</sup> One of the first Northern American exhibits traveled through Europe in 1566, consisting of a woman and her child from Labrador who were kidnapped by French seamen. The first American Indians from what is today the US were exhibited in the early eighteenth century (Creek, Cherokee, Osage, and Mohawk). Every now and again, other groups were traveling through Europe: a “small, ugly woman from Lapland” in 1806, a “Hottentot” (from South Africa or Namibia) in 1809, and a woman from Ceylon in 1813. 1819 saw the exhibit of “bushmen,” 1821 and 1824 two “Botokuden” (Indians from Brazil), and 1826 several Native American artists. During the 1820s, Captain Samuel Hadlock from Maine toured Europe with a troupe of Inuit, who were exhibited in London, Hamburg, Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, Prague, and Vienna. Osages were exhibited in 1829 and people from Greenland in 1836.<sup>102</sup>

In London and Paris, as in Germany, the general attitudes of the public towards these strangers in these earlier exhibits were rather negative, not least under the influence of contemporary missionary propaganda that stressed their heathenness and described their ungodly behavior. The *Times* wrote about the “Bushmen” in 1847: “in appearance, they are little above the monkey tribe, and scarcely better than the mere brutes of the field.... They are sullen, silent and savage—mere animals in propensity, and worse than animals in appearance.... In short, a more miserable set of human beings—for human they are, nevertheless—was never seen.”<sup>103</sup> In the same vein, anthropologist Raymond Corbey

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<sup>101</sup> Of course exhibiting the spoils of war was a common practice in ancient Rome as well and often included a parade of imprisoned foreigners for the Roman people.

<sup>102</sup> Kocks, *Indianer im Kaiserreich*, 26.

<sup>103</sup> Raymond Corbey, “Ethnographic Showcases, 1870-1930,” In: *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Aug., 1993), 338-369, 346

claimed that “for decades, the German press wrote about the appearance, behavior, and nature of the foreign visitors in a very negative tone, expressing disgust and contempt for them. The general reaction of the public visiting the exhibitions seems to have been the same; but near the turn of the century, press coverage began to change for the better, and more attention was given to ethnographic detail.”<sup>104</sup>

During the course of the nineteenth century, anthropological and ethnographic exhibits became more common and more “professional.” Whereas the early exhibits took place in conjunction with fairs, the shows grew so significantly in proportion and popularity that by the 1880s they were held predominantly in *volksbildenden Institutionen*, which were public educational institutions, such as renowned zoos and botanical gardens. They also became a staple at world and colonial exhibitions and circuses as well as occurring in the form of temporary or permanent exhibitions staged by missionary societies and museums of natural history, and later Wild West shows.<sup>105</sup> As Stephan Oettermann has shown, whereas in the first half of the nineteenth century only a couple of dozen exhibits of “wild people” can be counted, between 1875 and 1900 more than one hundred different exhibits took place in Germany alone.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, their character changed around 1875. Instead of small groups here and there, shows started to be perfectly organized, with larger groups (whole families or parts of tribes) appearing in quick succession. Member numbers rose dramatically as well, ranging between three and one hundred, and in one case even 250. The groups hailed from all continents and races: from Lapland to China and Russia, the jungles of Africa and South America, to the South

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Oettermann, “Völkerschauen und ihre Vorläufer,” 93.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 89, 92.

Seas. An example of the tremendous success of such shows is the exhibit of Nubians in Berlin in 1879, which attracted 58,000 paying customers on one Sunday alone. (The same group is credited later with saving the zoo in Dresden from bankruptcy.)

As already mentioned, *Völkerschauen* offered cheap and safe entertainment and the excitement of coming into contact with different peoples, which served as a demarcation of self against otherness and other models of society. They were affordable to the middle class and the workers, who could not travel abroad like the aristocrats and wealthy bourgeois. A Hamburg newspaper stated this directly: “Everything is made so convenient. Instead of having to travel in order to be able to tell stories, you can stay at home and the strangers come to us with their attractions.”<sup>107</sup> Thus, such performances “impacted working- and middle-class leisure cultures.”<sup>108</sup> Together with the new print market, *Völkerschauen* made it possible for the German mass public to satiate its “growing *Sehnsucht* or ‘desire to see,’” by embracing “new media and technologies of mass entertainment that were three-dimensional and panoramic.” For this reason, *Völkerschauen* should be understood as “a legitimate sphere of popular science, despite the limited degree of ‘authenticity’ in the cultural representations on stage.”<sup>109</sup> Simply put, *Völkerschauen* served the German public to gather information about the life-worlds of non-Germans without ever having to leave the country.

An added bonus was that these shows could be so much more exciting, thrilling, and violent because the spectators did not have to fear any actual physical harm. To

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<sup>107</sup> *Hamburger Nachrichten*, September 7, 1890. See also Thode-Arora, *Für fünfzig Pfennig um die Welt*, 114-119.

<sup>108</sup> Sierra Ann Bruckner, *The tingle-tangle of modernity: popular anthropology and the cultural politics of identity in Imperial Germany*. PhD Dissertation (University of Iowa, 1999), 52.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 89, 224.

heighten the sense of excitement, danger, and authenticity even more, spectators were allowed to make physical contact with the strangers by shaking their hands after the performance. The opportunity to stroll through the exhibit after the show at their own convenience added a whole new dimension to the experience: spectators did not just watch from their seat at a safe distance, but got to immerse themselves into this (albeit artificial) world of the people they had just seen on stage. These visits literally expanded the experience of the arena, and Buffalo Bill's camp certainly trumped all the other exhibits in sheer magnitude and perceived authenticity. The invasion of the privacy of the show members must have been better than a backstage tour nowadays, giving spectators the feeling that they were peeping into a world where they did not belong. In a way, these exhibits were similar to a living ethnologic museum. Together with their artifacts, houses, and even complete villages, so-called savages or primitives were "made available for visual inspection by millions of strolling and staring Western citizens."<sup>110</sup>

Obviously, the exhibited individuals, often more or less coerced into participation, had a hard time coping with the exhibits: it must have been harrowing to have curious people walk through at any point, often even regaling them with derogatory comments. Many of them battled homesickness and other emotional issues arising from being exposed to a strange world, not to mention the difficulties that accompanied the adjustment to the European climate, food, and customs, along with the fear of catching a vicious infection. Unfortunately, there are only a few sources that offer a glimpse into the feelings of participants of such shows. One of the few is the record of Abraham, who was a part of Carl Hagenbeck's "Eskimo" exhibit of 1878/1880. The oldest of the performers,

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<sup>110</sup> Corbey, "Ethnographic Showcases," 338.



he kept a journal in which he noted his impressions: “Berlin is not nice because there are so many people and trees.... The thundering of the carriages persists day and night.... It is still so long until this year is over because we really want to return to our home. We cannot stay here forever.”<sup>111</sup> Unfortunately, all participants died from smallpox because they had not been vaccinated prior to coming to Europe, and organizer Hagenbeck was shocked and deeply sorry. Not surprisingly, however, even the funeral turned into a spectacle.<sup>112</sup> Overall, the reactions of Native Americans to Europe were complex and certainly deserve more attention from scholars.

Four different genres of *Völkerschauen* traveled Europe in the nineteenth century, of which the “panoramic ethnographic landscape” became the most popular kind in Germany. This form of show exhibited the performers’ way of life in replicated settings of their homes within a “cultural, geographic, and botanical setting that was presented as their natural environment.”<sup>113</sup> One of the masterminds and pioneers behind this new kind of ethnographic exhibition was the Hamburg-based exotic animal dealer Carl Hagenbeck, who quickly developed a reputation as an anthropological showman. In his memoirs, published in 1909 and titled *Of Animals and People*, he stated that while the animal business was declining, he realized that exotic peoples piqued his audience’s curiosity just as much as animals, if not more, which led him to the idea of exhibiting exotic

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<sup>111</sup> Haug von Kuenheim, *Carl Hagenbeck* (Hamburg: Ellert & Richter Verlag, 2007), 111.

<sup>112</sup> *Frankfurter Journal*, December 18, 1880; Kocks, *Indianer im Kaiserreich*, 31.

<sup>113</sup> Bruckner, *Tingletangle*. Bruckner identifies the “anthropological monstrosity,” the “ethno-circus,” the “colonial village,” and the “panoramic ethnographic landscape.” She stated that “in contrast to the panoramic ethnographic landscape, the representational environment of the ‘anthropological monstrosity’ borrows from the expositional modes of the fair and the museum to highlight the idiosyncratic features of figures that it de-contextualizes and isolates” (254-255). The “‘circus’ does not need special sets since it is its own environment” (261-264). Finally, the “colonial village” explicitly “presents itself as a colonial territory inviting visitors to feel at home in an exotic culture that was under German control” (264-269). Cody seems to borrow from “circus” and “ethnographic landscape.”

peoples alongside exotic animals in his zoological garden in Hamburg.<sup>114</sup> Hagenbeck was also the first to add a “show program” to his exhibit, and depending on the origin of the group, they performed equestrian tricks, robberies, war dances, kidnappings, and wedding and funeral ceremonies. Over time, Hagenbeck adapted these programs to the expectations of his audience, which was eager to authenticate its preconceived notions about these strangers by seeing them actually perform to these expectations.<sup>115</sup>

In order to realize his plan, Hagenbeck needed large cash advances for recruitment and transportation of his “exhibits,” which meant that only a solvent businessman could undertake such projects. As a result, most ethnographic exhibits of larger proportions began to take place in well-respected venues and were much more structured, choreographed, and sophisticated because they were backed by the financial resources that allowed them to expand in such ways. This, in turn, further distinguished the new type of ethnographic exhibit from the fair-based exhibits of “wild people:” whereas the latter were still regarded with undisguised and naïve curiosity and often disgust, the more sophisticated and organized voyeurism of the *Völkerschauen* started to make some people uncomfortable with the cruder types of exhibits, which in turn caused organizers to disguise and upgrade their exhibit as an educational and scientific experience. Instead of openly gawking at strange peoples in order to stimulate certain senses, this new venue offered the visitor a “glimpse of life, customs, and manners” of

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<sup>114</sup> Hagenbeck has received ample attention from historians. See for example, Von Kuenheim, *Carl Hagenbeck*, 105; Pamela Kort and Max Hollein (eds.), *I Like America. Fictions of the Wild West* (Frankfurt am Main: Prestel, 2006), 54, 176; Thode-Arora, *Für fünfzig Pfennig um die Welt*, and Anne Dreesbach, *Gezähmte Wilde: Die Zurschaustellung „exotischer“ Menschen in Deutschland 1870-1940* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2005).

<sup>115</sup> Von Kuenheim, *Carl Hagenbeck*, 106.

other cultures, which was, according to the opinion at the time, “imbued with a scientific value that elevated the exhibit above the level of mere curiosity.”<sup>116</sup>

Consequently, historian Eric Ames argues that just as Hagenbeck “brought the animal trade from the margins to the mainstream of colonial commerce, so he moved the practice of human display from the fairground to the zoological garden. In other words, he made it ‘respectable’ and therefore easily consumable by the widest possible audience, including (but not restricted to) the broad middle classes.”<sup>117</sup> *Völkerschauen* had become one of the most popular forms of entertainment in Europe. An article in the German magazine *Gartenlaube* in 1884 stated that “the exhibits of peoples of different races from outside of Europe that have recently been popular in Germany exert a strange appeal on everybody.”<sup>118</sup> This appeal also reached beyond Germany: in 1883-1884, Hagenbeck exhibited sixty-seven people from Ceylon along with twenty-five elephants. The show performed in Hamburg for several weeks and also traveled to Vienna and Paris, where it stayed for one hundred days and attracted two million people.<sup>119</sup> In Vienna, Hagenbeck even welcomed the Austrian Kaiser Franz Joseph to his show grounds, which boosted its popularity.<sup>120</sup>

To sum up, Hagenbeck pioneered the idea of exhibiting foreign peoples in a reconstructed “natural habitat,” coined the word *Völkerschau* and transferred the old idea into a new frame, which brought him and others following this path great financial success. Ethnographic exhibits turned into such a profitable business that any doubts

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<sup>116</sup> Oettermann, “Völkerschauen und ihre Vorläufer,” 99.

<sup>117</sup> Eric Ames, “Seeing the Imaginary: On the Popular Reception of Wild West Shows in Germany, 1885-1910,” in *I Like America*, 214.

<sup>118</sup> Oettermann, “Völkerschauen und ihre Vorläufer,” 99, footnote 54.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 93 and Von Kuenheim, *Carl Hagenbeck*, 106.

<sup>120</sup> Von Kuenheim, *Carl Hagenbeck*, 106.

about the moral correctness of exhibiting people alongside animals were quickly quenched.<sup>121</sup> From 1874 until 1931 *Völkerschauen* were a German mass phenomenon, run almost exclusively by the business and logistic apparatus of the firm Hagenbeck.<sup>122</sup>

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, exhibits of live specimens were increasingly reframed in terms of science, especially physical anthropology and natural history. Aside from their entertainment and curiosity value, their educational value came to be stressed more and more. Hagenbeck, for instance, advertised his manifestations as “anthropological-zoological exhibitions.” Several important elements of the *Völkerschauen* made them eligible for claims of scientific importance: they played out scenes from everyday life, demonstrated exotic customs such as hunt and warfare and exhibited women and children alongside men in order to show a more complete picture of life in foreign lands. Therefore, they offered much for scientists: anthropologists had the opportunity to measure and document the physical appearance of peoples, whereas ethnologists were able to study the cultural displays and the array of artifacts that were brought along. For that reason, most of these shows also had an ethnologic exhibit attached to them, and museums often successfully tried to acquire the most interesting objects.<sup>123</sup>

Scholars of various disciplines were among the most frequent visitors to the exhibit in Hamburg. Hagenbeck and other entrepreneurs did not disregard this aspect of their business but advertised the scientific potential of their shows. He presented his exhibits to the middle classes with the stated intention of “promoting the *Bildung*, the

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<sup>121</sup> Oettermann, “Völkerschauen und ihre Vorläufer,” 93.

<sup>122</sup> Weber, *Indians on German Stages*, 126.

<sup>123</sup> Kocks, *Indianer im Kaiserreich*, 26.

knowledge and culture a civilized person should possess-and stimulating the German people's nationalistic zest for colonial expansion.”<sup>124</sup> Furthermore, statements such as “the linguist can study the languages of the different indigenous peoples from varied regions”; or “the phonetician can learn about the relationships of articulation on living study objects” can also frequently be found in his advertisements. And even the anthropologists and the ethnographer can be “educated” with the “help of the clothes, weapons, and common tools and objects of the indigenous peoples.” Lastly, the artist could be inspired in his work as well.<sup>125</sup> Also, performers, their languages and cultures, were investigated by scientists with the help of new media technologies such as photography, sound recording or film. Such research lies at the origin of new academic disciplines such as ethnography or ethnomusicology that found substantial impulses in Germany.<sup>126</sup> Emphasizing the importance of his exhibits to science, Hagenbeck did not charge scholars an entry fee.

In order to draw the lines between “us” and “them” more easily, scientists increasingly concentrated on giving these categories a scientific base. The idea that all races are aligned in a hierarchical structure, with “white” on top and “black” on the bottom of the evolutionary scale, gave rise to comparative race studies. As anthropologist Raymond Corbey describes it, the history of mankind was explained essentially in terms of a “heroic ascent toward the natural and ultimate goal of cosmic evolution: the industrial civilization of white, European, middle-class citizens of the nineteenth century. Other races followed the same path, it was postulated—especially in evolutionist

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<sup>124</sup> Corbey, “Ethnographic Showcases,” 345.

<sup>125</sup> Oettermann, “Völkerschauen und ihre Vorläufer,” 99.

<sup>126</sup> Weber, *Indians on German Stages*, 42.

ethnology, which was a scientific manifestation of the discourse on progress—but lagged behind culturally and physically. Imperialist expansion was represented in terms of a social Darwinist natural history, and European hegemony as a natural and therefore desirable development.”<sup>127</sup> According to this theory, all races would be eventually transformed from a savage state to a civilized state by undergoing a staged development from savagery through barbarism to civilization, insofar as their “constitutions allowed them to progress.”<sup>128</sup> This theory not only justified white conquest of other races and cultures, but in fact almost demanded it: the white, Caucasian race was able to progress through the stages under its own power and was obligated to help the others do the same.

In order to determine a race’s position on the scale and to study it more effectively, several fields of pseudo-scientific studies were either “invented” or revitalized during this time: craniology, phrenology, physiognomy, and anthropometry all focused on measuring the human body and deriving clues as to the specific makeup and differences between the races.<sup>129</sup> They also all shared the assumption that the outward shape and physical appearance of the body gave clues to the inner character of different races; therefore, the measurements allowed scientist to determine whether the subject of study possessed any “deviant” tendencies, such as being a criminal or a prostitute. Hence, the outward shape had to be measured and mapped meticulously.

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<sup>127</sup> Corbey, “Ethnographic Showcases,” 359.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Phrenology primarily focused on measurements of the human skull, based on the concept that the brain is the organ of the mind, and that certain brain areas have localized, specific functions or modules. It was believed that a person's capacity for a given personality trait could be determined simply by measuring the area of the skull that overlies the corresponding area of the brain. Physiognomy claimed a correlation between physical features (especially facial features) and character traits, and claimed that it was possible to identify a criminal by certain outward traits. Anthropometry refers to the measurement of the human individual. An early tool of physical anthropology, it has been used for identification, for the purposes of understanding human physical variation, in paleoanthropology and in various attempts to correlate physical with racial and psychological traits.

Ethnographic exhibits provided opportunities to study foreigners and thus were of great value and convenience to anthropological societies and museums of natural history. In fact, in London, Berlin or Paris, learned societies such as the Ethnological Society and the competing Anthropological Society showed great interest in the ethnological exhibitions. At the exhibits, they could scientifically collect, measure, classify, picture, and narrate colonial natives and at the same time acquire tens of thousands of native skulls for their collections. In return, the learned societies provided certificates of authenticity for the people exhibited, and suggested new target groups that would serve the financial needs of the impresarios as fully as their own scientific interests. (The scouts that were sent to hire performers were often in the service of ethnographic and anthropological institutions). The shows can therefore also be understood as a convenient interplay of science, commerce, and imperialism.<sup>130</sup>

Much of this was a distinctly German phenomenon. German anthropology, for example, had its own intellectual momentum that should not be equated with the aims and ideologies of its British, American, and French counterparts.<sup>131</sup> German anthropology and race studies are also often seen only in the shadow of National Socialism, but the earlier forms of science, amateurish and non-scientific as they may have been by modern standards, deserve separate historical attention in order to draw conclusions about the culture and mindset of the *Kaiserreich*. Rather than projecting the later race theories onto this time, the German interest in non-Europeans should be seen as a part of a “range of

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<sup>130</sup> Corbey, “Ethnographic Showcases,” 353-356.

<sup>131</sup> Matti Bunzl and H. Glenn Penny, eds., “Introduction: Rethinking German Anthropology, Colonialism and Race,” in: *Worldly Provincialism. German Anthropology in the Age of Empire* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 1-30.

intellectual traditions that were much more multifarious” and included humanism, liberalism, pluralism, monogenism (the theory of human origins which assumes a single origin for all human races), and a “persistent desire to know more about the world that went hand in hand with the German commitment to *Bildung*.”<sup>132</sup> Instead of a singular focus on establishing evolutionary hierarchies, German anthropologists tried to understand and chart diverse peoples’ cultural characteristics with the help of empirical research and collecting activity. They attempted to “provide new answers about humanity at large rather than to validate old truths about European superiority” while being informed “first and foremost by...notions of culture rather than...political preconceptions and colonial concerns.”<sup>133</sup> Overall, the interest in anthropology and exploring others and their ways of life was deeply rooted in Imperial Germany and manifested itself in the establishment of many large and small museums all over Germany. As Dana Weber argues, there seems to have been a “particularly German craving for *Bildung* as the defining feature of respectable middle-class existence in and beyond the major urban centers.”<sup>134</sup>

Of the early “race scientists” in Germany, Adolf Bastian and Rudolf Virchow were the most prominent. Bastian (1826-1905) first reached the far-flung corners of the world as a ship’s surgeon and systematically studied the people he encountered. He published over eighty ethnographical books and is considered the founder of the discipline of ethnography in Germany. He was eager to prove his ideas with the help of the shows that brought foreign peoples to Germany. Together with anthropologist and

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 16.



politician Rudolf Virchow, he founded the Berlin Society for Anthropology, Ethnography and Prehistory in 1869, as well as a scientific journal.<sup>135</sup> As noted, scientists took the exhibits very seriously, and they made extensive use of the presence of ethnographic shows in Germany. There are several examples in the sources that attest to the importance of these shows for scientists. The *Gartenlaube* stated, for example, that in 1870 Rudolf Virchow and other scholars in Berlin were measuring and examining the Nubians. The result of these examinations filled the papers of the Anthropological Society of Berlin for more than thirty years afterwards.<sup>136</sup> Another example is an incident that happened during Hagenbeck's exhibit of several Inuit from Greenland from 1878 to 1880, who performed hunts, dances, a dog sledding race, and demonstrated the use of a harpoon. Virchow found great interest in them and examined them thoroughly. In 1880, the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* described how during one of his examinations, the woman whose measurements he wished to take literally ran into the walls of the room in total panic, an incident that was not necessarily unusual.<sup>137</sup> Typically, these examinations were not painful for the "object" of the study, nor were any gruesome experiments performed, but nonetheless, often the natives had to strip down and subject themselves to the prodding of a stranger. It seems that Virchow was heavily criticized for this incident, since he repeatedly defended himself by stating that his methods were useful and purposeful, and that the woman had suffered a "psychological cramp."<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> See Klaus Peter Buchheit und Klaus Peter Koepping: "Adolf Philipp Wilhelm Bastian," in: Christian Feest und Klaus-Peter Kohl (eds.), *Hauptwerke der Ethnologie* (Kröner: Stuttgart 2001), 19–25. For Virchow see also Kocks, *Indianer im Kaiserreich*, 10.

<sup>136</sup> Oettermann, "Völkerschauen und ihre Vorläufer," footnote 56.

<sup>137</sup> Thode-Arora, *Für fünfzig Pfennig um die Welt*, 129-130 and Corbey, "Ethnographic Showcases," 348.

<sup>138</sup> Kocks, *Indianer im Kaiserreich*.

With the new emphasis on scientific and educational standards the shows claimed for themselves, the “exhibits” were expected to conform to those standards. To the dismay of the more critical scholars, some of the exhibits sometimes did not “behave” according to the ethnological data that had been collected and had been deemed “bullet proof.”<sup>139</sup> They especially lamented the practice of formulating conclusions about the foreigners’ character by judging them on the basis of their physical appearance. Even though this was the custom according to most of the pseudo-scientific research practices of the time, Virchow criticized the loose application of these theories, which often led to a manipulation of data or hasty conclusions in order to fit the stereotype. Virchow in particular was a known and feared “nagger” and often re-examined the “objects,” only to find deviations from the scientific convictions formed earlier.<sup>140</sup> A telling incident for the importance of the exhibits to conform to expectations is the presentation of the “Hopi Death Song,” which was performed in December of 1906 by a group of Hopi Indians for listeners at the Circus Schumann in Berlin. It was considered so significant that the Berlin Society for Anthropology requested a special appearance before three hundred of its members. According to Pamela Kort, it was not until 1963 that “ethnomusicologists discovered that such funeral chants had no foundation in Hopi culture: the Hopi, in a classic example of catering to the wishes and expectations of their audience, consciously staged the very cultural fantasies that they were supposed to naively embody.”<sup>141</sup>

Even though the organizers increasingly stressed the educational character of the shows, it is perhaps safe to say that the motives of ordinary people for visiting these

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

<sup>140</sup> Oettermann, “Völkerschauen und ihre Vorläufer,” 99.

<sup>141</sup> Pamela Kort, “The Unmastered Past of the Indians’ Murder,” in: Pamela Kort and Max Hollein (eds.), *I Like America. Fictions of the Wild West* (Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt: Prestel, 2006), 44-67, 53.

shows remained fairly unchanged: they were still seeking the thrill of the exotic while maintaining distance from these strange peoples. The new scientific theories can possibly even help explain some of the attitudes of show visitors: the spectator most likely was reassured in his own evolutionary status of self and other through the ordering of the species on an evolutionary scale. This ordering seems to accomplish three goals: it provides a scientific explanation for one's status and civility over others that takes guilt out of the equation. Second, it re-emphasizes the geographic distance between the strangers and oneself by stressing the effect of the environment on appearance, customs, and habits. Lastly, it also creates a "time-gap," a temporal distance, between the onlooker and the specimen: while the spectators' race has already undergone the evolutionary changes that advanced them to the top of the evolutionary ladder, the "wild people" are still at the bottom, they are in a way a part of the past, like ancestors, that need a lot of time still to climb that ladder. Initially, these convictions must have helped to soften the blow of the awesomeness and the shock of encountering the other. Such "coping strategies" were probably not available to the exhibited "specimens," who must have endured tremendous stress and fear in the face of the strange new worlds they encountered.

Furthermore, despite the numerous claims of the organizers about the scientific importance of their shows, the content remained primarily driven by financial factors rather than by educational motives. The main revenue still came from the ordinary people who wanted to be entertained more than educated. The fact that the shows were considered more respectable since they were regarded as educational certainly eased some visitor's reservations about the moral correctness of the exhibits, but only a

minority probably decided to visit the shows because of these claims only. The oscillation between entertainment and *Bildung* provided the spectators an attractive mix of intellectual stimulation without sacrificing thrill and excitement.

The reasons why ethnographic shows took longer to take a hold of German audiences compared to England are complex. After the founding of the German Reich in 1871, its citizens only slowly began to identify themselves as Germans, holding onto their scattered, regional identities. Thus, the surge of national pride and the realization of the importance of nationality happened much later in Germany than in other European countries. Only with the unification of the many nation-states did national stereotypes and the new idea that the nation carries the history begin to take root.<sup>142</sup> Furthermore, it also became increasingly important to define the nation against others geographically, linguistically, and ideologically.

Germany had been one of the most unmotivated nations in Europe to acquire colonies, and even after unification in 1871 under Chancellor Bismarck, colonialism only played a minor role.<sup>143</sup> Kaiser Wilhelm II was more eager to expand German influence across the globe, and the era between the 1890s and World War I was accompanied by a somewhat quixotic-expansionistic policy along with increased armament, especially of

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<sup>142</sup> Kocks, *Indianer im Kaiserreich*, 9.

<sup>143</sup> The lack of enthusiasm for colonialism in Germany has been noted by many. See for example Woodruff D. Smith, *The German Colonial Empire* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), Woodruff D. Smith, "Colonialism and Colonial Empire," in Roger Chickering, ed., *Imperial Germany: A Historiographic Companion* (Westport, Conn., and London: Greenwood Press, 1996), and David Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany, 1780-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 335. Only in 1884 did Bismarck (if hesitantly) give official protection to the properties of German traders in Africa. There was some public pressure in Germany to acquire colonies just like the other European nations in order to remain a viable power in Europe. Hans Ulrich Wehler, one of the foremost scholars on German Imperialism, has suggested that Bismarck agreed to acquire colonies in order to channel social tensions to Africa in the classic "safety valve" style. Bismarck seemed to have regarded the colonies more as a political hassle than an asset, and he in fact bargained quite a few of the German possessions away in order to improve relationships with other European powers.

the German Navy. Wilhelm II and his Chancellor von Bülow (1900) propagated the necessity of colonies for the “late-comer nation” and Germany’s right to occupy a “place in the sun.”<sup>144</sup> Only a few colonies were actually acquired and stayed in German possession until after World War I. Vast expenditures and wars with the natives of the regions spoiled the initial enthusiasm, and the Versailles Treaty put an end to it for good.

However, pro-colony propaganda still inspired many to dream about the possibilities. The exhibits of foreign people in Germany certainly played into such fantasies, but on the other hand also gained a good deal of their popularity from such tendencies. Since “the supply of natives closely followed the colonial conquests,” Germany had a slow start but eventually picked up on the connection between ethnographic exhibits and colonialism with much fervor.<sup>145</sup> In fact, Stephan Oettermann argued that even though they also existed in England, France, and the United States, ethnographic exhibits were predominantly a German phenomenon, exactly due to the fact that they peaked at a point in time in German history when the demand for colonies was highest.<sup>146</sup> The fact that many exhibits purposefully resembled a (military) review of colonialism demonstrates this point further. This is especially true for Buffalo Bill’s *Wild West*, which was augmented in 1891 by the “Congress of Rough Riders of the World” and increasingly emphasized military preparedness. The ethnographic exhibits thus “functioned in a context of European hegemony, testifying to the successful imperialist

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<sup>144</sup> This phrase, uttered by Chancellor von Bülow on Dec. 6, 1897 in a speech to the Reichstag, became an instant catchphrase. Von Bülow said: “In one word: we do not want to overshadow anybody, but we also demand a place in the sun.”

<sup>145</sup> Corbey, “Ethnographic Showcases,” 345.

<sup>146</sup> Oettermann, “Völkerschauen und ihre Vorläufer,” 94.

expansion of nineteenth-century nation-states and to the intricate connections that developed between scientific and political practices.”<sup>147</sup>

In addition, the fact that Germany was late and mostly unsuccessful in acquiring colonies might have also influenced science, more specifically the above described models of evolutionary race theory. Because there was no *direct* colonial contact with other races for such a prolonged period of time, there perhaps was less reason to classify as strictly and less need to validate one’s own position as there might have been in Great Britain with its extensive colonial reach, or in the United States that was struggling to justify the conquest of its Native American peoples. Germans were better able to romanticize and idealize the subjects of other countries’ conquests because first, they did not have any direct memories of bloody subjugation of those very people and secondly, did not need to demark themselves as strongly against them in a direct struggle by assigning positions on an evolutionary scale. In fact, Susanne Zantop argues that “precisely because they were not involved in current colonizing activity and had no apparent interest at stake, German readers were freer to assume the distanced, disinterested voice of the critic who discusses issues systematically and on principle. They engaged in international comparisons, in pitting colonial competitors against each other, in weighing the atrocities committed by others against the probity of the colonial onlooker.”<sup>148</sup>

However, the few efforts of colonization that Germany undertook initially found very positive reception among Germans, and the connections between colonialism and

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<sup>147</sup> Corbey, “Ethnographic Showcases,” 338.

<sup>148</sup> Susanne Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies. Conquest, Family and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770-1870* (Durham: Duke UP, 1997), 38-39.

evolutionary theory were widely acknowledged. As early as 1885, the German magazine *Deutsche Familienzeitschrift Daheim* commented on the anthropological display at the Berlin Panoptikum of a group of Zulus: “now that Africa and German colonial politics are intimately intertwined, [the inhabitants of Zululand] arouse the interest even of such people who formerly believed that Africa’s only purpose was to fill the expanses of the globe. However, now it is the duty of the Berliner to seize up the specimens from the black continent in order to see how it might be possible to later coexist with this colonial brother.”<sup>149</sup> The audience acted as the prospective colonial ruler in examining potential servants, farm workers, and enemies, who were purposefully displayed in a primitive manner. Considered a “lower species,” they were seen as the “objects of future administrative, tactical, missionary or pedagogic measures.” The magazine continues, after a description of the difficult task of kindling a fire with a spindle: “such waste of energy and time... will soon come to an end there. To prophesy this along with other things does not require much effort or secret knowledge. This all will change as soon as the Zulus become our colonial brothers.”<sup>150</sup> Many contemporaries would have found a popular phrase in Germany at the time appropriate in context with the uncivilized people on display: “by the German spirit the world shall be healed.”<sup>151</sup>

This description is rather astonishing in its almost positive portrayal of black Africans, given the fact that only a couple of decades earlier, the public opinion of black Africans had been almost entirely opposite. The negative reactions to black Africans

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<sup>149</sup> Oettermann, “Völkerschauen und ihre Vorläufer,” 94.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> The original quote, “am deutschen Wesen soll die Welt genesen,” is from a poem of Emanuel Geibel, a nineteenth-century romantic lyricist. The message was later taken up by conservatives and nationalists like Kaiser Wilhelm and his contemporaries and by the Nazi movement. It exemplifies Germany’s global ambitions in terms of colonization, and later domination.

were based on deeply seated stereotypes of barbarity and primitivism, and fueled by “the stubborn and often bloody resistance of several African peoples toward the European expansion in Africa, which was covered extensively by the European press.... In the eyes of many Germans, a black African was some sort of savage monster.” In fact, the more an “indigenous people resisted colonization, the more ferocity its representatives had to display when staged,” and “France consciously played on such fears in the French-German war of 1870-71 by putting black *tirailleurs indigenes* [indigenous marksmen] trained in Algeria to use against German troops.”<sup>152</sup> However, just a few decades later, these fears seemed to have lost some of their hold on the German public, which indicates that colonialist aspirations, mixed with perhaps a somewhat magnanimous attitude towards the more primitive peoples of the world, were so strong that they overpowered even the fear and derision that Germans had had for Africans for decades.<sup>153</sup>

Even though not a linear process or easy transition, the structural change and diversification of entertainment at the turn of the century marks the adaptation of leisure time activities to a new, industrial world.<sup>154</sup> This shift can also be noted in the physical makeup of cities. With industry becoming more established and stable (meaning less moving exhibits, institutionalized forms of entertainment and more freedom from the law), the venues moved from the worker-heavy areas to the inner cities, to better neighborhoods and shopping districts. In many instances, they moved across the railroad

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<sup>152</sup> Corbey, “Ethnographic Showcases,” 346.

<sup>153</sup> For a more detailed discussion about colonialism and the image of black Africans in Germany see David Ciarlo, *Advertising Empire: Race and Visual Culture in Imperial Germany* (Harvard University Press, 2011).

<sup>154</sup> Mathilde Jamin with Lisa Kosok, “Das Vergnügen durchschaubar machen. Überlegungen zur Ausstellung.“ In: Oettermann, *Studien zur Geschichte der Vergnügungskultur*, 12. See also Kosak, “Die Ordnung des Vergnügens,” 278.



tracks that separated different classes of society. They now catered to a more sophisticated set of tastes, and the first movie theaters consolidated this trend.<sup>155</sup> In fact, an important feature that was specific to Germany in the context of the exhibiting of foreign peoples is the fact that the entertainment industry seemed to have been able to overcome most class distinctions, perhaps more so there than in any other country in Europe. It seems that German society was less rigidly separated than for instance France or England, and thus people were able to mingle at the exhibits much more openly and without a strong class-consciousness. It is speculative whether this is connected to the structure of German society as a whole, or to the way the exhibits of foreign peoples were arranged and advertised to the people, but in the end it seems that in the face of foreign peoples all Germans felt more equal.<sup>156</sup>

The emergence and impact of *Völkerschauen* on German culture and their effect on German perceptions of self and other is difficult to overstate. An estimated 400 such shows toured Germany in the sixty years of their popularity, and given the fact that each show traveled extensively and visited ten to twelve locations each demonstrates the visibility and popularity of these shows even further. Some of the favorite locations for the shows were still the fairgrounds, where they appeared in conjunction with other events. This is a practice that Buffalo Bill also followed whenever he could. For example, *Völkerschauen* were shown on the grounds of the Munich Oktoberfest since 1876, and Buffalo Bill's *Wild West* appeared there in 1890. It also performed at the "Freimarkt" of Bremen, a successful, popular fair that continues today. Other locations for such events were the Vogelwiese in Dresden and the Christmas Market in Hamburg.

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<sup>155</sup> Kosok, "Die Ordnung des Vergnügens," 279-282.

<sup>156</sup> Oettermann speculates on this as well, "Völkerschauen und ihre Vorläufer," 7.

The 1870s and Hagenbeck's involvement changed the quality and character of the shows significantly because of new technological means of transport and staging, and a reframing of the shows in more scientific terms. Germans were not simply fascinated with the exotic, but increasingly absorbed and assimilated notions of "others" into their mind map. This facilitated the mythologization and romanticization of the Noble Savage and the American West in general, which will be discussed in the next chapter.



**Image 5:** Karl Hagenbeck.



**Image 6:** German Postcard, Hagenbeck's Singalese Exhibit.

## CHAPTER 3

### Indians and the American West in the German Imagination and on Stage

For centuries, the idea of a mythical Elysium to the West has influenced European thought, a place where “the condition of men would be profoundly altered, for there nature’s bounty was endless, happiness was certain, and death was banished forever.”<sup>157</sup> The composite vision of a mythical West as a land of laughter, peace, and life, of eternity, happiness, and millennialism, developed over time and became a staple in European thought. As Gerald Nash notes, “the exact location of this land, whether it was designated as Elysium, Eden, or the Isle of Women, engaged the attention of sailors as well as poets, who often placed it in a westerly location.” Reports of sailors who supposedly had found the Garden of Eden in a distant location fueled those ideas: stories of gentle climates and an abundance in crops, well-fertilized soil that could be planted without much labor and yielded bountiful harvests, and utopian ideas about happiness and ease inspired the dreams of many of what other blessings might be found in the West throughout the subsequent centuries.<sup>158</sup> (In fact, statements like this can also be found in the booster literature about the American West in the nineteenth century.)<sup>159</sup>

This idea of a paradise in the West became a staple in the imaginary worlds of all European nations, and later also in the United States. By the nineteenth century, Henry David Thoreau readily identified the West with freedom: “Eastward I go only by force,”

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<sup>157</sup> Loren Baritz, “The Idea of the West,” *American Historical Review*, 66 (April 1961), 618-19.

<sup>158</sup> One of the most influential reports of such conditions was Plutarch’s description of Sertorius, who supposedly had met sailors who described such a paradise. It was believed to be the Elysian Plains that Homer had celebrated.

<sup>159</sup> An excellent study of booster literature is David Wrobel’s *Promised Lands. Promotion, Memory, and the Creation of the American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002).

he noted. “But westward I go free.... That way the nation is moving, and I may say that mankind progresses from east to west.”<sup>160</sup> Ultimately, “the vision of the West as an earthly manifestation of God’s kingdom in heaven” was a powerful concept that became increasingly popular and mainstream and was not just a part of a religious utopia but permeated mainstream thinking about the West. Nash further argues that another strand of the myth “revolved about the concept of the destiny of nations, a notion that the sword must be taken westward. From ancient Troy to Greece to Elizabethan England, ‘westward the course of empire takes its way.’” This phrase sounds familiar in an American context as well, and indeed, the “emphasis on one or the other of these strands varied as they suited the purposes of those who made use of the idea of the West, whether as a concept or a direction, or both.”<sup>161</sup>

The fantasy about the West became especially strong again during the settlement period of the American continent. The hopes of finding an Elysium, a paradise on earth, spread not only among Americans, but found its way into the dreams of Europeans, who were eager to nourish it with new stories. This longing is reflected in the extensive literature about the subsequent American Wests that was published throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as in art and the intense preoccupation in Germany with everything Western, and especially Native American. In fact, Europe began a literary love affair with the Indian in the nineteenth century and used the American West as a self-reflecting mirror. Often freely mixing facts and fiction, writers and travelers produced thousands of books and reports, which reflected the idea that

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<sup>160</sup> Gerald Nash, “European Image of America: The West in Historical Perspective,” in *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, Vol. 42. No.2, The European’s American West (Spring, 1992), 2-16, 5-6.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

America was a utopia that was formed in peoples' minds just as much as (or even more than) in reality.

The printed materials related to the United States, the West, and the Indian significantly shaped German culture, politics, and philosophy, which in turn influenced Germany's interactions with the United States. A major contributor to the expanding knowledge about Indians and the West was the German publishing industry, which quickly became one of the most developed in Europe. It disseminated a large amount of Americana, and, according to F. Sixel, thus "performed a compensatory role for the limited German involvement in the colonial enterprise."<sup>162</sup> Germans were frequently exposed to conceptions about Indians that consisted of a mingling of fact and fiction drawn from reality as well as dramatic travel narratives and legends. These were reprinted in variations and fueled the German imagination.

Whereas the majority of Germans had to content themselves with the traveling ethnographic exhibits and later *Völkerschauen*, America, with its myths and the promise it held for Germans, became a popular destination for the nobility and the wealthy to travel to and explore. When they returned home, these travelers, missionaries, explorers, and others usually published their experiences, which greatly added to the genre of travel literature. As early as 1780, a German translation of Jonathan Carver's *Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America in the Year 1766, 1767, and 1768* appeared. Carver, an American citizen, had traveled through present-day Wisconsin, Minnesota, and the Lakes region shortly after the war against the French and the first British expedition into that area. His journal was first published in 1778 in London, and greatly "enhanced" by

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<sup>162</sup> Weber, *Indians on German Stages*, 27.

his editor with plagiarized passages from French travelers Louis Armand, Baron de Lahontan, and Louis Hennepin.<sup>163</sup> Nevertheless, it was a very influential work and inspired Friedrich Schiller to write “Nadowessiers Totenlied” in 1797 on the basis of Carver’s descriptions.<sup>164</sup>

Anglo-American just as much as European writers quickly discovered the Indian as a national topos that appealed to a broad group of readers, especially in Europe. Carver’s report described the Indian in both positive and negative terms. On the one hand, he acknowledged their pride, hospitality, strength and endurance and natural intelligence. On the other hand, he noted that their religious ideas are superstitions, lamented their ways of war and the brutality of conflict, and the laziness of the men and exploitation of women.<sup>165</sup> In an attempt to highlight the negative aspects of civilization, such as American materialism and European corruption, he emphasized the opposites in Indian life, the fact that they did not believe in the concept of private property but instead shared everything, and that they were “innocent” and had a harmonious relationship with nature from which they live, or better, lived until they were “spoiled” through contact with white civilization. These same topics of harmony, natural nobility, and the degrading influences of civilization repeat themselves in variations throughout the literature of the next two centuries.

One of the most significant German travel writers was Maximilian Prinz zu Wied-Neuwied, a German aristocratic explorer, naturalist, and ethnographer, who traveled to the United States in the early 1830s to collect and record the flora and fauna and to

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<sup>163</sup> <http://www.americanjourneys.org/aj-127/summary/index.asp>, retrieved 04/14/2011.

<sup>164</sup> Kocks, *Indianer im Kaiserreich*, 14.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

encounter those Indian tribes that lived west of the Missouri and traded furs with the American Fur Company. Following the example of Alexander von Humboldt, he contributed significantly to the corpus of botany, zoology and ethnography through his travels and his numerous publications. Most importantly, he was accompanied on his trip to the United States by the Swiss painter Karl Bodmer, who sketched almost 400 illustrations of plants, animals, and Indian life. The Prince chose eighty-six Bodmer sketches to be printed in his travel report, which was published in Germany between 1839 and 1841 under the title *Reise in das Innere Nord-America in den Jahren 1832 bis 1834*.<sup>166</sup> The report provides valuable ethnographic descriptions of Indian items and ceremonies and is an important ethnographic source especially about the Mandan and Hidatsa. Today, the paintings and travel report are among the most important works documenting the Indian cultures of the Missouri River.<sup>167</sup> Bodmer's illustrations have significantly influenced the German reception of Indians, and they have served as a prototype for innumerable adaptations in photography, advertisement and movies. They have become a part of the visual corpus of western civilization and tremendously influenced German opinion about North America.

George Catlin's paintings were another major influence on the *visual* representation of Native Americans. Catlin's ambition was to capture the Indians on canvas before they disappeared. He had traveled extensively in the West, visited over

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<sup>166</sup> It was translated into French in 1840-43 and English in 1843-44 (*Maximilian Prince of Wied's Travels in the Interior of North America, during the years 1832 – 1834*). See Stephen S. Witte, Marsha V. Gallagher (eds.), *The North American Journals of Prince Maximilian of Wied. Volume I: May 1832-April 1833* (Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, NE, 2008).

