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A Contested Future: Buffalo Bill's Wild West, Native American Performers, and the Military's Struggle for Control over Indian Affairs 1868-1898

Alexander Erez Echelman
Bard College

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A Contested Future: Buffalo Bill's Wild West, Native American Performers, and the Military's
Struggle for Control over Indian Affairs 1868-1898

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by
Alexander Erez Echelman

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Introduction: Buffalo Bill Cody and the Formation of an American Empire

The United States army built its empire in the West by the late nineteenth century, and the American scout-turned-entertainer William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody was its primary mouthpiece. Buffalo Bill created his famous Wild West show in 1883, and “brought together the wild, primitive past of the American frontier—buffalo, elk, staged prairie fires, real Indians—...[with] the astonishing promise of a technological future.”¹ Buffalo Bill performed his shows during the rapid industrialization of major American cities; he made his fortune by showing the United States’ technological prowess and its settlement in the West. Throughout his career as a showman, Buffalo Bill claimed that Native American peoples would inevitably submit to the United States’ industrial strength. Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aaron attribute America’s hegemony to its nation-building capacities: “lest readers see Apache or Métis freedom as unique, orders and the consolidation of nation-states spelled the end of autonomy for Yaquis, Comanches, Sioux, Blackfoot, and countless other peoples who once occupied these North American borderlands.”² Buffalo Bill’s visions of the United States’ expansion coincided with the military campaigns against Native American nations. Many Americans saw Buffalo Bill use his image as a scout to assert his show’s authenticity and support military violence against Lakota Indians.³ “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” unified Americans behind the army’s aspirations for empire in the West.

Although a major portion of my project explores Buffalo Bill’s glorification of America’s westward expansion, the core of my argument seeks to define the rationale behind his imperialist

¹ Warren, Louis S. *Buffalo Bill's America*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. X (from Introduction)

² Hamalainen, Pekka, and Benjamin H. Johnson, eds. *Major Problems in the History of North American Borderlands*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2012. 24.

³ Slotkin, Richard. *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998. 71.

discourse. Contrary to Adelman and Aron, I argue that there were large fissures amongst the white elite that interfered with the creation of a unified “American” identity. The heart of this claim comes from the controversy surrounding President Ulysses. S. Grant’s 1869 “Peace Policy.” In this monumental governmental action, the Grant Administration placed Quaker and Christian missionaries in charge of the Indian Affairs on reservations. The Peace Policy wanted to assimilate Native Americans into the nation. And as a result, Grant relinquished the military’s authority in Indian Affairs and transferred it to the Department of the Interior.⁴ But despite the Peace Policy’s rising popularity, military officers like General George A. Custer argued that the Interior’s assimilationist policies were ineffective: “the Indian cannot...adopt any policy or mode of life... which is not preceded and followed closely in reserve by a superior physical force.”⁵ Custer felt that the Peace Policy did not address the problems of Amerindian raiding; he believed that military force was the only way to really instruct Native Americans in any discipline. The debate between the military elite and governmental Indian agents in the early 1870s showed that the rising national identity that Aron and Adelman argued for was not entirely present; rather, there was an argument amongst the white elite over the United States’ future treatment and handling of Native Americans. In my next four chapters I show how the Peace Policy influenced Indian Affairs even after it ended in 1875. Buffalo Bill rejuvenated the military’s authority in Indian Affairs by making his show attract white elites who supported the Interior’s assimilationist policies.

⁴ Warren *Buffalo Bill’s America* 199-200.

⁵ Custer, George A. "Life on the Plains." *The Galaxy: A Magazine of Entertaining Reading* (1866-1878), February 1873, 164-77. Accessed October 29, 2014
<http://search.proquest.com/americanperiodicals/docview/126252222/fulltextPDF/F3196A42F6664A44PQ/7?accountid=31516>. 167

My first chapter explores how Buffalo Bill rose to fame and rejuvenated the army's image in the wake of the Peace Policy. President Grant enacted the Peace Policy in 1869 because he wanted to reduce the expenses from the military's campaigns in the West.⁶ This policy had paternalistic sentiments because it wanted Native Americans to abandon all their religious beliefs and customs.⁷ Grant's Peace Policy came in conjunction with Northern white elites who criminalized the urban poor for pauperism and laziness. Northern labor reforms and the Peace Policy reflected the broad white elite desires to make immigrants and Native Americans conform to middle-class Protestant ideals. These laws and policies showed the racial pretensions that many white elites had towards immigrants and indigenous peoples of the United States. Buffalo Bill's increasing fame as a white scout allowed him to gain widespread support for his noble lineage and his undiluted power. The first chapter argues that Buffalo Bill used popular racial theories of whiteness to back the military and its wars against Native American peoples.