<sup>167</sup> The plates and 386 drawings and aquarelles, together with the written works by Prince Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied, are located at the *Joslyn Art Museum* in Omaha, Nebraska and at the *Newberry Library Bodmer Collection* in Chicago.



seventy tribes, and eventually made over 600 paintings. When his efforts to sell his collection to the American government failed, he put together an exhibit of his paintings and started to travel the U.S. and eventually also several European capitals, including London, Brussels, and Paris, between 1839 and 1848. As a showman and entrepreneur, he attracted crowds to his Indian Gallery, who were mesmerized by his capturing of the proud character and noble expression of the depicted Indians. His exhibit was one of the earlier ethnographic exhibits that traveled Europe, and in 1843 he augmented his painting exhibit with the addition of a group of fourteen Iowa Indians to liven up his lectures.<sup>168</sup> In Paris, he was even granted an audience with King Louis-Philippe and his collection was displayed at the Louvre.<sup>169</sup> Catlin lived in Europe for nearly forty years and published several travel narratives and other writings. After his death, almost his entire collection was donated to the Smithsonian, fulfilling his dream and preserving for posterity this astounding visual representation of Native American life and culture in the nineteenth century. Even though Catlin's Indian Gallery did not tour Germany, his images spread to Germany and, just like Bodmer's paintings and prints, significantly influenced the German visions and stereotypes of Indians.<sup>170</sup> It is important to mention in this context that Catlin's and Bodmer's works coined the image of Indians as Plains Indians, an image that has persisted until today.

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<sup>168</sup> The Indians had first come to London with P. T. Barnum.

<sup>169</sup> Catlin toured France, England, and Belgium.

<sup>170</sup> For a deeper analysis of Catlin and his Indian Gallery, see Brian Dippie, *Catlin and His Contemporaries: The Politics of Patronage* (Lincoln, London, 1990). See also Christopher Mulvey, "Among the Sag-A-Noshes: Ojibwa and Iowa Indians with George Catlin in Europe, 1843-48." In: Feest, Christian (ed.) *Indians and Europe. An Interdisciplinary Collection of Essays* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 253-276.

In the nineteenth century, a slew of travel reports renewed the Germans' interest in the American frontier.<sup>171</sup> The genre grew not only in volume but also in variety of purpose and emphasis. This new phase of travel reports did not specifically focus on ethnographic or otherwise overly scientific descriptions, but was written with the intention to capture a wider audience of readers. Adventure, hardship of travel, and wonder and astonishment are the main tropes. There are those reports that mostly concentrate on giving advice to German emigrants, there are simple travel descriptions, descriptions of encounters with Indian cultures and with American life in general, and some accounts were highly dramatized.<sup>172</sup> Furthermore, the reports reflect that there was at least one German travel enthusiast present wherever there was something special to see: from the California Gold Rush to the first rail trip with the Northern Pacific to the

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<sup>171</sup> For a complete list of travel reports of Germans to the United States, see Christoph Strupp and Birgit Zischke, *German Americana 1800-1955. Reference Guide 18* (Washington, DC: German Historical Institute, 2005), especially pp. 189-229. The following reports and citations are taken from this volume.

<sup>172</sup> For travel descriptions: *Californien und das Goldfieber: Reisen in dem wilden Westen Nord-Amerikas; Leben und Sitten der Goldgräber, Mormonen und Indianer den Gebildeten des deutschen Volkes gewidmet* (Berlin: T. Thiele, 1863). Richard Oberländer, *Von Ozean zu Ozean: Kulturbilder und Naturschilderungen aus dem Fernen Westen von Amerika; nach eigenen Beobachtungen und Reisestudien* (Leipzig; Berlin: O. Spamer, 1885). Josef Huber and Josef Schmidlin, *Erlebnisse zweier Luzerner als Bürger und Soldaten in den Vereinigten Staaten und Indianer-Territorien von Nord-Amerika 1865–1869* (Luzern: Schill, 1888 [2nd ed. 1890]). Ph. Samhammer, *Beobachtungen in den Vereinigten Staaten Nordamerikas: Reise, Sitten und Gebräuche, die Krisis von 1893* (Sonneberg: Albrecht, 1894). Gottfried Duden, *Bericht über eine Reise nach den westlichen Staaten Nordamerika's und einem mehrjährigen Aufenthalt am Missouri (in den Jahren 1824, 25, 26 und 1827), in Bezug auf Auswanderung und Übervölkerung, oder: Das Leben im Innern der Vereinigten Staaten und dessen Bedeutung für die häusliche und politische Lage der Europäer, dargestellt a) in einer Sammlung von Briefen, b) in einer besonderen Abhandlung über den politischen Zustand der nordamerikanischen Freistaaten, und c) in einem rathgebenden Nachtrage für auswandernde deutsche Ackerwirthe und Diejenigen welche auf Handelsunternehmungen denken* (Elberfeld: S. Lucas, 1829 [Neuauf. St. Gallen: Bureau des Freimüthigen, 1832—2. Aufl. Bonn: Weber, 1834]). See in this context also: Gustav Körner, *Beleuchtung des Dudenschen Berichtes über die westlichen Staaten Nordamerika's, von Amerika aus /Schilderung des gegenwärtigen Zustandes der westlichen Staaten Nordamerika's: Ein Schriftchen für den gebildeten Auswanderer* (Frankfurt/M.: Körner, 1834).

Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, the German public was bound to read about it in a travel account.<sup>173</sup>

The scientific reports like Wied's and the scholarly accounts of other travel writers that described landscape, habits, and customs of both Americans and Indians often did not find the wide circulation that they certainly deserved. The reason was that scholarly publications such as these were often inaccessible to a wider reading public because they were either too expensive or specifically written for a peer-group of scholars. The public yearned for more variety in genres, and found it in the more affordable and more easily digestible publications such as novels, dime novels, and periodicals that also began to thrive at this time.

It is important to note in this context that European and American literature of this period naturally did not stop at national borders, but quickly found itself translated and devoured all across Europe and the United States. The literary products originating in England, France, Germany, and the United States cannot be thought of as separate entities but instead cross-fertilized each other and gained new ideas, genres, and concepts

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<sup>173</sup> Nicolaus Mohr, *Ein Streifzug durch den Nordwesten Amerikas: Festfahrt zur Northern Pacific-Bahn im Herbst 1883* (Berlin: Oppenheim, 1884). Karl Böttcher, *Chicago!: Weltausstellungs-Briefe* (Leipzig: Friedrich, 1893). Gustav Ebermayer, Georg Ehrne von Melchthal, und Valentin Zehnder, *Bericht über eine im Auftrage der königlich bayerischen Staatsregierung ausgeführte Reise nach Nordamerika und zur Columbischen Weltausstellung in Chicago vom 30. Mai bis 5. August 1893* (München: Wolf, 1894). See also: *Beilagen zum Bericht über eine im Auftrage der königlich bayerischen Staatsregierung ausgeführte Reise nach Nordamerika und zur Columbischen Weltausstellung in Chicago vom 30. Mai bis 5. August 1893* (München: Wolf, 1894). Hermann Götz, *Meine Reise nach Chicago und die Kolumbische Weltausstellung* (Darmstadt: Koch, 1894). Max Quentin, *Quer durch Nord-Amerika und die Welt-Ausstellung in Chicago: Tagebuchblätter* (Detmold: Meyer, 1894). Eduard Ruscheweyh, *Die uniformierten deutschen Kapellen (Garde-Infanterie und Garde du Corps) auf der Weltausstellung in Chicago 1893: Ihre Reisen, Aufnahme, Erlebnisse in den Vereinigten Staaten von Nord-Amerika* (Pforzheim: Haug, 1895). See also Friedrich Gerstäcker, *Narrative of a Journey Round the World: Comprising a Winter-Passage Across the Andes to Chile, with a Visit to the Gold Regions of California and Australia, the South Sea Islands, Java, &c.* (new edition, Nabu Press, 2010).

through this process. Consequently, German literature must be seen in this broader European context.<sup>174</sup> Therefore, this chapter discusses the pertinent international literature as well as the specifically German trends that provide clues about the national culture, which in the end helps to better understand the fascination with Indians and everything Western that is portrayed so prominently in the *Wild West* show.

The literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is split between two contrasting depictions of Native Americans: that of the Noble and the Ignoble Savage. Writers who chose the side of the noble savage often also contrasted the purity, freedom and compassion of the noble savage with the cruelty, debauchery and anarchy of “civilized” societies and attributed to the Indians the highest moral values and chivalry. (This reference to the Indians as chivalrous was of course connected to Europe’s past of knights and chivalry, which did not go unnoticed). Authors used the noble savage concept to criticize Europe’s decadence and stress the fact that this Indian lifestyle came naturally to a people who had never experienced any form of oppression. However, the notion that they were about to be made extinct by the evil forces of civilization shone through very strongly as well, and thus it also evoked emotions of sympathy and regret. These emotions were quickly discovered as a new device by authors to draw their readers in. As Ray Allen Billington argued, right at the time of the re-emergence of the noble savage theme, a new literary form was also emerging: the Romantic novel. It was “ideally designed to glorify frontier life, depending as it did on fast-paced action and rampaging adventure.” The favorite noble savage of the romantic writers was the tragically dying warrior, who was killed by the forces of white progress of some form. An example of the

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<sup>174</sup> An example for these cross-fertilizations is for example Karl May’s *Winnetou* series. It was widely read in France and translated into over forty languages.

strength of this theme is *Nadowessiers Totenlied*, (*Nadowessier's Death Song*) written by Friedrich Schiller in 1797 and inspired by Jonathan Carver's travels.

The image of the Ignoble Savage was also perpetuated in the popular genre of captivity narratives that portrayed the Indian as ravaging "reincarnations of the Wild Men of medievalism."<sup>175</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century and with the increasing settlement of the American West and a simultaneous expansion of knowledge about circumstances and conditions there, the conflict between white settlers and Indians became much more real and better known in Europe and fed the image of the Indian as a bloodthirsty and dangerous adversary. These tropes were increasingly assimilated into novels, which served as the "principal avenues for the armchair adventurers of Europe to learn of the American West."<sup>176</sup> The novelists of this century were numerous and from all different parts of the world, but united in their interest in the American West and by their role as the group of image makers that was the least restrained by reality.

One of the first among these was James Fenimore Cooper, who is considered to be the first true American novelist. He created a distinctly American type, a hunter and trapper who lived at the frontier, or the edge of civilization. His most popular work, *The Last of the Mohicans*, has remained one of the most widely read novels throughout the world, and along with the other four novels that make up *The Leatherstocking Tales* has tremendously impacted the way many view both the American Indians and the frontier period of American history.<sup>177</sup> The novels are notable for several reasons: the vast

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<sup>175</sup> Ray Allan Billington, *Land of Savagery, Land of Promise. The European Image of the American Frontier* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1981), 26.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>177</sup> The titles in the *Leatherstocking* series are *The Pioneers* (1823), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), *The Prairie* (1827), *The Pathfinder* (1840) and *The Deerslayer* (1841).

American continent, for the first time, is not only the setting for the action but provides significant meaning to the plot. Cooper saw in the wilderness a place in which virtue and talents could emerge to prominence over inherited wealth or position. He shared this perception with both Frederick Jackson Turner and William Cody, who postulated almost a century later the distinctly American character of the frontiersmen that was forged in the trials and tribulations of the rugged West. Cooper furthermore stressed that the wilderness is “a refuge from the class ordering and potential strife that marred civilization—a place in which talent could rise above birth without necessity of revolution or even litigation.”<sup>178</sup> He thus reiterated the theme of corruption through civilization and rehabilitation in the wilderness, as well as the fact that the American wilderness was inherently democratic by offering everybody the chance for success, no matter what their origin. This dualism that Cooper describes, the conflict between wilderness and the civilizations Americans were establishing, became a central theme in literature and a crucial reason for the popularity of his stories in Europe.

Cooper’s determination to portray Native Americans in a positive, balanced, and realistic light as noble savages is one of the first and strongest idealizations of Indians in American novels. His romanticized image of the strong, fearless, and ever resourceful frontiersman Natty Bumppo as well as the stoic, wise, and noble “red man” Chingachgook were born more from Cooper’s imagination than any other source, but it hit a nerve with his countrymen and a worldwide audience.<sup>179</sup> In tune with the dichotomy

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<sup>178</sup> Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment. The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization 1800-1890* (New York: Atheneum, 1985), 96.

<sup>179</sup> Cooper might have been inspired by the reports of a monk of the order of the “Mährische Brüder,” which originated in Germany. His tribe names, the description of funerals, characterizing the Delaware and Iroquois as noble and bloodthirsty, the metaphoric language, and alcoholism as topics for his writings

between noble and ignoble savage, the Indians in his stories are portrayed as either inherently good or abysmally evil; however, most of them (except for the main characters) remain rather an anonymous mass. In *The Last of the Mohicans*, Uncas, the son of Chingachgook and the last of his tribe, is supernaturally good, whereas Magua (who ultimately kills him) is profoundly evil and cunning. The good Indians demonstrate very positive character traits: they are described by Cooper as noble, proud, self-assured, stoic, eloquent, brave, they respect their elders, and are skilled hunters. On the contrary, the evil Indians are driven by instinct alone, bloodthirsty, sadistic, cunning, and ugly. (In fact, physical appearance and character traits go hand in hand in Cooper's novels, just as they did for many of the spectators of the *Völkerschauen*). These generic descriptions of "good" and "bad" Indians can be found in a myriad of later novels as well as Buffalo Bill's *Wild West* and Karl May's Western stories.

In the romantic traditions, Cooper laments the demise of the Indian, but also still sees them as an inferior race whose fate is inevitable in the face of progress. This resonated strongly with his readers in both the US and Europe, since it touched on contemporary concerns about racial superiority, the justification of conquest, and the nostalgic longings for a simpler life in the past. However, the belligerent character of the relationship between Indians and Americans should not be disregarded either. As Richard Slotkin has put it, "Cooper makes two contributions to the mythologization of American history: he puts the Indian and the matter of racial character at the center of his consideration of moral questions, and he represents the historical process as essentially a

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resemble those of John Heckewelder's *Account of the History, Manners and Customs of the Indian Nations who once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighboring States*, which was published in 1819 and in a German translation in 1821. See also Kocks, *Indianer im Kaiserreich*, 16.

violent one.” He further contended that “if two races come together in the same environment, competition between them is inevitable, accommodation unlikely, and the elimination of one or the other logically necessary for there to be social peace.” Thus, Slotkin argued for a natural hostility between Indians and whites, a frame Cody employed for the dramatic aspects of his *Wild West*.<sup>180</sup>

As simplistic and stereotypical as it may appear today, the classification of the Indians into Noble and Ignoble Savage demonstrated to readers that there were on the one hand bad Indians who were ugly, evil adversaries and could justifiably be killed by their white counterparts; on the other hand, Indians could also be wise, brave, and valuable friends and allies, a theme that became especially strong and prevalent in German literature. Paired with the Romantic longings for an uncorrupted life in the wilderness that was such an integral part of German culture, Cooper’s Indian image and the untamed wilderness of the western part of the continent mesmerized the German audience. And even though Cooper’s Indians lived in the forests of the Northeast, their description was easily transferred to the Plains in order to match the already existing German stereotype of “real Indians.” Not surprisingly, then, the most influential of Cooper’s novels in Germany was *The Last of the Mohicans*, which was published in both the U.S. and Germany in 1826 and made Cooper one of the most popular authors in Germany throughout the nineteenth century. His influence on the German image of Native Americans and the American West cannot be overestimated; it was mostly Cooper who coined the initial image of the Indian in the German imagination. In fact, no other influence is mentioned more often in the newspapers during the appearance of the *Wild*

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<sup>180</sup> Slotkin. *Fatal Environment*, 88.



*West* show than Cooper's tales of Natty, Chingachgook, and Uncas and his descriptions of the wild western frontier.

Lastly, the *Leatherstocking Tales* already include many of the leitmotifs of the Western genre: on the one hand, there are the rugged individualists who long for freedom and rely only on their own skills and prowess in their efforts to blaze a path into the wilderness and live in harmony with nature. On the other hand, these very outsiders prepare the way for the advancement of civilization with its rules and restrictions that they originally wanted to escape from. Remarkably, as Billington noted, "Europeans saw Cooper as a realist who accurately portrayed the frontiersmen and Indians—a judgment that would astound modern readers."<sup>181</sup> Cooper created a specific type of narrative of the American West, whose characters today are staple figures of Western culture. Cody took these blueprints and integrated them into a specifically American form of entertainment, which derived a large part of its success from the similarities of its protagonists and settings from the Cooper model. Incidentally, there are several similarities even between Cody and Nattie Bumppo. Cody partially styled himself as the quintessential white American who embodied civilization, but could still live at the frontier and understand the way of the Indians.<sup>182</sup>

Another reason why Cooper's Indians and his settings resonated so strongly in Germany in particular can perhaps be found in the way Cooper constructed his Indian myth: according to Slotkin, Cooper united "the fragmentary history of the Indians into a single myth of origin, rise to grandeur, intermarriage, decline and fall," which echoes

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<sup>181</sup> Billington, *Land of Savagery, Land of Promise*. 31.

<sup>182</sup> Slotkin, *Fatal Environment*, 91.

“the cycle of civilizational rise and fall which was a major concept of contemporary historiography” and represented “a metaphorical rendering of the pattern of our own civilization, reinforcing the suggestion that in the Indian we see the primitive germ of our own character and fate.” As a result, the “Indian” joins what Slotkin calls a “grandfather race” such as the Teutons, Aryans, or Celts, who were viewed in similar ways as more morally and genetically pure than their more advanced descendants.<sup>183</sup> In fact, as Slotkin argues, this concept of civilizations ending in extinction “was part of the cyclical theory many racist historians accepted; and as the nineteenth century moved forward, this prophecy of racial mongrelization and extinction became the dominant theme of racist historiography.” The German creation myth as well as contemporary fears of over-civilization and loss of “natural” abilities neatly fit into this cycle and reinforced the impression that the “good” Indian was indeed very similar to the German and going through the same kinds of developments. Moreover, this noble savage was on the verge of extinction, which made it even more exciting and imperative to see him in Cody’s *Wild West* before it was too late.<sup>184</sup>

While Cooper and his *Leatherstocking Tales* were highly successful in imprinting a stereotypical and lasting prototype of Indians in Germans’ minds, European writers were also at work, some to reinforce those formulas, others to expand or change them. As noted earlier, literature produced in a country was quickly translated and read by an international audience, and the motif of the American West inspired writers across

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<sup>183</sup> Slotkin, *Fatal Environment*, 94. For a detailed discussion of Cooper and the myth of the West see especially chapter 5.

<sup>184</sup> See Patrick Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800-1930* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003).

Europe to write their own stories. Their novels can be considered the successors to the symbolic dramas that have fed the romantic dreams of Europeans from the dawn of their history. Mythological folk heroes such as Odysseus, Siegfried, and Thor who battled evil in the past were simply replaced by more contemporary heroes such as German and American settlers who battled Indians and wild beasts in the vast American West.

In France, the most influential Western writers were Gabriel Ferry and Gustave Aimard. Italians read Elilio Salfari, Norwegians read Rudolf Muus, and England counted Mayne Reid and Percy St. John among its western image makers. Austrians had their very own Karl Postl (who wrote under the pen name Charles Sealsfield), and in Germany the most famous writers were Balduin Möllhausen, Friedrich Gerstäcker, and Friedrich Armand Strubberg.<sup>185</sup> Concerned with repeating the success of Cooper but also confronted with the growing desire in Europe to be drawn into a heart-pounding adventure story while at the same time being presented with a “real” picture of life in the West, these authors became the principal image-makers for their country’s and Europe’s literate masses. Their purpose was less to lament the Indian plight or preach liberty, but to “attract readers with rousing tales plentifully spiced with bloodshed and violence.”<sup>186</sup>

Balduin Möllhausen is often acclaimed as “Germany's Cooper.” In 1849, he traveled to the United States and soon joined the expedition of Duke Paul Wilhelm of Württemberg in 1851 to explore the Rocky Mountain West. Between 1853 and 1857-1858, he traveled with the United States Army topographical engineers along the Colorado River. When he returned to Germany in 1858, he began to publish his travel

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<sup>185</sup> See Billington, *Land Of Savagery, Land of Promise*. See also Jeffrey L. Sammons, *Ideology, Mimesis, Fantasy: Charles Sealsfield, Friedrich Gerstäcker, Karl May and Other German Novelists of America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

<sup>186</sup> Billington, *Land Of Savagery, Land of Promise*, 38.

reports and eventually more than 150 books about the West and its idyllic characteristics.<sup>187</sup> Due to his extensive travel and his insistence that everything he had seen and observed was the truth, his accuracy and honesty were never doubted, and he became the best-read German writer in the 1860s and 1870s.<sup>188</sup> His main concern was to convey a riveting adventure story, but at the same time the armchair adventurer could also learn much about the West, its landscape, climate, and people. In addition to his novels, Möllhausen was also commissioned by the popular periodical *Die Gartenlaube* to write accompanying essays for Rudolf Friedrich Kurz' illustrations of "prairie fires, a war party, a buffalo hunt, mustangs, and the current state of the Indians along the Missouri."<sup>189</sup>

Friedrich Gerstäcker had also traveled the West and capitalized on his knowledge by publishing numerous travel reports and novels. For six years, between 1837 and 1843, he wandered about the West and experienced life as a hunter, among Indians, and supposedly even joined a vigilante posse. His novels and travel books appeared between 1846 and 1872 and idealized nature and its simple inhabitants. The spirit he reflected was well expressed in *Nach Amerika (To America)* (1855) in which he proclaimed: "To America! With those words they leave behind their old lives, their works, their creations,

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<sup>187</sup> Examples for his travel writings are Balduin Möllhausen, *Tagebuch einer Reise vom Mississippi nach den Küsten der Südsee: Eingeführt von Alexander von Humboldt* (Leipzig: Mendelssohn, 1858 [2nd ed.]). Balduin Möllhausen, *Wanderungen durch die Prairien und Wüsten des westlichen Nordamerika vom Mississippi nach den Küsten der Südsee: Im Gefolge der von der Regierung der Vereinigten Staaten unter Lieutenant Whipple ausgesandten Expedition*, 1860 (new ed., München: L. Borowsky, 1979), and Balduin Möllhausen, *Reisen in die Felsengebirge Nord-Amerikas bis zum Hoch-Plateau von Neu-Mexico: Unternommen als Mitglied der im Auftrage der Regierung der Vereinigten Staaten ausgesandten Colorado-Expedition* (Leipzig: O. Purfürst, 1860 [new edition, 2 vol., Leipzig: Costenoble, 1861]). His first novel is titled *Der Halbindianer (The Half-Breed)*, 1861. (As cited in Strupp and Zischke, *German Americana 1800-1955*).

<sup>188</sup> Nash, "European Image of America," 8, Billington, *Land Of Savagery, Land of Promise*, 39-40.

<sup>189</sup> Weber, *Indians on German Stages*, 41.

leave the ties of blood and friendship, leave the hopes that excite them, the cares that depress them. To America!” However, in the same vein of hope and excitement, his novels also warn the readers that emigrants often fall prey to immigration agents, land sharks, and speculators. Another trend in Gerstäcker’s novels was the glorification of vigilantism and lynch law, which was shocking to many Germans who typically still have considerable respect for the law. Thus, those who read Gerstäcker’s books could not only satisfy their adventurous side but also had their horizons broadened.

Friedrich Armand Strubberg roamed the West from 1826 to 1854 and gained particular knowledge of Texas due to his years there as an agent of German colonizers. In his more than sixty novels about the West, he developed his experiences into two main themes: that of the band of honest German immigrants who were cheated by land sharks but “survived by using their Teutonic talents to become skilled frontiersmen” which is reflected in his novel *Bis in die Wildnis (Into the Wilderness)* (1858), and the description of the “incredibly bloody battles between American troops and Seminole Indians” that is the topic of the five-volume *Ralph Norwood* series.<sup>190</sup> In a Cooperian fashion, *Ralph Norwood* presented a typical European view of Indians as noble savages in an idyllic land.<sup>191</sup> In addition, Strubberg also observed that the West was vibrant with youthful exuberance, and its virgin culture beckoned to Europeans who were “tortured by fate and hounded by their fellow men.”<sup>192</sup>

After Buffalo Bill and his entertainment had left Europe for the second time, German poet Franz Kafka summarized the desire of many Germans to “become an

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<sup>190</sup> Billington, *Land Of Savagery, Land of Promise*, 38.

<sup>191</sup> Nash, “European Image of America,” 8.

<sup>192</sup> See Billington, *Land Of Savagery, Land of Promise*, 73-78.

Indian” and enjoy the freedom that was imagined to accompany such a lifestyle. His poem “Wunsch, Indianer zu werden,” (“The Wish to Become Indian”) was first printed in 1913 and consists of only one sentence. It reinforces the strength of the romance with the Native American lifestyle as Germans imagined it.

Wenn man doch ein Indianer wäre, gleich bereit, und auf dem rennenden Pferde,  
schieß in der Luft, immer wieder kurz erzitterte über dem zitternden Boden, bis  
man die Sporen ließ, denn es gab keine Sporen, bis man die Zügel wegwarf, denn  
es gab keine Zügel, und kaum das Land vor sich als glattgemähte Heide sah,  
schon ohne Pferdehals und Pferdekopf.

If only one was an Indian, always ready, and on the galloping horse, crooked in the air, repeatedly shivering briefly above the quivering ground, until one let loose of the spurs because there were no spurs, until one threw away the reins because there were no reins, and barely saw the land in front of oneself like a flattened meadow, without the horse’s neck or the horse’s head.

A last and most important link between the *Wild West* show, the fascination with Native Americans, and German popular culture is Karl May, purportedly the most widely read German writer of all time. Even though the Wild West novels do not constitute the bulk of May’s writings, they are the best known of his works in our time.<sup>193</sup> The “Winnetou” trilogy that appeared between 1893 and 1910 has so profoundly shaped German culture that in a 2002 copyright case, the German Federal High Court [*Bundesgerichtshof*] even ruled that “Winnetou” is not a literary character anymore but the “name for a certain human type, that of the noble Indian chief.”<sup>194</sup>

May’s Western stories are centered on Old Shatterhand, a blond German adventurer and scout who gets his nickname through his boxing ability but at the same

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<sup>193</sup> Today, May is still widely popular in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Mexico, and even Indonesia. In contrast, he is virtually unknown in France, Great Britain, and the United States.

<sup>194</sup> Karl Markus Kreis, “German Wild West: Karl May’s Invention of the Definitive Indian.” In: Pamela Kort and Max Hollein (eds.), *I Like America. Fictions of the Wild West* (Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt: Prestel, 2006). 249-73; 271.

time incarnates the virtues of a good Christian who prefers mercy to murder, and Winnetou, a Mescalero Apache Chief who becomes Old Shatterhand's blood-brother. They traverse the West righting wrongs and thwarting evil. Winnetou eventually is murdered by Yankees lusting for buried Indian gold. The stories basically retell the old German myths about good vs. evil, transported to Arizona and Colorado, and are intricately imbued with Germanic elements. As Karl Markus Kreis has noted, Old Shatterhand and other positive characters in the stories "embody familiar traits in their origin and behavior: the stories are permeated with German figures, German associations of ideological or social nature—in short, the hero is always a conventional German in a conventional environment."<sup>195</sup> German-born frontiersmen sing German folk songs, use German expressions, and maintain German values.

Karl May identified so much with his creations that he claimed his stories were based on his own experiences, even though he had not been to America until later in his career. He compensated successfully for his lack of direct experience through a combination of creativity, imagination, and factual sources including maps, travel accounts and guide books, as well as anthropological and linguistic studies. He used detailed descriptions of geography, plants and animals, and Indian character, looks, and objects. May devoured and cannibalized the works of other Western writers, including Cooper, Gerstäcker, Möllhausen, and Mayne Reid and was thoroughly steeped in the Romantic ideal of the noble savage and the belief that all mankind should live together peacefully. His hopes and wishes were, in a sense, directed into the distance in an escapist attempt to create a better, more peaceful world in his novels. All of his main

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 254.

characters try to avoid killing anyone, except when necessary to save other lives and his Native Americans are usually portrayed as innocent victims of white law-breakers.

Winnetou first appeared in May's *Old Firehand* and in several other works between 1875 and 1893. With the publication of the *Winnetou* series starting in 1893, he became one of the most famous and admired characters in German literature. The timing of May's development of this character suggests that the cultural climate in Germany was susceptible to stories from the American West that featured Native Americans in the roles of heroes. Not unlike Cody, May was sensitive to these tendencies and fulfilled the demand. In his novels, May managed to unite and highlight all the stereotypes about Indians that had been forming in Germany for a century or so. Besides Buffalo Bill, he can be considered the single most important influence on German views of the American Indian. Furthermore, as Heribert von Feilitzsch noted, May "captured in his portrayal the sentiment of Germans living in a rapidly industrializing country. The traditional German attraction to nature and romanticism increased in a world which seemed to evolve into an increasingly sterile and cold environment." Feilitzsch added that in May's novels the reader could identify with the Native American who also faced the destruction of his living space, and for similar reasons: ruthless materialism."<sup>196</sup> Thus, May further honed the image of the Indian as a noble and dying race in Europe and fed the romantic images of the mythical American West. For example, May's opinion about the vanishing Indian comes through in the following: [the Battle of the Little Bighorn] was "the site of that desperate fight in which the Indian let fly his last arrow against the exponent of a bloodthirsty and reckless 'civilization.' ... At the beginning of the nineteenth century the

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<sup>196</sup> Heribert Freiherr Von Feilitzsch, "Karl May: The 'Wild West' as Seen in Germany," *Journal of Popular Culture* 27 (1993), 183.



‘Redskin’ was still master of the vast plains.... But then came the ‘Paleface,’ the White man, drove the ‘Red brother’ from his hunting grounds, but traditions will weave their golden gleam around the vanished warrior of the savanna, and the memory of the mortal sin committed against the brother will continue to live in the song of the poet.”<sup>197</sup> May’s novels had a tremendous influence on the way Germans perceived the American West and Native Americans, and May has to be considered one of the most significant molders of the German cultural perception of that region of the world.

Besides their home-grown writers, Germans also read the works of other European writers, and throughout Europe a vibrant market for Western-themed literature emerged that constantly demanded more fodder. The Western had created for itself a true niche by the beginning of the 1870s and only grew in popularity for generations to come. The variations of the standard themes—good and bad Indians, hopes and perils in the new world, the virtues of the settlers and their struggle to survive in a hostile yet often also beautiful and abundant environment—allowed Europeans to catch a glimpse of the supposedly “real” life at the American frontier, identify with the settlers, and feed their dreams of escaping and finding a better life for themselves.

German writers, just like their European counterparts, displayed a generous degree of ethnocentrism and nationalism in the way they wrote about their protagonists and their struggles and triumphs. In German novels, of course all Germans are virtuous and good, and even though they are sometimes tricked or cheated by cunning Americans

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<sup>197</sup> Karl May in *Geografische Predigten (Geographical Sermons)*, as cited by Rudolf Conrad, “Mutual Fascination: Indians in Dresden and Leipzig,” in Feest, *Indians and Europe*.

or Indians, they always find a way out of the dilemma by relying on their superior wit and strength. In fact, most heroes were cast in their own nationality and never broke with it. German heroes always spoke German, clung to a Teutonic code of morals, and dreamed about returning to Germany one day. This custom of casting the heroes in their own nationality heightened the level of identification with these home-bred heroes.<sup>198</sup> Karl May's *Winnetou* novels display this trend very clearly. Most of the time, German writers looked with confidence into the future instead of into the past (compared to the French, for example, who had an early hand in the colonizing efforts, Germans did not have much to look back on). On the verge of unification, Germany was expected to rise to greatness and strength in the future. As Billington argues, German authors were "disdainful of other peoples, certain of Germany's destined mastery of the world," and their heroes "exemplified Germanic virtue and strength in their every word and deed. In their blatant assertion of national superiority they unwittingly displayed the doubts and insecurity natural in a young nation yet to prove its greatness."<sup>199</sup> German writers thus often and quite unintentionally divulged more about their own attitudes and cultural prejudice than they did about the topic they were writing about. In fact, they oftentimes invented an American West that was used as a backdrop for stories that basically reflected Europe's quarrels and fantasies about itself, and less about America.<sup>200</sup>

Even though the novels were the largest disseminator of myths and stories about the West, several other types of printed materials contributed to (and sometimes even contradicted) the images of the Indians and the American West. As historian Glenn

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>200</sup> See also Julian Crandall Hollick, "The American West in the European Imagination," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, Vol. 42, No. 2, The European's American West (Spring, 1992), 17-21; 17.

Penny has shown, German periodicals of the nineteenth century “significantly influenced popular visions of North America,” probably much more so than most historians tend to acknowledge.<sup>201</sup> Besides just the images from novels that focused on the dramatic struggle and the romantic dreams of Europeans, Germans found other types of information in these publications that differed from what they expected from reading Cooper’s classical texts or other novels: magazines printed “narratives about American frontier adventures, information about actual events, and the striking images that visualized both.”<sup>202</sup> Moreover, as Penny argues, periodicals, though differing in their sometimes more romantic, sometimes more factual approach, transported tropes such as anti-American critiques, admiration for indigenous peoples’ resilience and character, the theme of the “vanishing Indian” (already familiar from Cooper), and stories about the lives of German settlers.

Remarkably, many of these publications did not simply reiterate Anglo-American information and attitudes but were considerably more critical. According to Penny, they often even resisted Anglo-American tropes out of a “desire to preserve a slightly different set of assumptions about notions of modernity, nature and progress.”<sup>203</sup> Thus, as Dana Weber rightly observes, magazines and newspapers “supported the creation of this German attitude toward America that was then applied also to other cultural products and discourses, including those of theater and performance.”<sup>204</sup> The themes and stories of Buffalo Bill’s *Wild West* were therefore not only introduced and pre-figured by travel

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<sup>201</sup> Glenn H. Penny, “Illustrating America. Images of the North American Wild West in German Periodicals, 1825-1890.” In: Kort, Pamela and Max Hollein (eds.) *I Like America. Fictions of the Wild West* (Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt: Prestel, 2006), 140-157; 148.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Penny, “Illustrating America,” 141-154. See also Weber, *Indians on German Stages*, 40.

<sup>204</sup> Weber, *Indians on German Stages*, 41.

literature, novels, and paintings, but also by the popular magazines that were circulated widely around Germany and often included a more realistic and at the same time critical image of America and American Indian and settlement policy. Perhaps the magazines have contributed more directly than previously assumed to the repeatedly negative undertones of German news coverage about the *Wild West*.

In contrast to these important precursors of the *Wild West* show, the dime novels and pulp fiction that were so influential in the United States did not really take a hold of the German reading populace until after Buffalo Bill had toured Germany (around three decades later than in the U.S., where they began to be popular in the late 1860s). When they did become popular, several topics in the German *Groschenromane* spurred the Buffalo Bill fad even more and contributed significantly to a further romanticization of the frontier period of the American West. Of course there was the heroic figure of Buffalo Bill and his adventures, stories of famous Indians such as Sitting Bull, and variations of Cooper's novels ("The New Leatherstocking"). Then there were those that dealt with the building of the transcontinental railroad, trappers and mountain men, mining and the gold rush, Custer's Last Stand, revenge stories, ranch stories and cowboys, "empire" stories (especially cattle wars), and stories of outlaws and law enforcement officers. The German public was more or less flooded with an overabundance of these novels, which were mostly written by Germans but modeled after the American dime novel. Initially intended for an adult audience, many of these cheap reads were adapted for young readers and eventually became a staple in youth literature, virtually disappearing from the shelves of respectable adult literature in the mid-twentieth century.

As noted, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a specific Indian stereotype developed in Germany that was mostly based on and fed by literature, travel descriptions, novels, and Wild West shows. Consequently, alongside the numerous and very successful exhibits of strange people from all over the world in Germany, there was an increasing presence of Native American shows throughout the century that culminated in Buffalo Bill's *Wild West*. As shown, German clichés about Indians were based on cultural predispositions, needs, and desires and defined by the cultural contact and exposure of different cultural groups. Social and political circumstances also affected the reception. The next part of this chapter discusses the emergence of these Native American exhibits in Germany and how these shows reflected the commonly held stereotypes.

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A stereotype serves to order and classify information and in that way can be seen as cultural shorthand and a tool for learning. It consists of a collection of traits that are considered typical for a certain group and that can be extended upon any individual by virtue of his or her being a member of a certain group. Furthermore, once attached, stereotypes are very tenacious.<sup>205</sup> As Dana Weber noted, such arguments about cultural representation and stereotyping “explain the mechanisms by which distorted notions of Native Americans impacted European (and especially German) consciousness, and why they proved so resistant over time.”<sup>206</sup> Human beings cannot make sense of their life-worlds without classifications and simplifications, since they always relate new information to what is already known and truncate the new information until it fits

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<sup>205</sup> For stereotyping of Native Americans, see for example Susan Lobo and Steve Talbot (eds.), *Native American Voices: A Reader* (New York: Longman, 1998).

<sup>206</sup> Weber, *Indians on German Stages*, 28.

already existing patterns. The history of cultural exchange, transfer, and clash between American and European cultures is a significant example.<sup>207</sup>

In the case of the “Indian,” Germans regarded (and still do) him or her as an essentially positive, spiritual, and heroic human type who lives in tune with nature; individual examples that contradict this view are considered deviations, not the reverse. Also, no matter how reductive such stereotypes may be, usually they are not completely devoid of actual information, for example in certain elements of Native American attire that are applied widely to *any* Native American populations. Such stereotypes are considered “real” to the groups who create them. For example, even though the newspaper coverage, advertisements and pamphlets of the *Wild West* were naming different ethnic groups, the picture of one ethnic group, one Indian race with a homogenous culture remained. Again, the reason for that is the firm establishment of the stereotype of the typical Indian in Germany in the course of the nineteenth century. It was an ideological pattern that was superimposed on all Indians and their shows, and if appearance or behavior did not match that pattern, the group was simply excluded and ignored, as shall be seen in the following examples. If it did match the cliché to a significant degree, minor discrepancies could be ignored and conformity with the stereotype was emphasized.

The newspaper coverage throughout the nineteenth century especially reflects and perpetuates the universal stereotype of what was considered “Indian” in Germany. Most importantly, the newspapers prove that visually and conceptually, the stereotypical Indian

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 53-54.

for Germans was and has been the Plains Indian, and especially the Sioux.<sup>208</sup> This Indian's origin is mostly named as the "far West" or "Rocky Mountains," his physical appearance includes descriptions of muscular bodies, dark skin, white teeth and black eyes, long black hair, feathers, face and body paint, and colorful clothing, and essential for his survival are the teepees, his bow and arrow, and horses for hunting and transportation. These are the predominant elements found in the German newspaper coverage and the only distinguishing features; individual differences between Indians are rarely noted. They were unanimously called "red skins" throughout the coverage, even though it was noted that their skin was not really red. Newspapers also commented on the common stereotypes of the perceived division of labor among Native Americans that postulates that women do all the hard work while the men are lazy and only hunt and wage war. Despite this stereotype, only very little attention was actually given to the women (an exception is an article about the Iroquois show of 1879, which lauds the female performers' skill and artistry).<sup>209</sup> It becomes obvious from the press coverage that despite what the shows were trying to sell to their audience, there was no access to the "real" life of the performers, their way of life. Moreover, there seemed to have been only little serious interest for information beyond the stereotype among Germans.

By the end of the nineteenth century, it seems that the German fascination with the purely exotic started to slowly decrease. The initial jolt of emotions when seeing a completely strange being was wearing off because by this time most people had already encountered their first, or even multiple, strangers. In addition to this, issues with authenticity arose. The "strangers" were not considered "pure" and "untouched by

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<sup>208</sup> Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians*, 23ff.

<sup>209</sup> *Dresdner Nachrichten*, 12 July 1879.

culture” anymore, and it became increasingly difficult for the exhibit managers to satisfy the audience’s demands for authenticity and “real” exoticism. Globalization was taking its first tolls on the entrepreneurs. Some managers started to “import” “fresh” subjects more often, but that also became more and more complicated. In order to solve this problem, some entrepreneurs resorted to “home-making” their own wild peoples by “painting” actors and manufacturing artifacts, and it is probably safe to assume that some of the wildest and most exotic specimens were fake. Similarly, a new trend emerged: people went into the wilderness and “imbruted” there. That way, upon their return, they could cash in on the shows.<sup>210</sup> In fact, in 1890 Rudolf Virchow lamented that “fraudulent representations of exotic peoples are amassing and it is time that such occurrences should be confronted.”<sup>211</sup>

This dissatisfaction and the need for something new peaked around 1890, exactly the time when Buffalo Bill entered the European stage. The sheer physical presence of Africans and other exotic peoples seemed to have been almost normal, but the Native Americans were about to breathe new life into the business. The Berlin newspaper *Lokal-Anzeiger* put this impression into words:

Yes, black skin color has become something so ordinary and familiar that even the most exotic, thick-lipped, heathen, uncivilized, ravenous Negro races can hardly arouse much interest with us anymore as display objects... Whereas a few years earlier our youth gaped after Negroes, nowadays they have become such a common sight that such a thing would be considered even by the crudest Berliner a violation of German national pride and dignity. Only some romantically inclined virgins are still fascinated... There is something still different, however, about the Indian races and everything that has to do with Prairie life in North America. Today, despite the fact that steamships have already put ‘North America’ on the map of even the most casual tourists, despite the fact that things American no longer seem so ‘distant,’ so exotic, so foreign to us, Indians and everything

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<sup>210</sup> Oettermann, “Völkerschauen und ihre Vorläufer,” 87, 91.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 100.



associated with them continue to exert a powerful, indescribable force of attraction.<sup>212</sup>

Aside from these positive attitudes, there still was an ongoing debate in Europe whether the Indian was human or animal, whether he could communicate or whether he should be hunted. If he was human, he could be converted to Christianity, which would make it immoral to hunt and kill him like an animal. The Catholic Church especially was excited about the prospect of converting a continent of unbelievers. In the favorable view, the Indian was cast in the Romantic fashion, in the classical poses of the Romans or Greeks, just with darker skin. He was considered the “ideal to which liberal Europeans could aspire if only they could throw off the yoke of despotism and tyranny.”<sup>213</sup>

On the other side were those who considered the Indian an animal, half-naked and savage, lacking all moral and social virtue. In 1853 Charles Dickens, in his weekly magazine *Household Words*, wrote a telling essay in which he expressed repugnance for Indians and their way of life, recommending that they ought to be “civilised off the face of the earth.” In his eyes, the Indian is a “prodigious nuisance and a gross superstition ... cruel, false, thievish, murderish; addicted more or less to grease, entrails, and beastly customs; a wild animal with the questionable gift of boasting; a conceited, tiresome, bloodthirsty, monotonous humbug ... if we have anything to learn from the Noble Savage, it is what to avoid. His virtues are a fable; his happiness is a delusion; his nobility, nonsense.”<sup>214</sup> Of George Catlin’s Indian Gallery, he said:

It is extraordinary to observe how some people will talk about him.... There was Mr. Catlin, some few years ago, with his Ojibbeway Indians. Mr. Catlin was an energetic, earnest man, who had lived among more tribes of Indians than I need

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<sup>212</sup> *Lokal-Anzeiger*, Berlin, July 24, 1890.

<sup>213</sup> Hollick, “The American West in the European Imagination,” 17.

<sup>214</sup> Charles Dickens, “The Noble Savage,” in: *Household Words*, June 11, 1853.

reckon up here, and who had written a picturesque and glowing book about them. With his party of Indians squatting and spitting on the table before him, or dancing their miserable jigs after their own dreary manner, he called, in all good faith, upon his civilised audience to take notice of their symmetry and grace, their perfect limbs, and the exquisite expression of their pantomime; and his civilised audience, in all good faith, complied and admired. Whereas, as mere animals, they were wretched creatures, very low in the scale and very poorly formed....<sup>215</sup>

Europeans also claimed that the Indians' brains were smaller (thus the anthropological examinations and the emergence of the pseudo-sciences) due to the "basic foulness" of the American land.<sup>216</sup>

Native Americans had made one of their first appearances in the Dresden Zoological Garden in 1879. The group consisted of eleven people, nine men and two women (Iroquois and one Comanche), who subsequently appeared in Frankfurt, Düsseldorf, Kassel, and Hannover. "Big, fantastic posters" announced their arrival.<sup>217</sup> This performance is an example of how much the ethnographic shows had evolved already. The Indians were not there to just be looked at but to demonstrate their customs, and a sophisticated and varied program with many exciting elements shifted the focus away from "simple staring" and towards a viable entertainment experience. The program included a speech by the chief, Indian songs, bow and arrow shooting, a ceremony for choosing a new chief, ballgames (similar to baseball), the saving of Captain Smith by Pocahontas, a snowshoe race, a wedding and a burial ceremony, a war dance and a snake dance, a harvest sacrifice, and last but not least, scalping.<sup>218</sup> The most exciting act for the audience was the chase of a Comanche Indian named Antonio Marquis, who was reenacting an abduction scene that included scalp-taking, a war dance, and a wild horse

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Hollick, "The American West in the European Imagination," 17-21.

<sup>217</sup> *Dresdner Nachrichten*, July 3, 1879.

<sup>218</sup> Kocks, *Indianer im Kaiserreich*, 27.

chase that was enhanced by the rider performing tricks and stunts on his horse. A Leipzig newspaper ended its description of this scene with the comment that “in spite of a few, sometimes a little forced effects, this demonstration is very entertaining and exciting.”<sup>219</sup> Variations of this kind of act were popular and a staple in many of the entertainments, and could have also come directly out of Buffalo Bill’s arena.

In 1883, six Chippewa were on stage at the Berlin Panoptikum. Unsurprisingly, Rudolf Virchow was fascinated by them and presented them to scholars at the Berlin Anthropological Society, where he performed the obligatory body measurements. The press reported in detail the Indians’ names, ages, and other characteristics in order to enhance their “realism” and authenticity.<sup>220</sup> They appeared in traditional clothing, showed the making of arrow tips from rocks, carved pipes, made bows and arrows, and sang and showed a war dance with subsequent symbolic scalping. In a larger ethnographic exhibit that ran parallel with the show, Indian objects, weapons, wigwams, clothes and other objects were shown. The show was very successful and demonstrated that Native Americans could be a lucrative component of ethnographic exhibits. Sadly, all members of the troupe drowned on the return journey during the sinking of the *Cimbria*.<sup>221</sup>

Another very successful Native American group traveled through Germany in 1886. “The Sitting Bull Sioux Indians” of Frank Harvey consisted of thirty men, women,

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<sup>219</sup> *Illustrierte Zeitung*, Leipzig, September 8, 1879, see also Sibylle Spiegel, *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West in München. Eine Veranstaltung von “Höherem Wissenschaftlichen Interesse”* (München: Studien und Quellen zur Geschichte der Vergnügungskultur, Heft 5, 2002), 115-117.

<sup>220</sup> The troupe consisted of their chief Chippeway; Ka-gang-we-sid (Crow Foot), aged twenty-eight; Mo-ke-ke-sis (Sunshine), twenty-five years old who fought against General Custer and who supposedly was a favorite of Sitting Bull; Sa-ah-moo (Red Jacket); Mi-ka-de-pe-na-sa (Black Bird), brother of Red Jacket and ‘war buddy’ of Sunshine, and Wa-be-shke-ne-nas (Little Cheyenne), twenty-five year-old brother of Crow Foot.

<sup>221</sup> Spiegel, *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West in München*, footnote 9.

and children, horses, and a Texas sharpshooter by the name of Happy Jack Sutton.<sup>222</sup> The Dresden newspapers raved about their guns, horses, and feathered headdresses, creating “a loud, vibrant, and visually potent spectacle.”<sup>223</sup> The *Dresdner Journal* commented: “The Sioux are demonstrating scenes from their life as hunters, warriors and gatherers. They are skilled riders on their mustangs, even without saddle and bridle. Lassoing the horses paints a wild and beautiful picture that is permeated by a certain romanticism.”<sup>224</sup> Their demonstrations included characteristic dances, lasso throwing, arrow shooting, a demonstration of their war and camp life, raids on foot and on horseback, and a variety of weapons-based games. The scenes “Abduction of a Girl on Horseback,” during which the Wells Fargo stage coach “Deadwood-Custer City” was employed, and “Attack on an Emigrant Family” were especially “exciting and even amusing.”<sup>225</sup> These acts sound uncannily familiar in the context of Buffalo Bill’s *Wild West*. Traveling with the show was an extensive ethnographic exhibit and a collection of paintings by Rudolf Cronau, who at this time was an illustrator for the *Gartenlaube* and would mingle with the Indians to paint as authentically as possible.<sup>226</sup> Overall, the similarities to Buffalo Bill’s *Wild West* are blatantly obvious.

It can perhaps be argued that the Iroquois, Chippewa, and Sioux groups that traveled Germany in the 1870s and 1880s are transitional shows between the original exhibits of foreign people and the Wild West shows that were going to take Europe by storm in the next couple of decades. The press reviews were extraordinarily positive, and

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid., footnote 6. Ironically, Sitting Bull was actually touring the U.S. with Buffalo Bill at this time.

<sup>223</sup> Ames, “Seeing the Imaginary,” 216.

<sup>224</sup> *Dresdner Journal*, July 21, 1886.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Kocks, *Indianer im Kaiserreich*, 28.

the organizers and performers made sure that they transmitted cultural customs and ways of life to their audience instead of shocking with their physical appearance or (to European taste) appalling practices such as “screeching,” polygamy, or even cannibalism. Even though these shows happened on a much smaller scale than the later Wild West shows, the two have quite a few elements in common: a sophisticated, exciting, and often amusing program, a variety of numbers from different areas of life on the prairie, stunts and acrobatics on horses and with guns, reenactments of historic events, often with original props and authentic participants, and a “sideshow” in the form of an ethnographic exhibit or camp that allowed the audience to come into personal contact with the performers and their lifestyle. Ultimately, the Wild West shows only elaborated on and enhanced what was already common in Germany instead of introducing something completely new.

Observing all the excitement Native Americans were causing in Germany, veteran showman Carl Hagenbeck was acutely aware that the Indians embodied the future of the exhibits. Since 1874, he had assembled more than twenty troupes of peoples from around the world, and as a consequence of seeing the success of the Native Americans groups, he brought nine Bella Coola Indians from British Columbia to Germany. The group traveled to more than twenty cities from September 1885 to July 1886 and consisted of nine men and more than 1500 ethnographic artifacts. In the tradition of the exhibits, they were supposed to simultaneously “attract mass spectators and appeal to an elite group of scientific experts.”<sup>227</sup> Indeed, the Bella Coola created a “sensation in the scientific community...”; “[The Bella Coola exhibit] offers to the layman more than a mere

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<sup>227</sup> Ames, “Seeing the Imaginary,” 216.

satisfaction of curiosity and inquisitiveness, since the splendid exhibition of these Indians also allows a deep insight into the cultural state of the peoples of America.”<sup>228</sup> Rudolf Virchow describes their importance as follows: “The Bella Coola Indians...are different from all American savages so far presented here. By virtue of the deformation of their heads, the peculiar formation of their faces, their quite singular language, their highly developed artisanship, they are immediately on first encounter rendered conspicuous among the multitude of American native peoples. For this reason they afford one of the most interesting objects for the observation of every thinking human being.”<sup>229</sup> A large ethnographic exhibit accompanied the show that was later sold to several German museums. Among the objects were blankets, articles of clothing, jewelry, fishing gear, weapons such as bows and arrows, wooden and shale bowls, braid works, various facemasks in the shape of animals, musical instruments, tools, and toys.<sup>230</sup> It seemed as if the exhibit fulfilled all of the scientific and educational standards that had become so important in ethnographic shows.

As interesting as they were to scientists, the public received the Bella Coola rather poorly. Several factors contributed to this reaction: first, it was for the very same reasons that Virchow described: their appearance was met with suspicion as they looked more like Asians to many Germans. Several papers reflect this fact: the Berliner *Intelligenz-Blatt* commented that “their face with its strong cheek bones reminds more of the

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<sup>228</sup> Oettermann, “Völkerschauen und ihre Vorläufer,” 55.

<sup>229</sup> Wolfgang Haberland, “‘Diese Indianer sind falsch’: Neun Bella Coola im Deutschen Reich 1885/1886,” in *Archiv für Völkerkunde* 42 (Wien: Museum für Völkerkunde im Selbstverlag, 1988), 3-65. For the Bella Coola’s stay in Germany, see also Wolfgang Haberland, “Nine Bella Coolas in Germany,” in: Feest, *Indians and Europe*, 337-373.

<sup>230</sup> Kocks, *Indianer im Kaiserreich*, 32-33, quoted from *Stadt-Anzeiger der Kölnischen Zeitung*, May 20, 1886. Haberland also argues that not all of these objects are necessarily of Bella Coola origin. In fact, some might have belonged to other tribes that Jacobsen (Hagenbeck’s “scout”) encountered during his travels. Haberland, “‘Diese Indianer sind falsch,’” 26.

inhabitants of Polynesia,” and a Hamburg paper compared them to “Mongolians.”<sup>231</sup> In response to these reports, the organizers had the newspapers print “proof” of their authenticity and had respected scientists corroborate through statements such as Virchow’s. Interestingly, the Bella Coola were described in the press in the style of the typical *Völkerschau* as opposed to the way other Native American shows had been reported about: their appearance and behavior took center stage, and the acts themselves were barely described. In fact, most of the descriptions of scenes that did find their way into the coverage focused on the dances and ceremonies, which were often accompanied by drum music that sounded monotone to European ears.<sup>232</sup>

This is another reason why the Bella Coola show was not as well visited: the new element of excitement and a varied program that featured action scenes from the life of the participants that had been introduced by other Native Americans exhibits were mostly missing. Germans were by now mainly expecting entertainment from the shows and not as much direct ethnographic or scientific education. Incidentally, while the Bella Coola exhibit overall attracted fewer visitors than expected, people packed the arena on Sundays when the Bella Coola performed one of the most extraordinary parts of the show: the burning of a shaman.<sup>233</sup> This to the audience was spectacular and exciting, and seemed like a magic trick: at the end of the act, the shaman who was supposedly burnt alive in a box popped back out of it and surprised the audience.<sup>234</sup> Like any good magic trick, it caused shock and awe without actually harming anybody. The expectations of the

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<sup>231</sup> *Intelligenz-Blatt*, Berlin, January 20, 1886, *Hamburger Nachrichten*, May 8, 1886.

<sup>232</sup> *Stadt-Anzeiger der Kölnischen Zeitung*, May 20, 1886.

<sup>233</sup> Kocks, *Indianer im Kaiserreich*, 33.

<sup>234</sup> *Dresdner Nachrichten*, October 20, 1885.

German audience were clearly shifting away from the educational and towards the entertainment dimension of the exhibition of “others.”

A third and very important reason why the Bella Coola exhibit did not live up to expectations in Germany was the fact that it included the element of cannibalism. For this reason, it also cannot be considered among the new type of Wild West shows because cannibalism was considered a trait of the “jungle barbarians” that Germans found appalling. It portrayed the Bella Coola as a different kind of Indian, not as the noble savage that Germans knew from Cooper’s novels and that had built the foundation of all Indian stereotyping. The performance of the practice of cannibalism evoked the feelings of otherness, horror and revulsion that were targeted by the earlier type of ethnographic exhibits. In the style of scientific education about other peoples that was so typical for the *Völkerschauen*, the newspapers gave a detailed account of the meaning and execution of this ritual, which ended in the mock drinking of blood and eating of a corpse. After the conclusion of this, “the candidate receives an elaborately embellished, carved skull.... One of the present Bella Coola already owns eight of these signs of honor.”<sup>235</sup>

As mentioned earlier, it is not surprising that the Bella Coola were received with less enthusiasm by the German public, whereas other shows that consisted of Sioux, Comanche or Ojibwas (who were known in Germany as Chippewa) drew the largest crowds. The reasons are intricately connected to the myth of the West and the lore of the

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<sup>235</sup> A Hamburg newspaper described the ritual as follows: “the chief, whose dignity is considerable, decides in case of conflict. Beneath him in rank are the so-called hametze or cannibals, which can be divided into three groups: those that kill and eat humans or drink blood of live people, those that are satisfied with corpses that are two or three years old, and those that merely eat live dogs.” The preparation to become a member includes some time alone in the woods, while relatives convince someone with presents to allow the hametze-candidate to drink their blood upon their return: “he suddenly emerges from the forest, and with extraordinary skill rips open the chest or calf of the victim with his teeth in order to drink the outpouring blood. Thus the first level is achieved, followed by the gruesome eating of a corpse.” *Hamburger Nachrichten*, May 8, 1886.



Indian discussed earlier. As Eric Ames argues, “spectators faulted [Hagenbeck’s] Bella Coola show for its lack of fictional reference points.”<sup>236</sup> Simply put, his Indians did not match the Cooper ideal. As Ames further states, “the point is one of reception: Spectators forged a creative link between the idea of “Cooper” and the physical presence of the Sioux, but not that of the Bella Coola. It was the act of imaginative identification, on the one hand, and the lack of fictional reference points, on the other, that made the difference.”<sup>237</sup> (In this context, it is perhaps necessary to note that the Sioux did certainly not have anything more to do with Cooper’s fiction than any other Indian culture). Penny argues in the same vein, stating that “the German vision of America was that it was different, fantastic in its extremes, and yet somehow so familiar.”<sup>238</sup> As a consequence, new codes of exoticism were quickly established, leading to the paradoxical situation that not everything new from the Americas was also found attractive and certain forms of “alien-ness” were blocked out. In other words, only the familiar or familiarized exotic was acceptable.

Lastly, in contrast to the argument that rituals of cannibalism were unappealing to audiences, William Schneider contends that around 1890, “in order to increase profits, the organizers began to stress the unusual and the bizarre and to add spectacular performances, such as mock battles or cannibalistic rituals.”<sup>239</sup> He thus indicates a shift back to the earliest, traditional amusement-oriented character of European ethnological exhibits, which had been pushed aside by the *Völkerschauen* with their trend to scientifically educate the public. I would agree in several points, mainly that the primary

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<sup>236</sup> Ames, “Seeing the Imaginary,” 217.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Weber, *Indians on German Stages*, 41, and Ames, “Seeing the Imaginary,” 214-217.

<sup>239</sup> Corbey, “Ethnographic Showcases,” 357.

motivator for the organizers was always a financial one, and they therefore catered specifically to the needs of their audience. Hence, when visitor numbers started to drop off, the organizers were well-advised to provide more spectacular entertainment to attract them back again. However, I would disagree with the statement that the unusual and bizarre, including cannibalistic rituals, were the main attractions for Germans at the end of the nineteenth century. The Bella Coola are a prime example of this: it seems that the German audience was already steeped sufficiently enough in the stereotypes of the Native Americans that the Bella Coola just did not fit the bill and were therefore dismissed, spectacular demonstrations of cannibalism notwithstanding. By the last couple of decades of the nineteenth century, *Völkerschauen* became increasingly commercial entertainments with an ever-decreasing level of accuracy of representation, and with any educational objectives more and more moved to the background.

The presence and popularity of Native American show groups in Germany and the ever growing fascination with the American West are a specific trait to Germany. In fact, it seems that Germans, more than any other European people, were the most fascinated by Native Americans and everything Western. The American West in Germany was shrouded in myth and longing fantasy to such a degree that it stands out among European nations. Apart from what has already been discussed in terms of creation myths, several other reasons contributed to this phenomenon throughout the nineteenth century. The final part of this chapter discusses the influence of the trope of the vanishing Indian in both the United States and Germany, the view of the “West as America” and as a utopian dream, political and economic pressures, and emigration as factors in the complex interrelationships between America and Germany.

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During the second half of the nineteenth century, the German public was increasingly made aware that the Indians were a dying race. Catlin had proclaimed this in the 1840s, and even though he did not take his Indian Gallery to Germany, the message had spread throughout Europe. In 1886, a newspaper article stated that “with unbelievable rapidity the unique culture of this people will be displaced by the pressure of civilization, and it is to be feared that in a very short time nothing of it will remain.”<sup>240</sup> The portrayal of the Indian as a vanishing race in Buffalo Bill’s *Wild West* was part of the reason for its success in both the United States and Europe. As Patrick Brantlinger has pointed out, in the American context the “vanishing Indian” and the prediction of “‘total annihilation’ of the American Indian was a key ingredient in the nation-forging ideology of the new United States.”<sup>241</sup> Americans lamented the Indians’ sad, inevitable departure, wrought by the destruction of nature and its wild children in the wake of Manifest Destiny. Brantlinger goes as far as claiming that even the authors who wrote about “noble savages” and who regretted and condemned their extermination were nevertheless guilty of what he calls “proleptic elegy.” According to him, considering extinction as inevitable and then doing nothing to prevent it was to engage in a self-fulfilling prophecy. Lamenting the Indians’ decline created a cultural climate that accepted this fate, thus perpetuating extinction. Whereas this model explains the fascination and nostalgia connected with the Indian, it flattens a discourse that is considerably more complex. Certainly, a cultural climate can add power to an ideology, but to claim that even those

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<sup>240</sup> Oettermann, “Völkerschauen und ihre Vorläufer,” 55.

<sup>241</sup> Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings*, 48.

who wanted to preserve the Indians contributed to their demise by accepting this ideology seems a little exaggerated.<sup>242</sup>

Americans were worried about the extinction of the Indians because they provided an obstacle in the way of progress, which served as a measure to prove their might and justify their conquest. Without the Indian, Americans inevitably lost the most important element of nation-forging. Germans appropriated these notions and adapted them to their own cultural context. Even though the Indian did not serve the same purpose in Germany as it did in the United States, Germans and other Europeans used the image of the vanishing race to highlight the decadence of civilization and progress and the virtues of a more primitive life that seemed more honest and in tune with nature. The pressures caused by the Industrial Revolution along with political, economic, and social changes caused escapist and nostalgic drives to return to a glorified nature or to a golden past that were populated by idealized exotic or ancestral peoples. Newspapers kept highlighting the “free life” on the plains, even if it was considered part of the past. In this script that looks like a Romantic tragedy, the Indian was doomed to extinction because he was standing in the way of progress, and especially because Germans were so ambivalent about the benefits of progress at this time the Indian became a symbol of identification and loss of what was considered pure and good.

There was little doubt that the Indians’ fate was sealed, and many writers expressed these feelings in a contemplative and lamenting mode. Konrad Dreher, for example, ended his memoirs by describing his last visit to the *Wild West* with the following words:

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<sup>242</sup> For a critique of Brantlinger see David Wrobel, “Exceptionalism and Globalism: Travel Writers and the Nineteenth-Century American West,” *The Historian* (Fall 2006): 431-460.

when I bade farewell to the troupe late at night, the camp fires in the Indian tents were already lit and their melancholic songs reminded me of the last lamenting songs of a dying hero- drowned out by car horns and tramway rattling in the skyscraper-lined streets of modern America. The poetics of the old America succumbs to the busy franticness of modern life. With the end of the Buffalo Bill enterprise, one of the great and picturesque depictions vanishes. The Wild West will now only be preserved by cinema, and the war cry of the Indians through the gramophone.<sup>243</sup>

According to Dreher, the advances in technology made the indigenous man and his way of life appear foredoomed by the inexorable advance of progress to inevitable extinction.

Even Buffalo Bill was aware of the appeal of the vanishing Indian in Germany.

In an interview with a German reporter he vehemently defended the Indian as noble and honorable: “the Indian character is the most amiable and respectable in the world. I have never seen a prison in an Indian village, and they neither have locks on their doors nor do they steal from one another. I have also never seen an Indian who has beaten or cussed at their children.”<sup>244</sup> Cody also emphasized that all Indians work hard, are brave and highly skillful warriors, and that they are indeed good Christians: they pray, never lie, and have given up the practice of polygamy. At the same time, Cody marked their fate of extinction: “it is sad that this noble race had to give way to civilization. But it was inevitable. They left millions of acres of fertile land lie fallow and that had to change. Where my ranch lies today 25 years ago was wilderness.” Cody even expressed regret for having fought against them, and calls them the “original Americans” who now had to “wander their homelands.”<sup>245</sup> Most likely, Cody encapsulated the feelings of most Germans with this statement. However, besides this lament for what was supposedly being lost and the nostalgia for the past that accompanied this development, some

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<sup>243</sup> Kocks, *Indianer im Kaiserreich*, 44.

<sup>244</sup> “Der Wilde Westen in Berlin. Ein Interview mit Buffalo Bill,” *Berliner Tageblatt*, Berlin, July 27, 1890.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*

Europeans also considered the Indians' demise a desirable eventuality. As the century progressed, Indians and their traditions increasingly became a foil that served to highlight the accomplishments of Europe and the expansion of the European Imperial powers, who justified their policies on the basis of a presumed racial and cultural superiority that has already been discussed.

The American West was unconsciously used as a canvas for Germans onto which they projected their longings and needs. As Billington suggests, the West offered an outlet for pent-up fantasies of violence to distract from the restrictions of the modern, industrial world, and it served as an explanation for the strength of the lure that had caused many Germans to emigrate and make their way into the New World.<sup>246</sup>

Furthermore, besides the tradition of romantic primitivism, the West also appealed to Germans because it fit into and continued the tradition of folk tales, resembling memories of knights struggling against the forces of evil. For Germans, images of the mythic Siegfried and the Nibelungen as well as Arminius spring to mind immediately. (Again, the imagery includes mostly dragons and other fabled beings inhabiting the deep and ancient forests of Germany).

Due to the overwhelming preoccupation of Europeans with the American West, it began to define the entirety of America in the minds of many Germans: the West seemed to represent its most characteristic aspects and became a prism through which Europeans viewed all of America. Literature, newspapers, journals, and other outlets describe both negative and positive features about the West and America. On the negative side, crass materialism and boastfulness, a crude culture and alleged lack of sophistication,

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<sup>246</sup>Billington, *Land of Savagery, Land of Promise*, 31-35.

tendencies toward excess and wastefulness, as well as the primitivism that the wilderness seemed to evoke from its inhabitants scared and shocked Europeans. Positive attitudes stressed the exhilarating freedom and an exotic attraction that the untamed wilderness represented, as well as the extraordinary opportunities and riches that it seemed to offer to the adventurous and tough. Another strong pull was the social equality that developed in this New World, which stood in stark contrast to the restrictions of the Old World in Europe.<sup>247</sup> Here, Europeans could escape into an imaginary world, an idyllic civilization with much less stratification than existed in European societies.

The West as a utopia is a theme deeply embedded in European culture, as discussed earlier. Social and intellectual conditions in Europe contributed to the strengthening of the American lure. Europeans caught a glimpse of an alternative social order where chivalry and brute strength, then declining in the new industrial order arising in Europe, were still virtues. The West was seen by many as an ideal society, a young, fresh, and better world with limitless opportunities. Pastoral America was depicted and imagined as a haven and an escape from a dying Europe. The American West became a land of rebirth and rejuvenation, teeming with virtues that were long stamped out in corrupt and degenerated Europe. At the frontier, themes such as youth, regeneration, and hope dominated the life of the settlers. Especially Germans, who had always glorified primitivism, bought into these concepts, which offered them a mirror image of themselves. Already in 1827, famed poet and writer Johann Wolfgang Goethe put these feelings into words in his poem “*Den Vereinigten Staaten*“ (“To the United States“):

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<sup>247</sup> Nash, “European Image of America,” 4.

Amerika, du hast es besser  
Als unser Kontinent, das alte,  
Hast keine verfallene Schlösser  
Und keine Basalte.  
Dich stört nicht im Innern,  
Zu lebendiger Zeit,  
Unnützes Erinnern  
Und vergeblicher Streit.  
Benutzt die Gegenwart mit Glück!  
Und wenn nun eure Kinder dichten,  
Bewahre sie ein gut Geschick  
Vor Ritter-, Räuber- und Gespenstergeschichten.

America, you have it better  
Than our continent, the older.  
No castles in decay, no halls that moulder;  
No memories of use to fetter,  
No needless idle strife  
To cramp the innermost  
In times astir with life  
Go use the present and fare well.<sup>248</sup>

I would add at the end of this translation: “and when your children write their poems, keep them from writing about knights, robbers, and ghosts.”

Several other factors served to push Germans to fantasize about the West and often even consider emigration. An important concept in this context is that of the emotional safety valve. As the Industrial Revolution swept Europe and forced millions of people into monotonous work routines, stories and novels about the West served as vicarious escapes to more attractive worlds and away from everything that seemed old, decrepit, and oppressing. Europeans could project their longings and needs onto the American West and through this means experience a vicarious indulgence in violence, aggression and freedom. Moreover, the political climate during the 1830s and 1840s also encouraged such fantasies. Europe was still recovering from the French Revolution,

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<sup>248</sup> Translation taken from Billington, *Land of Savagery, Land of Promise*, 222.



which had sent shockwaves across the entire continent. The old order was struggling to reestablish itself, and Germany was torn by bitter political struggle and philosophical conflict. As Billington argues, the “voices of reform were particularly strident in Germany, stung by the humiliation of Napoleon’s victories, strengthened by dislike of control by Prussian and Austrian despots, and frustrated by the feuding Hohenzollern and Hapsburg families whose quarrels dimmed hopes of unification.”<sup>249</sup> Europe was considered by its own intellectuals a victim of irreversible weariness—*Europamüdigkeit*, as it was called. It seemed tired and worn-out, while America represented a new and virile society, full of opportunity and positive change. Especially the frontier, which spawned the emergence of virgin communities where men were shaping their own destinies, carried such connotations. America was seen as the land of the future, which could teach much to the land of the past. Germans and other Europeans were eager to read and learn about this rebirth at the frontier and the opportunities in American that they felt they were barred from in old Europe.

All of these social, political and economic discontents inspired Germans to search for very real solutions. Promotional literature and letters from America reinforced its utopian qualities and often created a direct personal appeal for millions of Europeans. The result was that by 1850, one in every ten Germans was departing for America.<sup>250</sup> The Great Plains especially evoked the image of freedom of mobility, moving on to better grounds, and of making your own decisions without having to take any kinds of restrictions into consideration. Overall, the “long nineteenth century” was marked by mass migration to the New World, and as Gerald Nash contended, by “industrialization,

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>250</sup> Nash, “European Image of America,” 7.

new technologies, American westward expansion and Civil War, German struggle toward national unity and civil rights and increasing literacy on both sides of the Atlantic.”<sup>251</sup> Improved communication and exchange of information between the two continents, which was facilitated by the ever-growing flow of emigrants and trans-Atlantic family connections, contributed to the positive image of America and further fed the emigration stream. Most likely, almost everybody in Germany at this time knew someone who could not resist the temptation and had immigrated to the United States.

This was the climate in Germany when Buffalo Bill and his *Wild West* arrived in 1890. The *Völkerschauen* that had dominated the second half of the nineteenth century in Germany were quickly pushed aside, and the Wild West shows proliferated in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century and rapidly became the ultimate form of entertainment. They did more than just exhibit foreigners; they entertained *and* educated, all the while perpetuating existing stereotypes by elaborating a set of mental pictures deeply embedded in German culture. The Wild West shows, obviously, portrayed life at the American frontier and were therefore restricted to peoples and scenes from that geographic area of the world. Due to the strong stereotypes of Native Americans in Germany, the success of the earlier *Völkerschauen*, as the Bella Coola demonstrated, depended heavily on the degree of congruence of the Indians with their stereotype in the German imagination. The fact that the Wild West shows concentrated on those groups made them an instant success and captured the imagination of popular audiences.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Tatlock and Erlin with regard to American-German relations. Lynne Tatlock and Matt Erlin, “Introduction.” In: Lynne Tatlock and Matt Erlin, *German Culture in Nineteenth-Century America. Reception, Adaptation, Transformation* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005. xi-xxi.), xi.

<sup>252</sup> See also Ames, “Seeing the Imaginary,” 217.

Another important factor for the greater success of the Wild West shows over the earlier ethnographic shows was the fact that they were more like theater performances that dealt with the settling of the West than a painstaking description of Native American facts: exhaustive descriptions of regions of origin, population numbers, cultural beliefs and customs such as the hunt, religion, everyday life and pastime activities were avoided in the Wild West shows.<sup>253</sup> In fact, in the *Völkerschauen*, the Indians were much more individualized, described by name in the papers, and their customs and accoutrements were outlined in detail. In the Wild West shows, the emphasis shifted away from such details, only the chiefs were named by name, and the descriptions were so general that they only allowed a superficial distinction between the different native tribes.<sup>254</sup> Often, only general information was provided about the region of origin (Rocky Mountains, Far West). Furthermore, most scenes of Indian domesticity did not really add any information besides the stereotypical “knowledge” of Indian culture, which was dominated by images of headdresses, tattoos and face paint, horses, painted teepees, and women doing the housework and men hunting and fighting.

Instead, the Wild West shows introduced a new element to its European audiences that had not yet been seen anywhere before. While there was still a strong interest in everything Indian, the most obvious new ingredient was that of struggle, or the emphasis on the violent interaction between the white and the red races. As can be observed in Buffalo Bill’s arena, the American cowboys embodied the superiority of the white race and were cast into the hero-roles. Native Americans were reduced to the attacking sidekicks and shifted from the center of attention into the role of showcasing the bravery

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<sup>253</sup> Kocks, *Indianer im Kaiserreich*, 51.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

and sacrifice of white settlers and American heroes at the frontier. The Indians' portrayal went from "star of the show," as it had been in the *Völkerschauen*, to vicious attacker, which did not correspond with historical fact and has more to do with propaganda than reality. It is indeed fascinating to see how the emphasis shifts from the single-minded concentration on every detail of Native American culture to the struggle of Manifest Destiny and the conquest of the West in the Wild West shows.

Even though the Indians were still an important part, Buffalo Bill introduced the persona of the cowboy to European audiences, who suddenly played a significant role as a heroic antagonist. In fact, during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, admiration of the American cowboy was on the rise. I would argue that contributing factors certainly were the dime novels as well as European writers who used Buffalo Bill and his cowboys as a foil for a new breed of heroes. Cowboys were rugged, fiercely independent, self-made, and democratic individuals who personified bravery. Audiences could identify with this positive persona because he was white and he was in essence "one of them," a man who was making the honest living at the frontier that so many Europeans dreamed of. Physically the cowboy was of spare build, muscular, with keen eyes and blond hair (perhaps indicating Northern European descent and racial purity). In the imagination of Europeans, the cowboy fit well into the stereotypes they held of the American utopia, and the cowboy turned into a mix between Hercules and Tristan, thus assuming legendary proportions. He was therefore a worthy successor to the mythic heroes of old and to the medieval knights so familiar to most Europeans. The descriptions of Buck Taylor and other cowboys in Buffalo Bill's *Wild West* follow this general pattern.

The cowboy fulfilled multiple purposes: besides representing the heroic characteristics of the American people at the frontier, he also embodied the element of imperialistic propaganda. The cowboy represented the white race dominating and conquering the “red” race, Americans colonizing their entire continent, and he brought an element of equestrian militancy into the *Wild West* show that resounded strongly with European audiences in a time of increasing globalization, nationalization, and militarization. Even though Native Americans continued to occupy a special place in the German imagination, this new development is striking in terms of bringing a distinctly American perspective to Europe that influenced the image of Indians in Germany profoundly. Buffalo Bill, of course, had a heavy hand in fabricating this image, and it perhaps was not any more “real” or historically correct than the previous Romantic image of the noble savage roaming the forests. But by introducing the cowboy and the element of struggle while portraying the Indian as aggressive and war faring, Buffalo Bill provided a counter-image to the noble savage and played into the notion of the Indian as a vanishing race, even though they went down fighting. This image of the Indian that still deserved admiration yet also was doomed to extinction expanded the myth of the American West even more, opened it for yet more complex stories and prolonged its survival in the collective mind and imagination of Germany. Thus, the late nineteenth century, and particularly the arrival of the *Wild West*, “marked an important phase in the historical development of the German’s fascination with the American Indian and its expansion into the realm of visual culture.”<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Ames, “Seeing the Imaginary,” 213-214.

The Wild West shows did not put a complete stop to the ethnographic exhibits, which continued to be held into the early decades of the twentieth century. However, since the Wild West shows specialized in depicting life on the American continent, Native Americans and cowboys were almost exclusively represented in Wild West show venues, whereas all other “colonial natives” still found themselves in the occasional ethnographic exhibit. In the 1910s movie theaters became a larger draw for people, and ethnographic shows were increasingly found objectionable on moral grounds.<sup>256</sup> In lieu of the shows, “ethnographic films and numerous scientific, semi-scientific, and pseudo-scientific anthropological treatises, abundantly illustrated with photographs, took over much of the function of ethnological exhibits, as did colonial and missionary propaganda films.”<sup>257</sup> The continued presence of “colonial natives” in Germany contributed to the process of disenchantment and stopped any further romanticization of their initial environment and lives. Corbin further argued that recruiting exhibit groups in the German colonies became very difficult after 1901 because of new laws and regulations, and of course World War I and its aftermath complicated the matter even more. During the 1930s, the *Völkerschauen* were prohibited by the National Socialists, who feared they would increase the sympathy of the German people for other races.<sup>258</sup> Thus, the exhibits of foreign peoples came to a stop in Germany, but the fascination with Native Americans lived on long after the Wild West shows ceased to tour. In fact, it found new avenues of expression, as shall be seen in chapter seven.

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<sup>256</sup> Oettermann, “Völkerschauen und ihre Vorläufer,” 92.

<sup>257</sup> Corbey, “Ethnographic Showcases,” 358.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.



**Image 7:** George Catlin. Portrayal of Se-non-ti-yah, an Iowa medicine man, speaking to a London audience (1844-1845).



**Image 8:** Bella Coola Indians, 1885. Photo of the Berlin Ethnological Museum.

## CHAPTER 4

### Taking the *Wild West* Abroad

Given the fascination with the American West and Native Americans in Europe, it was only a matter of time before American entrepreneurs realized this demand and seized the opportunity to tap into the market. Why not get a piece of the European pie that up until then had only been divided between European entrepreneurs? Cody was a savvy businessman, and he was one of the first Americans who brought his “home” with him to display in Europe as opposed to Europeans gathering artifacts and “specimens” in a foreign land and bringing them back. It is no wonder, therefore, that the *Wild West* was perceived as an exciting new variety of the popular European shows, and most likely as much more authentic. For Cody, venturing onto the European continent was not only another business opportunity; perhaps equally important to earning money he meant to elevate America’s prestige and value in the eyes of Europeans and Americans alike. By using the framework of the mythic West of the past, he highlighted American virtues, vibrancy, and validity as a global player in the present and future and clearly demonstrated that Americans were a force to be reckoned with. Therefore, Cody should be differentiated from the mainstream of the entertainment industry, which was mostly motivated by profit.

When embarking on a first stint to England in 1887, which was the prelude to the extensive European tour between 1889 and 1892, the message that the show was intended to carry across the water was stated clearly. In the first place, the spectacle was to demonstrate to the Old World the grandeur of America through the veil of a spectacular



show. Cody wanted to impress his European audiences and gain their respect, thereby improving the international image of the United States. In a sense, he fashioned himself as an informal ambassador who held in his hands the key to unlock the condescending attitudes many Europeans held about their American counterparts. Perhaps the fact that he was unendorsed by his government and not seen as a political figure also provided opportunities to disseminate a more positive understanding of America than otherwise would have been possible. Through the popular and democratic medium that was his show, he reached all classes and all strata of the population equally and probably was received less critically than an openly political message would have been.

Support for the European endeavor came from multiple sources in the United States: writer Mark Twain, in an open letter to Cody, wished him luck and declared that it was in the hands of Cody and his *Wild West* to show Europeans what America was about: “It is often said on the other side of the water that none of the exhibitions we send are purely and distinctively American. If you will take the Wild West show over there you can remove that reproach.”<sup>259</sup> Other American voices conveyed the hope that Cody would impress the Europeans with the grandeur of America by showing them “what life in America is like” and that “when he takes the show to England the blarsted Britons will go wild over it.”<sup>260</sup> In one of his monographs, which appeared in 1888 after returning to the United States from England and before the start of the more extensive European tours of the following two decades, Cody stated his impression of the impact of his show abroad: “I am convinced—and I say it in no boastful spirit, but as a plain statement of fact—that our visit to England has set the population of the British Islands reading,

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<sup>259</sup> *New York Dispatch*, July 18, 1886.

<sup>260</sup> *New York Times*, March 31, 1887.

thinking, and talking about their American kinsmen to an extent before unprecedented. They are beginning to know of this mighty nation beyond the Atlantic and consequently to esteem us better.”<sup>261</sup>

Even though no American businessman or showman for that matter had tried, on the same scale, what Cody was about to do, Europe was not devoid or ignorant of American products before the *Wild West* hit its shores. Of course there had been George Catlin, but the scope of his production was much smaller than Cody’s in its geographic reach as well as size and intentions of his enterprise. Besides this, European audiences had been exposed to quite a few American exhibits, especially at the popular world fairs. For example, in London in 1851, Americans had impressed Europeans by displaying Colt revolvers and McCormick reapers, proving that the U.S. were on their way to becoming an industrial and commercial power. However, the prestige problem lay elsewhere: whereas they admired American industrial and commercial products, Europeans were somewhat self-satisfied in their belief that America was devoid of culture, and Americans were profoundly conscious of their culture as an imitation of Europe’s original. Since civilization itself hailed from the Old World, the US remained indebted to Europe and lagged behind in many areas of refinement, especially in music, literature, and drama, despite all its progress.<sup>262</sup> This sense of America as the cultural poor relative of Europe persisted on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>263</sup> It annoyed the American intellectual and

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<sup>261</sup> William F. Cody, *Story of the Wild West and Campfire Chats, By Buffalo Bill, (Hon. W.F. Cody)* (Philadelphia: Historical Publishings, 1888), 710.

<sup>262</sup> In contrast, in the field of photography Americans never anxiously followed the European example or took cues from European artists. Europeans were instead impressed by American photo art, especially landscapes. America was still new and seen with wondering eyes, and since photography could not be manipulated in the same way as paintings could, Europeans appreciated this art form and admired the American natural landscape. (Rydell and Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna*, 120 and chapter 5).

<sup>263</sup> See Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s America*, 292.

cultural elite enormously, and chafed America's self-confidence. In fact, the sentiment was so strong that French statesman Georges Clemenceau supposedly stated in 1929 that "America is the only nation in history which miraculously has gone directly from barbarism to degeneration without the usual interval of civilization."<sup>264</sup> While he acknowledged the industrial and commercial development of the U.S., he at the same time denied America any kind of *cultural* advancement but instead attested to America its status as a "declining" nation in the circle of natural development without having enjoyed the "golden years" in between. According to this opinion, industrial progress had come at the expense of civilization and refinement.

The *Wild West* perhaps can be regarded as serving as a cultural counterpart to create an opposition to Europe's over-civilization and "stuffy" ideals of aristocracy. By emphasizing the raw elements of struggle and freedom, nature and democracy, a distinctly American identity was formed and cast into stark opposition. The frontier was understood as masculine, whereas cities and civilization were its antithesis, robbing them of their true manhood. As Richard White relates, painter Charles Russell confronted the issue of effeminacy through civilization directly:

Invention has made it easy for man kind but it has made him no better. Machinery has no branes. A lady with manicured fingers can drive an automobile with out maring her polished nails. But to sit behind six range bred horses with both hands full of ribbons these are God made animals and have branes. To drive these over a mountain road takes both hands free and head; it's no lady's job.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> As quoted in Rydell and Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna*, 98. Quotation attributed to Clemenceau in *Saturday Review of Literature* (1 December 1945), as noted in *Columbia World of Quotations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), entry 12632.

<sup>265</sup> Russell to "Friend Bob [Thoroughman]," April 14, 1920, as cited by White, "Turner and Buffalo Bill," 49.

Besides equating machinery with brainless women and juxtaposing it with the masculine and rough frontier, Russell also implies that the modern world, by its invention of machines, has removed itself from God, whereas the frontier and nature represent the divine state of mankind. American society was equated with youth and sturdiness and infused with masculine virtues and vigor. Europe, in contrast, looked effeminate, soft, and overcultured. For Buffalo Bill and his fellow Americans, the show was a means to establish a positive identity in contrast to Europe that often looked down on this young nation. In Europe, that message was understood. Similar to Americans, Europeans feared that they had lost an important element of society due to progress. The *Wild West* offered an escape into a simpler world in which virtues that were feared to have been lost were reawakened.

Cody grasped this ongoing cultural inferiority complex and tapped American longings for cultural and political validation. The rise from humble frontier origins to modern industrial nation was a powerful story that boosted America's self-confidence, and the success of such a story in Europe would bring the long-sought validation as a cultural force. If Europeans approved of his show, Cody could style himself as a cultural ambassador who indeed raised the esteem of America in European eyes, which was one of the primary reasons for taking the *Wild West* to Europe in the first place. The patronage of his spectacle by European elites and royalty was especially crucial in this context. Ultimately, the European tours did not only surpass anybody's hopes and expectations of success, but by 1906 William Cody and his *Wild West* had become the best-known representation of America in Europe. Having emerged from lowly frontier origins to receiving European adulation, they symbolized the birth of the United States as

a cultural force, not merely a military or economic one. At last, America had fully arrived on the world stage.

Still, this success was not necessarily predetermined for William Cody, since there had been considerable fears about the American influence in Europe. As early as the 1855 Paris Universal Exposition, Europeans were starting to be concerned about “Americanization;” a fear that was strong mainly among the intellectual elite. European intellectuals started to grapple with the idea of mass society, a phenomenon they first witnessed in America. They feared that mass culture would eventually blot out civilization and lead to unrestrained consumerism and greed. (This fear is expressed, for example, in the writings of Charles Dickens). Throughout the last half of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, Europeans were also increasingly stunned by the rapid development of the U.S. into a capitalist global power. It seemed that this process was taking place without regard to the possible negative effects it could have on individual peoples and societies as a whole (an example of this is critique is German philosopher Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.)<sup>266</sup> At the turn of the century, Europeans perhaps also needed to find a way to cope psychologically with the substantial stream of outmigration: as people were leaving the old continent in masses and praising the new world and its opportunities, there was perhaps a nagging fear that Europe would become de-populated, which probably evoked the same sentiments that had frightened Europe in earlier periods of American-European relations.

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<sup>266</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. The original German text was composed in 1904 and 1905, and was translated into English in 1930. For a more detailed discussion, see Rydell and Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna*, 154.

In short, the end of the nineteenth century was marked by a large trans-cultural movement between German and American cultures, along with prejudices and fears as well as hopes and expectations about each other. As Eric Ames has argued, these exchanges were “facilitated by a cultural context in quick flux, in which new media, forms of performance and entertainment, commerce, education, and science intersected with each other so much that they became tangled and almost impossible to separate.”<sup>267</sup> While this might be true for many cultural exports, in the case of the *Wild West* the European audience was well aware that it was a specifically *American* show and not just another touring show or a spruced-up *Völkerschau*. In fact, it was titled by the company “America’s National Entertainment,” which reflects the fact that it was important to Cody and others that it was seen as such in Europe, as something truly American that was not a cheap copy of a European masterpiece. Not only was it spectacular and grand in scale, but it also was fresh and original, offering Europeans a glimpse of everything they were longing for: open spaces, abundance, an epic struggle with a worthy yet doomed foe, exotic animals, adventure in the wilderness and exploration, a sense of freedom of movement and of a new beginning, the free expression of individualism, no traditions or entrenched customs that had to be adhered to, and a reinvention of one’s self and whatever other personal desires people projected onto the West.