The second chapter explores how Buffalo Bill rallied American support for the military's campaigns in the West and overseas. After Buffalo Bill established his Wild West show in 1883, he attracted many Americans to his performances with grandiose displays of military horseback riding techniques. The military's skill on horseback compelled many Americans to respect its mastery over nature and its wars against the indigenous of the West. For many Anglo-American men, the military's skill on horseback reflected their white racial vigor and their manly character.⁸ Buffalo Bill used the popular notions about white manliness to attract broad support for his Wild West shows. But despite this popularity, "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" received

⁶ Grant *Let Us Have Peace* 264.

⁷ Slotkin, Richard. *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization 1800-1890*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1985. 318-319.

⁸ Bederman, Gail. *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States 1880-1917*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1995. 86

critiques for its “wild” Native American performers who did not assimilate into the nation. Many of these critics were missionaries or Indian agents who supported the now-defunct Peace Policy, and they believed that Buffalo Bill encouraged Native Americans to resist Anglo-American civilization. The critiques to his show demonstrated that some Americans still supported assimilation over the military’s rule in Indian Affairs. In my second chapter I look at how Buffalo Bill fashioned the military as an institution that could assimilate Native Americans into the nation; this allowed him to attract more army support from more Americans.

In chapter three I look at how Buffalo Bill received British support for the army’s campaigns in the American West. Buffalo Bill took his show to Great Britain from 1887-1892 in order to gain international recognition for the United States’ empire. In many of his shows, Buffalo Bill depicted the army as the force that helped Native Americans abandon their “backward” customs and assimilate into the United States. He portrayed the army as this great civilizing agent who brought Native Americans from the depths of their “savagery.” Many British subjects respected “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” show because it reaffirmed their principles in colonial India. White British feminists believed that they had an obligation to save these backward Indian women. Their calls to reform Indian women’s customs gained broad support from most British subjects.⁹ Buffalo Bill’s popularity in Great Britain, however, accumulated critiques from American reformers. These critics claimed that “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” praised their Native American culture and allowed them to shirk the government’s assimilationist policies. In my third chapter I explore how Buffalo Bill offset show critics’ opinions by making his performances appeal to European royalty.

⁹ Burton, Antoinette. *Burdens of History: British Feminism, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture 1865-1917*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1994. 8

My fourth and final chapter delves into how Buffalo Bill used his Wild West show to support the military's management of Indian Affairs in the wake of the 1890-1891 Ghost Dance scare. The Paiute Indian Wovoka created the Ghost Dance as a way for Native Americans to believe in the messiah and the resurrection of their past relatives; many Lakota Indians hoped Wovoka's teachings would raise the quality of life on their reservations. The spread of the Ghost Dance in Lakota Territory scared many white settlers and caused General Nelson Miles to blame Sitting Bull for this religion. With Miles' help, Buffalo Bill entered reservation territory in an attempt to arrest Chief Sitting Bull. Buffalo Bill's venture immediately provoked the Department of the Interior to rescind the American showman's right to arrest Sitting Bull. The conflict between the military and the Department of the Interior demonstrated that there was still conflict over the future of Indian Affairs. Buffalo Bill attempted to boost the military's image through his Wild West shows, while Indian agents through the Department of the Interior challenged his ability to stop the spread of the Ghost Dance. My final chapter argues that Buffalo Bill used his Wild West show to exemplify the military's authority in Indian Affairs.

Buffalo Bill rallied support for the United States army by portraying it as the authority on Indian Affairs. Although military officers like Custer criticized the Peace Policy in the early 1870s, Buffalo Bill gained national fame for his image as a white scout and guarantor of American civilization. The racial pretensions surrounding the Peace Policy allowed Buffalo Bill to gain broad support from even those who disliked the military's Indian policies. Buffalo Bill's rising fame allowed him to rejuvenate the army's falling image and support its campaigns against Native Americans in the West. His initial fame thrust him into greater celebrity when he founded the Wild West show in 1883. Buffalo Bill attracted Anglo-American men to his show by connecting the army's demonstrated virility to its white racial vigor. When show critics

condemned his praise for his “uncivilized” show Indians, Buffalo Bill demonstrated that the military could force Native Americans to assimilate into the nation. The fame of his Wild West show then helped him assert the power of America’s empire to Great Britain during his 1887-1892 tour. Buffalo Bill attracted British viewers to the military’s civilizing mission in the West because of their own imperial history in India. When he received more critiques on his show, Buffalo Bill made his entertainment appeal to European royalty; this made his entertainment appear as high-class, and thus, immune to any criticism. Once Buffalo Bill returned to the United States, he helped quell the spread of the Lakota Ghost Dance. With the support of General Miles, Buffalo Bill supported the military’s triumphs in stopping the Lakota Ghost Dance while undermining the Department of the Interior’s authority in Indian Affairs. My project explores how Buffalo Bill’s show unified a divided American white elite behind the military’s imperial ambitions in the West.