Moreover, in anticipation of playing before European royalty in particular, the framework of the show was improved. Even though most of the acts stayed the same, they were now arranged into a narrative that resembled a historical pageant, which created a more sophisticated and coherent appearance. It also contextualized the history

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<sup>267</sup> Eric Ames, *Carl Hagenbeck’s Empire of Entertainments* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 103.

of the conquest of the American West in a way that it resembled a “natural course” of history, which at the same time mirrored theories of Darwinism. *The Drama of Civilization*, as it was aptly baptized in 1887, was divided into “Epochs” that traced the development of the American West and justified the course of Empire and the notion of Manifest Destiny. Paul Reddin adds that “the Wild West show reduced the western saga to a morality play in which Cody, along with scouts and cowboys, represented the forces of good and civilization and Indians and a few errant white road agents symbolized evil and barbarism.”<sup>268</sup> This kind of presentation was entirely unique and unprecedented, and not even any of the shows that followed Cody to Europe could “match the Wild West Company when it came to generating stories merely by their presence.” Even though Louis Warren draws his conclusions from a mostly British context, it is safe to say that indeed “all the shows that followed him moved in his shadow” and that the “quality of arena performance and public deportment by Buffalo Bill’s *Wild West* was very high.”<sup>269</sup>

Another factor that greatly heightened the quality and success of the *Wild West* in Europe as well as in the U.S. was its modern appearance and the use of the newest staging technologies. One of these was the electrical light that enhanced the visceral sense of fantasy for its spectators. During the performances, the illumination could be dimmed and a “cyclorama” was used for light projections.<sup>270</sup> Cody, his competitor Carver, and Carl Hagenbeck were all aware of the suggestive power of this new technology that already anticipated new visual modes in theatre and cinema.<sup>271</sup> The massive advertising campaigns certainly must be counted as an American invention at

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<sup>268</sup> Reddin, *Wild West Shows*, 76.

<sup>269</sup> Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s America*, 290.

<sup>270</sup> Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians*, 35.

<sup>271</sup> Weber, *Indians on German Stages*, 133.

this time, and the gigantic logistics, organizational apparatus and reliance on technology made the show itself and its transportation possible. Cody had invested the immense sum of ten thousand dollars in “scenery, canvas, backdrops, and machinery” to outdo his competitors and offer his audience the best experience possible.<sup>272</sup> In addition to that expense, the extensive advertising devoured large amounts of money as well.<sup>273</sup> Through such technical feats and innovations, Buffalo Bill’s *Wild West* revealed itself as a technologically advanced, sophisticated, elaborately organized spectacle that drew all the registers of “progress” in order to impress its audience and to appear as original and authentic as possible. Lastly, Cody also collected letters of endorsement from former army commanders in order to bolster his military accomplishments to the European audience. These letters were printed in the program booklet of the show to enhance Cody’s claim of authenticity and raise his status in Europe, where respect for military feats ranked high. At the same time, John Burke, Cody’s advertisement expert, secured a military rank for Buffalo Bill; thanks to his services as “aid-de-camp” he was awarded the title of Colonel. Even though this commission was honorary only, Cody became simply “the Colonel, even to his family and closest associates.”<sup>274</sup>

Salsbury and Cody took advantage as much as they could from other events that were drawing large crowds and attached the *Wild West* to them. These were often World Fairs, annual markets, or other show-casings of larger proportions. They borrowed logistical developments (such as traffic and crowd control) that led to increased foot traffic and sheer exposure to masses, and it is likely that the show’s status and acclaim

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<sup>272</sup> Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians*, 34.

<sup>273</sup> For example the advertisement for the 1905 tour of France alone cost the company almost 200,000 Francs. AHC, Buffalo Bill collection, Box 1, folder 4, item 3.

<sup>274</sup> Kasson, *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*, 75.



was increased by this strategy.<sup>275</sup> When the *Wild West* went abroad for the first time in 1887, it was attached to London's American Exhibition. In fact, English promoters had been quite desperate to drum up support for the event, and subsequently struck a deal with Nate Salsbury. The scale of the undertaking impressed the press in England as well as in the U.S. The *State of Nebraska* steamship that carried the company over the Atlantic is reported to have held on board eighty-three saloon passengers, thirty-eight steerage passengers, ninety-seven Indians, 180 horses, eighteen buffalo, ten elk, five Texan steers, four donkeys, and two deer. In addition to the one transporting the "live" members of the show, multiple other steamships carried the equipment. Of course, even before this impressive assembly reached the coast of England, John Burke had already plastered London with posters and advertisements for the show, and despite an outbreak of hoof and mouth disease, the steamers were allowed to dock.

The *Wild West* encampment became the hot spot for the British upper crust and among others, Prime Minister William Gladstone, the Prince of Wales and future King Edward VII with his wife and daughters, and even the aging Queen Victoria honored the *Wild West* and Cody with her presence in May.<sup>276</sup> Even though she did not share the enthusiasm for the Indians, she found the show exciting and interesting, as she stated in her diary:

All the different people, wild, painted Red Indians from America, on their wild bare backed horses, of different tribes- cow boys, Mexicans, etc., all came tearing round at full speed, shrieking & screaming, which had the weirdest effect. An attack on a coach & on a ranch, with an immense amount of firing, was most exciting, so was the buffalo hunt, & the bucking ponies, that were almost

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<sup>275</sup> For example, in Bremen the *Wild West* coincided with the "Northwest German Commerce and Industry Fair" that was open in the city from June through October 1890. Cody was there in September 1890.

<sup>276</sup> For a detailed description of the English tour and the stay in London, see for example Don Russell, *Lives and Legends*, chapter 23, Cunningham, *Your Fathers the Ghosts*.

impossible to sit. The cow boys are fine looking people, but the painted Indians, with their feathers & wild dress (very little of it) were rather alarming looking, & they have cruel faces.<sup>277</sup>

Cody himself later circulated the story of the Queen bowing to the American flag, which of course was eagerly reported in the American papers and frequently reprinted in pamphlets and advertisements for the show. Recently, historians have questioned this occurrence, and it is likely that it is one of Cody's many fabricated myths in order to enhance his persona and the importance of the *Wild West* as a cultural ambassador. This alone, however, makes this story worth mentioning: it was vastly important to Cody to stress his ambassadorial role and promote America in Europe. In that same vein, having the former institution that ruled America and against whom America had fought a war of independence, honor and validate this American product was of utter significance and magnitude for the American self-esteem. In fact, Cody wrote in his autobiography about this incident: "we felt that the hatchet was buried at last and the *Wild West* had been at the funeral."<sup>278</sup>

Queen Victoria asked for another performance for her Jubilee Festivities on June 20, which was also attended by the kings of Greece, Belgium, Denmark and Saxony as well as multiple European princes and princesses, including Germany's future Kaiser, Wilhelm II. Immediately afterwards, Cody had lithographs produced that soon became the basis for show posters and were distributed alongside other advertisement material. They showed Cody's head, surrounded by those of his royal patrons. Again, this exposure to and approval by dignities from all over Europe tremendously boosted not only the

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<sup>277</sup> Queen Victoria's diary as quoted in Joseph G. Rosa and Robin May, *Buffalo Bill and His Wild West: A Pictorial Biography* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 118-119.

<sup>278</sup> Cody, *Camp-Fire Chats*, 737.

popularity and fame of the *Wild West* in Europe, but also stroked the American ego to a level that Cody became an even greater celebrity in America during these years of his absence. At the end of the London engagement in October 1887, well over a million people had seen the performances, and William Cody was a superstar in England. From London, the *Wild West* traveled to Birmingham, Manchester, and Hull, where it was also received enthusiastically. In 1903, during the second tour through England, Cody reinforced his ambassadorial role once again in his speech to “Young Britons.” Nearly 5000 children, among them “150 crippled,” were given a special performance, and the children waved both the Union Jack and the Star Spangled Banner. Cody thanked them for their “expression of international friendship” and proclaimed that they accomplished what their “elders must hope to achieve through the beaten paths of diplomacy.” He added that “when the message that you send today is wired to the eighty-six millions of our people it will have a value beyond calculation.”<sup>279</sup>

In May of 1889, the *Wild West* started its next European adventure and opened its gates in Paris on the occasion of the *Exposition Universelle*, which commemorated the centenary of the French Revolution. More than 10,000 people, including President Sadi Carnot, turned out for the opening performance on May 18 at the show grounds in Neuilly, a suburb of Paris. The papers reported lavishly on the performance, the presence of the president, and Buffalo Bill’s exploits in the West as they were related in the show program.<sup>280</sup> Cody had slightly modified some parts of the program to match it better to its French audience, and this strategy became standard practice. The program included

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<sup>279</sup> *Daily News*, London, February 21, 1903. In BBHC, MS6, series VI G, Box 3, folder 5, #2726.

<sup>280</sup> Extensive coverage was provided for example in *L’Illustration*, June 8, 1889 and June 22, 1889 and in *Le Figaro*, May 12, 1889 and May 19, 1889.

national personas and small nation-specific additions with which the individual country could identify; this enhanced the personal experience of the audience because the content was more relevant that way. In France, the cowboy band played the *Marseillaise*, the French national anthem, after the Star Spangled Banner. The French *tricolor* was presented next to the American flag, and several performers dressed as fur trappers, which represented the French influence in North America. Not only did the papers report on the performance of the *Wild West* cast in the arena. They also frequently informed their readers about competitions the cowboys engaged in with locals who claimed they could beat them in riding or shooting. For example, a French paper related a story of a race between a cowboy on horseback and a man on a bicycle.<sup>281</sup> To overcome the language barrier, Cody hired French-speaking secretaries, interpreters, and press agents. Of course the programs were translated into the respective languages, and each country had its own version of Buffalo Bill's name: the French called him "Guillaume Bison" or "Guillaume le Buffle," the Italians christened him "Buffa Bill" or "Boofela," and in Germany the papers translated his name to "Büffel-Wilhelm," however, a Berlin paper commented that the German translation was "only little romantic" and most papers used the English version.<sup>282</sup>

While at Paris, noted French painter Rosa Bonheur came to the camp and painted several scenes, among them one that showed Napoleon and Cody on their horses. The two men are depicted in a very similar style, and the caption under the painting refers to Napoleon's military and Cody's "cultural" conquests respectively. With Napoleon facing to the front left and Cody to the front right, the painting seems to convey that Napoleon

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<sup>281</sup> *L'Illustration*, June 8, 1889.

<sup>282</sup> "Bei Buffalo Bill." *Berliner Börsen Courier*, July 23, 1890.

represents the glorious French past, whereas Cody embodies the future. This was a much-coveted interpretation by Cody and his fellow Americans and reinforces the idea of America as the land of the future and of youthful regeneration. The fact that Bonheur equated Cody with Napoleon must have been flattering to him.

In every situation of cultural contact, stereotypes often pre-determine and shape the encounter. Whereas in England the *Wild West* encountered many cultural similarities and common interests and themes, the French stay was coined by contrast and rivalry. Americans tried to set themselves apart from the French, and thus, certainly, American stereotypes about the French accompanied the show to Paris. They ranged from a questioning of French morality and industriousness to a perceived decadence and snobbery. In fact, one incident especially highlights American discontent with the French attitude: for the invitation-only pre-opening performance in front of the French elite, Cody had not hired a French-speaking announcer but instead had Frank Richmond read his translated script without any knowledge of the French language. It should not come as too much of a surprise that the audience did not appreciate or understand his way of “hollering French at the natives.” Still, the Americans were offended at the audience’s reaction with hoots and pounding on the grandstands, and defended Richmond as a “natural linguist who spoke the language with a genuine Parisian accent,” while accusing the high-class audience of behaving like thick-headed, stubborn school children.<sup>283</sup> Some reporters even poked fun at French fashion and sophistication, which stood in contrast to their behavior: how could you take seriously “men that wore patent leather shoes and had

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<sup>283</sup> *La Charge*, August 11, 1889, *New York Tribune*, August 31, 1889, in *Scrapbook for France*, BBHC.

‘pearly gray finger tips?’<sup>284</sup> American self-consciousness as well as pride certainly played a role in these statements, especially since they were facing Europe’s cultural epicenter. Thus, they highlighted French decadence and softness and contrasted it with their own simple morality and hardiness that, even though it might not produce the highest forms of fashion or sophistication, was true, honest, and pure. America’s values were different and certainly nothing to be ashamed of.

Despite these stereotypes, the French received the Americans with much enthusiasm that was substantially generated by literature and a longing for everything the West was imagined to offer. Perhaps it can be said that William Cody was accepted with more enthusiasm than hardly any foreigner before him, and maybe this was because he did not really feel like a stranger to the French public but in his persona as a frontier hero felt more like a personification of a character from Cooper or Aimard. Furthermore, the Indians had been sufficiently romanticized in the French perception, and the common themes of the Indians as noble savages and as fierce yet doomed warriors of a vanishing race dominated the press coverage. Whenever the Indians ventured into the city, the press reported their excursions in detail, and the French were especially proud when the Indians climbed the Eiffel Tower, which had just been erected to mark the occasion of the exhibit.

Reddin contends that one of the distinctive features of the French reception is a note of sensuality that crept into French accounts of the participants in the show. For example, Buffalo Bill and Annie Oakley were described in a way that highlighted their physical attractiveness: Buffalo Bill’s “Herculian body is surmounted by a superb head,

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<sup>284</sup> *New York Times*, May 18, 1890 and June 23, 1889.

illuminated by deep-set, flashing eyes, and when he appears on his horse, letting his long, shoulder length hair wave in the wind, one experiences an indefinable sensation....”<sup>285</sup>

Rydell and Kroes also mentioned that “touching the Indians became a popular sport among young French couples, who, newspapers reported, thought such contact would assure fertility.”<sup>286</sup> Curious though this language may seem, similar accounts and descriptions can be found in the German newspaper coverage, too, and I would argue that it was not highly unusual but simply the elocution of the time.

France was only the first stop on this extensive continental tour that also brought the *Wild West* to Spain, Italy, Austria, Germany, and Belgium, and eventually back to Great Britain. From France, the *Wild West* continued to Barcelona for a three-week engagement in December of 1889, this being the only scheduled appearance on the Iberian Peninsula. There is some misinterpretation among scholars about the success and reception of the show in Barcelona. The weather was reportedly very bad, which kept the crowds a little smaller. Indeed, the management of the show noted in its ledger that the stay in Spain coincided with the “rainy season,” whereas all the other cities visited are accompanied with a note that indicated only a few days of rain each.<sup>287</sup> Claims about the Spaniards being offended and boycotting the show due to derisive comments about the limited ferocity of Spanish bulls are difficult to reconstruct from the available sources, just as much as the reports about an outbreak of the flu that supposedly cost many of the

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<sup>285</sup> Reddin, *Wild West Shows*, 100.

<sup>286</sup> Rydell and Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna*, 109.

<sup>287</sup> AHC, Buffalo Bill Collection, Box 1, folder 4, item 1.

Indians their lives. Overall, there is little reason to assume that the Spaniards were less excited about the spectacular performances in the arena.<sup>288</sup>

From Spain, the show moved on to Italy and visited Naples, Rome, Florence, Bologna, Milan, and Verona in the spring of 1890. For the Americans, Italy represented the cradle of world culture. They marveled at its antiquity and splendor and had their pictures taken at the Coliseum and in front of other ancient structures. At the same time, however, they subscribed to less favorable nineteenth century American stereotypes about the character of Southern Europeans. And even though Cody publicly flattered the Italians by highlighting their class and style and showing much reverence for the “Eternal City,” playing in Italy put in sharp contrast the cultural clash that Americans perceived between them and Europeans: the decaying walls of ancient Italy embodied the state of European civilization, whereas America was perceived as rejuvenating.

The Italian audience, not as used to seeing strangers as for example Germans at the time, treated the Indians especially with less respect, mocking them and pulling their hair to test its authenticity. Lacking the long-term exposure to exhibits of foreign peoples, they were at the same time fascinated and appalled and perhaps saw the Indians in a similar way that Germans had black Africans earlier in the century. Some sources state that the Indians fled to their tents after the performance and closed the flaps so that nobody would come and harass them.<sup>289</sup> Besides these less pleasant occurrences, the Americans did lots of sightseeing, visiting the attractions of Rome, Mt. Vesuvius near Naples, and even took a gondola tour in Venice, which produced a famous photograph

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<sup>288</sup> For a detailed analysis of the *Wild West* in Spain see Chris Dixon’s forthcoming monograph on Buffalo Bill in Barcelona.

<sup>289</sup> *Il Corriere Italiano*, Firenze, March 14, 1890, and March 18, 1890.



that was disseminated widely throughout the United States and found a steady spot in the show program (attached at the end of this chapter). American newspapers followed them closely and eagerly reported back to the States every adventure and encounter. They also drew much attention in the Italian press, and on both sides much was made out of the blessing of Buffalo Bill and his troupe by Pope Leo XIII.<sup>290</sup>

Even though an advertising bonanza was launched, the show drew fewer crowds than it had in other European countries. Especially Naples, but also Bologna and Florence did not generate the crowds that the *Wild West* usually entertained. The stops in Verona and Milan were more rewarding.<sup>291</sup> It seems that Italians enjoyed the spectacle much more for its entertainment value than for its ideological messages, which had been so crucial to the show's success in the United States.<sup>292</sup> Although fascinated by the spectacle that was offered to them in the arena, Italians knew much less about the American West and did not have an equally strong literary tradition of romanticizing the American Indian as their European neighbors did. Thus, the show here drew most of its visitors solely on advertisement and newspaper coverage at the moment of their presence. It could not fall back as much on previously formed romantic images of Native Americans roaming the

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<sup>290</sup> *L'Opinione*, Rome, February 21, 1890, *Il Diritto*, Rome, February 21, 1890 and February 27, 1890. On the Papal reception (which was, contrary to some accounts including Cody's own, not a special reception for the troupe but instead the celebrations for Pope Leo XIII coronation anniversary that the troupe happened to witness), *Il Diritto*, March 7, 1890. See also the account in John Burke's book, *From Prairie to Palace. The Lost Biography of Buffalo Bill*, in which he claimed that "the pontiff leaned affectionately toward the rude groups and blessed them," and that he seemed to be "touched by the sight." Furthermore, Burke noted that the Indians had difficulty restraining their "whooping." John Burke, *From Prairie to Palace. The Lost Biography of Buffalo Bill*. Introduction by Jason Berger, edited by Tim Connor (Spokane, WA: Marquette, 2005).

<sup>291</sup> Measured by the income generated per show in each city. AHC, Buffalo Bill collection, Box 1, folder 4, item 1.

<sup>292</sup> For a deeper coverage of the *Wild West* in Italy, see the article by Anna Scacchi: "Buffalo Bill a Roma." In: *Il Veltro*, Vol.44, issue 1-2, 2000, 71-83. Scacchi supports the argument that the Romans' response to the show differed from that of other Europeans. She argues that they applauded him less for his role as a frontier hero and more as a showman and shrewd entrepreneur.

wilderness or evoke feelings of nostalgia as it did in other European countries. Italians, who were inherently steeped in their Roman culture, heritage, and history of conquest and colonization, perhaps did not perceive the American conquest of the wilderness as an extraordinary feat compared to their own past and thus were less excited about this ideology-laden adventure story.

Even though Italians did immigrate to the United States, the migration only started in the 1870s, when Italy had become overcrowded and workers suffered from low wages and high taxes. Between 1890 and 1900, a little over a half a million emigrants left Italy for the US, most of them men with little education and from rural communities.<sup>293</sup> Despite this emigration wave, however, Italians had not participated in the settling of America, nor had they the same nostalgic connection with nature and simplicity as for example the Germans. Historically and culturally, Italians reveled in a glorious past of civilization and advancement, quite the opposite of what the American wilderness represented. Additionally, the show did not speak as much to Italian desires and fears. In fact, Italy was just at the beginning of a significant industrial development and thus Italians were not exposed to the same constricting and monotone work routines of the factories that inspired many a German to escape into a world of violence and freedom such as that offered by Buffalo Bill.

Compared to Germany or England, Italian newspapers devoted only little attention to the ethnological components of the show, and did not delve into political issues such as the reservation system in the U.S. They instead described the battle scenes, overall spectacle of hosting Buffalo Bill and his troupe, and presenting Roman culture to

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<sup>293</sup> <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAEItaly.htm>, retrieved February 24, 2012.

them. Of special interest were stories about competitions between Italians and Americans that occurred outside of the arena and sometimes created significant ill-will between the Italians and their guests. For example, one newspaper reported a riding contest of wild horses between a cowboy and *buttari* Giulio Bedini of the Mariani Equestrian Circus (an Italian group that copied Cody's show in Rome), which the latter won and was paid a 500 lire bet prize by "il signor Americano."<sup>294</sup> Another described the riding of the Duke of Sermoneta's wild horses, who had claimed that his horses were untamable. In front of a sizeable crowd and in the pouring rain, the cowboys proved this to be wrong and mounted the horses "in less than a quarter of an hour," much to the admiration of most and disdain of some of the witnesses.<sup>295</sup>

Italians were also fascinated by the magnitude of the enterprise; they gathered at the train station to view the arrival of the show, and marveled at the shooting skills of Annie Oakley, the trick riding by the cowboys and the colorful splendor of the Indian dances. In particular, though, it was the persona of Buffalo Bill that fascinated Italians the most.<sup>296</sup> Many newspapers reported on his attractiveness, his fearlessness, and his many adventures on the frontier. It is possible, however, that this concentration on Buffalo Bill himself perhaps came from a lack of other information or even interest in the general idea that was the American West. For example, whereas German newspapers printed many supplemental pieces on the extinction of the buffalo, the Indian Wars, the reservation system, the settlement of the West, the landscape, climate, and the general character of Americans and life in the West, Italians might not have been as eager to learn for the

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<sup>294</sup> *Il Diritto*, Rome, March 8, 1890.

<sup>295</sup> *La Capitale*, Rome, March 5, 1890 and March 6, 1890. *Il Diritto*, Rome, March 7, 1890.

<sup>296</sup> As a survey of Italian newspaper coverage reveals. This is also the opinion of Italian colleagues who have been working with Italian primary material for a study about Buffalo Bill in Italy.

above mentioned reasons. Thus, the papers reprinted the material provided for them in the program, which was heavily studded with William Cody's life and exploits in the West, and did not bother to disseminate other kinds of information. They might have also seen Cody in the tradition of gladiatorial contests, a brave warrior who fought strange animals and ferocious foes.

Reddin notes that there seems to have been a good deal of criticism in Italy of the show. This criticism ranged from insufficient direction of traffic to faded costumes to the opinion that the riding and shooting was unexceptional. Also, the show could have "benefitted from a better director," who allegedly did not live up to Italian theater and performance standards.<sup>297</sup> This kind of criticism does not appear in the German newspapers. If Germans criticized, they complained about the noise and dust, not being able to acquire a ticket, or about American cultural practices in general. Reddin also notes that the Indians were often described in the Italian press as "warlike and of unsettled temperament" who would "destroy everything with fire and arms" and "commit any atrocity" at the slightest provocation.<sup>298</sup> This is remarkably different from the reception of the Indian in Germany or France, where the image of the noble savage had all but blotted out such characterizations. The Italians, lacking the element of Romanticization, saw the Indian in a barbaric state that was despicable rather than admirable. Moreover, this could also be connected to their own history and creation myth; Italians saw themselves in the tradition of the Old Romans who had civilized the European continent and forced many a native tribe into either acculturation or obliteration. Hence, it is possible that this basic

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<sup>297</sup> Reddin, *Wild West Shows*, 108.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*

concept contributed to the Italians' inability or unwillingness to view the Indians as a noble people.

Some Italian newspapers described the *Wild West* as a regular circus type attraction that did not surpass some of the national productions in scale or excitement.<sup>299</sup> The element of authenticity that was so important to Buffalo Bill and that, in his mind, set his show apart from a mere circus did not matter as much to Italians as it did to Germans or the French. Again, this can perhaps be explained by Italians' comparative lack of knowledge about the American West and of a personal connection with that part of the world. They did not empathize as much with Indians because they did not identify with them as Germans did, nor did they take part in the colonization of North America, as the French had. The *Wild West* was devoid of such connections for Italians, and therefore regarded more as an ordinary circus with random props that might as well have been manufactured next door. Overall, while by no means a failure, the tour through Italy drew fewer visitors compared to France or England and did not correspond well enough with Italian culture or anxieties in order to call it a smashing success. Especially compared to the next stop, the Italian experience would fade into the background; William Cody and his troupe would meet their most enthusiastic audience in Germany.

The show debuted in Munich in April of 1890, then moved to Vienna in May and came back for the rest of the year to play in Dresden, Leipzig, Magdeburg, Hanover, Braunschweig, Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen, Cologne, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, Stuttgart, and Strasburg, which was German at this time. It closed in October of 1890, wintered there and reopened its gates in April of 1891, from whence it continued its German tour with

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<sup>299</sup> *L'Italia*, Milano, April 4, 1890 and April 5, 1890.

stops in Karlsruhe, Mannheim, Darmstadt, Mainz, Cologne, Dortmund, Duisburg, Krefeld, and Aachen, where it arrived in May of 1891.<sup>300</sup>

In May and June the show played in Belgium's Brussels and Antwerp and then crossed the Channel for another extended tour of Great Britain, where it visited twenty cities over the next 16 months, ending with a five months stay in London in October of 1892. While there this time, it counted Frederic Remington as one of the visitors, who was by then already considered one of the foremost Western artists of his time. His comments reflect the scope of the spectacle in London: "At present everyone knows where it [the Wild West] is, from the gentleman on Piccadilly to the dirtiest coster in the remotest slum of Whitechapel... One should no longer ride the deserts of Texas or the rugged uplands of Wyoming to see the Indians and the pioneers, but should go to London."<sup>301</sup> Finally, the show returned to the United States to play before a home audience for the next ten years. In December of 1902, Cody and his *Wild West* returned to London from whence they set out for yet another European tour that lasted until 1906 and encompassed Great Britain, France, Italy, the former Austrian Empire (which includes the modern states of Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, the former Yugoslavia, Romania, Poland, the Check Republic, Slovakia, and parts of Russia), Germany, Luxemburg, and Belgium.

Germans were very aware that the *Wild West* presented them something unique. As previously noted Germans had grown weary and bored of the constant presence of strangers, who did not really capture their imagination anymore. It was the Indians who uniquely inspired their longings and drew them out of the house and to the show grounds,

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<sup>300</sup> Route book, 1890/1891. MS6 Series VI: A, Box 3 folder 16.

<sup>301</sup> Remington, as quoted in Rosa and May, *Buffalo Bill*, 155-156.

but it was also the level of entertainment and the spectacular that Cody offered his audiences that distinguished his show from the previous *Völkerschauen*. The fascination with the exotic and the fears and opportunities of imperialism were some of the elements that made the *Völkerschauen* so successful in Europe; they fit European notions about the world and their place in it. In contrast, the Wild West shows were an American phenomenon, imbued with specifically American ideology and propaganda. Since racial struggle was crucial in the American context, it was also an integral part of the shows (and of course it catered to the dramatic and entertainment factors that were becoming so important at this time). Thus, Buffalo Bill cast his frontier story in terms of an exciting struggle between the races, not as an ethnographic showcase. However, Europeans also still saw the ethnographic elements of the *Völkerschauen* in the *Wild West*, which is part of the reason why they reacted so favorably towards the Indians.

Newspaper reports about Buffalo Bill reflect the perceived differences between the *Wild West* and the previous kind of ethnographic entertainment: on the one hand, the newspapers emphasized the educational character of the show in the tradition of the *Völkerschauen*, but they also noted that there is more to it than that. In June of 1890, a Dresden newspaper commented on the similarities between Buffalo Bill's troupe and other ethnographic shows as well as the *Wild West's* educational character that contributed strongly to its success. It recognized the pioneering efforts of zoological gardens and their desire to contribute to the education of the public through the means of the exhibits. The author also remarked that "from an ethnological standpoint, [Buffalo Bill's *Wild West*] is decidedly just as valuable as any of the numerous groups of people.... However, never before did we have the opportunity... to see a traveling troupe

such as Buffalo Bill's Wild West, and the lively interest gives witness to the strong desire of our citizens for education."<sup>302</sup> Other newspapers further emphasized the entertainment value and its originality and authenticity, calling the *Wild West* "the latest form of exhibition entertainment."<sup>303</sup>

Cody's show indeed contained many of the elements of a *Völkerschau*: there were the Native American dances, riding contests and their Native sports and fighting styles.<sup>304</sup> Such acts were easily recycled and recreated, newly combined and put together, and were part of many of the Native American shows touring Europe at the turn of the century. The camp that accompanied the show of course in its very nature was nothing new to German audiences, even though the scale and accessibility might have struck many Germans as a novelty. In 1893, *Meyers Koversations-Lexikon* described Cody's *Wild West* along these lines as "the latest trend 'in anthropological exhibitions,' or 'performances of representatives of foreign peoples for the satisfaction and visual pleasure and the dissemination of anthropological knowledge'"<sup>305</sup>

In addition to the entertainment and the dissemination of knowledge, another element comes to light in the newspaper coverage that set the *Wild West* apart from its competitors: for Germans (as opposed to Italians for example), the special appeal of the show was that it was considered authentic in its representation of cultural forms and historic events; it was seen as a true representation of frontier history, which brimmed with historicity and authenticity. It was indeed the element of authenticity that the *Wild*

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<sup>302</sup> *Tageblatt*, Dresden, June 15, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.10a).

<sup>303</sup> *Anzeiger für Tharand und Mohorn*, June 3, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.06b).

<sup>304</sup> After 1890, not only Native Americans performed such "ethnic" acts, but also performers of other nationalities. For example, the newly added Arabs and Cossacks of the Congress of Rough Riders also demonstrated their specific riding games, sports, and dances.

<sup>305</sup> Ames, "Seeing the Imaginary," 213.



*West* had over circuses that were emerging at this time all over the U.S. and a little later in Europe. Americans and Europeans alike loved it for that reason and never really were bothered that it was a “bluff.” In short, this was not circus weirdness but history. A Leipzig paper, for example, described the *Wild West* as “strictly separated from theatrical dramatizations,” and only depicting “the reality of Indian life.”<sup>306</sup> Another paper added that even though an “Indian troupe or the Indian tent is nothing new in Leipzig,” the *Wild West* did not resemble any mere trick riding company but instead was “a historic-ethnographic show, aiming to give an authentic image of the life and dangers of the approach of the white men and their dealings with the only reluctantly retreating free sons of the ‘Great Spirit.’”<sup>307</sup> The show program and accompanying brochure conveyed similar intentions. They claimed that the show consisted only of “real personalities, only true, no false equipment” and that it was no mere “theater production,” but that instead “one sees here actual life, as it was in the west... a genuine, unvarnished picture of the past- the fighters and wild riders of the prairie.”<sup>308</sup> Lastly, the brochure also emphasized another important connection between Germany and the American West in order to enhance its relevance, immediacy, and authenticity to German audiences: it argued that Germans will find it “especially interesting to learn about real life” in the West through the means of the show because they have “sent so many of their brothers to the far west.” Thus, this claim of authenticity was a crucial element for Germans, and certainly one of the intentions of William Cody when he brought the show to Europe.

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<sup>306</sup> *Leipziger Tageblatt und Anzeiger*, Leipzig, June 17, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.12a).

<sup>307</sup> *Zeitung*, Leipzig, June 17, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.13c), my italics.

<sup>308</sup> BBWW Journal, no page numbers, 1890, in Scrapbook for Germany.

Understandably so, Buffalo Bill and the Indians created a real sensation when they arrived in Germany, and it seems that the enthusiasm in Germany was greater than in any of the other European countries. Of all the traveling shows displaying scenes from the American West, it was Cody's that left "a lasting impression on the already sensitized German imagination thanks to his ability to create the illusion of authenticity with the help of his performers and his own persona as well as owing to the show's extraordinary corporeality."<sup>309</sup> Because the images of the *Wild West* were validated by the emphasis on authenticity and paired with the immediacy of the spectacle, they joined and often overpowered prior notions of the West that might have been less dramatic. In fact, Eric Ames stressed that even though Germans perceived the West in many different and sometimes contradictory ways, the "ardent embrace of fantasy" stands out in the German reception.<sup>310</sup>

Cody made sure that his show met the taste and the expectations of the public. He well knew that he walked in the footsteps of Cooper and other image makers, and thus he made sure that this imagination and fantasy that inspired his audience the most was an integral part of his representation. This intimate connection between the *Wild West* and previous image makers was especially strong in Germany and played a crucial role in the success of the *Wild West* in this country. More so than in any other European context, it contributed to the ardent and passionate embrace of the Indian and everything Western by Germans. On the one hand, of course, scientists and ethnographers were still fascinated with the Indians; the ones traveling with the show offered a last opportunity to examine

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<sup>309</sup> Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians*, 45, 91 and Weber, *Indians on German Stages*, 219.

<sup>310</sup> Ames, "Seeing the Imaginary," 214.

and gather data from these soon to be extinct tribes. The general public, in contrast, did not hold such scientific and data-driven objectives; much more than that, they saw the Indians as living embodiments of characters from the novels that they had read in the past. As Ames has very convincingly argued, the “German reception’s governing logic was one of vivification,” meaning that by recalling the images of Cooper and Gerstäcker, German spectators were able to “take possession of the American entertainment and make it their own.”<sup>311</sup>

In these performances, what the public had read was coming to life in an even more attractive way than in *Völkerschauen* because adventure and the thrill of danger were made palpable.<sup>312</sup> The *Wild West*’s “principle of reception” on many levels went beyond live, materialized information and education. “Vivification of a fictional universe” meant that “to many German spectators, the *Wild West* seemed to convert fictional characters into living tissue....”<sup>313</sup> The performers and acts in the arena gave life to these fictional characters that never existed in real life, and thus made many a spectator’s childhood dream about participating in an adventure story come true. The Americans seemed to have come straight from the pages of novels written by Sir Walter Scott, Cooper, or Gerstäcker. Cody was acutely aware that this connection existed and took full advantage of it.

Ames has also argued that as a consequence of this deep cultural infatuation and connection, “Cody moved his production away from referential worlds toward a fantastic diegetic universe internally related to fictional elements proceeding from the

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<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

<sup>312</sup> See Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians*, 45.

<sup>313</sup> Weber, *Indians on German Stages*, 222.

imaginary.”<sup>314</sup> In other words, Cody created a world in his arena that was as authentic and real as the novels and imagination of the German audience could dream it. Buffalo Bill presented real Indians, and not white actors, who now inhabited their own representations. As Richard White noted, this was “the most complicated kind of mimesis” in the sense that the performers were “imitating imitations of themselves.”<sup>315</sup> Buffalo Bill had brilliantly conceived and executed this powerful mimesis, which helped propel his representation of the West to the top of the entertainment business and supplant prior notions of the West with his own in the German imagination. Presumably, then, from the start the West as portrayed in the *Wild West* was a thrilling, entertaining, but highly imaginative place of struggle. For Germans, the show resided much more in the realm of fiction and entertainment than at the core of identity, as it was intended to for Americans.

The concepts of authenticity and vivification thus feed off of each other in a peculiar way: on the one hand, Germans wanted to see the “real” and authentic Indians that had fought on the Plains, they wanted to see real props like the stagecoach and Cody’s costume that he wore when he killed Yellow Hair. Indians played white representations of themselves that nevertheless existed in one form or another. Thus, in the arena, these representations were “preserved” and stood as authentication of history similar to what ethnographic museums would do (just in a more spectacular way). At the same time, the actual encounters between Indians and the German population and the cross-cultural dialogue that often resulted from such contact heightened this feeling of

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<sup>314</sup> Ames, *Carl Hagenbeck’s Empire of Entertainments*, 106.

<sup>315</sup> White, “Buffalo Bill and Turner,” <http://www.studythepast.com/his378/turnerandbuffalobill.pdf> .

authenticity even more and gave the Indians a real platform and voice. This was especially true in cases where they were invited to hold public speeches and when they were seen walking through town and making purchases. On the other hand, according to the principle of vivification, the participants were seen as giving life to figures that never existed in reality but only in the imagination of their creators. Being technically fictional, the German audience nevertheless imbued them with the same degree of realism with which they saw people like Cody and Annie Oakley. These two receptions worked side by side with each other and seemed not to have caused any great concern or confusion among the audience. On the contrary, the combination further strengthened the already existing stereotypes and images of Native Americans and the American West in Germany.

While traveling Europe, it became clear that Buffalo Bill's spectacle differed more dramatically from the world around it than it had in the U.S. Precisely because of these differences, Germans were still eager to learn and believe. In contrast, American audiences were much more aware and informed of events in the West and their significance for the nation. Some people in the audience might have even had personal memories from homesteading in the West or at least from traveling there. For Germans, the show was much more exotic and had few points of reference between their reality and the featured performance; the *Wild West* existed mostly in the arena and in their imagination. Buffalo Bill's impact on German images of the West can consequently be regarded as even more dramatic. With his version of the West he created a memory that turned into the predominant way of thinking for Germans about that region of the world. Thanks to Buffalo Bill, the German "mind map" of the American West was enriched

significantly with the drama of struggle. In an interview conducted in May of 1891 Buffalo Bill stated the purpose for the show in Germany, combining the elements of exoticism, interest, and excitement: “we bring a never-before seen novelty. Not only do we satisfy curiosity but also the thirst for knowledge. Our tour is a cultural-historical mission. Just watch out you don’t get kicked!”<sup>316</sup>

The German newspapers gave voice to these sentiments and this connection between literature, imagination, and the spectacle in the arena. Many descriptions of the *Wild West* are paired with comments that invoke Cooper or other image carriers. A Berlin paper in July of 1890 raved: “it is really nothing new that we saw there; we have already seen it—not with our living eyes, but rather only in the dreams of our childhood.... Nothing arouses the imagination of children to the same measure as stories of Indians, of pathfinders and backwoodsmen.”<sup>317</sup> Another paper stated “still today, just as in our childhood, we are captured by the magical spell of Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Tales*, and names of chiefs and squaws such as “‘Nimble Deer,’ ‘White Dove,’ and others like it have for us a sound transfigured by the actual poetry of the primeval forest.”<sup>318</sup> One reporter even quoted Johann Wolfgang von Goethe to help explain the deep influence of western literature on Germans:

Whatever you desire most in your youth you will have in abundance in old age, says Goethe. What would we have given in our childhood, when we with glowing cheeks were studying Ferry’s *Waldläufer*, to see with our own eyes the romantic likeness of an Indian! And now, that we have settled with our youthful dreams, Colonel Cody, also called Buffalo Bill, comes along and shows us in

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<sup>316</sup> *Dortmunder Zeitung*, Dortmund, May 19, 1891, see also Karl Markus Kreis, “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West in Dortmund 1891 und seine Begegnung mit Karl May in Dresden 1906,” *Studies in the Western IV*(1996): 50-72, 68.

<sup>317</sup> “Bei Buffalo Bill,” *Berliner Zeitung*, July 24, 1890.

<sup>318</sup> *Lokal Anzeiger*, Berlin, July 24, 1890. For further examples, see also *Hamburger Nachrichten*, August 22, 1890, *Berliner Intelligenz-Blatt*, July 18, 1890, *Dresdner Journal*, June 7, 1890.

lavish galore everything we once wished for. This is the way it goes with many things in life: you only get the good food when you have lost your good teeth. But thankfully there is a new youth; may they have it better. For these few days, the motto should be for everybody who would either like to be transplanted back into their youth or make their children happy: Let's go to the show!<sup>319</sup>

A paper from Meitzen in June 1891 claimed that “visitor numbers will remain high because we all still have a secret sympathy for the romance of the Indian and free life of the rider, even though the times are long gone when we experienced heroic acts with Leatherstocking and the last Mohican.”<sup>320</sup>

Before setting out again after the winter in Germany to continue the German tour in 1891, Cody and Salsbury made a few significant changes to the show and its cast. Some of these were triggered by allegations and rumors in the United States about show Indians being mistreated, which greatly enraged Cody and caused him to extend an invitation to the camp to the American consul general and the consul of Hamburg so that they could convince themselves personally of the health and happiness of the Indian contingent. In addition to this measure, which proved to be successful (the *New York Herald* printed a retraction of the former allegations)<sup>321</sup> Cody and Burke returned to the U.S. along with a few Indians to prove once and for all that the latter were not starving or mistreated in any way. In 1890, during their stay, the Ghost Dance movement escalated, Sitting Bull was killed, and the Massacre at Wounded Knee sealed the fate of the Sioux at Standing Rock. Cody was actually called upon by General Miles to intervene, but he did not make it to the scene in time. Nevertheless, his vicinity to these events made the news, and Cody himself, in his usual manner, gained a tremendous amount of publicity and

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<sup>319</sup> *General Anzeiger*, Dortmund, May 15, 1891.

<sup>320</sup> *Meitzener Tageblatt*, Meitzen, June 3, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.08a).

<sup>321</sup> “Explicit Denial of the Various Charges Made against ‘Buffalo Bill.’” *New York Herald*, July 24, 1890.

afterwards incorporated some of these elements into his show. In fact, Cody returned to Germany with a contingent of Ghost Dancers that greatly enhanced his claim of authenticity and the German audience's empathy during the following show season.

The Ghost Dance Movement and the Massacre at Wounded Knee were the subject of extensive newspaper coverage in Germany, and many of the articles were openly critical towards the actions of the American government in this chain of events. The Freiberg *Anzeiger und Tageblatt* published a full page article about American Indian policy and the injustices that it brought to the tribes in June of 1890. It first described the nature of the Ghost Dance movement by stating that "a war is being expected with the Indians who believe that a great chief will be resurrected and re-conquer the land for the Indians." According to the paper, this was not so much a political war but a "fight for food" (*Kampf ums Brot*) due to the poor living conditions on the reservations that were caused by the current Indian policy of the American government.

These statements were followed by reports about the conditions on the reservations gathered from American newspapers. Repeatedly, the article stated the injustices the Indians have suffered: for example, the Turtle Mountain Chippewas were dispossessed of their land and white settlers were allowed to settle there against the Indians' will and without compensation. They could not feed themselves due to the poor quality of the land that was left to them since only about one-third of the remaining reservation land was fertile and over 1930 Indians were expected to make a living from it. The paper continued by accusing the government of "letting them die from cold and hunger." Furthermore, the Indians were expected to farm but they were not supplied with any tools. There was no more game or fish to be hunted, and no work to be had. The only



thing left to do was to sell timber, which was not very lucrative. Lastly, the food allotments from the U.S. government were described as pathetically insufficient, and not all of the Indians received their ration of flour and fatty pork every two weeks. Many died of hunger and cold, “including the Catholic Indians: 100 of the 1300 died in the past 18 months. The misery was inexplicable, and it was not the Indians’ fault.” The article concluded with the statement that the Ghost Dance movement, therefore, should not have come as a great surprise.<sup>322</sup>

This and similar assessments of the situation on reservations increased Germans’ sympathy with the plight of the Indian and greatly popularized their fate in Germany. Buffalo Bill advertised heavily in Germany the fact that he had brought the “real” Ghost Dance Indians to Germany with him, which greatly impressed the German public. Here they could witness a piece of contemporary history and with their own eyes convince themselves that these were, in the Cooperian sense, the last of their tribe. The notion that these very Indians had been brutally subdued and their way of life annihilated by the American government added to their appeal and the nostalgic longings that were attached to everything Native American in Germany.

Various scholars have wondered about the reasons why Native Americans would have joined these shows. Until recently, the historiographical assumption was that Native Americans were victims of the *Wild West* and were mistreated and forced to participate, that they were objectified, and subjected to humiliating ethnic humor. L.G. Moses has demonstrated that the Indians were not passive victims but often active pursuers of careers in show business. According to Moses, “it would be wrong to see the show

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<sup>322</sup> *Anzeiger und Tageblatt*, Freiberg, June 1, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.06a).

Indians as simply dupes, or pawns, or even victims. It would be better to approach them as persons who earned a fairly good living between the era of the Dawes Act and the Indian New Deal, playing themselves, re-creating a very small portion of their histories, and enjoying it.”<sup>323</sup> In fact, Moses also drew attention to the fact that “show Indians often spoke eloquently about the necessity of adapting to the modern world.”<sup>324</sup> This awareness emphasizes the vitality of Native groups who, far from succumbing to the ideology of the vanishing Indian and to oppressive reservation policies and de-culturation through boarding schools, took their lives into their own hands. At the turn of the twentieth century, Wild West shows offered the opportunity for achieving this aim. Moses showed that Native Americans enjoyed a greater degree of freedom during their sojourns in Europe than on the tightly controlled reservations. They were the members of a transitional generation that “encountered for the first time the full weight of comprehensive government programs to eradicate native life.”<sup>325</sup>

It is likely that the positive reception in Europe facilitated the decision to join the shows and experience a different lifestyle. It probably helped to maintain their self-esteem and the knowledge that their culture was appreciated and admired, at least in Europe, at a time when being “Indian” in the US was seen as a social stigma. The encounters with Europeans, as intrusive and annoying as they must have been at certain times, perhaps helped some of the performers to cope with their fate. Another aspect that was relevant for the decision to join a Wild West show for Native American performers was that of financial compensation. In fact, the performers’ income was far superior to

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<sup>323</sup> Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians*, 279.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

that of individuals who had remained on the reservations as farmers. A Leipzig paper reports that upon request, the reporter was told by his camp guide that the lowest wage of the Indians was \$30 a month, and that the chiefs received twice that amount. “When considering that food is included, this is very good pay.... The Indians are very frugal, only when playing cards do they splurge.”<sup>326</sup> Lastly, strict rules and contracts protected the members of the show from abuse: William Cody signed contracts for work hours, wages, food, the content of shows, and medical help, which provided the show Indians with much more stability and job benefits than they could have ever received on the reservation.<sup>327</sup>

In addition to the new influx of “famous” Indians at the beginning of the 1891 season, Salsbury had added another element to the show because he was not certain until March of 1891 that Cody would be allowed to hire any more Indians, but also because he and Cody were tuned into European attitudes enough to have realized that they could capitalize on the increasing spirit of militarism and nationalism. Thus, at the beginning of 1891, the *Wild West* was augmented by a grand view of mounted representatives of foreign troops from a variety of countries, including two regular detachments of cavalry—twenty Germans and twenty English soldiers, six Argentinean gauchos, and twelve Russian Cossacks. These troupes joined the twenty Mexican vaqueros, two dozen cowboys, six cowgirls, one hundred Sioux Indians, and a cowboy band of thirty-seven that already belonged to the *Wild West*.<sup>328</sup> A part of the show time was now allotted to these contingents to demonstrate their particular traditions and skills of horsemanship.

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<sup>326</sup> *Tageblatt und Anzeiger*, Leipzig, June 19, 1890.

<sup>327</sup> Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians*, 31, 63, 70, 122.

<sup>328</sup> Russell, *Lives and Legends*, 370-371.

“The Congress of Rough Riders of the World,” as it was dubbed, added to the *Wild West* the element of an imperial pageant. The cast of Cody’s troupe was thus internationalized and broadened the appeal for an international audience. The show was now not as much focused anymore on exclusively portraying elements from the American West but mixed the typical Western elements with exotic spectacles from around the globe. With it, Cody and Salsbury further advanced the evolution of spectacles with foreigners that had been so present in Europe throughout the century. Furthermore, as both Kasson and Reddin argue, the addition of the Congress “inspired dreams of freedom in Europe that seemed locked into class-based social hierarchies.”<sup>329</sup>

The addition of the Congress fit the pulse of the time in Europe well, since it came at the moment when Europeans reached the far frontiers of their own empires. The merging of American frontierism and continental expansion with European colonialism proved to be a successful strategy for William Cody. And while not as relevant for Germany, these larger connections must have been at least partially obvious to European audiences, who “may have seen the show as confirming views of Western superiority and the White Man’s civilizing mission.”<sup>330</sup> The fact that the Rough Riders consisted of members from many different nations and races expanded the frontier myth beyond the “red vs. white” paradigm and appealed to a more and more globally aware public. As Louis Warren has argued, “the effect was not only to Americanize the global frontier, justifying American empire, but also to internationalize the American frontier, inviting once-excluded peoples into the American myth.”<sup>331</sup> The addition of European troops

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<sup>329</sup> Kasson, *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*, 88-91, Reddin, *Wild West Shows*, 104-110.

<sup>330</sup> Rydell and Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna*, 111.

<sup>331</sup> Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*, 430-431.

allowed European audiences to more easily identify with the show acts and indulge in a little bit of national pride, a privilege that in the earlier shows without the Rough Riders had been reserved for Americans only.

Over the years, Cody added more and more exotic components, for example Arab acrobats, depending on popularity and public taste. This strategy enabled him to not only portray events from the past in his “Wild West” component but also achieve relevance for contemporary events: with the help of his international cast, he re-enacted events from around the world that were still making news, and the Congress increasingly functioned as an imperial showcase for America: whereas in the earlier years the Congress united Americans with other mounted troops to underline America’s role as an equal partner among the civilized nations of the world, the addition of Filipinos from America’s first overseas colony or the inclusion of an act featuring some of the Rough Riders who had charged up San Juan Hill clearly demonstrates Cody’s intentions to cast America as an imperial power. This shift away from the earlier focus of the American West and towards new, international frontiers is mirrored in the evolution of the show program: in 1898, Cody replaced his long-standing act of the Duel with Yellow Hair with “Battle at San Juan Hill,” a reenactment of a fight from the Spanish-American War.<sup>332</sup> In addition to the expanded geographical scope, this act also proves Cody’s attempts to become more relevant for the time: the duel lay far in the past, and Custer was a dead hero. In contrast, the hero of the Battle of San Juan was the very much alive Theodore Roosevelt, who had led a regiment of Rough Riders to victory in this battle.<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> Rydell and Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna*.

<sup>333</sup> Warren, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West*, 464-466.

The events of the Spanish-American War also impacted the mutual reception of Americans and Spaniards in the aftermath of the Wild West's visit to Spain: William Cody and other participants began to talk dismissively about the Spanish audience in 1900 and accused the Spaniards of pettiness and arrogance. This has certainly contributed to the debate about the success of the *Wild West* in Spain. Furthermore, the defeat and collapse of the Spanish Empire was a profound shock to Spain's national psyche and contributed to the cooling of relationships between the U.S. and Spain and the retrospective devaluation of the *Wild West*'s visit to Spain. In 1901, Cody opted to once again align his show with American imperialistic endeavors when he replaced the "Battle of San Juan Hill" with a reenactment of the Chinese Boxer Rebellion, the "Battle of Tientsin." Thus, Cody included events that he considered ideologically relevant to the majority of his audience. Incidentally, Mark Twain, usually an ardent supporter of the *Wild West*, did not represent this majority this time but instead "stormed out of the stands in protest at [this] jingoistic 'Battle of Tien-Tsin'" because he perceived it as propaganda, and not as celebration of Western progress.<sup>334</sup> While the Congress of Rough Riders of the World made Cody's spectacle bi-focal, it nevertheless retained its central message, even though it was expanded in scope: American imperialism at home had overcome savagery, and the Americans had proven their worth as a nation and found a common denominator through which they could develop an identity that was uniting instead of divisive. The former adversary was turned into a source of amusement, ethnographic study, and inspiration for a shared racial consciousness among whites that at the same time also

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<sup>334</sup> Ibid., 467. In fact, Mark Twain had become a committed anti-imperialist by this time.

“held the potential for blurring class distinctions.”<sup>335</sup> Abroad, American imperialistic aspirations were to be taken seriously and Americans were a major player in the global league of colonizers.

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<sup>335</sup> Reddin, *Wild West Shows*, 101-102. See also Louis Warren: “Buffalo Bill Meets Dracula: William F. Cody, Bram Stoker, and the Frontiers of Racial Decay,” *American Historical Review* 107 (2002): 1124-1157.



Image 9: Rosa Bonheur's rendition of Cody and Napoleon.



Image 10: Show poster advertising the European tour.

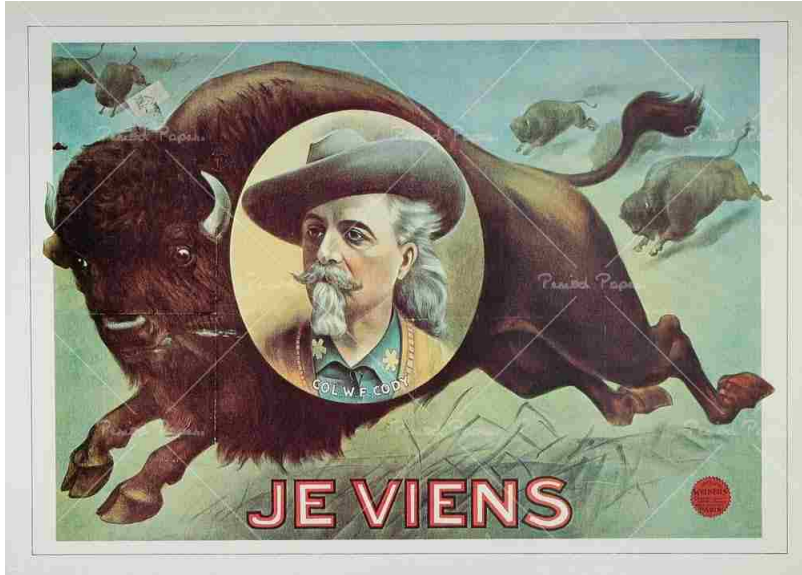




**Image 11:** Wild West arena with Mt. Vesuvius in the background.



**Image 12:** Famous gondola photograph, colored. Venice, 1890.



**Image 13:** Show poster advertising the *Wild West* in France, 1889.



**Image 14:** Poster portraying female dignitaries, among them Queen Victoria of England, 1887.

## CHAPTER 5

### The Mechanics of the *Wild West*

This chapter offers a much more detailed insight into the inner workings of the *Wild West* by illuminating issues that are not directly related to the content of the show or the goings on in the arena, such as advertisement, kitchen logistics, the setting up of the camp, or the role of women in the camp and show.

The German press coverage of the *Wild West* is extensive and well documented for the tour of 1890-91. Due to the length of their stay in every German city, sometimes for up to three weeks, reporters had plenty of time to visit the show, often even repeatedly, and gather additional information. The show itself created such an interest everywhere it went that the public interest in press coverage did not cease. Many reporters had the chance to interview the show's participants about various topics of interest, and they often stated their own opinions about the authenticity and other aspects of the show. Furthermore, some reporters even researched and wrote articles about American politics and other topics of general interest that informed the public of the conditions in America. Of course, as subjects of their time and of German culture, their own opinions mostly reflected the common stereotypes and biases most Germans shared. Furthermore, they were influenced by notions of what the readers wanted to hear and what they thought might be a successful article. Overall, though, the reporters can be expected to hold fairly representative opinions.

The expectations of the audience were heavily based on the stereotypes of the "Indian" and the "Wild West" that had been coined by the visual materials and the

literature that had been consumed. Many articles include very detailed descriptions of the program, the members, the arena, the animals, clothing, behavior, rituals, ethnographic objects, the props and other technical aspects, as well as special events that happened either during the performance or in connection with it. Also, many reporters included much of the material that was printed in the show program about Buffalo Bill and his life on the frontier into their articles. These passages are easily recognized by their identical wording that came straight out of the program. Therefore, four different kinds of articles can be identified: there are those articles that were submitted to the papers by the *Wild West*'s press agents that include generic information and are fairly easily spotted due to the fact that they appear in the same form and phrasing in every city, mostly before the arrival of the troupe.<sup>336</sup> Secondly, there are those articles that mostly include reprinted passages from the program. These articles appear throughout the stay of the *Wild West* in the respective city and often concentrate on a singular topic, such as Buffalo Bill's life or Annie Oakley's shooting skills, which were heavily advertised in the program. Naturally, they do not reflect a German's opinion but simply reiterate information that the organizers of the show deemed important.<sup>337</sup> Thirdly, many papers included inserts of parts of the show program or pages from the "Wild West Journal" that accompanied the show, including pictures and large advertisements.<sup>338</sup>

The fourth type of article is the most valuable and interesting: whenever a newspaper sent a reporter to the show, his article reflects his own opinion. These types of

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<sup>336</sup> For example, *Weser Zeitung*, Bremen, August 20, 1890.

<sup>337</sup> An example for this is the article in *Preussische Zeitung*, Berlin, July 20, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.40a). It relates General Sheridan's account of Cody's epic ride to carry messages between the forts through hostile Indian country. This is an account that was taken from the 'Wild West Journal' that often accompanied the local papers.

<sup>338</sup> For example *Weser Zeitung*, Bremen, September 9, 1890.

articles greatly enhance the variety of the press coverage and provide insight into German opinions about the West and the show. Besides descriptions of the show acts, the horses, or the tricks performed in the arena, these reporters also often saw a code of values, an admirable norm of behavior in the performances and tried to describe the overall impression the *Wild West* made on them. Many reporters, in one form or another, described the performers' "courage and determination, speed and agility—those are the assets which the collective performance showed, so that the actual effect of the performance is very hard to describe. One must see it with his own eyes to be convinced."<sup>339</sup> After having seen the show in Hanover, another reporter admiringly stated that "in the wild way of life in the prairie and backwoods you only have physical strength, skillfulness, and the qualities of spirit to help you meet the practical demands of every moment."<sup>340</sup> These kinds of formulations are unique and demonstrate the deep impact and impression the *Wild West* had on its spectators.

The eyewitness reports often include two elements: the first is the genuine opinion of the reporter and his very personal way of describing the show and the surrounding spectacle. His opinion naturally flows into the description and gives the article a very personal and authentic touch. The language and choice of words in these articles are varied and idiosyncratic and often reveal the genuine enthusiasm of the reporter. The second element in these eyewitness reports provides clues about the extensive press work that Buffalo Bill and other members of the troupe performed in the background: these are the articles that clearly are eyewitness reports but contain, at first sight, startling similarities in wording and content. The reason for these similarities, however, is rather

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<sup>339</sup> For example *Anzeiger und Tageblatt*, Pirna, June 3, 1890, *Berliner Börsen Courier*, July 23, 1890.

<sup>340</sup> *Tageblatt*, Hannover, June 29, 1890.

simple: close reading reveals that many reporters received group tours through the camp that were accompanied by a translator. It is the translator's formulations that are reflected in the reports, mixed with the reporters' personal opinions.<sup>341</sup>

For example, there are multiple articles in different papers that describe the role of the women in the show. While they all are of different length and emphasis, they contain passages that are identical in wording, yet do not derive from the program. Thus, one of the camp tours must have focused on the women's role. The same can be said about food and kitchen logistics, which seems to have been either of special interest to the German reporters or a regular tour that the *Wild West* troupe offered to the reporters. Given the many identical formulations across different papers, the tours offer the most logical explanation for that. This demonstrates that Cody made a distinct effort to involve the press; further reading of the newspapers indeed reveals that journalists were given the opportunity to stroll through the camp and talk to the many different members of the show. Cody himself and many of his show members met with journalists throughout the stay of the show in a town and gave interviews, chatted, and entertained. Cody often personally gave free tours of the camp, and generously distributed information about life

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<sup>341</sup> See for example "Ein Besuch bei William Langan." *Anzeiger und Zeitung*, Rabenau, June 7, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.09c). A Berlin reporter also states that the tour he received through the camp was highly informative. *Berliner Börsen Courier*, July 23, 1890.

in the West and his adventures.<sup>342</sup> Some reporters actually copyrighted their articles in order to prevent other papers from reprinting them.<sup>343</sup>

Another strategy to involve the press and turn them favorably towards the Americans and the show was to invite them to special events such as the “Indian Breakfast” or the “Cowboy Rib Roast Dinner.” The dinner especially offers an interesting insight into Cody’s bridging act between the rugged, uncivilized frontier and the high culture of Europe. While still in the United States, he frequently invited selected guests to join him for a “typical western dinner” of meat and more meat. This was eaten without the help of silverware or even a table but instead skewered on a wooden peg and then washed down with whiskey. In fact, one participant noted: “There were three kinds of drinks—water, whisky, and whisky and water, and the greatest of these was whisky.”<sup>344</sup> Indians and cowboys were employed as waiters for these events and entertained the guests. For East Coasters, this ritual offered the possibility of an escape from the growing modernization of the East into a salutary and healthy part of the country where men could be men. The lack of amenities such as tables, plates, silverware or napkins suggested a certain crudeness and hardness of Westerners, and the fact that the cowboys were serving as waiters suggests that they were anything but genteel. At these dinners, Cody stressed his “primitivism” and that he and his fellow Westerners were rather gruff and rustic. He also admitted that he had not always lived to very high moral standards.

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<sup>342</sup> For example *Tageblatt und Anzeiger*, Chemnitz, June 21, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.17d). The reporters not only received a tour but also breakfast. A reporter in Berlin also notes that upon mentioning that he was a member of the press, “all doors flung wide open” and he was allowed on the show grounds before they were open to the public. He further attributes this openness to the “typically American character” of the members of the troupe. *Berliner Börsen Courier*, July 23, 1890. When Buffalo Bill was indisposed, Salsbury gave tours in his stead. “Der Wilde Westen in Berlin.” *Berliner Tageblatt*, no date, but most likely July 25.

<sup>343</sup> “Der Wilde Westen in Berlin.” *Berliner Tageblatt*, no date, but most likely July 25.

<sup>344</sup> Reddin, *Wild West Shows*, 64.

During the voyage to Europe, this distinction was lost at sea. Buffalo Bill wanted to be seen as an equal and raise the esteem for America in Europe. The nuances between Eastern and Western Americans were invisible to Europeans because for Europeans the West represented in the show was an exemplification of the *entirety* of the United States. Thus, Buffalo Bill modified his dinners because he did not want to show Europeans that Americans were barbarians who were not even acquainted with the most rudimentary rules of dining. Instead, he kept the Western character of the meal (the loads of meat roasted over an open pit) but added some elements of civilization, such as silverware and tables. Americans were to be seen as rugged and sturdy, but not uncivilized. With this adaptation, he managed to perpetuate the image that Americans were wholesome, close to nature, straightforward and uncomplicated, and uncorrupted by civilization, but they also knew how to “behave themselves.” Instead of representing the more primitive American as he had on the East Coast, Cody now stressed that the frontier made one exceptional and imbued man with virtue and values. Americans were rustic and noble, without all the downfalls that civilization brings with it, as could be seen in decadent Europe.<sup>345</sup> For Europeans, this must have looked like a younger version of their own countries.

Besides the extensive and innovative involvement of the press, Buffalo Bill and his publicity team also pioneered other forms of advertisement to enhance the appeal of the show and make its presence known. While the dime novels were great advertisement that Cody did not even have to pay for, they were not quite as widely circulated in Europe as they were in the States. Thus, Cody and Burke resorted to posters as the most important part of the advertising blitzes. During the “fat” years in the US, over a half a

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<sup>345</sup> Reddin, 57.



million sheets of “paper” were distributed throughout the cities. They were placed several weeks in advance of the arrival of the show in strategic and highly visible spots, in storefronts, along fences and the outside of buildings, and even on specially constructed billboards. They were very visible, colorful, and sensationalist in nature and could measure up to nine feet by 150 feet. Buffalo Bill was often pictured, sometimes by himself, which aggrandized his persona and suggested that he himself represented the *Wild West* more than anyone or anything else. Many posters depicted show acts, and some did so in almost a comic-book style, illustrating scenes and images from the West ranging from riding to shooting to the Indians and cowboys.

By 1905, during the second European tour, the advertising had reached such grand proportions that the management kept lists with numbers, types, and names of posters and handbills that reveal that there were close to 200 different pictures portrayed on the advertisement material. Conscious of the importance of advertisement, Cody himself oversaw much of the advertisement for his show and made sure the products met his high standards.<sup>346</sup> The European poster campaign did not differ significantly from the American one, only that the little writing that sometimes appeared on the posters was translated into the respective language (for example, one of the most famous French posters that shows Buffalo Bill’s head in the outline of a buffalo reads: *je viens* (I am coming)). Europeans were just as mesmerized by the sheer size, color, and presence of the posters, as it was very difficult to ignore them. Even the newspapers commented on the presence of the posters. A Hanover paper, for example, remarked that the “posters

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<sup>346</sup> AHC, Buffalo Bill Collection, Box 1, folder 4, item 4, and Jack Rennert, *One Hundred Posters of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West* (New York: Darien House, 1976).

[were] plastering the walls everywhere,” showing the “likeness of Buffalo Bill,” and handbills were “found in every shop window.”<sup>347</sup>

After the posters were up, the next stage of advertising began: Cody’s agents arrived in the city to recruit local help, prepare for the arrival of the troupe, and buy space in newspapers for advertisements. The ads started to appear around three days before the arrival of the show and usually followed a very similar pattern. The generic type of news release that the company’s advertisement machinery churned out generally stated the date, time, and place of the show as well as the number of participants. They then described the Indians in mostly romanticized language, noting their near-extinction, and lastly reminded the reader of the *Wild West*’s international acclaim.<sup>348</sup> Most articles of this kind also added a sentence about the unique opportunity to see the show and the expectation that this city will see something completely new and spectacular that the audience will never forget.<sup>349</sup>

The publicity agents made sure every newspaper in town advertised the show and handed out pamphlets and little booklets that looked like modern magazines. These included details about the West in general, Cody’s frontier exploits, his military endorsements, the show and its acts, and other prominent members of the show. As described above, journalists used these materials to supplement their stories, often without much alteration, which becomes only too obvious after reading many different articles from different cities. Cody also pioneered other forms of advertisement: for example, a newspaper in Hamburg describes a “colossal carriage, drawn by four horses,

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<sup>347</sup> *Post*, Hannover, June 29, 1890; similar comments can be found in *Wiener Tagblatt*, Vienna, May 27, 1890, and *Berliner Fremdenblatt*, Berlin, July 25, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.48b).

<sup>348</sup> For example, *Anzeiger*, Magdeburg, June 15, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.11a).

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*, *Gericht’s Zeitung*, Leipzig, June 14, 1890; *Nachrichten*, Hannover, June 27, 1890.

that was decorated with a life-size picture of Buffalo Bill and multiple other colorful pictures,” and a Bremen paper remarked that “advertisement cars have been driving through the city daily, drawing massive attention from passer-bys.”<sup>350</sup> If one has ever been to Las Vegas, this method of advertisement will seem familiar. In fact, the advertisement in the press and through billboards was so massive and spectacular that it was itself considered noteworthy in the papers. The Dresden *Anzeiger* commented that “an important emphasis in the organization lies on press work. Already weeks in advance, the audience is prepared for the show through billboards etc. The American, in this matter as in many others, is very practically minded.”<sup>351</sup> Strikingly, even local businesses contributed to the hype about Buffalo Bill and tried to make a profit. For example, a Bremen cigar maker, in a business ad, recommended his “excellent Buffalo Bill Cigar.”<sup>352</sup>

It was not easy, especially for a foreigner, to navigate the complicated entertainment laws and regulations that had emerged over the last few decades in regards to crowd control and maintaining law and order at public events. As already discussed, permits had to be filed for almost everything, and the program and a description of the nature of the show had to be submitted to the proper authorities. Sybille Spiegel’s work *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West in München. Eine Veranstaltung von “Höherem Wissenschaftlichen Interesse”* reflects her extensive research of the first stop of the *Wild West* in the German speaking realm, which was Munich. Spiegel aptly reveals the administrative jungle that had to be navigated in order to make the show happen. In 1890,

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<sup>350</sup> *Hamburger Nachrichten*, August 22, 1890; *Bremer Nachrichten*, September 5, 1890.

<sup>351</sup> *Anzeiger*, Dresden, June 15, 1890.

<sup>352</sup> *Bremer Nachrichten*, September 7, 1890.

Munich was rather a sleepy town, but nonetheless the capital of Bavaria and also a royal seat of power. Spiegel's research into the city archives reveals the complex mechanisms connected with obtaining permits, the multitude of different sovereign rights that had to be taken seriously, and a jumble of competencies and authorities of different municipal offices.

Spiegel's work demonstrates that Burke judged the situation correctly and hired the professional help of an experienced German, D. Ludwig Neumueller, who was an Impresario with experience in organizing and managing plays, opera, ballet, and concerts. Burke found him through an ad in the *Komet* newspaper (a paper specializing in travel, commerce and markets) that promoted Neumueller's expertise in obtaining official permits and space for "travelers of all genres."<sup>353</sup> The article also stated that Neumueller would "professionally handle the artistic management of entertainments of all artistic specialties; a direct connection with the major newspapers and press outlets; true to the proven concept of experienced businessmen that one pound of printing ink makes one pound of gold." This was just the person Burke needed to make the *Wild West* in Munich a reality and a success.

Not only did permits need to be secured, but the police already had an eye on Buffalo Bill even before the *Wild West* had applied for an official permit to play in Munich;—the police president of Munich tried to gather information in light of the scheduled stop of the show. He requested the following information from the Vienna police department: "in reference to the trick-rider-company. An American artistic company under the name of cowboys (or similar) is planning to perform publicly in

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<sup>353</sup> Spiegel, *Buffalo Bill in München*, 21.

Munich. Since they are supposed to have performed in Vienna fairly recently, I am respectfully requesting some brief information regarding the type of production and the reasons for potential complaints and problems.”<sup>354</sup> The police was certainly not going to be unprepared for the arrival of the show and made sure that this type of entertainment was acceptable and peaceful enough for a stay in Munich.

Even though such requests for information were not unusual, it is nonetheless striking that the German police initiated such information gathering long before the arrival of the outfit. In this case, however, the Munich police actually confused Buffalo Bill with his competition, Doc Carver’s “Wild-America,” a show that had recently played in Vienna. In fact, Buffalo Bill’s first scheduled stop in the German speaking realm was supposed to be Vienna, but since Carver beat them to the punch Cody sidestepped to Munich and opened there first before travelling to Vienna next.<sup>355</sup> Thus, at the time the inquiry was made, no information was to be obtained about Buffalo Bill’s *Wild West* in the German speaking realm. Since a permit for Munich was eventually issued for the 19<sup>th</sup> through the 27<sup>th</sup> of April, 1890, the English, French and Italian press reports must have impressed the chief enough, or maybe the American Consulate in Munich vouched for the quality of the show. Due to the great success in Munich, the permit actually was extended to the 5<sup>th</sup> of May, with the last performance to be held on the 4<sup>th</sup>.

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<sup>354</sup> Ibid.

<sup>355</sup> In fact, Buffalo Bill’s performances before the Austrian audience in Vienna, where the show traveled in May after their stay in Munich, were not very successful. When examining the profit ledgers, the figures for Vienna are significantly lower compared to Germany, France, or Italy: each show earned only 3600 Marks, even though the troupe stayed there for three weeks in which they gave 22 performances. This is most likely due to Carver’s stay in Vienna the month before. AHC, Buffalo Bill Collection, Box 1, folder 4.

After the permit was issued, the practical organization got started, as well as the preparation of the show grounds and the closing of contracts to supply the multitudes of people and animals during their stay in Munich. According to Spiegel, there are only traces of these activities in the sources: On May 26, 1890, Burke requested from the Munich police permission to fence in a 250 meter wide by 300 meter long area of the Theresien Wiese (also the location for the Oktoberfest) that had already been reserved for the show. Furthermore, in order to maintain public safety, Neumueller requested in the name and at the expense of Buffalo Bill three mounted and six regular police officers for the duration of the stay.

On March 26, 1890, Burke filed a petition to the magistrate of the city to be freed from all fees and taxes due to the “higher scientific values” of the performances. Travelling artists and actors needed a permit for their travelling business (*Wandergewerbsschein*), which allowed them to be transient while pursuing their careers. Of course, foreigners did not have such a permit, and therefore had to apply for the necessary permits separately wherever they went. If they were able to prove that their respective act served a “higher scientific value,” they did not have to apply for certain accreditations and did not have to pay certain fees. The title “of higher scientific value” thus was worth money. Most likely, this option was a result of the earlier ethnographic shows that emphasized science and education and thus were elevated in their status over regular shows that simply aimed to entertain. In regard to Burke’s request, the police president of Munich prepared a report which was to determine whether “this troupe is capable of fulfilling the standards of serving a higher scientific value or whether it is

instead a mere entertainment similar to ordinary performers and trick rider companies.”<sup>356</sup>

If it was decided that they were just an ordinary entertainment they would not have lost their license to perform, but would have had to pay an excise tax and a charity fee. Burke included in his application for a permit a feature that was also printed in the programs for the European tours:

the aim of the management of BBWW is to present more than a mere exact and factual program for the entertainment of the public. It is in fact our intent to present scenes and episodes of the wonderful pioneer and frontier life in the Wild West of America. We aim to do this with the help of historic characters and live animals, demonstrating real events that are drawn from life and actually happened. The exertion, the courage and the frontier skills of the participants serve as the guarantee for the true reproduction of scenes and events that they have actually experienced themselves.<sup>357</sup>

Accredited experts judged the “interest to science.” A frequent assessor for such events was the aforementioned Rudolf Virchow, president of the Berliner Charité as well as the Society for Ethnology and Anthropology in Berlin. In Munich, Johannes Ranke, the first professor of Anthropology in Germany, was in charge. In his report from April 2, 1890, Ranke concluded that the “Indian troupe aroused the most lively attention everywhere it went, and not just among the general audiences but also especially among experts due to their ethnographic-anthropological and cultural interest, and because of its originality and authenticity. In this regard, the performances are to be judged much more valuable than the common artists and performing groups and thus satisfy in many ways without doubt the higher scientific interests and values.”<sup>358</sup> Thereupon, the Munich police informed General Manager Burke on April 8, 1890, through a resolution that was to be

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<sup>356</sup> Letter by the Munich police president to Dr. Ranke, March 30, 1890, as quoted in Spiegel, *Buffalo Bill in München*, footnote 32.

<sup>357</sup> Buffalo Bill Program and Journal, BBHC, Scrapbook for Germany.

<sup>358</sup> Report by Dr. J. Ranke, April 2, 1890, as quoted by Spiegel, *Buffalo Bill in München*, footnote 39.

submitted to the Consulate of the United States of America, of the following: “In regards to the performances of Buffalo Bill. In response to your petition from the 26<sup>th</sup> of this month you are herewith informed that you do not need to have a permit for the performances you intend to hold at the Theresienwiese due to its higher scientific interest of said performance.” In short: Buffalo Bill’s *Wild West* did not have to pay the entertainment tax, and their claims to authenticity and historic accuracy were thus underwritten by German officials.<sup>359</sup>

This was not the end of the involvement of German officials in the show, however. Many other details had to be seen to, as is described in a letter from the Munich police department in reply to the Dresden police for information about the show. It describes the show grounds, the arena, and the grandstands for approximately 8,000 spectators while disclosing the number and cost of law enforcement officers and the process of building code inspections. For example, the Munich officials were not satisfied with the grandstands that were brought with the show, and “the municipal construction engineers... ordered a few slight corrections to ensure greater safety.” The letter also notes that the conduct of the show’s participants did not give cause for complaints by the police, and Cody himself as well as his agents were attested to have followed all police directives fully, punctually, and with good grace.<sup>360</sup> Furthermore, the police had the newspapers print announcements about traffic regulations: visitors to the “Buffalo Bill Indian Troupe” were advised where to park their carriages, and in case of non-

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<sup>359</sup> Spiegel, *Buffalo Bill in München*, Footnote 40.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, footnote 43.



compliance were threatened with hefty traffic tickets of up to 60 Marks or up to 14 days in jail.<sup>361</sup>

Before the show arrived, crowds of spectators, school kids, and reporters gathered at the train station to greet the incoming special train that carried Cody and his *Wild West* troupe. It was all about catching a first glance, and the organizers made sure the arrival and departure times were widely known. Most accounts concurrently mention thirty-seven cars, about two hundred people, one hundred and twenty horses, six mules, twenty buffalo and two calves. All in all, the train consisted of regular passenger cars, twenty cargo cars, and a kitchen car.<sup>362</sup> In Dresden, according to one reporter, the “train station looked like a Texas train station.”<sup>363</sup> The cowboys performed much of the unloading of the materials and animals, which took an average of 1.5 hours. The materials consisted of “boxes and crates of all shapes and sizes, mattresses, blankets, feather beds, tables, tents and poles,” the grand stands for the spectators, the props, as well as the personal belongings of the troupe, to name just a handful.<sup>364</sup> The goods were then loaded into moving vans and other cargo carriages and brought to the show grounds. For example, in Dresden, the Royal Logistics Company (*Hofspediteur*) Geucke provided sixteen two-horse carriages, several moving vans, and four omnibuses from the Omnibus Club, and in Leipzig, the content of the kitchen car alone took up six big moving vans.<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>361</sup> “Bekanntmachung” from Dresden, without date or paper (MS6.9.5.1.01b)

<sup>362</sup> For example *Anzeiger*, Freiberg, June 3, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.07a); *Leipziger Tageblatt und Anzeiger*, Leipzig, June 17, 1890.

<sup>363</sup> *Anzeiger und Tageblatt*, Pirna, June 3, 1890; *Leipziger Tageblatt und Anzeiger*, Leipzig, June 17, 1890.

<sup>364</sup> *Leipziger Nachrichten*, Leipzig, June 17, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.11e).

<sup>365</sup> *Tageblatt und Anzeiger*, Leipzig, June 3, 1890; *Anzeiger und Tageblatt*, Vogtländischer Plauen, June 3, 1890.

Many articles mention that the “Sons of the Jungle” seemed to have been “sensitive to the morning cold” and that they were therefore wrapped up tightly in woolen scarves and blankets, with only their “characteristic faces” showing through, curiously looking around.<sup>366</sup> It seems very possible that this statement was part of the generic pre-announcements of the show and thus produced by the *Wild West* Company, especially since this very formulation appears in many of the generic articles. If that is the case, it is interesting to note that the company itself promoted a very specific image of the Indians. The language suggests that they were cold because they hailed from such a different climate, and that they were not as hardy as their fellow cowboys, who seemed to have not been affected as much. The fact that the formulation includes a reference to their different physique and at the same time their “keen eyes,” taking everything in, underlines the fact that they were strangers, yet interested and not necessarily intimidated by their new surroundings.<sup>367</sup>

If this article really was a part of the Cody advertising machinery, it demonstrates how acute and realistic their reporting was in anticipating the conditions: it was indeed cold in the mornings, and several reporters who seem to have been there personally state that many performers “had tea or coffee from tin cups that was provided from the kitchen wagon.”<sup>368</sup> However, the generic reports could not foresee unexpected delays, and in the case of Leipzig it is fairly easy to distinguish between the articles given to the press by the Company beforehand and those that were written by reporters who actually attended

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<sup>366</sup> *Leipziger Tageblatt und Anzeiger*, Leipzig, June 17, 1890; *Tageblatt und Anzeiger*, Leipzig, June 3, 1890.

<sup>367</sup> Two examples that both use very similar wording in their description of the Indians but seem to contradict each other in their authenticity are the *Stadt-und Dorf Anzeiger*, Leipzig, June 17, 1890 (eye-witness account by a reporter) and *Tageblatt und Anzeiger*, Leipzig, June 3, 1890 (of the generic kind).

<sup>368</sup> *Anzeiger und Tageblatt*, Vogtländischer Plauen, June 3, 1890.

the spectacle: the train arrived with a three hour delay in Leipzig, which the generic reports of course do not reflect but instead state the arrival time at 4am instead of 7am. According to the reporters who did attend the spectacle, the wait was worth it though, and the process of unloading and the parade made up for the cold feet.<sup>369</sup>

The parade to the showground was part of Cody's advertisement strategy and drew significant attention. In the United States, the parade provoked comments like: "it was as if the wild regions of the West had mustered all of their queerest denizens, clothed in holiday dress and sent them forth."<sup>370</sup> In Europe, the reactions were not much different in light of the colorful and exciting flurry of activities. According to Rydell and Kroes, the "flatbed cars" were linked together "with planks so that the wagons would come off in a continuous line, already in parade order for passing through the center of town en route to the fair grounds."<sup>371</sup> Most of the time Buffalo Bill would lead the parade on his horse, followed by the cowboys and Buck Taylor with the animals and the Indians. They were described with the highest admiration, astonishment, and excitement, and sometimes the reporters delved into descriptions of individuals such as Buck Taylor with his "beautiful cascading hair under his huge sombrero" and the generally "impressive impression" on the audience.<sup>372</sup> The Indians were usually among the first ones to be described as soon as they stepped off the train, and their clothing and facial features captured the crowd's attention. Sometimes they were depicted in a very positive light as

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<sup>369</sup> *Leipziger Nachrichten*, Leipzig, June 17, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.11e).

<sup>370</sup> Reddin, *Wild West Shows*, 64, quotes *New York Morning Journal*, June 26, 1886.

<sup>371</sup> Rydell and Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna*, 115.

<sup>372</sup> *Anzeiger und Tageblatt*, Pirna, June 3, 1890.

“exotic looking figures in picturesque clothing” with faces “coined by great smartness and to a certain degree also intelligence.”<sup>373</sup>

A reporter in Leipzig began his description about the arrival of the show and the parade with the statement that he “did not regret having walked all the way from the train station to the show grounds.” According to his account, the mustangs were “small, thin, unkempt, and therefore looking rather shabby, in all colors, also pintos, but as far as I can remember not a single dapple-gray.” The cowboys looked “hardy and weather-beaten,” and for him the fact that they will “perform in every weather” makes them real Americans. The Indians were “wrapped in blankets, white and red, dark blue, sometimes brown-yellow,” and their features inspired his fantasy. He described their “long Indian noses, protruding mouths and chins and rigid, black hair” and mentioned that they were indeed not wearing wigs. During the course of his description, some of the misconceptions of Indians become apparent: “As they were sitting on the horses, each of them leading another one or two horses, you could really imagine them, returning from horse-rustling, because that is what made them into the un-loved neighbors of the settlers back in the day.”<sup>374</sup> The buffalo also had quite an effect on this reporter and on others: even though he did not “see anybody in a buffalo hide, and the great buffalo herds are nearly extinct,” he was “even more surprised to see a herd of the real buffalo, among them two calves, with the troupe. There was about twenty of them, real bisons, that peaceably walked along, probably because they were used to it and had grown up with the noise and the crowds.”<sup>375</sup> The calves the reporter mentioned were actually born in

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<sup>373</sup> *Tageblatt und Anzeiger*, Leipzig, June 17, 1890.

<sup>374</sup> *Leipziger Nachrichten*, Leipzig, June 17, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.11e).

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*; *Tageblatt und Anzeiger*, Leipzig, June 17, 1890.

Munich and were jokingly named “Münchner Kindl” and “Hofbräuhaus” by the Bavarian Prince Regent.<sup>376</sup>

Upon arrival at the designated show ground, the arena and the camp were built, and the reporters were amazed at the speed and efficiency with which this was executed. Mostly everything that was needed was brought on the train, and the tents were erected in neat rows near the arena, depending on the terrain: “the colorful and cryptic colored teepees in which the Indians and Mexicans have taken up residence were lined up in long rows.”<sup>377</sup> A mess tent was attached on either side of the kitchen to supply the company with their meals. The animals were quartered in a separate area, the horses in covered stalls and the buffalo in an open corral. Reporters were compelled to compare the erection of the camp with the conquest and “domestication” of the West: “the speed with which they were working out there gives a vision of the fabulous city foundings in the forests of the West.” Cody was equated with the role of the mayor who is at the same time feared and respected and upholds law and order.<sup>378</sup> Similar reports followed from other cities: “Everywhere you look, exemplary order and organization can be seen. Everything works like clockwork, everything has its function.”<sup>379</sup>

Furthermore, the use of the railroad to transport the large amounts of equipment also reminded some reporters of the conquest of the West and the role the railroad played in it. This fact has been repeated and interpreted by several scholars, who sometimes

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<sup>376</sup> *Tageblatt und Anzeiger, Leipzig*, June 20, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.15b); *Braunschweiger Tageblatt*, Braunschweig, July 15, 1890. See also *Leipziger Nachrichten*, August 5, 1890.

<sup>377</sup> *Tageblatt und Anzeiger, Leipzig*, June 17, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.12a).

<sup>378</sup> *Stadt und Dorf-Anzeiger, Leipzig*, June 19, 1890, but also Berlin, July 25, 1890. This points to the fact that this idea and formulation must stem from the show program or another publication that was given to the reporters in every city.

<sup>379</sup> *Courier*, Hannover, July 1, 1890.

went as far as claiming that the Germans were already preparing for World War One: for example, Paul Reddin argued that the Germans “knew that the Americans had learned to use railroads for military purposes during its Civil War. Journalists and military officers watched and took notes on every aspect of camp life—the details of unloading, the kitchen facilities, the position of workers, and the time everything took. How much the Germans learned became evident during World War I.”<sup>380</sup> A statement by Annie Oakley in her later autobiography reinforced this claim. According to her, “we never moved without at least forty officers of the Prussian Guard standing all about with notebooks, taking down every detail of the performance. They made minute notes on how we pitched camp—the exact number of men needed, every man’s position, how long it took, how we boarded the trains and packed the horses and broke camp; every rope and bundle kit was inspected and mapped.”<sup>381</sup>

Considering all of these statements about the interest of the German military and the efficiency and organizational and logistical skills of the company, it certainly seems convenient to draw conclusions in regards to the German preparations for World War One. However, such claims are too easily made, and it seems that there are two different processes at work: First, it seems that in retrospect of the events of World War One and the timing of the *Wild West* in Europe, Annie Oakley might have exaggerated some of her statements regarding the military. Secondly, the German military was not the only organization interested in the logistics of the show. As Warren notes, “the American army was studying circuses for similar reasons,”<sup>382</sup> and hints can be found in French

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<sup>380</sup> Reddin, *Wild West Shows*, 112.

<sup>381</sup> Russell, *Lives and Legends*, 371-372.

<sup>382</sup> Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s America*, 417.

newspapers as well. For example, Reddin notes that French soldiers went to the show to observe and learn from demonstrations. He adds that the show inspired in the French an appreciation for physical exercise, discipline, horsemanship, camping outdoors, and sharpshooting.<sup>383</sup> In a time of increased militarization, the Americans certainly offered a real-life study opportunity for the movement of large amounts of people and supplies, and the German Army, like their European counterparts, most likely gained insights and knowledge from it, but to claim that they were watching with a large-scale war in mind, one that happened a little over two decades later, would be putting the cart before the horse and assuming causality where none exists.

In addition to these innovative and large scale logistics, the German media was also very impressed with the order and discipline in the camp, and the reporters were amazingly well informed about the inner workings of the company. This knowledge stems from the extensive effort of Cody and his management to inform the press about every detail of the show and to generate as many newspaper articles as possible in order to remain newsworthy and pertinent in people's minds. Readers in various German cities were informed about the personnel of the show along with its task, from managers, accountants and contracting agents to the equerry and the interpreters. The reporters marveled at the sheer scale of the undertaking, noting that "it is unbelievable to see the scale of the personnel structure in order to fulfill all tasks. Labor division is an important factor in this. Everybody has a position, a part of the whole. The soul of it all is of course Buffalo Bill (Colonel Cody) himself. He is the unlimited authority in the camp."<sup>384</sup>

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<sup>383</sup> Reddin, *Wild West Shows*, 101.

<sup>384</sup> *Tageblatt*, Dresden, June 15, 1890.