Chapter 1: The Unification of “White” America and Buffalo Bill’s Rise to Fame 1868-1877

The aftermath of the American Civil War incited widespread reforms towards white elitist visions of wage labor capitalism. Many Americans tried to reconcile the unprecedented number of Union and Confederate casualties with the image of a merciful God: “the Civil War had given Americans an extensive education in the capacity of individuals and societies to inflict and suffer violence—and to justify that violence in terms of sacred mythology.”¹⁰ Corpses littered the battlefields like Gettysburg and Antietam, making Americans wonder how this bloodshed could have meaning to this shattered Republic. Northern reformers increasingly adhered to the “Protestant myth of blood atonement,” which was the belief that death in the Civil War helped vindicate the Union’s mission to reform the South—and banish the practice of chattel slavery.¹¹ The Civil War annihilated the Southern economy, and in its place, the United States enacted broad reforms that would rebuild the nation through labor. Many Northern reformers and Union activists believed that the white elite had an obligation to force immigrants into the wage labor economy in order to incorporate them into the nation: “they [charity reformers] denounced all such [welfare] entitlements as socialistic, a shameful form of state guardianship, [and] a vestige of feudalism brought over from the Old World.”¹² White elitists in burgeoning American cities forced European immigrants into wage labor capitalism because they imagined these foreigners as lazy or backward. The urge to reform the nation through labor became a way for the white elite to indoctrinate newcomers into the benefits of wage labor

¹⁰ Slotkin, Richard. *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization 1800-1890*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1985. 303.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Stanley, Amy Dru. "Beggars Can't Be Choosers: Compulsion and Contract in Postbellum America." *Journal of American History*, March 1992, 1265-93. Accessed December 21, 2014. http://www.jstor.org.ezprox.bard.edu/stable/2079343?seq=1&sid=21105493997523&uid=2&uid=4#page_scan_tab_contents. 1276.

capitalism. Many white elites believed that this economic system could help them rebuild the nation and unify a once-broken nation. The common push for wage labor capitalism demonstrated that the United States was searching for a national myth that would reinforce white elitist ideals.

Post-Civil War visions of American Indian policy illustrated the military's and the government's competing policies for indigenous assimilation into the United States. By 1868, many Americans rejected the military's traditional jurisdiction in Amerindian affairs because it increased taxes and promoted unwanted bloodshed. The new Republican president Ulysses S. Grant created the Peace Policy in order to define the government's role in American Indian affairs: "peace, and universal prosperity...will lighten the burden of taxation, while it constan[t]ly reduces the National debt. Let us have peace."¹³ In a nation weary from bloodshed and burdensome expenses, Grant's Peace Policy aimed to reduce the military's costly wars against different Native American nations. The backing behind Grant's Peace Policy also showed that the military's increased expenses were not upholding peace in the West. Grant's policy gave Quaker missionaries the right to teach Native Americans agriculture, English, and Christianity on the reservations.¹⁴ The military lost all authority on the reservations, and could only apprehend Native Americans who escaped from these spaces.¹⁵ Francis A. Walker, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1871 and 1872, compared the Peace Policy to labor reforms in the northern United States: "the proper treatment of the Indian question requires that...all Christian nations...have learned to meet the kindred difficulties of pauperism."¹⁶ The

¹³ Grant, Ulysses S. *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*. Edited by John Y. Simon, David L. Wilson, J. Thomas Murphy, and Sue E. Dotson. Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University, 1991. 264.

¹⁴ Slotkin *The Fatal Environment* 318.

¹⁵ Warren, Louis S. *Buffalo Bill's America*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. 200.

¹⁶ Walker, Francis A. "Article II: Indian Citizenship." *The International Review (1874-1883)*, May 1874, 305-26. Accessed October 29, 2014. <http://search.proquest.com/americanperiodicals>. 305.

missionaries and Indian agents used the same rhetoric to justify the white elites' obligation to help these "backward" peoples. Grant's Peace Policy forced Native Americans to work for their individual welfare and religious salvation, or at least stay on the reservations so that Anglo-Americans could develop former Native American lands. Many military officers protested Grant's Indian policy because they thought missionaries would be unable to assimilate Native Americans into the nation.¹⁷ The military's and the Grant Administration's debates over Amerindian assimilation showed divergent white elitist visions on the nation's role towards American Indian Affairs.

The resultant political atmosphere from the Peace Policy's failures enabled William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody to rise to fame as an army scout on the Great Plains and unify the white elite behind the military's Native American policy. Lawrie Tatum, an Iowa Quaker and Indian Agent for the Comanches and Kiowas, annulled his power under the Peace Policy when he asked General William Tecumseh Sherman to stop Native American raids into Texas: "the agent [Tatum] sent a note to Colonel Grierson asking for the arrest of Satanta and others he had named. In a tense confrontation on the porch of the commanding officers quarters, Sherman and Grierson faced Satanta...and other Kiowa chiefs."¹⁸ Tatum's difficulties in managing his Native American charges showed that he was not able to stop Native Americans from leaving the reservation. The military's entry onto the reservation reaffirmed previous conceptions about missionary incompetency as Indian Agents. Native American raids into Texas incited civilian backlash against the Peace Policy; many Texans assumed that Lawrie Tatum valued Native American assimilation more than Anglo-American wellbeing in border cities. Tatum knew that

¹⁷ Warren *Buffalo Bill's America* 200.

¹⁸ Utley, Robert M. *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian 1866-1891*. Lincoln, Ne: University of Nebraska Press, 1973. 210.

Native Americans sought refuge from military retaliation on the reservations, but his inaction showed many Texans that he could not protect Anglo-Americans from Amerindian attacks.¹⁹ The jurisdictional ambiguities in Tatum's experiences plagued other Peace Policy agents in the early 1870s and contributed to the program's end by 1875. The Peace Policy's failures strengthened widespread support for the military's claims to whiteness. Military officers often boosted the image of their prized scout—William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody—because he embodied racial visions of a “civilized” white warrior against the “savage” Native American raiders.²⁰ In an army of mostly immigrants and mixed-blood scouts, Buffalo Bill's claims to white racial purity rejuvenated the military's declining image.²¹ Americans living in the mid-1870s also witnessed the failures of Southern Reconstruction and the white racial union between northern and southern elites. The expenses of Radical Reconstruction made many northern whites choose to heal the war-torn nation by allying with southern whites and their exclusionary economic agendas.²² Buffalo Bill's fame was contingent upon white supremacist notions from both the North and the South. His successes as a scout made him a popular American performer of frontier life. Buffalo Bill used his early stage career to ally the white elite behind the military's campaigns against Native Americans on the Great Plains.

Many Americans came to understand the bloodshed of the Civil War by imbuing wage labor economy with God's divine will. In the mid-nineteenth century, Christian theology argued that God was merciful and could justify large-scale death: “In the face of war's slaughter, mid-nineteenth century religions promised that there need be no death. Only a willful failure to

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Warren *Buffalo Bill's America* 106.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Blum, Edward J. *Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion, and American Nationalism 1865-1898*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2005. 89.

believe could bring humans to the dread ‘second death’ that cast them into hell.”²³ God was not torturing the soldiers of the Civil War; the deaths in this war would distinguish the faithful Christians from the unfaithful. Dying in the Civil War allowed the soldier and his loved ones to immortalize his sacrifice and reconcile the family’s loss to the notion of a merciful God. Many American families understood the death of their loved ones through the belief that their faith will redeem their shattered family and nation. The Union’s mass mourning for their loved ones merged the family’s individual sacrifice with that of the country’s. Americans suffered together so that they could rebuild the nation under a loving God. President Abraham Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address connected the nation’s sacrifices to the need for wage labor capitalism throughout the United States: “in the Second Inaugural of March 1865 Lincoln again offered an explanation for wartime slaughter, but this time it was God, . . . who gave it meaning. An Old Testament God of justice is avenging the sins of slavery.”²⁴ Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address targeted slavery as the reason for this mass slaughter and loss. The American people’s sacrifices have now shifted to atonement; the nation must repent the continuance of slavery. Lincoln gave the United States a religious and moral imperative to end slavery; this act alone would justify the loss of loved ones. The drive to break slavery showed that Union soldiers often destroyed Southern plantations and cash crops like cotton. These acts paved the way for wage labor capitalism, and gave many Americans the religious backings to enforce it throughout the country.

Empowered by the religious drive to reform America, northern white elites forced immigrant beggars to embrace wage labor capitalism and work for their alms. Northern white

²³ Faust, Drew Gilpin. *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*. New York, NY: Random House, 2008. 174.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

elites frequently noticed that the surge of post-Civil War immigration increased the amount of poverty and beggary in growing American cities.²⁵ Pauperism plagued northern American cities, and the white elite blamed the immigrants for their poor work ethic: “they [northern elites] found it inconceivable that wage contracts could generate the need to beg. Regarding wage labor as the obverse of dependence, they postulated that beggars simply lacked compulsion to work.”²⁶

Shocked by their losses in the Civil War, northern white elites believed that labor alone could help rebuild and industrialize the United States. Northern white elites viewed wage labor capitalism as the ideal economic system, and thus, denounced the immigrants who did not work for their wages. Rather than help immigrants adjust to this new system, northern white elites imposed labor contracts that did not give the weaker parties ample provisions. The end of the Civil War created an American identity that forced immigrants to embody white elitist conceptions of material success and work ethic. Many northern whites voted to criminalize poverty so that they could maintain the ideal image of wage labor capitalism: an 1866 labor law in Massachusetts was “directed against idle persons without ‘visible means of support,’ [and] the act punished at forced labor for not longer than six months.”²⁷ The end of chattel slavery was now replaced with wage slavery. Northern white elites criminalized poverty because it was the antithesis of their Protestant work ethic; pauperism threatened to undo their sacrifices from the Civil War. Northern labor laws became the standard through which other white elites forced the rest of the population to participate in wage labor capitalism.