Shortly after the completion of the camp, the press was invited for a visit and a guided tour to disseminate information and advertise for the show. Detailed descriptions were provided of almost every aspect, from the physical appearance of the camp to the different roles of the individuals to the food and the interior decoration of the tents. Many reporters also commented on the “romantic character” the area was assuming with the presence of the Americans. The descriptions of the tepees are telltale signs of the reporters’ personal stance towards Indians, ranging from positive and explicatory (“very interesting are the paintings on the Indians’ tents, animal shapes and other mysterious signs. They are the name signs of the inhabitants; they represent something like our door signs”).<sup>385</sup> to rather condescending descriptions such as “the Indian tents are bigger and clumsily painted, with strange hanging doors and wind flaps, and they differ significantly from the smaller tents of the cowboys, that stand out in their cleanliness and homeliness.”<sup>386</sup> It becomes obvious that the Indian tents were not opened to the public but only available for inspection from the outside. In fact, a reporter in Berlin speculates that this might be connected to a religious belief of the Indians and that the invitation of strangers would possibly cause a desecration.<sup>387</sup> It seems more likely, however, that the Indians simply needed a break from all of the exposure and thus kept their tents rather private.

While the reporters were previewing the camp, they also commented on the members of the troupe. Again, the descriptions of the Indians reflect the ambivalence with which German reporters regarded them. There are positive and curious descriptions:

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<sup>385</sup> *Leipziger Nachrichten*, Leipzig, June 17, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.11e).

<sup>386</sup> *Zeitung*, Leipzig, June 17, 1890.

<sup>387</sup> *Berliner Fremdenblatt*, 25 July, 1890.



“Some of the dark fellows had already lain down to sleep in the afternoon when our reporter visited the camp. Others were sitting together in the tents and avidly played cards with pretty high stakes. The Red Skins themselves are imposing people, in movement, expression and language serious and measured. Equally interesting are the cowboys, whose suntanned faces are proof for their hardiness.”<sup>388</sup> Negative descriptions that correspond with common stereotypes can be found in abundance, too: “The Indians thought it below their dignity to do anything more than just putting up their wigwams. Wrapped in blankets, they smoke and play cards in their tents, lying around, or just idly loitered around;”<sup>389</sup> another reporter remarked disparagingly “the Indians are quiet and loiter around, as it is the custom of their race.”<sup>390</sup>

In contrast, the Mexican vaqueros and their tents were described positively throughout: “While the Indians attract much attention with their dark skin color, their long dangling hair, the sharply cut profile, and wrapped in colorful cloths, the Mexicans should attract even more attention with their intelligent faces, boldness and energy.”<sup>391</sup> Instead of loitering or gambling at high stakes card games, the “Mexicans are entertaining themselves with music and laughter,”<sup>392</sup> and a “part of the cowboys is enjoying dance and piano music, another part is sitting quietly around, and a third part is busy erecting the last of the stands and tents.”<sup>393</sup> There is even some luxury and elegance in the Mexicans’

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<sup>388</sup> *Leipziger Nachrichten*, Leipzig, June 17, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.11e).

<sup>389</sup> *Zeitung*, Leipzig, June 17, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.13c).

<sup>390</sup> *Tageblatt*, Hannover July 1, 1890.

<sup>391</sup> *Courier*, Hannover, July 1, 1890.

<sup>392</sup> *Tageblatt*, Hannover, July 1, 1890.

<sup>393</sup> *Neueste Nachrichten*, Hannover, July 1, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.27a).

tents, which are outfitted with rugs, mirrors, and even paintings as well as some sturdy furniture.<sup>394</sup>

However, the most luxurious and lavishly decorated tent of all was Buffalo Bill's. According to many accounts, it was large, neat, elegant and "house-like." The tasteful decorations include satin and velvet upholstered furniture, animal fur rugs, mounted animals on the walls, his army diplomas and ranks, photographs of his ranch in Nebraska and his cattle, as well as a portrait of him by Rosa Bonheur. Various valuable gifts were displayed that were presented to him by the many royal and affluent visitors who had enjoyed the show in the past, among them jewels, decorated guns, rugs, paintings, and statues.<sup>395</sup>

The newspaper articles also give a glimpse into the life of the female members of the troupe outside of the arena. Reporters mention Mother Whitaker, who seems to have played the role of a "camp-mom" and taken care of the mending of clothes and the sewing of costumes. Her tent, according to the press, was "easily recognizable because of the Singer sewing machine."<sup>396</sup> The press also was invited to enter Annie Oakley's tent, and the descriptions stress the juxtaposition between her masculine skills in the arena and her hospitality and manners as a lady outside the arena: her tent boasted a small reception area, which was "decorated with great care and detail," and despite its small size was "very lovely." It contained objects of culture: pictures and paintings, carpets, a mirror and other luxury items, as opposed to the Indian tents with their perceived primitivism.

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<sup>394</sup> *Stadt und Dorf-Anzeiger*, Leipzig, June 19, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.14b); *Tageblatt*, Hannover, July 1, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.26f).

<sup>395</sup> *Tageblatt und Anzeiger*, Leipzig, June 19, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.15a) *Tageblatt*, Hannover, July 1, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.26f); *Berliner Fremdenblatt*, July 25, 1890.

<sup>396</sup> *Dresden Journal*, Dresden, June 7, 1890.

According to the reporters, her pride in her guns showed through: she owned a number of Winchesters that she proudly displayed, as well as a “collection of jewelry and coins of considerable value,” which were gifts from dignitaries from around the world. This was topped off with a substantial array of awards for her skills from clubs and competitions. In order to counterbalance this martial trait of Annie, the reporters made sure to mention that she also possessed very feminine traits, such as the fact that she “plays the banjo gracefully.”<sup>397</sup>

Of particular interest were the food and kitchen supply logistics. The tour through the kitchens was most likely given by William Langan himself, who was the kitchen boss, and his head chef John Keene: “When we entered the wagon we smelled the very appetizing smell of the roasts that were being prepared in the huge pans.” After a detailed description of the kitchen, the reporter described the mess tents on either side: one of them is the “Indian tent,” in which the “chiefs sit in the middle, and the tribesmen behind them at long tables. Just like in their wigwams, they do not want anybody looking in and disturbing.” The mess tent of the cowboys was outfitted with four simple tables: one for the ladies and the staff (the cashiers, ticket stub checkers etc), and the other three for the cowboys, Mexican vaqueros and the musicians. The ladies and staff dined “from white china or stoneware, the Indians and cowboys from tin cups and glazed plates.” Each table, including the ones of the Indians, had to have “salt, pepper, vinegar, oil, mustard, butter, condensed milk, Worcestershire sauce, salty and mustard pickles, horseradish and onions” available for everybody’s convenience. Food was served for all “without exception” in three meals at 6:30am, noon, and 6pm, and about 220 people were fed at

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<sup>397</sup> Ibid.; *Nachrichten*, Dresden, June 8, 1890.

every meal. Breakfast consisted of coffee, tea, beefsteak, eggs, bread and potatoes. The lunch menu included, alternately, soup, roast beef, mutton cutlets, beef steak, and other fried stuff, sometimes also cooked beef, mutton or calf, eggs and ham, cauliflower, fried potatoes, rice pudding, fruit, apple sauce, and coffee. In the evening there was also fried meat, coffee, and tea available. The reporters agreed that the portions were large and the quality good, and that it seemed to be not too different from a middle-class German diet. “As you can see, these people don’t live poorly!”

Again, some of the negative stereotypes of Indians come to light: The Indians were described as very picky eaters who did not like vegetables. Only the best meat was allowed to be served, and it had to be well cooked. “Tough, dry meat is being tossed without much qualm under the table, and they do the same with the bread.” The pieces of meat for the Indians had to be especially big according to their demands, and they were “very skilled in using their teeth to mash the meat.” Except for coffee and tea, the Indians were not provided any drinks, especially not brandy or other alcoholic beverages. In contrast, the cowboys could buy beer with their money, which they “really like ever since their stay in Munich and Vienna.” Ostensibly also due to the demands of the Indians, the kitchen chief had to “order with a local baker the daily supply of 75 kg light bread baked according to the French style” because the Indians did not like the darker, mostly rye-based German bread. The “daily meat share was 250kg of the best beef, one calf, two muttons and 40-50kg of ham.” A local butcher was responsible for the supply, who at the day of the show’s arrival had to deliver “an ox, a calf and two *Schoepfe*.” Since Mr. Langan had lost his right arm, his chef Mr. Keene did the butchering, and to

his great credit, he “knows how to prepare the meat to the taste of the strange guests.”

One of the newspapers even provided this anecdote and “recipe” from the *Wild West*:

Buffalo Bill, perhaps, understands best how to swing the knife when it comes to demonstrating how to butcher and elk or a buffalo. For the gourmets, we are adding an original recipe according to which Buffalo Bill acts in the Prairies of the wilderness: you kill a buffalo, cut its head off, dig a pit, fill it with thin wood and light it. When the coal is great enough, you place the head into it with hair and skin, cover it with dirt and then lay down to sleep, wrapped in your blankets and furs. In the morning you unearth the head, break it open with an ax and now can avail yourself to a wonderful, tasty, and strengthening meal. –He also shared an Indian way of cooking, which is completely acceptable according to Indian culinary principle. However, it is very “Indian” due to the materials used: you cut juicy pieces of meat from the buffalo, wrap them in buffalo “dung” and hold them on sticks above the fire. When this wrapping falls off, the meat is done and has not lost a drop of juice.<sup>398</sup>

The ruggedness and creativity of the scout are stressed, whereas the Indian way of preparing meat, which was at least as practical and ingenious, and not necessarily less appetizing, is degraded and “exoticized.” Additionally, both ways of preparation sound wasteful, which was of course part of the lore of the West that Buffalo Bill embodied. The notion of the unlimited abundance of the West seems to have caused the German reporters to not have minded or even thought about the wastefulness of the described practices, even though they were often critical of American squandering in other circumstances. Maybe this concept of shooting a buffalo on the open prairie and preparing it according to either one of those methods was so strange and foreign to this reporter that he did not even question it but simply swallowed it as a part of the mythical image of the West, just as Buffalo Bill would have intended it.

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<sup>398</sup> The information about the kitchen is taken from the following papers: *Tageblatt und Anzeiger*, Leipzig, June 19, 1890; *Tageblatt*, Hannover, July 1, 1890; *Neueste Nachrichten*, Hannover, July 1, 1890; *Anzeiger und Zeitung*, Rabenau, June 7, 1890.

The presence of the show in a city, along with all of the advertising, made it difficult to ignore it and stay at home. Even though most cities boasted a variety of theaters and entertainment facilities, as discussed in chapter two, the show lured with several baits: it was a welcome break from the monotone work day and the long hours, and the escapist nature of the show appealed to many Germans who had read the novels and heard so much about the fabulous and free life at the American frontier. The fact that the show was, besides exciting and full of color and adventure, educational and perfectly suitable for women and children added to the appeal because it could count as a family trip.<sup>399</sup> Furthermore, it was the biggest, most modern, and most extravagant of all the travelling ethnographic shows that had visited Germany in the past, and it had earned a brilliant reputation due to the smashing success all around Europe. This tremendously added to its appeal and stature in the mind of Germans. Lastly, the advertisement and news articles about the show warned that this was the last chance to see the Indians and buffalo and the authentic life on the Prairie because westward expansion was destroying this traditional way of life. Since the show was travelling, there were only a limited number of opportunities to witness it. In fact, it turned into a status symbol to have seen the *Wild West*.<sup>400</sup>

Of course, there were reasons against going to the show as well. The fears of the police concerning crowd control were not completely unfounded, and pick-pocketing and other small crimes were not uncommon. There was also fraudulent activity reported in

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<sup>399</sup> Interestingly, the American West was seen as a region free of sexual temptation and almost completely de-gendered, whereas for example the orient evoked sensuality and desire. Shows that featured oriental elements were often considered unsuitable for women and especially children.

<sup>400</sup> *Dresdner Zeitung*, August 19,1906.

the papers in regards to the selling of show programs,<sup>401</sup> and the afternoon out with the family did not come cheap, either. Seat prices ranged from one to four Marks, and taking out a family of four “cost about the daily wage of a working person.”<sup>402</sup> Then there were concession stands to navigate, which can cost dearly when children are tugging at your sleeve. But even for adults, there were opportunities to spend money for various treats; the management of the show ensured that vendors were present that offered liquor, and beer, cigars, and a local café opened a branch at the show grounds to fulfill the culinary wishes of the audience.<sup>403</sup>

For tens of thousands of Germans, the pros outweighed the cons, and long lines formed at the ticket booths. Sometimes the demand for tickets and the amount of people trying to obtain them was so great that many had to be sent away disappointed. Tickets for the opening and closing performances were especially coveted, and whenever a member of a Royal family attended, the performances were usually sold out. Ticket fraud is also no new invention, and there were many complaints and warnings in the papers about fraudulent ticket sales or even tickets for sold-out shows being offered at horrendous prices for the desperate dad who promised his kids a visit to the show. For example, a newspaper report stated that when the Queen and King visited the performance in Dresden, which was completely sold out with supposedly 16,420 people attending, some people were willing to pay up to twenty marks for a ticket.<sup>404</sup> Besides all the enthusiasm, there was a little bit of grumbling to be heard in the press as well. Those who were hoping to catch a glimpse from the fence were often disappointed: “the whole

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<sup>401</sup> *Anzeiger*, Dresden, June 8, 1890 (MS 6.9.5.1.02d).

<sup>402</sup> Reddin, *Wild West Shows*, 112.

<sup>403</sup> “Bei Buffalo Bill.” *Berliner Börsen Courier*, July 23, 1890.

<sup>404</sup> *Anzeiger*, Dresden, June 10, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.03c).

camp is surrounded by a high protective screen so that nothing can be seen from the outside.”<sup>405</sup> Also, sometimes the shows were shortened and seemed rushed, which upset the audience, and others complained about the admission price.<sup>406</sup> Given the total number of spectators, it is however fair to assume that these complaints were relatively few in number.

Concerning visitor numbers, it is often difficult to determine with certainty how many people attended the show because figures often vary greatly. The numbers on advertisement posters probably are less reliable because they were themselves used for advertisement purposes. This said, the stands could only hold a certain amount of people, and even though there were complaints that more tickets were sold than there were seats available, the numbers probably stayed close to full capacity. In Dresden at the end of the stay, the *Tageblatt* states that “over 100,000 people visited the Indian company in these two weeks.”<sup>407</sup> Interestingly, a Leipzig newspaper remarks that the fact that Leipzig is such an industrial city (*Industrie-und Handelsstadt*) actually harmed the attendance numbers. At the opening performance, “the cheap seats were not all sold out because the laborers work until late at night, so the show times are not conducive to this schedule.” However, the more expensive seats for four, three, and two Marks were very well taken up, and a total of about 4,000-5,000 people attended this performance.<sup>408</sup>

Even though there are no records directly relating to spectator numbers, the management of the *Wild West* kept a very detailed account book that includes data about

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<sup>405</sup> *Leipziger Tageblatt und Anzeiger*, Leipzig, June 17, 1890.

<sup>406</sup> *Kölnner Tageblatt*, September 22, 1890. See Kreis, Buffalo Bill in Dortmund, 37; *Frankfurter Kleine Presse*, October 1, 1890.

<sup>407</sup> *Tageblatt*, Dresden, June 15, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.10a).

<sup>408</sup> *Tageblatt und Anzeiger*, Leipzig, June 18, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.12c).



the profits made in every city. The numbers from the first European tour, including the seasons of 1889, 1890, and 1891, reveal that in the cities where the numbers of days the show stayed and the number of shows given is roughly equal, the profit per performance was the highest. In 1890, cities such as Dresden (15 days, 15 shows), Magdeburg (5 days, 5 shows) or Düsseldorf (6 days, 6 shows) brought around 10,000 Marks per show into the cash registers. Berlin generated the highest profit overall with 289,907 Marks for its month-long stay and 57 performances, however, that amounts to only 5000 Marks per performance. The 1891 season was a little less successful monetarily, with performance earnings ranging between 4000 and 8000 Marks. The reason can probably be found in the fact that there were roughly twice as many performances as days of stay, which decreased profit margins.<sup>409</sup> In view of the number of cities visited and the profits made per stay in Germany, however, the exposure of Germans to the *Wild West* was massive. Naturally, considering the enormous logistics and the extensive preparations undertaken by the management of the *Wild West*, anticipation for the actual performances was high, and audiences expected to be terrifically entertained.

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<sup>409</sup> AHC, Buffalo Bill Collection, Box 1, folder 4.





**Image 17:** The *Wild West* show grounds in Germany, 1890-1891



**Image 18:** Show poster advertising the bucking mustangs.

## CHAPTER 6

### Cultural Impact and Significance

This chapter provides a deeper reading of the German responses to the *Wild West* through an analysis of the newspaper coverage of the first German tour from 1890-1891. Many of the arguments made in the previous chapters are highlighted and confirmed by a close reading of the articles, which enables a more complete and nuanced understanding of the impact of the *Wild West* in Germany.

The *Wild West* included the following show acts, according to the program:<sup>410</sup>

1. Entrance
2. Horse race between a cowboy, a Mexican, and an Indian, on Spanish-Mexican horses.
3. Miss Annie Oakley, famous shot, will demonstrate her marvelous virtuosity with firearms.
4. Former Pony Mail Rider, who will illustrate the way official letters and dispatches were carried across the great prairies before the railroad and the telegraph were built. The rider had to change his horse every ten miles and make fifty miles without stopping.
5. Attack on an Emigrant Train by Indians and defense of the same by the frontiersmen. After the attack is fought off, the dance Virginia Reel is presented on horseback by the cowboys and frontier women. By the way, the wagons are the same that were used 35 years ago.
6. Historic Event from the Life of Buffalo Bill. The famous duel with Yellow Hand (sic), chief of the Sioux at War Bonnet Creek, Dakota, and the defeat and death of the same on July 17, 1875 in the presence of Indian and American troops. This duel between two representatives of two different races of man is of equal historical significance in America as the famous fight between the Horatci and Coratci.
7. The Little Johnny Baker. The cowboy shot, adorned with his prize medals of the young shooters of the world.

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<sup>410</sup> The performance acts of the *Wild West* are listed according to the material in William F. Cody collection- MS 6. Series VI A- Programs, etc. Box 1, Folder 6, as well as Ames, *Carl Hagenbeck's Empire of Entertainments*, and two reproductions of its 1890 German show programs in Kort and Hollein, *I Like America*, 235, 240.

8. Picking up of objects by cowboys from the ground while riding at full speed, throwing of the lasso that shows the method of catching cattle and wild horses, as well as the demonstration of various equestrian tricks. The riding of the bucking broncos, which are the most untamed and wildest horses that exist nowadays, because it is impossible to tame them and to train them to stop throwing the rider off.
9. Pistol and Revolver shooting, performed by Mr. C.L. Daly.
10. Race between two American 'ladies of the backwoods' (*Hinterwäldlerdamen*)
11. Attack by the Indians on the Deadwood Stagecoach, which is repelled by Buffalo Bill and the cowboys under his command. Note: this is the authentic, old mail coach that is called "Old Deadwood Stage Coach" that is famous due to the fact that many people have lost their lives in it, and that made the route between Deadwood and Cheyenne for 18 years. Two presidents of the United States, four kings and other royals that attended the Jubilee of the Queen of England have ridden in it because they found the coach to be an important and historic rarity, which lent the performance an interesting character.
12. Race between Indian boys on horseback without saddle.
13. Customs of the Indians. Indian camp on the prairie, race on foot, various strange dances.
14. Colonel W.F. Cody (Buffalo Bill), shooting during full gallop.
15. Buffalo Hunt as it is happening in the far West of North America. "Buffalo Bill" and the Indians.

As the program states, the show began with a parade of all participants into the arena, where they were introduced. The newspaper coverage reported in detail the different members of the troupe, including the Indian tribes, their appearance, and numbers. According to the information provided in the show program, the order was as follows: a group of Arapahoe Indians, led by their chief Black Heart; a group of cowboys; Buck Taylor, the King of the cowboys; a group of Bruce Indians with Little Chief, their chief; a group of Cut-Off, led by their chief Brave Bear; Mexican vaqueros; Mr. Antonio Esquivel; a group of Cheyenne Indians; Chief Eagle Horn; a group of ladies from the West of the United States; the young Bennie Irving, the world's smallest cowboy; the Boy Chiefs, the small chiefs of the Sioux; flags of friendly nations; a group of Ogallala

Sioux Indians; Low Neck, chief; Rocky Bear, Medicine Man of the Sioux; “Buffalo Bill” (Colonel W. F. Cody), Chief of Scouts of the United States Army.<sup>411</sup>

Even though each group was introduced separately and by racial affiliation, for many reporters the overall image was the most impressive: “the whole Wild West troop: Indians, cowboys, and vaqueros are a colorful mixture. They take to a trot to mix into wild chaos—a glorious, colorful picture—steed and rider disappears into a whirling cloud of dust.”<sup>412</sup> Reporters agreed that this “grand mix of races” created a living, colorful picture of the West in a “kaleidoscopic manner.” For one of them, there was “such a great conglomeration of colors, head dresses, fantastic body paint and clothing” that “it was difficult to make out the individual brawny figures; that’s how wild and numbing the chaos was at first.”<sup>413</sup> They mentioned the apparently common purpose among the performers and their unity as a whole. No reporter singled out racial aspects of any one group in the grand entry, but all described the picture in a romantic and harmonious fashion.

The grand entrance was accompanied by music provided by the cowboy band and followed by a rendition of the national anthems of the United States and the host country. This fact again confirms Cody’s ambitions to be perceived as an official representative of America to the European nations and the goal to be seen as a distinctly American entertainment. The display of the U.S. and respective nations’ flags also falls into that category. In fact, Rydell and Kroes noted that flag-raising ceremonies were previously only held at patriotic occasions and military or governmental functions. However, during

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<sup>411</sup> Descriptions of this can be found in every newspaper in Germany. One example is the *Sächsische Dorf-Zeitung*, Dresden, June 3, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.07d).

<sup>412</sup> *Rheinischer Merkur*, Cologne, September 20, 1890.

<sup>413</sup> *Courier* (Evening), Hannover, July 2, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.27d).

the 1880s American flags became an increasingly important element in most American celebrations and promoted the veneration of the flag all over the U.S.<sup>414</sup> Buffalo Bill was following this new trend, and displaying the flags side by side stressed the friendly relationship between America and the different European nations.

The only person that was singled out and described profusely during the entrance was William Cody himself. Right from the start, newspapers stated that he was not a “fake” and truly lived up to all the expectations: “Buffalo Bill can well be regarded as a prototype for the self-made man in the Wild West of America. If you consider him a swanky imposter you could not be more wrong.”<sup>415</sup> His impressive entrance on his white horse Charlie stunned the audience and inspired raptures such as “and now comes—as an old lady sitting about a half an arrow’s flight away from us enthusiastically announced (an she must certainly know it!)—the most beautiful man of the century! Colonel W.F. Cody, aka Buffalo Bill, the director of the show, courier, scout, buffalo hunter, pathfinder, master shot, lawmaker, turned entrepreneur and savvy businessman. The audience shouts bravos, and Buffalo Bill, indeed an impressive appearance of masculine prowess and determination, lifts his hat in greeting to the crowd.”<sup>416</sup>

Many papers commented on Cody’s physical appearance in the most positive and glowing manner: “Every line of his muscular physique overflowed from the usual sharpness of his suit.... [He is] a portrayal of manliness, like it could be thought of in its perfection.”<sup>417</sup> Another reporter put it this way: “Buffalo Bill is a beautiful man. He

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<sup>414</sup> Rydell and Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna*, 56-57. The Pledge of Allegiance was born from the same idea for the opening of the Columbian Exposition.

<sup>415</sup> *Nachrichten*, Hannover, June 29, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.26a).

<sup>416</sup> *Kleine Presse*, Frankfurt am Main, October 2, 1890.

<sup>417</sup> *Tageblatt und Anzeiger*, Leipzig, June 26, 1890.

sports a balanced, muscular figure with a keen, fearless gaze in his eyes, flowing hair that flows over his shoulders and is a little bleached by the exertions of his life, and a stalwart posture.... These all are signs for his character, for a man who is significant and who is aware of his status.”<sup>418</sup> A Leipzig paper printed the following:

He is highly impressive, 5’ 11” tall, and has a sharp but very much delicate and aristocratic face with vivid color and a strong, now mottled mustache and goatee that shows determination, bravery and at the same time nobility. Under the high, strong bones of his forehead a pair of small but fiery eyes is flashing. His hair is shoulder-long, which is why the Indians in the past have called him ‘Longhair.’ His appearance and prestige are even greater due to the fact that he is famed to possess all of the virtues of the West but none of the vices that usually taint so many a backwoodsman’s character.<sup>419</sup>

One reporter even admits that he had not initially bought into the hype around Buffalo Bill’s persona and this “theatrically enhanced hero,” but “now that I saw him personally, it is all true. I openly admit I could not imagine a more splendid, masculine appearance than his.”<sup>420</sup> One last statement in this context also refers to Cody as the personification of fictional heroes: “He is the Indian novel hero, right from out of the book. Though not young anymore, he is still a straight and beautiful man full of innate nobility, even if not without some theatrical gestures.”<sup>421</sup> For many a German, Cody epitomized the essence of Western masculinity and virility. The reactions clearly reflect the cult that had developed around his personality in Europe.

The audience had been prepared sufficiently by the newspaper announcements in advance of the show as well as the intense poster campaign that often singled out Cody. It was also perpetuated in the show program, which cast Cody in the most positive ways

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<sup>418</sup> *General Anzeiger*, Leipzig, June 18, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.16b).

<sup>419</sup> *Nachrichten*, Leipzig, June 20, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.16a).

<sup>420</sup> *Nachrichten*, Leipzig, June 20, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.15c).

<sup>421</sup> *Meitzener Tageblatt*, Meitzen, June 3, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.08a).



possible. Yet, not only did the program praise Cody's physical appearance and skills, but also commented on his inner qualities. For example, quotes from Generals Sheridan and Carr confirmed Cody's superb moral makeup as a soldier and scout: "he is a very hard working man, cool-headed, brave," and "he is modest and unassuming.... His personal strength and activity are very great and his temper and disposition are good."

Furthermore, his "eyesight is better than a good field glass... and [he] seemed never to tire and always ready to go...." Lastly, Cody was attested to "never [having been] noisy, recalcitrant, or excited."<sup>422</sup>

Lastly, many papers referred to Buffalo Bill in terms of ancient myths and compared him to the knights of the past. This affiliation was important because it connected Cody with a European past that his audience could identify with. Reporters mentioned his "splendid, knightly appearance" and the fact that he "rides his magnificent white horse with such dignity as we have never seen in any circus before." In fact, he and his horse seemed "fused" together, implying a connection to the ancient mythical centaurs of German folklore and a natural connection between Cody and his animal. For many a reporter, he indeed "appears like a knight from the past."<sup>423</sup> Thus, the persona that Cody and his *Wild West* show created for him was that of a larger-than life hero who embodied natural nobility, masculine prowess, and an overall superb character.

As mentioned previously, the phrases and formulations that were used to describe Cody in particular, but also other members of the show such as Buck Taylor, sometimes give the impression of being sensual in nature to a modern reader. The French and

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<sup>422</sup> BBWW Journal German edition, 1891, no page numbers, in William F. Cody collection, MS 6. Series VI A- Programs, etc. Box 1, Folder 6.

<sup>423</sup> For example *Nachrichten*, Leipzig, June 20, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.15c); *Meitzener Tageblatt*, Meitzen, June 3, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.08a).

German language used to describe Cody seem similar in their tone and vocabulary; however, I would argue that these sensual undertones are rather normal for the time and originate from a romantic and nostalgic longing rather than erotic fantasies. With that said, though, it is almost certain that many a female spectator felt a sexual draw towards the members of the troupe (which of course applies to the men as well in regards to Annie Oakley in particular). This was not necessarily unintended by the cast members who certainly enjoyed the positive attention and perhaps even lightly teased the audience with sensual hints.<sup>424</sup>

The newspaper coverage also reveals that the American ideology did not translate well into the European context, and that Germans did not really pick up on the elements of ideology in the show that were so crucial for Americans. In fact, when “America’s National Entertainment” came to Germany, an interesting and crucial process of appropriation can be witnessed that takes our understanding of Native American perception in Germany beyond the concepts of vivification and the general ethnological interest in the Indians. In the arena, the German audience (and as representatives for them the German reporters) did not find the Indians to be the most interesting and exciting act. Quite the contrary, many newspapers stressed the fact that the trick riding was the most interesting part of the show. For example, a Frankfurt newspaper asked “what does the experienced Buffalo Bill show us? The poor Indians who were (so to speak) his friends all throughout his life, are just simple accessories to his show, the main attraction are the cowboys, his troupe, and he himself.”<sup>425</sup> In light of the German infatuation with Indians, their deep cultural connection with them, and the habit to romanticize everything Native

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<sup>424</sup> Male virility was a strong concept in the show and is discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>425</sup> *Frankfurter Nachrichten*, October 1, 1890.

American, this seems like a major contradiction. Why did the Indians in the arena not elicit more excitement and awe among Germans?

The newspaper articles answer this question indirectly. They extensively and repeatedly described the extraordinary feats and fearless stunts of the riders as the most interesting of the production because they were the most *genuine*, even more so than the acts performed by the Native Americans. This demonstrates that the German public was indeed very aware of the theatricality and showmanship that permeated the show and especially those acts that were heavily scripted and cast the Indian into the role of the aggressor, such as the attack on the Deadwood Stage coach and the emigrant train. A Berlin paper explained that “no matter how much the individual acts and the fights between redskins and whites excite you, no matter how much our fantasies of Indian stories from our youth are inspired, it is hard to deny that... [these acts] only represent an illusion of authenticity and feel a little forced and theatrical.” According to the reporter, this representation of the acts and the Indians within them “slightly impedes the Romanticism of the wilderness and of prairie life that speaks from this performance.”<sup>426</sup>

This illustrates that, in fact, German opinion was based on a *dual perception* of Indians that sharply differentiates between the Indian Germans saw in the arena and the Indian they saw in public, during their shopping trips, their public speeches, and for example the already mentioned Indian breakfast in the camp. Germans *were* fascinated and mesmerized, but not with the version of the Indian that was presented to them in the show. The polarity between white and Indian dominated the arena, and the demise and defeat of the Indian was taken for granted and deemed unavoidable. That arena Indian did

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<sup>426</sup> *Berliner Fremdenblatt*, July 25, 1890.

not match the German stereotype of the noble savage who lived in harmony with nature and fit so easily into the German creation myth. The Indian in the arena corresponded with *American* notions of the Indian as a belligerent adversary who needed to be conquered in order to become a positive part of American identity. The element of struggle that was introduced by the *Wild West* and crucial to American ideology did not at all enhance the Indians' allure or status in the German eye but instead corrupted the existing stereotypes. Therefore, this aspect of Native American representation in Germany was not considered the most exciting in the show but instead was surpassed by other elements like the trick riding, which in the German imagination seemed more "realistic" and "authentic" than the portrayal of the Indians in the show. The Indian presence of course was still acknowledged and described in a mostly positive way, but it did not take center stage for the German audience as one would have expected, given the Indian excitement in Germany at that time.

Of course, many reporters also commented on the excitement of the struggle in the arena and the pitting of the races against each other. After all, violence always makes for a good and exciting story. And on a regular basis, the arena Indians' viciousness and cunning are described as well. It seems, however, that beneath the superficial excitement of battle and conflict, the German reporters rather dismissed the authenticity of the Indian portrayal and were looking instead towards other aspects that felt more "real" to them. The trick riding fulfilled this bill. Similarly, while newspapers described the wild and exotic outer appearance of Indians, they still qualified their wildness: Descriptions of their skin-color ranged from "dark yellow to red, and they are wrapped in colorful shawls and blankets. Their wild hair and the sparkling lances are decorated with feathers, their

feet and hands are embellished with bells, and they are all bow-legged but wiry, with strong and well-developed upper bodies.” In addition, they were “body-painted and move with a certain daintiness and lightness that reminds one of a dance.” However, as the reporter stated at the end of the article, their “wildness is just painted on.”<sup>427</sup>

In contrast, whenever Indians were encountered *outside* the arena or when they were talked about as a “concept,” their image matched up again with the German imagination; they were perceived as a lot less antagonistic compared with how the show presented them. There was much sympathy for the plight of the Indian in the papers, and when the rumors about maltreatment surfaced, there was uproar in the German press. One reporter commented that the battles in the arena are “tragic,” comparing the drama to that of Romeo and Juliet.<sup>428</sup> Other articles were very progressive when measured against the usual standards of the time, like the following Leipzig paper that published a long essay on the wrongs committed against the Indians by the American government and the terrible influence of civilization on the Indians, whose lifestyle was being “corrupted by alcohol, smallpox, and the teachings of the Mormon Church.” The “European influence causes degradation of nature’s people, poisoning the very air the Indians breathe.”<sup>429</sup> According to this article, which was published under an abbreviated name, (perhaps it was not quite fashionable to criticize that harshly) the reservation system forced the Indians to break the rules because they were being starved to death and intentionally infected with contagious diseases. “Civilization tools” such as forced farming, religious indoctrination, and Indian schools estranged the Indians from the land and corrupted their

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<sup>427</sup> Ibid.

<sup>428</sup> *Freisinnige Zeitung*, Berlin, July 24, 1890.

<sup>429</sup> No paper name noted, but probably from Leipzig, June 21, 1890.

character, causing them to develop the same fraudulent and dubious qualities as white Americans.

To further prove this point of a positive and romanticized perception of the Indian outside of the arena, a look at the descriptions of the Indians in the newspapers reveals they were described almost like foreign royalty. In contrast to the show program that emphasized their belligerence, the chiefs especially were portrayed as proud and noble in interviews.<sup>430</sup> Rocky Bear, for example, who traveled with the *Wild West* in Europe between 1889 and 1892, was considered the representative and speaker for the different Indians in the troupe and greatly impressed the press with his noble, assertive, proud, and self-confident demeanor in his interactions with reporters, the nobility, politicians, and the general visitor. He was respectfully called “medicine man” and “chief.”<sup>431</sup> He appears to have been an impressive person and an authority figure, who seems to even have made the reporters a little nervous. At the aforementioned Indian Breakfasts, it was he who gave a speech and awed the reporters with his eloquence. The most telling example of the admiration for the Indians outside of the arena, however, was perhaps Rocky Bear’s appearance before the Anthropological Society of Berlin.<sup>432</sup> In Ames’ words, Rocky Bear “took the podium with the *gravitas* of an elder statesman.” His performance was “oratory, unrehearsed, non-diegetic, and overtly political in content. Augmenting his speech with hand movements that fascinated members of the audience, Rocky Bear openly challenged the United States government, and he did so in terms that may have resonated with some of the older men sitting before him.” He accused the U.S. of having

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<sup>430</sup> See also Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians*, 226, 44, 56.

<sup>431</sup> *Dresdner Journal*, June 3, 1890; *Hamburger Nachrichten*, August 28, 1890 and August 25, 1890; *Kölner Tageblatt*, September 16, 1890; *Dresdner Journal*, June 7, 1890.

<sup>432</sup> *Hamburger Nachrichten*, August 25, 1890. See also Ames, “Seeing the Imaginary,” 222-223.

forcefully and unrightfully removed the Indians from their land and denied them the right to sovereignty and self-defense. He finished his speech by appealing directly to the audience: “Look at my hand! It is black, but the heart in my breast beats like your heart, in feelings of friendship; our skin colors are different, our hearts are one.”<sup>433</sup> Rocky Bear probably did speak what many Germans felt at the time: an innate tie of friendship and affinity with the Indians that transcended racial theories and bonded them in brotherhood.

Other reporters describe their personal experience with the Indians in the camp in similar, dignified terms that demonstrate respect and almost veneration for the Indians:

Our reporter visited the Indians during their break yesterday morning. Quiet, with dignity and unmoving facial features they were sitting there, leaning against the tents.... One of the Cheyenne chiefs seemed to be especially dignified; his tribe is back on the war path. The red men had just received letters from home that obviously were very dear to them. They were carefully put in their pockets until someone in the troupe would read their contents to them.<sup>434</sup>

It could be argued that this perception of the nobility of the Indian chiefs outside the arena is based on the strictly hierarchical thinking and the rigidity of Wilhelmine Germany, as well as the literary stereotypes of chiefs that had influenced the audience’s perception, and that it was consciously targeted by the organizers.<sup>435</sup> I would contend that the vivification of literary figures certainly played a role in the perception of the chiefs and that Cody used this concept consciously to tap into these previously existing fantasies of the audience by casting his chiefs in a similar light. However, to claim that he was aware of the full strength of the hierarchical thinking in Germany gives too much awareness and premeditation to Cody and the *Wild West*. There are no indications that

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<sup>433</sup> Ames, “Seeing the Imaginary,” 223.

<sup>434</sup> *Post*, Hannover, July 3, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.27e).

<sup>435</sup> Kocks, *Indianer im Kaiserreich*, 66.

Cody was that deeply steeped in German cultural leanings to actively take advantage of such connections.

The portrayal of the Indians as bloodthirsty savages and the pitting of Indians against their conqueror in the show has been the subject of harsh criticism of Buffalo Bill and other Wild West show organizers. In the eyes of scholars such as Philip Deloria Jr., Cody can be justifiably accused of not representing the Indian adequately, as complex enough, differentiated enough, multi-dimensional enough, or even peaceful enough. Scholars rightly complain that Native American representation remains on the level of one-dimensional, simplified characters that only reflect the dichotomy between good and evil, noble versus savage, vanishing versus drunk. Obviously, this was exactly the role that they needed to play and that was ascribed to them by Cody. Deloria also laments that “Native peoples themselves have acquiesced to pictures made of them by others and now perceive of themselves in terms of such stereotypes,” which might partially be Buffalo Bill’s fault.<sup>436</sup>

As much as this characterization and these accusations might be true in the representation of the Indian in the show arena, it is only one half of the image that most Germans perceived from the stay of the *Wild West* in their town. The other, and in terms of Indian perception, more important half consisted of what they saw outside of the arena, which corresponded more with their own preconceptions and ideas and consequently was more easily absorbed into their existing mental world. Thus, even though Buffalo Bill’s Indians in the arena represented the bloodthirsty sidekick that the cowboys needed to

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<sup>436</sup> See Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (Yale University Press, 1998), 125.



reinforce the ideological message of civilization overcoming savagery, Buffalo Bill still perpetuated and reinforced the “positive” stereotypes about Indians in Germany, just not those presented in the arena. This dual view of Native Americans is a crucial piece for understanding the German reception of Buffalo Bill and reinforces the idea that Germans did indeed appropriate the *Wild West* according to their own culture and their own preconceptions, as opposed to unequivocally and uncritically swallowing the American ideology behind the show. It also underscores how Germans were indeed more infatuated with Native Americans than any other European country.

As mentioned, Indians were frequently seen in the cities, where they went to local stores, restaurants, cultural events such as theater and opera performances, and sightseeing destinations. This was of course part of the advertising for the show, but also offered them the opportunity to escape the camp and experience the “host culture.” Everywhere they went, they created an instant attraction and were soon surrounded or accompanied by throngs of curious people. The newspapers promptly reported the next day where they went and what they did. Most of these reports are coined by curiosity and awe, comments about the Indians’ civilized behavior, and a touch of pride at having come into contact with these most interesting specimens of humanity.<sup>437</sup> A Leipzig paper noted in detail the Indians’ dress when they were seen shopping in the city and commented very positively on their “good taste in clothing” after they had bought “big cashmere plaids like our ladies wear traveling.” Even though they neither spoke German, English, nor French, they “knew how to communicate with sign language very well. In order to understand the price of something, the chief took a handful of *Mark* coins and had the

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<sup>437</sup> *Anzeiger*, Dresden, June 11, 1890.

right amount counted out, knowing that one *Thaler* is worth three *Mark*.” When they left the store the crowd that had gathered outside cheered and applauded, which the “brown gentlemen...received with dignity,” as if it was a “long-familiar homage.”<sup>438</sup> Another reporter quoted a shopkeeper with whom the Indians conducted business: the “Indians came without any further company to shop with us.... They looked for colorful scarves and communicated in sign language....They know money and paid.” In the eyes of these reporters, the “demeanor of these people was dignified and determined,” they appeared “extraordinarily decent,” and “it was very educational to meet them face to face.”<sup>439</sup> Judging by the tone and word choice of these articles, the reporters regarded the Indians not at all as uneducated members of a lesser species but as modern and resourceful travelers who graciously put up with a rather juvenile European admiration. Newspaper reports from other cities often corroborated.

Aside from shopping, the Indians and other cast members of the *Wild West* also participated in local cultural events. A Dresden paper reports that the *Concertgarten von Bail* at the *Cafe Imperial* was fully occupied for its opera and waltz concert. Notably, also the “complete Indian troupe” was present and seated at a big table. The “strange guests enjoyed beer and lemonade, and later also Colonel Cody and a few other gentlemen of the show appeared. The Indians raptly listened to the sounds of the band and applauded abundantly. A repeat is probable.”<sup>440</sup> The show members’ appreciation for the concert and the venue as a whole is emphasized, which reveals a positive reception and acceptance of Indians and Americans in German society as a whole. Two further

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<sup>438</sup> *Stadt und Dorf-Anzeiger*, Leipzig, June 22, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.18g).

<sup>439</sup> *Tageblatt und Anzeiger*, Leipzig, June 19, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.15a).

<sup>440</sup> *Anzeiger*, Dresden, June 11, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.04e).

newspaper articles especially reflect not just the attention Indians received when moving around in the city but also their appreciation for the country's culinary specialties: in Dortmund, they enjoyed a trip through the local breweries, about which the newspapers commented: "the 'wild' Indians have acquired quite a tame attitude," even though many people at first "thought they were on the war path." However, it turned out that instead of "thirsting for blood, they thirsted for beer because they were on the 'beer-path'.

Cheers!"<sup>441</sup> Interestingly, it seemed to have not been a problem for these Indians or for the show management to have Indians consume alcohol in public, even though Buffalo Bill was reportedly very concerned about his reputation as a good steward of the Indians and thus did not allow them to drink.<sup>442</sup> Indian alcohol abuse was regarded an enormous problem in both the U.S. and Europe, and some of the Indians, like Rocky Bear, publicly refrained from drinking.<sup>443</sup> On the other hand, there are plenty of newspaper articles that give evidence that Indians frequented bars and beer halls and came to really appreciate German brews.<sup>444</sup> It is nearly impossible that they could have done that behind Cody's back, and he therefore must have at least tolerated it.

Overall, then, the image of the Indian in public was very positive and characterized by curiosity, awe, and excitement. Their public appearances left lasting images in the German imagination and perpetuated the romantic stereotypes that had formed over time. As Reddin notes, Indians were seen less as bloody barbarians than as quiet and quite civilized individuals. In Germany especially, few newspapers mentioned

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<sup>441</sup> *General Anzeiger*, Dortmund, May 5, 1891.

<sup>442</sup> *Dresdner Journal*, June 4, 1890.

<sup>443</sup> *Kleine Presse*, Frankfurt am Main, October 2, 1890.