²⁵ Stanley, Amy Dru. "Beggars Can't Be Choosers: Compulsion and Contract in Postbellum America." *Journal of American History*, March 1992, 1265-93. Accessed December 21, 2014. http://www.jstor.org.ezprox.bard.edu/stable/2079343?seq=1&sid=21105493997523&uid=2&uid=4#page_scan_tab_contents. 1270.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

The Peace Policy utilized the same white paternalist rhetoric for wage labor capitalism and enforced it on Native Americans living west of the Mississippi river. A Quaker newspaper known as the *Friends' Intelligencer* outlined the religious and paternalistic goals behind the Peace Policy: “[Native Americans] can be instructed to obtain a supply...of animal food and other articles of subsistence, on a territory of greatly diminished extent, and at the same time be in a condition much more favorable to secure their civilization and enlightenment.”²⁸ The Peace Policy intended to transform Native Americans into agricultural laborers. White elites wanted Native Americans to labor on their reservations so that they could assimilate into the cultural and economic norms of the Anglo-American race. Quakers and other Christian missionaries valued Native American agricultural pursuits because it emulated notions about the ideal white yeoman farmer.²⁹ The Peace Policy modeled a market economy because it coerced Native Americans to engage in self-subsistence agriculture. But it followed the notions of a wage labor economy in the sense that it designated reservations that allowed Anglo-Americans to settle on former indigenous lands. Many Native Americans did not want to follow the Peace Policy because they traditionally hunted off the reservation and provided food for both their whole clan and for future generations.³⁰ The ongoing Quaker support for the Peace Policy demonstrated that white missionaries harbored paternalistic sentiments towards their “savage” Native American counterparts. Religious imperatives fueled the Peace Policy, and these reforms also had economic elements that mirrored the northern white elites’ model of wage labor capitalism. And by confining Native Americans to their reservations and agricultural plots, Christian missionaries

²⁸ "Report of the Indian Committee." *Friends' Intelligencer*, November 23, 1867, 595-602. Accessed November 17, 2014. <http://search.proquest.com/americanperiodicals>. 600. /docview/91155024/79658659F147488BPQ/1?accountid=31516.

²⁹ Slotkin *The Fatal Environment* 317.

³⁰ Hamalainen, Pekka. *The Comanche Empire*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008. 324.

opened up land for Anglo-American development and mesh their interests with President Grant's Peace Policy.

President Grant's Administration enacted the Peace Policy because it wanted to reduce the military's expensive campaigns against the Cheyenne and Arapahoe nations. The Cheyenne war of 1865 started when Colonel John Chivington attacked a noncombatant group of some 130 Cheyenne men, women, and children at Sand Creek.³¹ Felix R. Brunot, the chairman of the Board of Indian Commissioners, condemned the United States army's costly war: "fifteen or twenty Indians had been killed at the expense of more than twenty million dollars apiece, while hundreds of soldiers had lost their lives...the war was something more than useless and expensive; it was [also] dishonorable to the nation."³² The character of the Indian Wars on the Great Plains differed from the Civil War. Native American nations attacked military outposts through sporadic raids and did not conform to the regimental orders of European or American-styled warfare.³³ Many military officers soon realized that they could not engage the Cheyenne nation with the same tactics that they used against the Confederacy. The military's lack of Amerindian fighting tactics engaged them in a costly war with no clear results. Governmental officials like Felix R. Brunot condemned the military's mismanagement of American Indian affairs and bemoaned the additional economic burdens from this war. Brunot devalued the military's credentials to the American public by addressing the disgraces that the Cheyenne War of 1865 brought to the nation's image. The army lieutenant Edward Wynkoop gave more reasons for criticism against the military when General George A. Custer massacred Cheyenne and

³¹ Ibid.

³² "Peace Policy towards the Indians: Address of Honorable Felix R. Brunot." *Advocate of Peace*, May 1872, 183-84. Accessed October 29, 2014. <http://search.proquest.com/americanperiodicals/docview/126937297/fulltextPDF/E617FF77D1054934PQ/1?accountid=31516>.

³³ Utley *Frontier Regulars* 45.

Arapahoe Indians near the Washita River in 1868.³⁴ Wynkoop denounced army cruelty towards the Cheyenne nation: "I was only acting as a decoy to induce these Indians to present themselves...where they were liable to be... murdered [by the United States army],...[and so I chose] to resign the commission I held."³⁵ The United States army threatened to ambush these Cheyenne Indians for not staying on their reservation. The Washita River massacre showed many Peace Policy officials that the military could instigate another costly war with the Cheyenne nation. Grant's Administration decided to counteract that possibility by implementing the Peace Policy. Although religious imperatives were at the Peace Policy's core, the Grant Administration used this plan to reduce both the military's authority and the nation's economic burdens.

Military officers like General George A. Custer undermined the Peace Policy's influence by illustrating the American Indian's hostile behavior towards whites. Following the massacre on the Washita River, General Custer explained the rationale behind his attack: "the Indian is capable of recognizing no controlling influence but that of stern arbitrary power. To assume that he can be guided by...his ideas of moral right and wrong...is to place him far above his more civilized brothers of the white race."³⁶ Custer believed that the Native American could not assimilate into Anglo-American society. The Amerindians' supposed lack of morality and self-government justified military campaigns against the Cheyenne on the Washita River. Military officers like Custer thought that lethal force was necessary to insure peaceful relations between

³⁴ Hamalainen *The Comanche Empire* 325.

³⁵ Wynkoop, Edward. "Address of Col. Wynkoop." *Friends' Intelligencer*, January 16, 1869. Accessed December 23, 2014. <http://search.proquest.com.ezprox.bard.edu/docview/91161040/CCAEE7BB505B4ED1PQ/1?accountid=31516>. 730

³⁶ Custer, George A. "Life on the Plains." *The Galaxy: A Magazine of Entertaining Reading (1866-1878)*, February 1873, 164-77. Accessed October 29, 2014. <http://search.proquest.com/americanperiodicals/docview/126252222/fulltextPDF/F3196A42F6664A44PQ/7?accountid=31516>. 167.

Native Americans and white settlers near the reservation. And as a trained Civil War officer, Custer used force to keep Native Americans away from the United States' right to expand westward and develop the land. Both the military and the Peace Policy strived to settle the West and help the United States expand, but the former did not believe that the nation should include Native Americans in these reforms. Custer supported his claims by illustrating the Peace Policy's ignorance of Indian Affairs: "the second night following the issue of arms, a combined party of Cheyennes and Arapahoes, numbering...the exact number of pistols issued at the council, left the Indian village to inaugurate a bloody raid in the Kansas settlements."³⁷ Peace Policy agents gave Native Americans guns to help them supplement their agricultural provisions with hunting, but these firearms fueled Amerindian raids against white settlers. Custer used examples like these to prove that the military understood the Native American's deceitful tactics, and thus, could prevent skirmishes off the reservations. The military knew that preemptive violence would stop white-Indian conflicts, and derided the Peace Policy for both its naïveté and its inability to "civilize" Native Americans. Native American raids off the reservations justified that military's white supremacist viewpoints and the Peace Policy's narrow-minded reforms.

The Peace Policy declined in the early 1870s because of the government-military alliance against the Lakota Sioux entitlements to their South Dakota reservation. In the late 1860s, General Custer organized a military "fact-finding mission" into the Black Hills of South Dakota and found gold on sovereign Lakota Sioux territory.³⁸ White settlers searched for gold on the reservation, and the Grant Administration helped the military take the land "Unless they [the Lakota Sioux] abandoned their hunting grounds...and returned to the permanent

³⁷ Custer *Life on the Plains* 170.

³⁸ Lazarus, Edward. *Black Hills/White Justice: The Sioux Nation Versus the United States, 1775 to the Present*. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1991. 74.

reservation,...the government would declare them hostile and treat them accordingly.”³⁹

President Grant’s Administration used the threat of military force to seize Lakota hunting grounds. Opening up Lakota Sioux land for white settlement meant that the government had to allow the military to prevent any Native American counter- raids. The joint military-government occupation of the Black Hills showed that the Grant Administration and Peace Policy valued white settlement over Native American assimilation into Anglo-American culture. Red Cloud, the Lakota chief of the Black Hills, protested governmental seizure of his peoples’ land: “for the railroads you are passing through my country I have not received even so much as a brass ring...I suppose I must, in time, go to farming, but I can’t do it right away.”⁴⁰ Railroad tycoons speculated on Lakota land and the government did not share the profit with Red Cloud and his people. Grant’s Administration voided Lakota claims to the land because it wanted to develop American industry and trade. Many government officials accepted bribes from railroad companies and were not interested in helping the Lakota secure the game needed to help them subsist as farmers.⁴¹ Although the Peace Policy officially ended in 1875, governmental land speculation in South Dakota illustrated the corruption and white supremacist visions of the Grant Administration.

Military and government notions of white supremacy allowed Buffalo Bill rise to fame as a scout on the Great Plains. The presence of white-Indian scouts in the military created doubts about America’s racial superiority: “the frontier held out the possibility that if Americans were to be transformed into a new race, it would be a darker, not a lighter one.”⁴² Many military officers

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ "The Indian Council: Reply of Red Cloud." *Circular [Brooklyn]*, June 13, 1870, 103-04. Accessed November 23, 2014. <http://search.proquest.com/americanperiodicals/docview/137685723/AB0CFFE43EDC4E4EPQ/9?accountid=31516>. 104.

⁴¹ Slotkin *The Fatal Environment* 327.