<sup>444</sup> *Hamburger Nachrichten*, October 19, 1890.

the violent nature of the Indians and American progress but instead used “attributes such as ‘romantic,’ and ‘nature’s men’” and stressed “the demise of Indians and buffalo.”<sup>445</sup>

Of course, the fact that some newspapers also printed critical or downright negative views of the Indians should not be concealed. Despite the strength of the Indian myth in Germany, and keeping in mind that Germans were indeed more romantically infatuated with the Indian than other European nations and certainly their American counterparts, Germans were no less ethnocentric than their European neighbors. Theories of social Darwinism and the superiority of the white race certainly did influence German thinking, and examples of this kind of schism in attitude towards Indians also commonly occur in German newspapers. Some newspapers accentuated the Indians’ uncivilized behavior, sometimes in a quite degrading language. One reporter complained about the “ugly Indian custom” of dining out without paying, and then noted that “when considering that one of the main acts of the Indians in the show is the robbing and murder of a paleface, a little bilking appears as a comparatively innocent amusement.”<sup>446</sup> Strikingly, this article refers to the Indian actions in the arena and is based on the “barbarism” they portray there, which gives countenance for the aforementioned theory that the image of the Indian is dualistic and, when referring to those in the arena, mostly negative.

One of the most lengthy and telling negative exposés about the stay of the *Wild West* in Germany appeared in the *Dresden Tageblatt* in June of 1890. Since over 100,000 people visited the Indian company in these two weeks, the reporter contemplated whether this American influence has been positive. He contended that the “Dark Men” have

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<sup>445</sup> Reddin, *Wild West Shows*, 111-112.

<sup>446</sup> *Dresdner Tageblatt*, Dresden, June 15, 1890.

taught the Dresdeners multiple “bad habits,” ranging from lasso throwing among the youth “during which, one must fear, our little ones could possibly choke each other,” to much more serious allegations among the adult population. In fact, he suggested that the occurrence of a murder as well as a murder trial that ended in a conviction and death sentence for the defendant were connected to the violent nature of the *Wild West* and its negative influence on the peaceful “members of a civilized nation.” He carried on by arguing that the situation in the streets is virtually life-threatening “whenever the Red Skins show themselves, due to the huge crowds that consist to a great part of women and our beloved school children.” Lastly, he even stated his belief that the Indians were taking advantage of the inhabitants of Dresden, “taking a lot of money with them from this city, more than from Vienna or Munich. The question is whether the always business-minded and solid people of Leipzig will welcome them just as friendly. The people of Dresden are very susceptible to performances. The Indians once again proved that.”<sup>447</sup> Not only did the author of this article repeat the stereotypes of Indians as a negative and dangerous influence on a normally very civilized society, but also feared damage to the women and children of Dresden due to their exposure to this “barbaric lot.” By warning his readership that the “wild people are in town,” he hinted that no one could be safe while Buffalo Bill resided within the city walls. Even more tellingly, he ignored the fact that *white* people, and *not* the Indians, managed the show and reaped most of the profits from their performance in Dresden. Overall, by catering to both the feelings of Eurocentrism and romantic images of loss, newspaper reports offer a valuable mirror on society.

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<sup>447</sup> *Tageblatt*, Dresden, June 15, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.10a).

Criticism of a different kind was voiced by an article that appeared in Meitzen, and it demonstrates the permeation of German culture with Indian lore and the way stereotypes and expectations can distort perception:

It is an apparent flaw of the *Wild West* Company that they did not take more care to make this outer appearance of the Indian camp more interesting. Apart from beautiful scalps and other furs, they could have gathered a rich collection of old Indian weaponry and exhibited other Indian products, as we, mutatis mutandis, witnessed it during the exhibit of the Singhalese. Indian women make pretty pottery, and feather and pearl embroidery, and are highly appreciated in America as carpet weavers. Of all this, nothing is apparent in the *Wild West* and therefore it is missing the atmosphere that would effectively prepare the visitor for the Indian scenes.<sup>448</sup>

Other reports mention the fact that even during the performance, some spectators mocked the Indians, stating that they supposedly sound like the market criers praising their goods: “The chief’s war cry in its long-drawn out sounds caused the misfortune of provoking the audience to holler back: Dutch *Bücking!*”<sup>449</sup> Overall, however, the positive portrayals far outweigh the negative descriptions.

As previously discussed, the perception of the Native Americans in the United States and Germany differed sharply and is intricately connected to cultural and societal particularities, preconceived notions, and preferences. A practical illustration of the differences in the perception of Indians is the portrayal of a domestic scene from the *Wild West* in American and German newspapers. The German article from June 1890 featured a detailed description of the skills needed to put up a teepee, the appearance of the camp, the dances and foot races, and the outer appearance of the Indians: “the majority is almost

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<sup>448</sup> *Meitzener Tageblatt*, Meitzen, June 3, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.08a).

<sup>449</sup> *Stadt-Anzeiger der Kölnischen Zeitung*, May 10, 1891. Incidents like this also occurred in the United States. Reddin notes that sometimes audiences saw the dances as humorous and spectators shouted “such sallies as ‘Rats!’ ‘Whoop’er up ther, Jim!’ and ‘Dosy-do’ at the most critical points of their performance,” evoking “obvious disgust” from the Pawnees. Reddin, *Wild West Shows*, 79.

naked, exposing the dense muscles of their upper body, arms and legs. The skin and faces are painted in bright red, yellow, and oranges, and around their wrists and ankles they are wearing brass or silver bands.” The author further described the feathers and weapons worn by the Indians and the dances they performed: “this colorful bunch is starting to move according to the rhythm of three tambourines with short jumping steps that make the bells that are attached to them jingle, uttering abrupt yells while the drummers play their monotone ways.” He closes his article with the comment that “the German audience would have liked to see more intimate scenes from everyday life of the Indians.”<sup>450</sup>

In the United States, descriptions of the same scene sub-humanized and belittled the Indians and mocked their performance. The “Chicago Tribune” noted in 1885: “The Indian dances were grotesque and funny, but rather tame. The warriors gathered in a circle, stamped their feet and jerked their bodies in time to the monotonous music from a couple of tum-tums, keeping up a continuous falsetto squeaking, and looking as hideous as possible.”<sup>451</sup> Even fifteen years later, the descriptions of Indians in the U.S. were not much different, and even the show program perpetuated the negative biases: “Their paint and feathers, their hook-noses, serpent-like lips, cold, glittering black eyes and haughty port mark them as the genuine thing and members of the Four Hundred of their race.... Their war dances are enough to make one have bad dreams—the bowing, mowing

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<sup>450</sup> *Dresden Journal*, Dresden, June 7, 1890.

<sup>451</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, Chicago, May 18, 1885.

figures; grinning gibbering faces, the gaudy, bird-like dresses—inhuman and uncanny.”<sup>452</sup>

As shown, when it came to the representation of conflict in the arena, the Indian assumed the role of the aggressor and attacker, whereas the cowboys stood symbolically as defenders and representations of the white race, for Americans, and for progress.

German newspapers praised the cowboys’ skills and hardiness in the arena and considered their performances the most riveting and impressive. Due to the fact that the Indians were more or less their sidekicks and did not correspond with the romantic German notions of nobility and dignity, the trick riding represented the most authentic element in the arena for the German audience. Lengthy descriptions of the cowboy performers praised their hardiness, physical fitness, virility, and skill in riding the wild mustangs. Most newspapers described their outer appearance in detail: “the cowboys are wearing their fur chaps, gun belts, and jingling spurs and are carrying light wooden saddles with a knob on the front side.”<sup>453</sup> Another reporter noted that “the star attraction of the show is the exhibition riding of the cowboys. This really is a piece of wilderness and wildness.” Following a description of the wild mustangs and the difficulty of mounting them, the reporter concluded by stating that this “exciting and very dangerous scene is the climax of the performance and the most characteristic feature of life in the Wild West as portrayed by the Wild West Company. This alone is worth the visit.”<sup>454</sup>

Other journalists reported similar notions: “The total impression we got from the show is that the main focus is in the area of riding skills. The riders seem to have been

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<sup>452</sup> Show program Buffalo Bill’s Wild West (1898), in William F. Cody collection, MS 6. Series VI A-Programs, etc. Box 1, Folder 6.

<sup>453</sup> *Berliner Fremdenblatt*, July 25, 1890.

<sup>454</sup> *Meitzener Tageblatt*, Meitzen, June 3, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.08a).



forged to their horses, because they freely use the guns, the lance and the lasso, directing the horses only through iron thigh pressure.” After describing some of the tricks in detail (for example the picking up of objects from the ground in full gallop or Cody’s roping skills), he continued by stating that

the horses demonstrate a superb training, which became especially apparent during the fighting scenes between Indians and cowboys. On command, the horses threw themselves and their riders to the ground just like dead, only to get back up just as quickly when the enemy was out of sight. The cowboys are superb horse wranglers of the bucking horses, who were trying everything to buck them off. These riding skills are the most interesting part of the different acts, which in part were a little bit too theatrical. This is especially true for the buffalo hunt, the attacks on the cabin and the stage coach. Annie Oakley and Mr. Daly are terrific shots, but Colonel Cody had them beat with his skills to shoot glass balls out of the air.<sup>455</sup>

Again, this reporter did not care as much for the acts that pitted the Indians against the cowboys because they were not considered as authentic but rather always seemed a little staged and “theatrical” to German audiences. For Americans, on the contrary, these attacks on icons of identity and progress carried the main significance and ideological message of the show.

However, even though the cowboy was not discussed as much as the Indian and had not achieved the same kind of mythological status in Germany, Germans still admired and venerated the cowboy as a uniquely American character. In fact, the enthusiasm for the cowboy was undeniable proof for the power of the American experience on Germans’ mindsets. Richard White has argued that it was the *Wild West* showmen who created the cowboy as an icon just as much as they capitalized on an existing iconography.<sup>456</sup> As opposed to the traditional connection with nature and the

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<sup>455</sup> *Sächsische Dorf-Zeitung*, Dresden, June 3, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.07d).

<sup>456</sup> White, “Turner and Buffalo Bill,” <http://www.studythepast.com/his378/turnerandbuffalobill.pdf>, 12.

sympathy for Indians, cowboys were a purely American invention and thus were scrutinized and appropriated much less than Indians. In fact, they were celebrated as the personification of male virility, ruggedness, and independence. A newspaper comment from Dresden, which can be considered representative for the coverage of cowboys throughout Germany, centered on their riding skills and hardy characters. The author described the wild nature of the mustangs and the difficult process of roping, saddling, and mounting them in great detail, especially stressing the physical strength and experience needed: “the horses’ serious attempts to buck off their riders absolutely correspond with their wild and aggressive nature. In order to master these animals, it certainly takes the entire repertoire of strength, skill, and quick wittedness of these people, who have been toughened from childhood by such activities.”<sup>457</sup>

The cowboys seemed to be fused with the bucking horses, conjuring up images of the mythical centaurs that supposedly roamed the German primeval forests. To further emphasize the extraordinary character of the cowboy, “only people accompanied by a cowboy are allowed to come close to these wild mustangs,” and the cowboys as the quintessential hardy American did not even “grumble” about the rainy German weather: whereas in good weather the show raised a lot of dust that German audiences were complaining about, in the rain the sand in the arena turned into mud. Nevertheless, the cowboys seemed to enjoy the rain, which emphasizes their tough fiber. In fact, the reporter continued: “it was announced in a real American fashion: performances in every weather.”<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>457</sup> *Journal*, Dresden, June 7, 1890.

<sup>458</sup> No source, but most likely *Anzeiger*, Dresden, June 8, 1890; *Nachrichten*, Leipzig, June 17, 1890.

Whereas Americans identified mainly with the cowboys and settlers instead of with the Indians, the process of significance-attribution was more complex in Germany. The cowboy for Germans was on the one hand the counter-figure to the Indian and a manifestation of progress, but on the other hand he also was venerated as a cultural hero. As Billington suggests, cowboys resembled images of knights, embodying characteristics such as dignity, independence, honor, and chivalry.<sup>459</sup> In a way, cowboys were the “knights of the prairie.” This connection with nobility can be found all through American cowboy mythology and in Buffalo Bill’s show as well: Buck Taylor was called the “King of the Cowboys,” and with his impressive stature and “his long, flowing hair has attracted the admiration of the ladies in every city.”<sup>460</sup> Cowboys, then, embodied America for Americans as well as for Germans because they were the products of the rugged land and the process of westward expansion. Hence, this part of the show was understood by Germans as distinctly American, as Mark Twain had hoped for when the show departed for Europe. Ultimately, the two romances of the Indian and the cowboy became entwined to such a degree that children all over Europe grew up playing cowboy and Indian together for generations to come.<sup>461</sup> I would even argue that it was thanks to Buffalo Bill and the *Wild West* that the image of the cowboy, and not that of the pioneer, miner, or farmer, gained such popularity around the world. Gradually, the popularity of the cowboys surpassed that of the Indians and scouts in the *Wild West*, especially when they became equated with the Congress of Rough Riders that took on so much significance in the last European tour.

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<sup>459</sup> Billington, *Land of Savagery, Land of Promise*, 171.

<sup>460</sup> *Anzeiger*, Dresden, June 3, 1890.

<sup>461</sup> Rydell and Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna*, 113.

The two main skills the cowboys demonstrated in the arena were his mastery over animals and his superb marksmanship. The animals were an integral and valuable part of the show. The constant traveling and the climatic change required extra attention, and the cowboys and stable masters made sure that the buffalo, horses, and mules were treated with great care.<sup>462</sup> Upon their arrival in Germany, the animals had to undergo a veterinary examination to make sure they were free of disease and well handled. German officials had ample opportunity to examine the show animals before the first show in Germany due to the fact that Buffalo Bill and his entourage arrived in Munich over a week before the show officially was scheduled to begin, which was unusual, but connected to the fact that the competition with Carver required them to skip Vienna and come to Munich first. On April 11, 1890, district veterinarian Wunder received the request to “examine all animals of the Wild West show during the morning hours of tomorrow and report their health status.” The veterinarian replied with his report that he “examined during the morning hours 169 horses, six mules, 18 buffalo and a steer,” and did not find anything out of the ordinary.<sup>463</sup> Newspapers also confirmed the well-being of the show animals by stating that they were “in superb shape.”<sup>464</sup>

Remarkably, the buffalo that accompanied the show evoked contradictory comments among German newspapers. On the one hand, they were seen as exotic and as representatives of a dying lifestyle on the plains, and thus were imbued with a similar romantic touch as the Indians. On the other hand, they disappointed some reporters with their shaggy looks and somewhat “tired” behavior because in the imagination of many a

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<sup>462</sup> *Tageblatt und Anzeiger*, Leipzig, June 20, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.15b).

<sup>463</sup> Spiegel, *Buffalo Bill in München*, Footnote 41, 42. In a letter to the police department of the city of Munich, Burke had mentioned 25 buffalo and circa 200 horses and mules.

<sup>464</sup> *Tageblatt*, Hannover, July 1, 1890.

German, the buffalo had assumed grand proportions and probably resembled something like the ancient mammoth. These notions were disappointed in the arena, where Cody and his cowboys chased the band of buffalo around and shot at them with blanks and blunted arrows. The buffalo, after years of doing this, had grown accustomed to the noise and the excitement, and eventually learned to simply mill around the arena, ignoring their pursuers. Whereas many reporters described the buffalo act with enthusiasm, there were also disappointed and critical voices among them. The criticism might have stemmed in part from the fact that Germans were more interested in preserving the buffalo as a part of a landscape that they had romanticized, whereas the show emphasized hunting the buffalo over preserving them. Thus, whereas Cody exemplified the prevailing mood about extinction of species and stressed that progress required dominion over the animals as well, the German mood was more romantic and critical of this depiction.

The horses in the show helped showcase the humans' skills, and depending on the act the meeting of cowboy and horse was seen either as a merging of man and animal or as a clash between two combatants. In the first scenario, man and horse were often referred to as Centaurs from ancient European myth, especially when they displayed feats that required extraordinary harmony between the two. This for example applies to the Pony Express Stop act, the attacks on the Stage Coach, or the lassoing and picking up of items from the ground at full speed. Horse and man needed to communicate, and the horses needed to be very well trained to navigate through the different requirements of the acts. Admiration for the superb horsemanship and training of the animals by the

cowboys can be found abundantly in the newspaper coverage, which described their unity and almost supernatural merging into one.<sup>465</sup>

The second scenario is more complex and (contrary to initial expectations) regarded by the German press with some criticism. On the one hand, the wild, bucking mustangs were definitely one of the highlights of the show, if not the climax for many Germans. The show program advertised the riding of the broncos as a battle between man and nature that reminded one of a gladiatorial contest. It implied that taming the horse was equal to taming the western landscape and in that way overcoming nature. At the same time, the physical mastery of the horse confirmed the rider's manhood and tough American fiber. As demonstrated above, the press described in detail the wild and ferocious bucking of the horses and the difficulties of the cowboys to stay on top, praising the cowboys' skills and athleticism. For the audience and the reporters alike, this was an authentic and very real act that seemed the least scripted out of all of the show acts of the *Wild West*. It was perceived to be the only act that is un-staged and in fact sometimes even led to injuries of the cowboys.<sup>466</sup> Here the audience knew that the unexpected could happen, which increased the immediacy of the spectacle and the personal empathy for the humans on the wild beasts. In a way, this is similar to today's rodeo or even NASCAR races, where people just wait for a spectacular accident to happen. In fact, an Indian was killed as a result of an injury that he incurred by being gored by one of the buffalo. The incident happened in Hamburg, and while the wound was initially thought not that severe, it "quickly became worse [in Bremen] and caused

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<sup>465</sup> *Anzeiger*, Tharand und Mohorn, 3 June 1890; *Deutsche Volkszeitung*, Hannover, July 6, 1890.

<sup>466</sup> *Deutsches Tageblatt*, Berlin, August 8, 1890.

the death of the man.” The Sioux Indian’s name was “Uses the Sword” and nicknamed “Mosquito,” and he was buried at a Bremen cemetery on September 12, 1890.<sup>467</sup>

Just as with many of the other show acts, fascination and awe were not the only reactions the bucking horse act solicited from its viewers. No matter how much the show program might advertise the dangers and the ideology behind the bucking broncos, the German crowds actually erupted in *laughter* when riders were thrown or the horses performed some spectacularly grotesque feats.<sup>468</sup> This comic relief was certainly not what Buffalo Bill or the cowboys had intended with this act. The ideological components were once again overplayed by a specifically German appropriation that at its core saw the show more as entertainment than as a confirmation and staging of American ideology and identity. In fact, many papers stated that the horses were *trained* to buck and that the act seemed almost like a conspiracy and not like a real battle between man and beast: “these horses, the so called furry “moustangs” [sic], in their seemingly unrestrained wildness, are a real natural wonder in horse training. On command, they buck, stampede, and throw themselves on the ground and roll over with ferocity that one could really believe that they have just been lassoed from the prairie.”<sup>469</sup> This and other reports reveal the awareness of many Germans that what they were seeing was a show and that its message should be taken with a grain of salt. The statement in the program that the horses were wild but that in every performance they were tamed by the cowboys was seen suspiciously by many reporters, who recognized the wildness of the horses, but only in their “trained” nature and not in their natural character.

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<sup>467</sup> *Weser Zeitung*, Bremen, September 10, 1890. The name is stated on the death certificate that was issued by the Bremen registrar. Buffalo Bill Collection, Staatsarchiv Bremen.

<sup>468</sup> See for example *Tribüne*, Hamburg, August 27, 1890.

<sup>469</sup> *Freiberg Anzeiger*, Freiberg, June 3, 1890.

Overall, then, the bucking bronco act was seen in two different lights in Germany: on the one hand, there was genuine admiration for the physical skills of the cowboys and for the superior training and communication between horse and rider. On the other hand, Germans once again dismissed the ideological elements behind these acts that were of such crucial importance for Americans: they did not emphasize the fact that the taming of the horse equaled the taming of the landscape. For them, the horses were already trained and were just “acting,” much like everybody else in the arena, and their grotesque jerks and crazy twirls provoked amusement. They also offered criticism of the scenes for being exaggerated and reinforced the notion that the show indeed in the first place was meant to entertain and therefore employed tricks and cheats just like any other show.

This notion applied not only to the horse training, but also to the shooting demonstrations. For example, Karl Markus Kreis recounted the memories of Karl May’s wife, who had presumably met Cody in 1906: “Cody told us about his acts and revealed some of his tricks used for his performance. For example, for his shooting demonstration he used not bullets but rather pellet shot; that way he could never miss the target in the air.”<sup>470</sup> Nevertheless, the shooting exhibits were an important and very exciting element of the show for Germans. After all, the trademark of the cowboy was his gun, which became as much a frontier icon as its owner. The repeating rifle and the revolver became the symbolic conquerors of the American wilderness, and in that sense are truly American inventions. Ironically, as John Sears has pointed out, this turned the show into a “display of the products of nineteenth-century industrial civilization” just as much as

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<sup>470</sup> Kreis, “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West in Dortmund,” 71.



“of the savage life of the frontier.”<sup>471</sup> The rifle and revolver were the most “innovative products of nineteenth-century industrial civilization in the United States,” and thus became the mediators between the increasingly technological and industrialized world and the unrestricted, self-determined life of the frontier.<sup>472</sup>

The *Wild West* show made extensive use of this cultural icon that Americans proudly displayed in Europe. At the heart of the show were exhibitions of shooting that impressed and awed Germans. Praise for Annie Oakley and her shooting skills occupied almost as much space in German newspapers as the descriptions of the Indians in the arena, attesting to the fascination and appeal emanating from this American invention. The show’s program consequently advertised the shooting elements extensively and assigned the bullet an important role in the conquest of the West: “the bullet is a kind of pioneer of civilization. Although its mission is often deadly, it is useful and necessary. Without the bullet, America would not be a great, free, united, and powerful country.”<sup>473</sup> In this context, the reenactments of frontier scenes in which Indians and white settlers were facing each other in conflict naturally sported a healthy dose of gun smoke as well.

Germans, on the other hand, had no ideological attachment to guns; they never have been a significant symbol in German popular and mythological identity. This can probably be explained by looking at the formative periods of both nations. When Americans asserted their independence, fought their Civil War, and expanded their

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<sup>471</sup> John Sears. “Bierstadt, Buffalo Bill, and the Wild West in Europe,” in Rob Kroes, Robert Rydell, and D.F.J. Bosscher, *Cultural Transmissions and Receptions: American Mass Culture in Europe* (European Contributions to American Studies, Vol. 25) (Austin: Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, 1993), 3-15, 7.

<sup>472</sup> Rydell and Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna*, 113.

<sup>473</sup> Naila Clerici, “Native Americans in Columbus’s Home Land: A Show within the Show,” in Feest, *Indians and Europe*, 415.

borders from sea to sea, guns were the weapon of choice. In contrast, epic German battles and tales of the days in which Germany was “grand” establish instead the sword as such, simply because guns had not yet been invented. Similar to the significance of firearms in America, for Germans the sword embodies power, dominance, and freedom, and has even become the royal insignia of the Kings of old throughout Europe. Perhaps due to this lack of symbolism embodied by guns, German newspapers sometimes criticized their liberal application in the *Wild West*: the gun smoke especially and the noise were considered excessive, and some stated that there was “much theatrical effect” involved.<sup>474</sup> This again suggests that the show resided much more in the realm of entertainment than at the core of identity for Germans. Another reporter noted that it truly was a great performance, but that perhaps there was a little too much shooting, and that the “usage of powder was indeed very liberal.” He then justified this “flaw” by stating that “it is closely connected to the real life of the Indians, so it is justifiable and authentic.”<sup>475</sup> Consequently, the gun and the cowboy as its wielder can perhaps be considered the most distinctively American parts of the *Wild West* show in both intention and perception. In the same vein, as observed by Dana Weber, “gun shooting is not featured as part of the competitions” at the Karl May festivals.<sup>476</sup> This also reinforces the idea that this is a specifically American element that did not translate into the German cultural context permanently. It was something that Europeans admired but did not copy.

In both the U.S. and Germany, women in the Victorian area were considered to be the guardians of morality and virtue. Angelic and submissive, they were supposed to be

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<sup>474</sup> *General Anzeiger*, Dortmund, May 15, 1891.

<sup>475</sup> *Tageblatt und Anzeiger*, Leipzig, June 18, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.12c).

<sup>476</sup> Weber, *Indians on German Stages*, 137.

content to nurture their children and fashion their homes into places where their husbands could take refuge from the ravages of the get-ahead world of business. Domesticity was not a simple social sphere that confined women to the house, but it was what defined women as such. Thus, there was a sharp polarity between the women's sphere and the men's sphere, and scientific and cultural thought attributed certain traits and characteristics to each of these that were mutually exclusive. Men were more aggressive, self-reliant, and displayed leadership abilities. Women were considered spiritual, passive, and emotional.<sup>477</sup> According to this concept, the western landscape was automatically associated with male virtues and traits, and women played only a minor role in it. Thus, the female performers in the *Wild West* did not meet the prevailing stereotypes, even though the publicity men tried to make them conform. Annie Oakley, Lillian Smith, and the Ferrell Sisters defeated men in shooting, challenged their shooting prowess, and handled guns and horses as only men should or supposedly could. During their performances, they "abandoned the side saddle and dressed in cowboy attire, and matched their equestrian and shooting skills with men." They were so comfortable and skilled in areas that were so thoroughly considered *male* domains that they seriously challenged the prevailing stereotypes and probably scandalized some people in the audience.<sup>478</sup> In fact, sometimes the women and Oakley in particular were portrayed in very unfeminine ways. She was referred to as a "hot-blooded little lady [*Dämchen*]" or described as a "backwoods-woman" a designation that could not be considered

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<sup>477</sup> Karin Hausen, "Die Polarisierung der 'Geschlechtercharaktere.' Eine Spiegelung der Dissoziation von Erwerbs- und Familienleben," in *Sozialgeschichte der Familie in der Neuzeit Europas*, ed. Werner Conze (Stuttgart, 1976).

<sup>478</sup> For a detailed discussion on women in the show see also Sarah Wood Clark, *Beautiful Daring Western Girls: Women of the Wild West Shows* (Cody, WY: Buffalo Bill Historical Center, 1985).

respectable because they embodied a wild element that made many a spectator uncomfortable.<sup>479</sup> As Rydell and Kroes put it, “the women performers revealed the ability of performers to edit—if not rewrite—cultural scripts and to test the limits of Victorian values.”<sup>480</sup>

In order to “soften the blow” for the audience and to “contain the threatening potential of women sharpshooters and rodeo riders,” Cody and other showmen emphasized their femininity.<sup>481</sup> Oakley always wore her hair long and was described as beautiful and prettily dressed. The German papers followed this pattern of describing the women as skilled shooters and riders but also as beautiful, feminine, and soft. A biography of Annie Oakley from the show program was often reprinted in the newspapers, and while she was frequently referred to as a “nimrod in petticoats” and “Amazon,” these descriptions were always accompanied with words such as “grace” and “courage.”<sup>482</sup> Thus, while lauding their extraordinary riding and shooting skills, the newspapers made sure to depict the more typically female characteristics of the women participants as well. The fact that these American women embodied not only the hardy frontier images but also demonstrated sophisticated cultural skills reconnected them to civilization and enabled them to be a real hybrid: besides possessing important skills that were considered manly but vital at the frontier, they were also able to maintain their female characteristics such as a neatly decorated home (in this case their tents) and an appropriate and almost shy and simple courtesy. Thus, Germans could admire the

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<sup>479</sup> *Berliner Börsen-Courier*, July 24, 1890.

<sup>480</sup> Rydell and Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna*, 32-33.

<sup>481</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>482</sup> *Journal*, Dresden, June 7, 1890; *Anzeiger*, Dresden, June 8, 1890; *Journal*, Dresden, June 10, 1890; *General Anzeiger*, Leipzig, June 18, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.16b).

toughness of American women while still being reassured of the presence of civilization even in a remote place such as the American West.

Whereas the women were allowed to show off their riding and shooting skills, their roles were nonetheless designed within certain gendered boundaries. Since aggression was considered a masculine trait, the women never appeared in the role of an aggressor in the *Wild West*; only the men did the horse-taming and bronco riding, which is an essentially masculine event. The ladies did not participate in the attack scenes unless they portrayed the damsel in distress that needed to be rescued from the Indians, as was the case in the *Attack on the Settler's Cabin* (Ma Whitaker portrayed this victim). The women either appeared in the role of skilled marksmen who shoot at targets, or the victims of male aggression.

Furthermore, to soften the image of the women even more, the acts that they performed were sometimes trivialized. The *Virginia Reel*, for example, a square dance performed on horseback, was often described as a “pretty dance” that specifically served to please the women in the show as well as those in the audience, even though it was a difficult act of horsemanship and control. The challenges and dangers of the performance were dismissed or not even acknowledged. The race between the Ferrell sisters received significantly less coverage compared to the races by men in the press. Women's acts were seen more as playful and pretty, and were mentioned in one breath with the races of the Indian boys, only with the caveat that the boys rode without saddles. In contrast, the men's races were seen as necessary for survival and presented as considerably more dangerous endeavors. Overall, women were never described in the same heroic terms as men, in roles of leadership, or in terms of power or strength. Instead, the press

overwhelmingly described them in the most traditional female ways, emphasizing their grace, elegance, beauty and skill. Yet, one reporter took a different stance towards the female riders. In a newspaper article from Hamburg, he described the women as excellent riders, but an undertone of sexuality and exoticism crept into the description:”The race between two backwoods ladies was the next act. Good Lord! If the ladies that perform this sport were to marry Bedouins, a true race of Centaurs would come forth, because courage is paired with amazing skill, calmness and elasticity of the body....”<sup>483</sup> This demonstrates that not all reporters followed the same pattern of describing the ladies of the show and proves the diversity of opinion and perception.

Even more significant is the contrast between the descriptions of the women in and outside of the arena. In fact, outside the arena, women were seen as symbols of domesticity and friendliness and behaved within the accepted norms.<sup>484</sup> A Berlin newspaper demonstrates this contrast in direct fashion by stating that the “Amazon” women in the arena turn out to be good housewives, as they should be: “Ms. Georgie William, the red-haired piquant rider of the company was there, and noticed a faulty patch on her husband’s jacket, and excused herself, apologizing that all in the camp was not orderly and right. Mr. Georgie Williams, a lean gentleman, smiled. ‘I apologize, Madam, for the *Wild West* appears to us to not be in very good shape.’ In the corner stood a sewing machine allowing one to guess that the bold Amazon is actually a very good, industrious housewife.”<sup>485</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> *Tribüne*, Hamburg, August 27, 1890.

<sup>484</sup> see *General Anzeiger*, Leipzig, June 22, 1890, or “60 Stunden im Sattel.” *Berliner Börsen-Courier*, July 24, 1890.

<sup>485</sup> “Eine Nacht bei Buffalo Bill.” *Berliner Börsen-Courier*, August 2, 1890.

The performances in the arena and the life in camp were seen as two distinctively different entities by the German public. The Indians' portrayal in the arena did not correspond with German notions of Indian character, and therefore the German public concentrated more on the Indians outside the arena in order to confirm their stereotypes and dismissed the performances as entertainment and staged theater as opposed to seeing it as a realistic representation. The female cast members were seen in a similarly dualistic light; Amazons in the arena where they were acting a certain way, but really good housewives in camp, which to them was much more realistic. Thus, the camp visits embodied a crucial part of the experience for the German audience, and it is probably safe to say that most of the visitors to the *Wild West* took the opportunity to stroll through the camp also.

Some Germans even traveled with the *Wild West* for a while and lived alongside the Americans in the camp. Carl Henckel is an example: he was a twenty-eight year old art student in Munich who was magically attracted to the picturesque scenes of the *Wild West*; so much so that he paid daily visits to the *Wild West* while it was in Munich.<sup>486</sup> There, he eagerly sketched the Indians and cowboys during the performances and in the camp and decided to accompany the troupe to later tour stops. He summarized his experiences with the *Wild West* in an essay that was published in April 1891 in a Munich newspaper. The same essay, "Eine Sommerreise mit Buffalo Bill" ("A Summer Journey with Buffalo Bill"), accompanied his portfolio along with some of his sketches.<sup>487</sup>

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<sup>486</sup> Spiegel, *Buffalo Bill in München*, footnote 80.

<sup>487</sup> Henckel's portfolio, titled *Buffalo Bill and his Wild West, drawings from Life*, consists of fourteen illustrations with captions in English, French, and German. Carl Henckel, *Buffalo Bill and his Wild West, drawings from Life* (Munich: Twietmeyer, 1891). The essay is "Eine Sommerreise mit Buffalo Bill" and

According to Henckel, the “purpose of the pictures is to reproduce to the interested viewer the types of the wild West of North America and scenes from their life, which is a wonderful mix of medieval romance and raw natural power.”<sup>488</sup> The portfolio, which featured fourteen illustrations, was offered for sale to the visitors of the *Wild West* after it resumed performing after the winter break of 1890/1891. People who found the big format portfolio too expensive could also purchase a smaller version of the drawings as separate postcards.

Although Henckel did not participate in the whole tour, he was present at the performances in Munich, Berlin, Dresden, Hamburg, Bremen, Stuttgart, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, and Strasburg. He came to the following conclusion at the end of his involvement with the show in Germany: “in spite of the friendly reception in Dresden, Munich remained the city with the fondest memory of the Wild West participants. Therefore, on some evenings, even the quiet red skins told of the good friends and the good beer (in Lakota *mine piga/ gelbes Wasser/ yellow water*) in Munich... The well and far traveled whites and coloreds of the Wild West gushed over Germany as a country, and in the winter, a small Buffalo Bill colony formed in Munich near some of the breweries.”<sup>489</sup> His bias for Munich might be explained by the fact that it was his home town, but nevertheless, his statements confirm the well-being of Cody’s troupe in Germany.

Royalty also often visited the *Wild West* camp before or after the show and was always guided through the camp by Buffalo Bill himself. As noted, the contact with

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was published in the *Münchner Neue Nachrichten*. A description of Henckel’s collection is printed in for example in *Staatsbürger Zeitung*, Berlin, August 2, 1890.

<sup>488</sup> In Henckel, *Sommerreise*.

<sup>489</sup> *Ibid*.



Royal dignitaries was crucial for Cody in his desire to establish America as a cultural and global power in the eyes of Europeans, and the Royal patronage validated American longings for prestige and status. In return, back in the States, Cody's success in Europe and his socializing with Europe's elites raised his esteem there and made him an international celebrity. Germany at the turn of the century was officially a unified country with the Royal family seated in Berlin, but still had maintained the traditional local feudal structures and families with Royal blood that claimed royal rights until the dissolution of all feudal structures in 1919. The German Kaiser Wilhelm and his family visited Buffalo Bill several times and requested private demonstrations of shooting skills from Annie Oakley.<sup>490</sup>

One of the most enduring myths about the *Wild West's* stay in Germany deserves brief mentioning in this context. It concerns Annie Oakley shooting a cigarette out of the Kaiser's mouth (or alternatively, his hand), which has found its way into numerous scholarly works and popular memory.<sup>491</sup> It also claims that Annie supposedly stated later that she regrets to have only shot the ashes off of his cigarette instead of shooting him dead, which in her opinion would have prevented World War One. Some versions of the myth claim that this happened during a Berlin performance, however, the Berlin newspapers are suspiciously silent in regards to this incident. Instead, if this happened, it must have been two years earlier when Annie and her husband Frank performed shooting tricks for the then-Crown Prince while the *Wild West* had returned to the U.S. after its

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<sup>490</sup> The Berlin newspapers do not yield much information in regards to these events, which means that they were probably exaggerated by the Buffalo Bill company and used for advertisement purposes.

<sup>491</sup> An even cursory online search on Annie Oakley results in countless hits that recount this myth.

London engagement.<sup>492</sup> Still, it seems that this story was fabricated to enhance Annie Oakley's notoriety, as she was a "show-woman" and thus needed this kind of publicity. In fact, the Kaiser, being rather shy and not necessarily a dare-devil, would probably not have allowed such a threat to his life.<sup>493</sup> Be that as it may, the performances in Berlin were well-visited by royalty and the upper crust of Berlin society, and their presence at the show was noted in detail by the papers. It seems that the English-speaking paper in Berlin, the *English and American Register*, was especially concerned with highlighting the visits of these dignitaries.<sup>494</sup>

Munich, the capital of the former constitutional monarchy of Bavaria that was incorporated into the German Reich in 1871, also saw its nobility and high society admiring and associating with Buffalo Bill. The opening performance of the *Wild West* was attended by almost all members of the royal family that were currently present in Munich, including the Prince Regent. After the "great breakfast" on April 23, Prince Leopold visited Annie Oakley in the camp and requested a special performance of her shooting skills. The next day, Prince Ludwig appeared with his two daughters, their court ladies, and his adjutants in order to be shown the camp. Duke Max Emanuel visited the performance on April 25 and returned the next day, this time accompanied by the princes Ludwig, Leopold, and Arnulf, in order to be shown the skill and precision of Annie Oakley and Mr. Daly. During this occasion, Prince Leopold demonstrated his own

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<sup>492</sup> Robert A. Carter, *Buffalo Bill Cody. The Man Behind the Legend* (New York: Wiley and Sons, 2000), 330.

<sup>493</sup> During a conversation with Karl Markus Kreis, he confirmed that the story is more than likely a myth.

<sup>494</sup> See for example *English and American Register*, Berlin, July 26 (MS6.9.5.1.53).

shooting skills. Afterwards, Prince Arnulf and Duke Max Emanuel had a drink with Cody.<sup>495</sup>

As a sign of gratitude and admiration, many royal or otherwise noble visitors gave gifts to Cody and to several of the main performers of the show. For example, the Bavarian Prince Regent presented trick shots Johnnie Baker and C.L. Daly each with a diamond-studded pin, bearing his name. Annie Oakley was given a diamond-studded gold bracelet, and Rocky Bear received a gold necklace adorned with commemorative coins. On April 26, Cody was sent a “splendid brilliant-studded chest pin” with signature from Prince Ludwig. Prince Arnulf and Princess Therese presented Cody with a brilliant ring, which Cody wore from then on. In turn, Cody took the liberty to “present the Prince Regent with an authentic Indian bow and arrow set in memory of the visit of the *Wild West*.”<sup>496</sup> Cody proudly displayed these gifts in his tent and often showed them to visitors.

Buffalo Bill's *Wild West* was not the only Wild West show touring Europe and Germany in the 1890s. Cody, of course, had to change his scheduled stops in Germany due to the competition with another showman and thus opened his Germany tour in Munich instead of in Vienna. It was Doc Carver who had beaten him to the punch in Germany. Carver, a noted marksman and trick shooter from California, had previously traveled in England, France, Belgium, Germany and Austria with his outfit called “Wild-Amerika.” Carver also demonstrated his amazing shooting skills in front of the German Kaiser.

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<sup>495</sup> Spiegel, *Buffalo Bill in München*, 36.

<sup>496</sup> Ibid.

Like Buffalo Bill, Carver was aware of the importance of advertisement, the effects of billboards, and new ways of drawing attention to his show, and intent on generating positive press coverage. Newspapers described his huge posters that plastered the cities, and his performers made public appearances, similar to the Indians of Buffalo Bill's show. One such report described a carriage in which the "most beautiful" of Carver's Indians were driven around, donning their "typical colorfully painted faces, grand headdresses, and...fantastic costumes."<sup>497</sup> Furthermore, the Indians were often seen in Hamburg's nightclub district.<sup>498</sup> Carver also gave special shows for children and the poor that were free of charge. Before he left with his "Wild- Amerika" for Australia, he gave away some of his horses in a lottery and received very positive descriptions in the press for doing so.<sup>499</sup> These tactics were identical to Cody's and must have all but overwhelmed the inhabitants of Hamburg in sheer magnitude and frequency, especially when Carver and Cody crossed paths there in August of 1890. A fierce competition ensued that did not even go unnoticed by American newspapers. The *San Francisco Examiner* commented that "Hamburg is filled with a howling mob of Indians and cowboys who are awaiting the chance to scalp each other. The town is crowded with the posters of both parties. As soon as Cody's bills are posted, Carver's assistants come along and tear them down and put up their own. The bad blood between Cody and Carver has also aroused such a jealous feeling among their Indian and cowboy followers that serious trouble is expected at any moment."<sup>500</sup> The three main Hamburg newspapers printed pages worth of advertisement for the two shows, and often, their ads appeared side by

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<sup>497</sup> *Hamburger Nachrichten*, August 22, 1890.

<sup>498</sup> *Ibid.*, September 19, 1890.

<sup>499</sup> Kocks, *Indianer im Kaiserreich*, 53, *Berliner Intelligenz-Blatt*, October 11, 1890.

<sup>500</sup> *San Francisco Examiner*, August 28, 1890.

side. Carver and Cody are almost impossible to distinguish from one another in their pictures that appeared as parts of the ads, and the show programs are nearly identical, Carver's focusing slightly more on shooting and Cody's on riding.<sup>501</sup>

Thus, animosity arose quickly and was acute. The two entrepreneurs were vying for the same audience at the same time, with shows that only differed slightly in content and appeal. In fact, even though Buffalo Bill's outfit was larger, Carver copied many of the most successful elements such as the camp that was freely accessible to the public and a show act that was added in September of 1890 in which the cowboys rode elk.<sup>502</sup> Carver's show was slightly more affordable than Cody's, and in his advertisement he stressed that he had played before European royalty. Even Carver's physical appearance strikingly resembled that of Cody.<sup>503</sup> All in all, even though Carver had arrived first, in Cody's eyes he was an imposter and a copy cat and was essentially stealing Cody's success and money away from him right under his nose.

What vexed Cody the most, though, was the fact that Carver managed to secure an electrical generator in Hamburg and give evening performances that were illuminated by electrical light, whereas Cody had to do without one on this stop. This not only gave Carver's show an edge but also extended the time frame in which performances were possible, which drastically increased his profits. The effect of the light was critical, as is reflected in the news coverage:

Night life on the Prairie. On the wide-open plains of the far-West, life does not awake until sunset. During the day, the languid red skin sleeps and only leaves his hut at the coming of dusk, because according to Indian belief only women and children are allowed to work in the fields and house. Men alone are worthy for the

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<sup>501</sup> They appeared in the *Generalanzeiger*, the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, and *Hamburger Nachrichten*.

<sup>502</sup> *Hamburger Nachrichten*, September 9, 1890.

<sup>503</sup> Kocks, *Indianer im Kaiserreich*, 38. Price: 50pf, Platz 1K, Tribuene 2 K, Loge 3K.

hunt and the noble handling of weapons. During the night, the Indians prepare their attacks on humans and animals. The darkness of night and the weariness of the hard-working white settlers protect them from early detection. Dr. Carver's Wild America demonstrates to us in a night performance how these nocturnal scenes on the plains play out. The appeal of today's performance is even elevated by brilliant fireworks....The effect of the performances is tremendous in the electric light. The distinguished shooter Dr. Carver demonstrated the same skills as in daylight in the electric light, which filled the entire arena. The audience acknowledged the performance with continuous and animated applause.<sup>504</sup>

Since Cody could not out-do his competitor in Hamburg, he regarded his stay there more or less as a failure. He must have been relieved to hear that his and Carver's paths would not cross again in Europe.<sup>505</sup> The show moved on ahead of schedule to Bremen, where it had access to illumination once again. The Bremen newspapers commented on the effect of the electric light and attested its great benefit to the show by enhancing its "wild colorful splendor" and giving the Indian scenes an "even more characteristic feel." What the spectators especially liked during the night performances was the effect of fire that was achieved by illuminating the stage coach and the settler's cabin from the inside when attacked by the Indians, as well as the large campfire that was lit in the middle of the arena. According to one paper, "it was a marvelous sight to see these picturesque figures dance in wild leaps around the fire."<sup>506</sup>

Years later, in 1905, Cody complained about Carver "jumping in ahead" of him in Europe in a letter to his sister Julia, but proudly stated that he "broke" Carver by following "right behind him and billing and advertising the same towns he did." He was reminded of the competition with Carver all those years later because he found himself in a similar situation again, this time in France with a traveling show called "McCaddon

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<sup>504</sup> *Hamburger Nachrichten*, September 4, 1890.

<sup>505</sup> See also Ames, "Seeing the Imaginary," 222, 218.

<sup>506</sup> *Bremer Courier*, September 5, 1890; *Bremer Nachrichten*, September 13, 1890.