⁴² Warren *Buffalo Bill’s America* 101.

thought that America's westward expansion could weaken its racial superiority. Mixed-race scouts and families could assimilate into the United States and invalidate Custer's white supremacist war against the Lakota and the Cheyenne nations. The United States' rights to develop the land and expand westward would be in vain. Military officers like Custer wanted to rally the nation behind a white expansionist army. Buffalo Bill embodied these military ideals of whiteness: "he obscured his limitations as a tracker by sticking close to the Indians and the mixed-bloods in his scouting parties, and accepting credit for their accomplishments."⁴³ Many military officers overlooked Buffalo Bill's shortcomings as a scout because he did not have any American Indian blood. He was the scout who fit Custer's visions of a white expansionist army. With his lack of Amerindian blood, Buffalo Bill showed his military officers that he was a loyal servant to the United States, and not a spy looking to help his Native American family or nation.⁴⁴ The military made Buffalo Bill a national celebrity when it asked him to help escort the Russian Grand Duke Alexis on his 1872 hunting trip in Nebraska. James Gordon Bennett Jr, the editor and publisher of the upscale *New York Herald*, depicted Buffalo Bill as the arbiter of Anglo-American civilization and whiteness: "white men and barbarous Indians alike [were] moved by his [Buffalo Bill's] presence, and none of them dare do aught in word or deed contrary to the rules and law of civilization."⁴⁵ Buffalo Bill was a powerful hunter who commanded respect from both Native Americans and Anglo-Americans. White elites who read the *New York Herald* would notice that Buffalo Bill maintained strong white-Indian relations through his excessive capacity for force. Buffalo Bill's whiteness allowed him to support Anglo-American norms of civilization and present this to a sympathetic white elite. Many Peace Policy agents

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ *New York Herald*. "Grand Duke's Hunt." October 7, 1871. I found this on a microfilm reel.

eventually supported Buffalo Bill's image because they valued Anglo-American land claims over assimilationist policies on the reservation. Buffalo Bill's rise to fame rested on his claims to whiteness and ability to expand Anglo-American settlement.

White elites also supported Buffalo Bill's image because of his connections to Jeffersonian agrarianism. A series of sensationalist books known as dime novels flooded American markets in the 1870s and emphasized the United States' agrarian past: "Although the West still serves as the site of an imaginary future, what the mythic Frontier of the dime novel actually embodies is a world in which the values and practices of pre-industrial order are given renewed life."⁴⁶ The dime novel encouraged American city dwellers to romanticize the West's freedom from industrial and urban ills. But rather than lament the passing of a pre-industrial time, the dime novel claimed that America's agrarian past could exist in the West. Many dime novels depicted a hero who protected the West from greedy eastern capitalists who sought an easy profit.⁴⁷ The virtuous protagonists who protected the West were attractive to American white elites because they embodied the nation's agrarian and virile spirit.⁴⁸ Peace Policy advocates and military officers supported the dime novel's image of the West because it helped them justify the United States' agricultural expansion and white settlement. Buffalo Bill gained additional white elite support by mirroring the protagonists in dime novels on his group buffalo hunts: "guiding the hunt provided Cody another stage, on which he made a show of merging the figure of the hunter...with the avatar of American wilderness."⁴⁹ Buffalo Bill's hunting skills helped him represent the image of a pre-industrial America for his entourage. Americans who

⁴⁶ Slotkin, Richard. *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998. 145.

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Warren *Buffalo Bill's America* 197.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

went on Buffalo Bill's tours saw him as a white Indian who recalled previous scouts like Daniel Boone or James Fennimore Cooper's Natty Bumppo.⁵⁰ As a white scout, Buffalo Bill aligned his image with other dime novel protagonists, and thus, portrayed the beginnings of Anglo-American settlement in the United States. Military officers and Peace Policy agents supported Buffalo Bill's image because he encouraged Anglo-Americans to master the land and promote America's expansion.

Buffalo Bill's early show career unified white elitist opinions behind the military's Native American campaigns. After his famous buffalo hunt with Grand Duke Alexis, Bennett invited Buffalo Bill to accompany him to New York and work with the dime novelist and playwright Ned Buntline. Buffalo Bill was going to star in Buntline's *Scouts of the Plains* and work William Hickok and "Texas Jack" Omohundro in the "Buffalo Bill Combination."⁵¹ The show's plot unabashedly attacked the Peace Policy: "throughout the four acts, either the girls or the scouts are in imminent peril and, . . . all through the play a Quaker peace commissioner drops in most inopportunoely. He gets scalped—'as he deserves'—before the close."⁵² Buffalo Bill's combination saved the damsels and their comrades from Indian attacks while the missionary inadvertently hampered their efforts. *Scouts of the Plains* highlighted the missionary's incompetency in both the Peace Policy and in Indian Affairs. Americans watching the play would see that Buffalo Bill ensured the spread of Anglo-American civilization and the safety of those frontier damsels. The Quaker peace commissioner was the comic fall guy in the show whose death received applause at the end. Buffalo Bill's performance sensationalized violence on the plains and enticed his viewers to celebrate both his triumph and that of the military's.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Slotkin *Gunfighter Nation* 70.

⁵² Sagala, Sandra K. *Buffalo Bill on Stage*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico, 2008. 54.

Almost all of Buffalo Bill's showgoers liked the amount of violence in *Scouts of the Plains*: "the next day the newspaper [the *Easton Daily Express*] devoted a column to the border drama, describing it as historical as well as 'instructive and agreeable.'"⁵³ Buffalo Bill's Combination traveled around the northeast and received praise for its realistic portrayal of frontier life. Many American viewers believed that Buffalo Bill's actual experience as a scout legitimated the show's content and violence. *Scouts of the Plains* sensationalized army violence against Native Americans and rallied vast support behind its lead champion, Buffalo Bill. Most white elites liked Buffalo Bill's early performances because they provided insight into the Peace Policy's failures and the military's commitment to American expansionism.