Circus and Wild West.” Cody related to Julia that he has done the same thing with McCaddon as he did with Carver, until the competitor had to “steal out of the country or go to jail,” causing him, as Cody related, to “jump over into England himself to avoid being sent to jail.” Cody admitted that it was an expensive battle, but that he now has “the country all to [himself]... and will make big money.” He concluded his remarks by declaring that “such is life, especially in the show business.”<sup>507</sup> In fact, Cody was that sour over the renewed competition that he had a lawyer formulate a lawsuit for restitution of damages to a French court in 1905. The document reveals that McCaddon, a former employee of Bailey, had formed his own Wild West troupe and “preceded [Cody] in the principal towns of France, advertising in such a way as to create confusion between his enterprise and that of Mssrs. Cody and Bailey.” Due to the intentional similarities between McCaddon’s and Cody’s entertainment, the document attempted to forbid the former to make use of the terms “Buffalo,” “Bill,” “Wild West,” and “Rough Riders.” Furthermore, it demanded that McCaddon pay restitution for financial loss incurred by Cody in an unspecified amount.<sup>508</sup> This measure reveals the intense competition for audiences in Europe and the fact that Cody’s show, just as the others, was a business that needed to generate revenue in order to survive, a fact that Cody only knew too well due to his ongoing financial struggles.

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<sup>507</sup> William F Cody Collection- MS 6. Series I B Correspondence- Box 1 Folder 21, #174, Letter to sister Julia, dated August 19, 1905, from Roanne, France.

<sup>508</sup> AHC, Buffalo Bill collection, Box 1, folder 4, item 5.

The ethnographic exhibits of Indians and the Wild West shows in Germany had a particularly strong effect on children and youth, as is proven by the amount of space newspapers dedicated to describing the kids' reactions. Even before Buffalo Bill toured in Germany, children appropriated the images of Indians and turned them into Romanticized yet exciting characters in their plays. As early as 1879, papers were commenting on the influence: "How popular the Indians of the zoological garden are already is proven by our school boys. In a local school during the fifteen minute break, they now play Indians instead of robber and gendarme. The scalping is especially popular. The death-song that they sing in imitation should sound horrible even to Indian ears."<sup>509</sup> The zoological garden even offered special performances for children at half-price. This imitation of exotic figures in general and Indians in particular became a popular entertainment in Germany almost immediately after the *Völkerschauen* arrived there. It was not only an expression of admiration and excitement, however, but also a form of processing this new culture and making it their own by literally embodying it and trying it on. More than the cowboys, the Indians inspired this behavior, and by dressing as Indians, the alien culture was adopted. This is a form of cultural mimesis, which offered a way to identify with that culture and thus making it a part of one's own set of cultural understandings and assumptions.

This cultural mimesis is mentioned in several other newspapers as well. In the aftermath of Buffalo Bill passing through Munich, the main newspaper reported a "strange movement" that has gripped the youth and their "gullible minds." *Räuber und Gendarm* (cops and robbers) used to be the preferred game, but now, in its stead, "whole

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<sup>509</sup> *Dresdner Nachrichten*, July 11, see also *Hamburger Nachrichten*, September 11, 1890.



packs of boys are seen with their faces painted (due to the lack of the respective colors they use street dirt or excrements) and running through the streets with lassos, playing Indians.” According to the paper, the Indian games included instances of mock scalping of “pale faces,” and many a mother has been “shocked about the state of her offspring” when returning home after playing Indians.<sup>510</sup> The risk of injury inspired multiple negative responses throughout Germany, causing one reporter to ponder the overall *American* influence of the show with special regards to the city’s youth: “it is doubtful that the influence is positive: the Dresden youth has adopted many bad habits from these “dark men”, for example the lasso-throwing. One has to fear that especially the young children might choke each other.”<sup>511</sup> In fact, in Leipzig a girl was almost strangled to death by a lasso, and in Vienna a boy who had played “Buffalo Bill” with his friend also nearly lost his life: in order to heighten the authenticity of their play, the boys had shot actual pistols. According to the paper, “it is not quite clear yet whether a stopper injured the boy or if there was a sharp round in the gun, but be that as it may, he had a quite substantial grazing shot in the chest area and had employed all of his Indian bravery in order to bear the pain and not show any of it at home.” However, the boy’s “pale-face friend” felt too much remorse in order to keep the secret. The paper concluded the story with the remark that now “the young Indian is bound to his bed and a medicine man is practicing his art on him.”<sup>512</sup>

Overall, the media as well as parents certainly did not approve of these allegedly negative effects of the *Wild West* on the youth, or even on society as a whole. Even

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<sup>510</sup> *Münchener Neue Nachrichten*, April 28, 1890.

<sup>511</sup> *Dresdner Tageblatt*, Dresden, June 15, 1890.

<sup>512</sup> *Nachrichten*, Leipzig, June 22, 1890 (MS6.9.5.1.18e).

though Buffalo Bill did not directly promote juvenile delinquency, it is perhaps fair to claim that he introduced a significant degree of struggle and violence into children's play. Furthermore, the *Wild West* had a substantial impact on the younger generation in Germany that might not have even been familiar with the previous romanticized stories by Cooper and other authors but was exposed for the first time to the American West through Buffalo Bill. Since his story was filled with and driven by struggle and violence, this might have contributed to the trend in literature, and especially in the pulp fiction and dime novels, to increasingly emphasize those elements. The youth expected and loved it, and throughout the early decades of the twentieth century, stories of the Wild West were increasingly catering to a younger audience.

Taken as a whole, the newspaper coverage on the presence of Buffalo Bill's *Wild West* in Germany reveals the enormous enthusiasm for the cowboys, Indians, and overall spectacle of the show, but also enables a more complete and nuanced understanding of the impact of the *Wild West* in Germany. The language the reporters employed to describe the show was exuberant, and the scope of the reporting is most likely wider than it had ever been for any other entertainment that visited a city. The modern and sophisticated advertisement campaign, the parade to the show grounds, and the opening of the camp to visitors certainly contributed to the impression of being in the presence of something unique and awesome. Every aspect of the performances found lengthy expression in the papers in such detail that it would be possible to reconstruct the show and its acts solely on the base of the reporting and without referring to any of the official programs or advertisement materials. The royal patronage boosted the show's spectacular reputation and Cody and the other members of the show were treated like celebrities.

The coverage also demonstrates the German dual perception of Native Americans, which differs significantly from that of Americans. Their representation on stage did not correspond with the romanticized and peaceful stereotypes of Indians that had formed in the German imagination. Their portrayal in the papers was mostly limited to their roles as attackers in the acts that portray conflict, but the feats of the cowboys on the bucking horses overshadowed their role in the show. Indeed, it was their presence outside of the arena that fascinated Germans, from their visits to stores and restaurants in the city to the way they presented themselves in the camp and at press events. Articles were teeming with physical descriptions, behaviors, attitudes, and customs, which were overwhelmingly positive and often tinged with a sense of romantic nostalgia. The non-belligerent Indian, the victim of white progress, inspired the German imagination and elicited memories of fictional characters living in harmony with nature. Thus, the newspapers clearly reflect the German stereotypes of the time in regards to the American Indian. Furthermore, the German reception of the bucking horses and the shooting of firearms also reveals the differences in perception between the U.S. and Germany and corroborates the argument that each country appropriated the *Wild West* on the basis of its own cultural values and predispositions.

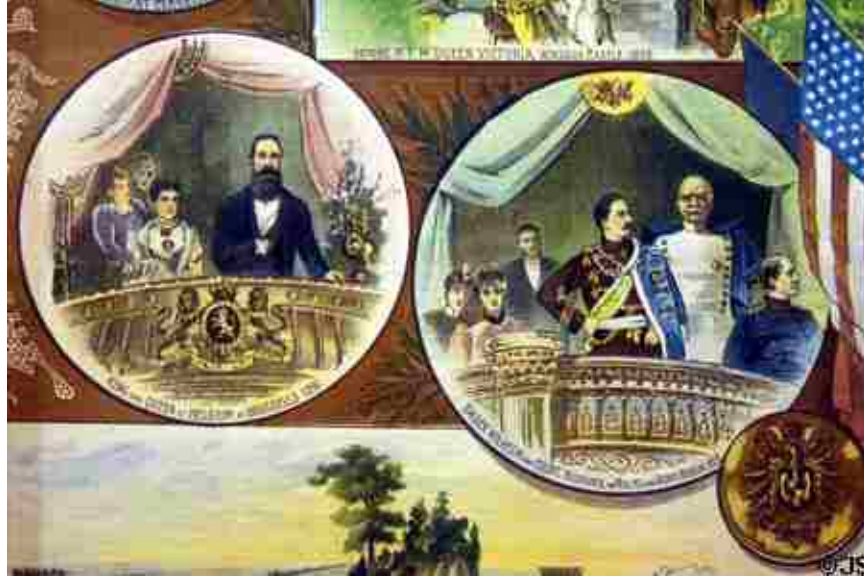


Image 19: The German Kaiser and Chancellor Bismarck at Buffalo Bill's Wild West.

**HAMBURG. Altona.**  
**Gr. Buralah 86/88, Reichenstrasse 3.**  
 bis zum 30. August incl.  
**zu bedeutend herabgesetzten Preisen.**

**Corseschoner 10 Mk.**  
 100 Dtl. reinw. Bledwin, Baum-Strumpf, engl. Jag. Paar Mk. 125, 3 Paar Mk. 150.

**Emmer-Besucht**  
 Heute Montag  
 2 große Vorstellungen  
 der Champion-Schütze

**30,000 Permenen**  
 und folgende Tages  
 der Carver's Wild-Amerikan  
 der Welt.

**Haus und Kuchl**  
 ...

**Seite Montag**  
 beginnt die Nahrung der durch  
 Feuer, Rauch und Wasser  
 beifährigen Waren.  
 Gebr. Theilheimer, Altona  
 Nr. 16 Reichenstr. Nr. 16.

**Für Knapfende**  
 ...

Image 20: A newspaper page showing competing ads for Buffalo Bill and Doc Carver in Hamburg, 1890.

## CHAPTER 7

### Return and Aftermath

As the previous chapters have shown, Cody and his *Wild West* did more than anyone before to give a face to America in Europe. Through his spectacle, he managed to portray Americans in a positive light as an antipode to European decadence and increasing over-civilization, he validated American culture and progress in the eyes of observers on both side of the Atlantic, and he established the U.S. as an integral part in the league of global colonizers. Even though Europeans dismissed or sometimes failed to notice the underlying ideological messages that he attempted to convey, Cody and his “American National Entertainment” heavily impacted European opinion about the United States and especially the American West in a mostly exuberant and positive way. Especially in Germany, the mythical image of the Plains Indian that had been established and perpetuated by literature and art was reinforced by the *Wild West* and to such a degree that it still captivates the German imagination today. In fact, as Eric Ames rightly states, “it was the Wild West show that crystallized the stereotype of the Plains Indian and its predominance among audiences in Germany, as it had in the United States.”<sup>513</sup>

Several aspects made Germans especially susceptible to a deep cultural infatuation and connection with Native Americans: on the one hand, as chapter two suggests, there was the long tradition of ethnographic exhibits and the popularity of the *Völkerschauen* that captivated the German curiosity and attention. These exhibits brought Germans into cultural contact with the most exotic strangers and, after initial reactions of

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<sup>513</sup> Ames, *Carl Hagenbeck's Empire of Entertainments*, 109.

shock and awe, elicited curiosity and inquisitiveness. They facilitated and perpetuated the forming of specific stereotypes about “Others” that formed the basis for all future German understanding of the exotic. The fact that the emphasis of many of these shows was on education and entertainment at the same time seems to have contributed to the rather positive attitudes of Germans towards exotic strangers. While the desire to learn and study the foreigners was not completely “innocent” and free of ethnocentrism and racial prejudice, Germans still showed a remarkable “maturity” in dealing with these strangers, especially in contrast to other European nations. As chapter two suggests, this positive response might be connected to Germany’s late and hesitant acquisition of colonies, which allowed its citizens to be less “belligerent” towards the strangers because they did not have to be conquered violently at the cost of German lives. In addition, the proliferation of an entertainment culture in Germany and the changes brought by the Industrial Revolution expanded the exposure of Germans to these shows by making them more affordable, more accessible, more culturally acceptable, and above all a valid and exciting way to spend their free time and to find distraction from the monotony of the work day.

Chapters two and three attempt to explain the high level of sympathy and empathy for Native Americans that was, to its degree, unique in Europe. In German mythology, the ancient wild men of the woods were mirrored in the images of the noble savage of North America that developed in the nineteenth century. This link to the past, and especially later the threat of extinction of the Native American way of life, instantly provoked German sympathies and fascination. Germans regarded the wild men of the ancient forest as their cultural ancestors, from which they drew a sense of national

identity and unity. In contrast, Americans did not identify with the indigenous population of their own continent in so significant a fashion, which is a logical consequence when considering the fact that they themselves were all “newcomers” and *not* indigenous to that region. For them, the Native Americans were primarily seen as an obstacle that had to be overcome in order to forge a common national myth and identity. Thus, the German and American conceptions of the Native American were worlds apart.<sup>514</sup>

While Germans were fascinated with Native Americans, the American landscape and the myth of the American West also became the subject of much fantasizing and imagining in Germany. As chapter three illustrates, novelists, travel writers and painters established and perpetuated a Romanticized vision of an Edenic landscape and its pure and uncorrupted inhabitants, which inspired German longings for an easier and happier life and an escape from the constraints and hardships of industrial Germany. Shows that featured Native Americans from North America became increasingly popular and soon surpassed all other ethnographic shows in visitor numbers as well as scientific interest. Instead of simply exhibiting the foreigners, the shows became increasingly entertaining and included acts that ranged from demonstrations of domestic tasks to wild chases and mock attacks that greatly enhanced their appeal. Buffalo Bill’s *Wild West*, in many ways, was a logical consequence of these shows and therefore must be seen as a part of the long tradition of ethnographic exhibitions in Germany instead of as a complete novelty that took the German public by surprise.

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<sup>514</sup> During the last century, this perception has profoundly shifted. In fact, there has been significant identification among the US mainstream for indigenous cultures, as for example Patricia Limerick argues in *Legacy of Conquest*. Her chapter “The Persistence of Natives” discusses how Indians have been at times held up as a mirror to reflect the shortcomings of mainstream society. Patricia Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest. The Unbroken Past of the American West* (W.W. Norton: New York, 1987).

Nonetheless, the sheer scale, technological modernity and expert production of the *Wild West* mesmerized its European audience and further cemented the pre-existing stereotypes about the American West and Native Americans in each country's perception. The underlying ideological message of the show about the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race, Manifest Destiny, and the importance of overcoming savagery to forge American national identity were refracted and even disputed in the different European countries to different degrees, depending on the respective country's own culture and values. As chapter four shows, Italy and Spain did not have a tradition of Romanticizing the American Indian and the American West in general and thus simply perceived the *Wild West* show as a spectacular entertainment that did not really resonate much with their own culture or their own desires and needs. The French, in contrast, had been exposed to a mythical West in novels and paintings before, and therefore had much stronger sympathies and leanings for Native Americans. However, the French still saw American cultural products as inferior to their own sophisticated tastes and their own cultural achievements and thus confirmed the American inferiority complex that William Cody had set out to demolish with the *Wild West*.

The German reaction to the *Wild West* show stands out among all of Europe and certainly surprised even William Cody himself. Even though he was aware of the enthusiasm for the West and the Indian that had been newly generated in Germany by writers such as Cooper and Möllhausen, the interest for Indians and the dismissal of some of the most important elements of American identity and imperialism could not have been anticipated by Cody to the extent that they played out in the German context. As discussed in the previous chapters, Germans appropriated what was shown to them in the



arena differently and in ways quite inconcordant with the messages. First, audiences saw the Indians and cowboys in the arena as living embodiments of fictional Western heroes created by Cooper. This process of vivification was a way for Germans to identify with the American entertainment, make it their own, and adapt it into their mind map.

However, it also meant that the West was a thrilling, entertaining, but highly *imaginative* place of struggle. For Germans, the show resided much more in the realm of fiction and entertainment than at the core of identity, as it was intended to for Americans.

Secondly, Germans perceived a deep schism between the representation of Natives on stage and outside the arena. The belligerent and violent picture that Indians portrayed on stage did not match Germans' romanticized version of them and was thus surpassed in significance and attraction by the cowboys and other elements of the show. However, whenever Indians appeared in the cities or were encountered in the *Wild West* show's camp, they were regarded with much respect and treated almost like royalty. It was outside of the arena that they matched the prevailing stereotypes, which is the reason why Indians received so much attention in the German press despite the fact that they were not considered the main attraction in the actual show. Germany's history of dealing with exotic peoples and the long process of appropriating images of Native Americans certainly contributed to their elevated status and at the same time distorted the message that the *Wild West* was supposed to convey.

Neither the *Wild West* shows nor the previous *Völkerschauen* contributed new images to the stereotype of the Indian in Germany. Indians such as the Eskimos and Bella Coola were considered "different" and therefore did not fit into the existing stereotype, and the *Wild West* shows projected the image of the mounted buffalo hunter that

dominated the action. The organizers were not interested in a differentiated representation of Indian life because it was not what the audience wanted to see. Thus, the Wild West shows reinforced the existing stereotypes and emphasized the appeal of the American West. Today's image is still based on what Buffalo Bill presented in the arena and is deeply embedded in European perceptions of the North American continent.

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When Cody returned to Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century, a decade had passed since his last visit and dramatic changes had taken place in both the U.S. and Europe. The second European tour is emblematic of these changes and reflected not only Cody's flexibility as a showman but also his attempt to remain relevant in an ever-changing world. Significant changes took place in the United States and Europe between the two European tours that help account for the dramatic transformation of the *Wild West* from a pageant of conquest of the American continent and the struggle between Americans and Indians to the militaristic display of power the show turned into at the dawn of the new century. Connecting the two cultural moments of the respective European tours and bridging the generation that lies in between them can account for the changes in both character and reception of the show.

The second tour started in London in the summer of 1902 and traveled through Great Britain extensively before jumping the channel to Paris in 1905. After touring through France, the next stops were Italy, Austria-Hungary, Germany and Belgium, before returning to the US in 1906.<sup>515</sup> Throughout the tour, Cody never stopped tweaking

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<sup>515</sup> Route book, MS6 Series VI: A, Box 3 folder 16. For Italian coverage see for example *Corriere Italiano*, Firenze, April 1, 1906 (claims 12,000 people attended the performance), for France for the second tour, see

his show to match the most contemporary issues and concerns, and thus the character of the second show changed significantly from what was presented to the audiences in the 1890s. The changes were of course gradually made and mostly reflected the political and cultural tastes of Americans. After all, this had always been an American show that, when taken to Europe, either coincided or clashed with European notions, and certainly never catered solely or even primarily to those foreign expectations.

The United States suffered a major economic depression between 1893 and 1897, and saw plummeting immigration numbers that reflect the weakening of the pull-factors that had previously made America so desirable for immigrants. Psychologically, the “closing” of the frontier as postulated by Frederick Jackson Turner and many other American intellectuals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had ended a period of positive thinking about the future and reinforced frontier anxiety and fears of being left without a safety valve for the downtrodden industrial workers and the disillusioned elements of America.<sup>516</sup> Consequently, Americans were searching for a substitute for the Western frontier and found it in the Pacific, to which they redirected their imperialistic aspirations. The interior frontier that had embodied the struggle and eventual overcoming of savagery was extended beyond the borders of continental America when it closed, giving America new purpose and a new goal in its efforts to define its own role as a nation and as a global power. The Spanish-American War, for example, found its way into the *Wild West* show, which is a clear indicator for the

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also Pierre Klein, *When Buffalo Bill caracoled in Nancy (France): Cody's and the American shows through the local press (1902-1905)* (Université de Nancy II. Centre de Télé-enseignement universitaire, 2004).

<sup>516</sup> See Wrobel, *The End of American Exceptionalism*.

changes in American attitude and the increasingly strong desire for the nation to be considered a major player in the league of global colonizers

At the same time in Europe, the race for colonies heated up, as did the tensions between the nation states that were gradually developing an acute awareness of national pride and entitlement. Even Germany was now engaged in the annexation of territories and busy expanding its naval fleet.<sup>517</sup> These developments, however, as influential as they may seem, should not be taken as mile markers on the road to inevitable and total war as it happened a decade later. Overall, Europe and the U.S. had in common an increasing interest in military displays and affirmation of national power and pride, which William Cody used to his advantage in his *Wild West* by adapting it to these trends and tastes. Thus, I argue that it translated much better into the European context than the first time around: instead of re-appropriating much of the content and intended messages as they had done the first time around, Europeans found it much easier this time to celebrate the *Wild West* and Congress of Rough Riders for what it was: a display of military practices from around the world with the added bonus of action and excitement that the American West had come to signify.

Some of the major changes in the character of the *Wild West* can be attributed to the partnering of Buffalo Bill with the Barnum and Bailey circus in 1894 and the death of Cody's long-time manager Nate Salsbury in 1902. The circus and show industry were changing rapidly, and becoming part of a larger conglomerate allowed the cash-strapped Cody to survive yet another bust in his finances. Even though the merging with Bailey

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<sup>517</sup> See Wehler, *The German Empire*.

was technically a buy-out, it saved Cody and his *Wild West* for the moment. It was only after the death of Bailey in 1906 and financial controversies that arose from his will that Cody had to basically surrender his *Wild West* to Pawnee Bill in 1908.<sup>518</sup>

The second European tour was much bigger in size and logistics and featured a considerably more substantial side show. The advertisement campaign was staggering. In Paris, for example, close to 200,000 handbills were distributed, along with almost 300,000 broadsheets.<sup>519</sup> For 1906, the management estimated the need for show programs at a minimum of 300,000, printed in eight different languages.<sup>520</sup> The cast of the show included eight hundred people and five hundred animals, which is almost four times the size of the first tour through Europe.<sup>521</sup> The transportation of the show required fifty train cars that were divided into three different trains and consisted of eighteen cars containing animals, twenty-one flat cars for cargo, nine sleep cars, one luggage car, and one advertisement car, plus the three locomotives. European officials meticulously recorded not only the types and number of cars, but also their nomenclature, their weight, and the way they needed to be coupled, since the rail system was not unified in Europe and some of the cars had American couples that needed to be connected to the different European ones.<sup>522</sup> Moreover, the management had to obtain written and official permission from each different railroad operator in every country to use their rails, announce their route, schedule, and planned stops eight days in advance *and* they had to

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<sup>518</sup> Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America*, 525.

<sup>519</sup> AHC, Buffalo Bill Collection, Box 1, folder 4, item 4

<sup>520</sup> AHC, Buffalo Bill Collection, Box 1, folder 4, item 2. (30,000 for France, 60,000 for Italy, 50,000 for Austria, 60,000 for Germany, 45,000 in Hungarian, 15,000 in Czech, 15,000 in "Polonish," and 25,000 in "Hollandish").

<sup>521</sup> The first show consisted of 200 Indians, cowboys, scouts, and sharpshooters, and 175 animals, as revealed by the abundant ads in the European papers.

<sup>522</sup> AHC, Buffalo Bill Collection, Box 1, folder 6, item 5 (Austria, 1906) and folder 6, item 4 (France, 1905).

pay for it.<sup>523</sup> Once more, the logistics of the *Wild West* were not just grand in scale but also had to take into account such difficulties.

Instead of remaining in every city for a few weeks or even months, opening the camp to the audience and making frequent visits to stores and attractions in the individual cities, the new itinerary only allotted a day or two per city. This negatively impacted not only the level of stress among the members of the show but also the air of uniqueness of the *Wild West*, since it now appeared, even despite its much larger scale, to be more akin to an ordinary traveling circus than an event of extraordinary proportions. This impression was heightened by the addition of non-“Western” related side shows that were the trademark of Barnum and Bailey. An advertising pamphlet clearly confirmed the extended importance that was given to the side show; it announced a “great collection of human curiosities” not to be missed by the visitor. These included a snake charmer, the smallest woman in the world, a giant negro, a man with entirely blue skin, a ghost conjurer and sword swallower, trained birds and monkeys, “funny monkeys,” a musical rabbit, a Chinese Acrobat group, and an escape artist.<sup>524</sup>

Arguably the biggest change, however, was the emphasis on the equestrian and militaristic aspects of the show that overshadowed and impacted all other acts. After the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, Cody had started to add current events to his program, especially if they reflected military actions. Besides a reenactment of the Battle of the Little Bighorn, the *Wild West*, as we have already seen, now included the “Battle of San Juan,” as well as a rendition of the Boxer Rebellion in China in order to accommodate the international cast of his show. The cavalry units from Hawaii, Cuba,

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<sup>523</sup> AHC, Buffalo Bill Collection, Box 1, folder 5, items 1 and 4.

<sup>524</sup> Ames, “Seeing the Imaginary,” 227.

the Philippines, Japan, Russia, Germany, France, and Mexico along with a contingent of Theodore Roosevelt's original Rough Riders displayed military maneuvers of their countries, staged mock-races, and paraded their horses in a glorious and exuberant show of military confidence. The American troops were an intricate part of this display of military prowess, confirming the United States' claim to military recognition. Buffalo Bill probably intended to merge the story of the American West with the story of European expansion at a time when European colonization reached the far frontiers of its own empires. European audiences may have been aware of this larger connection and may have seen the show as confirming views of Western superiority and its civilizing mission. Thus, the addition and emphasis on the "Congress of Rough Riders of the World" is a clear indicator of an increasingly militaristic tendency in American and European popular culture.

Despite all of the new emphasis on international troops and imperialistic exploits, it is important to keep in mind that the essential message of the show was partially retained in the later European tour as well: as Rydell and Kroes put it, in the United States, "white, Anglo-Saxon 'civilization' had tamed 'savagery,' rendering 'savages' a source of amusement, ethnographic study, and inspiration for a shared racial consciousness among whites that held the potential for blurring class distinctions."<sup>525</sup> Even though this message was easily transferred to a more global context, it remained an important ingredient for the success story of the *Wild West*. For Europeans, and especially Germans, the inclusion of troops from their own country of course added to their identification with the show and instilled pride and reaffirmation that one was part

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<sup>525</sup> Rydell and Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna*, 115.

of the “winning circle” of imperialism. In Germany, the element of authenticity remained important, as did the displays of Indian culture and Indian battles. The image of the Native American had undergone further Romanticization and stereotyping in the ten years of Cody’s absence, and Germans were eager to be once again presented with renditions of Indians that matched their imagination.<sup>526</sup>

Despite all of these analogies between European and American tastes during the second continental European tour, I would argue that it was not quite as successful as the first. Cody was not in the prime of his life anymore and his personification of frontier rigor and hardiness increasingly lost its authenticity and appeal. Continued financial struggle and an ugly divorce marred his public image, and he himself was not as much the focus of the show as he had been the first time around. Furthermore, since the struggle for American identity and superiority at the frontier had been decided, it lost its element of actuality and immediacy. It became a struggle of the past. In addition, the component of the exotic and the novelty of the *Wild West* that had contributed so much to the attraction of the show a decade earlier was substantially weakened by a plethora of similar shows touring Europe at the turn of the century. The market was oversaturated with these exhibits that ranged from Native American and African tribal exhibits to Eskimos from Greenland and Aborigines from Australia. Scientists outbid each other with ever new racial theories explaining the differences in appearance, intellect, and attitude, and show organizers added ever-more spectacular and dangerous acts to the program that only strengthened the impression that all of these shows were in a way the same, only with different nationalities executing the acts.

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<sup>526</sup> *Dresdner Zeitung*, August 19, 1906.



Cody had many imitators in Europe who made a fortune from their own versions of Wild West shows. In addition to Doc Carver, another American who traveled Europe around the turn of the century was Gordon W. “Pawnee Bill” Lillie, with whom Cody later merged his show.<sup>527</sup> Cody also had a direct imitator, Samuel Franklin Cody, who toured England in the 1890s with a performance of trick shooting in music halls and staging theater plays in the form of Western melodramas for his audience. The name choice of this performer was certainly not coincidental and meant to siphon some of William Cody’s success for his own ventures. Franklin Cody, for example, challenged French bicyclists to races; he rode his horse against the French cycling champion or two men on a tandem.<sup>528</sup> However, the most successful and long-standing Cody imitators were actually German. Among them, Carl Hagenbeck, who had been credited with the invention of the *Völkerschau* earlier certainly stands out, along with Hans Stosch-Sarrasani, who used his circus background to adapt American Wild West shows to German demands.

Carl Hagenbeck successfully managed shows run by other entrepreneurs until he opened his spectacular zoo and theme park in Stellingen near Hamburg in 1907. This zoo was to become not only a venue for the presentation of *Völkerschauen* and his version of a Wild West show, but also a theme park and a film set for the first exotic grand productions of German cinema after World War I.<sup>529</sup> In 1910, Hagenbeck brought his most successful show to Hamburg: a group of forty-two Oglala-Sioux and ten cowboys, including several participants who had previous experience in traveling shows, such as

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<sup>527</sup> Lillie toured Belgium in 1894.

<sup>528</sup> Materials on S.F. Cody are collected at the Autry National Center in Los Angeles.

<sup>529</sup> Weber, *Indians on German Stages*, 119.

Thomas American Horse, the leader of the American contingent of Hagenbeck's show, whose father had performed with Buffalo Bill. They attracted more than one million visitors during their five-month stay in Hamburg, making it the most popular event of its kind.<sup>530</sup> As opposed to the earlier Bella Coola exhibit, the Sioux were incredibly successful because Hagenbeck was finally able to use to his advantage the Indian stereotypes that so many Germans expected to see fulfilled in the shows.

The program of the show was very similar to that of Buffalo Bill, mixing supposedly "real" events from the American West with spectacular chases and gun fights while at the same time demonstrating Indian customs and dances. Authenticity and "purity" were important elements for Hagenbeck, and for the Oglala show he had instructed his agent Jacobsen to specifically pick Indians who had long hair, little knowledge of English, and a good reputation on the reservation. This turned out to be much more difficult than assumed; when Jacobsen arrived at Pine Ridge in 1910, there were five other show agents already present trying to win Indians' employment for various shows. Thus, recruiting was difficult, especially since many Indians relied on the shows for the economic survival and were well aware of the demand.<sup>531</sup> Upon their arrival in Germany, Hagenbeck had the Indians equipped with big feathered headdresses in order to match the German expectations, even if such attire clashed with claims of authenticity, which organizers nonetheless continued to make.<sup>532</sup>

Most tellingly, Hagenbeck drew a sharp distinction between his and American shows such as Cody's. He was keen to stress that his Indians received the respect they

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<sup>530</sup> Ames, "Seeing the Imaginary," 224; Oettermann, "Völkerschauen und ihre Vorläufer," 54, Kocks, *Indianer im Kaiserreich*, 35.

<sup>531</sup> Ames, "Seeing the Imaginary," 224.

<sup>532</sup> Kocks, *Indianer im Kaiserreich*, 36.

deserved and that the show was not about sheer profit but about a just representation of the Indians: “The Americans who had then moved across Europe,” he wrote, “sucking in the golden money, were no models, were almost repelling.” Hagenbeck went on to note that “the old Colonel Cody, himself a fighter in the last Indian wars, had formed around himself a body guard of subjugated redskins, they followed him to Europe and they disappeared with him. In his horse-operas they had remained almost unnoticed.”<sup>533</sup> Ironically, however, it is hard to deny that Hagenbeck was indeed inspired by Buffalo Bill’s show and by Cody’s ideas of Wild West entertainment. After all, the attractions in his zoological garden often included Native Americans throughout the early twentieth century, and the format greatly resembled Buffalo Bill’s *Wild West*.

The other major profiteer from Cody’s entertainment and the success of the Wild West shows in Germany was Hans Stosch-Sarrasani. A Dresden-based circus entrepreneur, Sarrasani created a “world circus” that integrated Wild West forms and content into a classic circus show and fused them together into seamless episodes with the use of technology. Sarrasani himself claimed to be a master-shot, and was also able to hire Sioux Indians for his show who demonstrated lasso-throwing and other typical Wild West show skills. They became a circus trademark for Sarrasani, who continued to hire them until the late 1920s.<sup>534</sup> However, during World War One many a European showman had to be resourceful when it came to “his” Indians because it was impossible to hire “real” Indians from the U.S. To make up for this most important element in the

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<sup>533</sup> Rudolf Conrad, “Mutual Fascination: Indians in Dresden and Leipzig,” in: Feest, *Indians and Europe*, 463.

<sup>534</sup> Weber, *Indians on German Stages*, 51, 119; Kocks, *Indianer im Kaiserreich*, 45; Dreesbach, *Gezähmte Wilde*, 101-102.

show, many of Sarrasani's Indians during this time were dressed-up Dresdeners.<sup>535</sup> In fact, performers of different races frequently played other cultural roles than their own or had to be instructed about how to perform their purported cultures. A statement by Heinrich Kober, Sarrasani's PR-manager, about the circus' Native American performers, offers a vivid example for this fact:

[They were] as harmless and unromantic as any other American.... [They soon got used to the tepees] but to teach them Indian behavior wasn't that easy. The men had to be taught the use of bow and arrow, the squaws to embroider colorful bead patterns, and the children had to break their habit of constantly playing around at our cars instead of participating in primitive family life. The director and the clown Magrini taught them war dances, behavior at the torture pole, the attack of the mail coach. Spectators then regarded Magrini as the most 'authentic' Indian in the Wild West pantomime.<sup>536</sup>

Overall, then, it is clear that Hagenbeck and Sarrasani were deeply indebted to Buffalo Bill's *Wild West*. Interestingly, however, the influence of the American shows was not readily acknowledged by the German entrepreneurs: Hagenbeck defined his shows in contrast to the "purely sensationalistic Wild-West-Shows, the American freak shows, and the *Völkerschauen* of the Barnum company."<sup>537</sup> This statement expresses the tensions between productions designed by Hagenbeck himself and those by others, in which features of the borrowed are adopted because of their attractiveness, yet their influence is denied by blaming them for their sensationalism.

Another show that successfully toured Europe in the early twentieth century was the Miller Brothers' 101 Ranch Wild West Show. An American production, it played in London in 1914 on the occasion of the Anglo-American Exposition and counted King George V and Queen Mary of England among its spectators. A special spectacle occurred

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<sup>535</sup> Kocks, *Indianer im Kaiserreich*, 80.

<sup>536</sup> As quoted in Weber, *Indians on German Stages*, 123-124.

<sup>537</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

when African-American cowboy Bill Pickett successfully bulldogged a wild Scottish Highland steer. This show is worth mentioning due to its dual character that was hinted at already in Buffalo Bill's later tour. It contained elements of the "real" Wild West with its Indians and cowboys, but also included scenes from the "Great Far East," which featured horsemen from around the world. In that way, it was a mix of typical Western elements with exotic spectacles from around the globe and foreshadowed in the Congress of Rough Riders. Ironically, when Buffalo Bill was forced to eventually join forces with Pawnee Bill, their new fusion displayed a similar dual character: Cody's show represented the "Historic Wild West," while Pawnee Bill's part consisted of the "Great Far East." Similar to the later *Wild West* tour of Cody, it was accompanied by a large side show that included Hindu magicians, Singhalese dancers, Australian aborigines, Japanese cavalry, and Zouave horsemen from North Africa.<sup>538</sup>

Buffalo Bill's *Wild West* not only inspired other showmen to undertake similar endeavors, but also influenced subsequent forms of spectacular performances such as the modern American rodeo, which reached Europe in the 1920s.<sup>539</sup> In the United States, as Beverly Stoltje observed, the joining of the image of the patriotic cowboy and cowgirl with the American flag and anthem is not just an element of the *Wild West* show but also of American rodeo. Add fast-paced action, ferocious animals, and an exciting production

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<sup>538</sup> Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians*, 190-191, and Russell, *Wild West*, 4,40.

<sup>539</sup> Kevin Mulroy, (ed.), *Western Amerykanski. Polish Poster Art and the Western* (Los Angeles: Autry Museum of Western Heritage, and Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1999), 10.

along with some formal features such as a Grand Entry and transform reenactments into competitions, and the similarities are overwhelming.<sup>540</sup>

With their grand entries, Native dances, drumming, singing, and the appearance of Native American performers in regalia, Powwows can be considered another outgrowth of the Wild West shows. However, as Stoltje further argues, because its participants dance for themselves and not for an external, ethnically and culturally alien public, the powwow can be considered as a cultural retrieval from *Völkerschauen*. By taking back what is rightfully theirs, the powwow's contemporary cultural owners maintain older forms yet recharge them with new meanings and put them to new use according to their current diverse and specific needs. What both rodeos and powwows continue to share between them is their sequential structure: they retain the program points order of the *Wild West* and of other exotic shows."<sup>541</sup>

The emerging film industry effectively put an end to most *Völkerschauen* in Europe; however, the fascination with everything Western remained and was even reinforced in the movies. The western as a genre took over the stereotyping of the Indian as a dying race in romantic nature and bloody wars with whites. One last time, William Cody demonstrated here his uncanny talent to encapsulate the vogue of the time: in 1914, *The Indian Wars* was released, a film in which Cody reenacted his own past fights against Indians and especially the incident at Wounded Knee in a modified, propagandistic manner. As Philip Deloria remarks, as the Wild West "coalesced out of dime novels, stage theatricals, rodeo contests, and circuses,... through the *Indian Wars* it poured its

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<sup>540</sup> Beverly Stoltje, "Power and the Ritual Genres: American Rodeo," in: *Western Folklore* 52, April (1993): 135-156, 153.

<sup>541</sup> Ibid.

accumulation into the new medium at a time when the show formula had already faded.”<sup>542</sup>

As a resident of the Dresden area, a traveler, and an America-enthusiast at the turn of the century, it is only natural to assume that Karl May went to the *Wild West* to see the Indians with his own eyes, indulge his own fantasies, and soak in the American atmosphere of the camp, maybe even get inspiration for a novel. Considering the fact that his first Western novel, *Winnetou I*, appeared only three years after the visit of Cody’s show in Dresden and that many of the events and scenes resemble Buffalo Bill’s show acts, one would assume that he did not let that opportunity pass him by—even though he responded in quite hostile fashion when it came to Cody and his portrayal of Native Americans. However, May vehemently denied to have visited the show all his life. As Karl Markus Kreis notes, “no concrete evidence for [May’s presence] has been found yet.”<sup>543</sup> In fact, all evidence points to the fact that May despised Cody’s representation of Indians and that he and his editor actually attempted to “stage a parallel Wild West,” not a copy of Buffalo Bill’s stories (that also start to appear as dime novels) but his own, “original version with German personnel, [as] a counterpart to the ‘American games.’”<sup>544</sup> Moreover, May even claimed that with *Winnetou* he had attempted to create an idealized

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<sup>542</sup> Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, 74. See also Kevin Mulroy, “The Western Worldwide,” in Kevin Mulroy, *Western Amerykanski*, 21ff.

<sup>543</sup> Karl Markus Kreis, “Buffalo Bill. Old Shatterhand’s Herausforderer, Rivale, oder Vorbild?” In: *Jahrbuch der Karl-May Gesellschaft*, 2004, Vol. 34, 121-138. There is contradictory evidence as to whether May met Cody. Even though he supposedly despised him, May wrote to a reader in 1894 that he was personally acquainted with Buffalo Bill, and Klara May, his second wife, makes the as yet unconfirmed claim that the couple had met Cody personally in 1906.

<sup>544</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

counter-figure to the show Indians who were routinely represented as bloodthirsty. Instead, May wanted to idealize the Indian and make him a romantic symbol.<sup>545</sup>

In light of the earlier discussion about the ambivalence of the German reaction to the Indian in the arena and in public, this attitude of May's perhaps should not come as a major surprise. In the *Wild West* arena, Cody portrayed struggle and a quintessential white American ideology with regard to the Native Americans and their role in American history, which, as noted, did not resonate very strongly with the German public. May's opinion about Native Americans was rooted in the German romantic tradition and thus his prototype was not reflected in the arena. Instead, the warrior-like opposite took the stage. May's Indian was born from the Romantic notions of the vanishing Indian that corresponded more with the German image of the Indian off-stage than with the violent one on stage. Therefore, it makes sense to argue that Cody's and May's representations of Indians mark two opposite ends of the spectrum, Cody's show embodied struggle and May's works focused on harmony and peace between the races. In fact, Weber also argues that the contemporary Karl May festivals are all about smoking the peace pipe, dancing, and powwow style drumming, and not about conflict at all. The Native American image in Germany has always been one of harmony and peace instead of strife and conflict, as it was for Americans.<sup>546</sup>

May's Western novels have not only become a staple of the German cultural imaginary, but have also acquired a life of their own. The adaptation of the novels into movies has given millions of Germans a similar experience with the Wild West, just as

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<sup>545</sup> Karl Markus Kreis, "Indians Playing, Indians Praying: Native Americans in Wild West Shows and Catholic Missions," in: Colin G. Calloway, Gerd Gemünden, and Susanne Zantop (eds.), *Germans and Indians. Fantasies, Encounters, Projections* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 195-212.

<sup>546</sup> As Weber argues throughout her dissertation.



Buffalo Bill did with his show seventy years earlier. Winnetou and Old Shatterhand live on in the German imagination in the personas of Lex Barker as Old Shatterhand and French actor Pierre Brice, who for the past thirty years has played Winnetou in films and on stage, and who looks the way every European imagines a Noble Savage should look.<sup>547</sup> Ask a German to name a famous American, and often enough, Winnetou will top the list before George Washington or Abraham Lincoln. The film music is instantly recognized, and some Germans have even traveled to the Grand Teton Range in Wyoming to locate the rock pile that supposedly marks Winnetou's burial mound.<sup>548</sup> The novels have also inspired about a dozen different Karl May festivals that are held all over Germany every year. In a way, they are the ultimate combination of Buffalo Bill's *Wild West* and Karl May's creative story telling: May's stories are re-enacted in an arena that is furnished with props and serves as a backdrop for the dramatic scenes of shooting, chasing, trick riding, and epic battles. Pyrotechnics and other technology enhance the effects, similar to William Cody's vision of combining dramatic stories from the American West with the latest technology in order to bring peoples' fantasies to life. Where Cody's entertainment reflected the American struggles and current issues of the late nineteenth century, Winnetou in a way was the German Indian of the twentieth.

Even today, Germans are still fascinated and enthralled with the mythic Native Americans whose image was forged by Buffalo Bill and Karl May. Besides the Karl May festivals, numerous "Western enthusiast" clubs dot Germany, offering a chance to dress and live as Indians for the weekend and escape the daily work routine. These clubs are

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<sup>547</sup> In fact, it is rumored in Germany that Pierre Brice actually helped mend the broken relationship between France and Germany after World War II.

<sup>548</sup> Hollick, "The American West in the European Imagination," 18-19.

often highly structured and members take their roles very seriously. In a way, these clubs are similar to Civil War reenactments in the U.S. Advertisement often evokes images of the American West, the cowboy, or the Indian, and many museums and historical societies are dedicated to preserving Native American history. Furthermore, a significant part of the scholarly community in Germany is occupied with Indian studies and the way race and ethnicity, myth and legend, and fact and fiction have influenced German thinking about Native Americans. Many a German scholar has traveled to the Indian reservations throughout the U.S. to conduct field work, and Native Americans can even be spotted at openings of museum exhibits or other cultural events in Germany on a regular basis. And even though Buffalo Bill was not the only promoter of Indian lore, not the sole perpetuator of a mythical image of America in Germany, and not the inventor of the exhibits of foreign peoples or of exotic entertainment, he masterly combined all of the elements to burn into Germany's cultural imagination a lasting and all-encompassing image of the American West.



Image 21: Show poster, “Entente Cordiale” between France and the United States, 1905.



Image 22: Scene from the *Wild West*, members of the Congress of Rough Riders.

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