General Custer's death at the Battle of Little Bighorn and the end of Reconstruction unified the white elite behind Buffalo Bill and the army. The nation was shocked to learn that Custer and his troops died from a larger Lakota force under the leadership of Sitting Bull. Jack Crawford, a scout and poet for the United States army, depicted the sadness and confusion surrounding Custer's death:

*The fearless, reckless hero
So loved by the whole frontier,
Had died on the field of battle
In this our centennial year.*⁵⁴

Custer was a distinguished general whose death surprised many military officers and civilians alike. Despite all his promise and bravery, Custer died in a year that reflected the United States' founding. Americans like Crawford wanted to commemorate Custer's death; he wanted other generals to embody Custer's passion for westward expansion and settlement. The United States was searching for another figure who could fulfill the military's white expansionist

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Dead, but Not Forgotten. N.p., 1885. This is from the Denver Public Library Western History Collection. From Buffalo Bill Papers Call number FF19.

visions. Reconstruction's decline in the late 1870s also empowered the white elite to look for guiding icons: "politicians and writers...chastised sectional divisiveness as un-Christian and sanctified national white solidarity as a spiritual imperative."⁵⁵ Many Northern reformers started neglecting African American civil rights because they wanted southern whites to help them rebuild the nation. The Civil War showed many Northern reformers that they had a spiritual and religious obligation to unify the Republic. Although Reconstruction gave African Americans citizenship and the right to vote, northern reformers chose to scale back these freedoms by aligning with southern whites.⁵⁶ White racial reunion officially happened when Northern politicians agreed to end Reconstruction in 1877.⁵⁷ The white elite in the United States had this religious drive to resolve northern-southern tensions and enforce military rule against the Lakota nation.

Buffalo Bill rallied the white elite around his image by taking his revenge on the Lakota Indian who killed Custer. In the summer of 1876, Buffalo Bill scalped the Cheyenne Indian Yellow Hand and claimed that this was the "first scalp for Custer."⁵⁸ Buffalo Bill used this theatrical gesture to premier his new show called the *Red Right Hand; or, Buffalo Bill's First Scalp for Custer*.⁵⁹ His attempts to unify the American people behind his vengeful actions initially divided them: "theatre managers prominently displayed the battle's gruesome artifacts until protesters condemned them as obscene and barbaric, which served to further popularize the program."⁶⁰ American viewers liked the sensationalism of *Scouts on the Plains* but detested the display of Yellow Hand's scalp and the excessive violence in the show. The revulsion to Buffalo

⁵⁵ Blum *Reforging the White Republic* 90.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Sagala *Buffalo Bill on Stage* 83.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

Bill's attack proved that some members of the white elite still valued aspects of the Peace Policy. In his attempt to unify the nation behind a white hero, Buffalo Bill showed that Americans still had divergent views about the military's role in Indian Affairs. In later decades, Buffalo Bill found ways to unify the white elite behind a soldier who could mirror Custer. In an 1898 Wild West poster, Buffalo Bill described "Custer's Last Stand": "over 800 Soldiers, Savages, and Horses engage in this reproduction of the famous battle with Indians in American history. The apex of realism realized."⁶¹ Buffalo Bill's 1898 reenactment of "Custer's Last Stand" focused on the facts of the battle rather than his vengeful action against Yellow Hand. His commitment to authenticity unified the American people behind the military, and this was something that Buffalo Bill perfected during his career as a showman. Buffalo Bill's theatrical murder of Yellow Hand in 1876 demonstrated that he was searching for a way to unify the white elite behind the army's wars on the Great Plains.

The United States' post-Civil War reforms created a white elitist Republic that valued Buffalo Bill's image as an army scout. President Lincoln sanctified the Union's war against the Confederacy by encouraging Americans to atone for the presence of chattel slavery. Many northern whites believed that they must commemorate the dead by forcing immigrants and the urban poor into wage labor capitalism. Increased urban poverty rates made northern whites criminalize vagrancy and create theories about the superior white elites' work ethic. Northern elite visions of whiteness also targeted Native Americans for their nonconformance to wage labor capitalism. President Grant's Peace Policy sought to assimilate Native Americans into the nation through instruction in agriculture, English, and Christianity. But these white elitist reforms conflicted with the military's role in Indian Affairs. Many military officers criticized the

⁶¹ *Buffalo Bill's Wild West/Rough Riders*. N.p., 1898. From Denver Public Library Box 2 Buffalo Bill Papers.

Peace Policy's inability to stop Amerindian raids while the Peace Policy advocates bemoaned the army's expensive and non-effective campaigns. The military struggles against the Peace Policy showed that the white elite had differing opinions about the nation's stance towards Native Americans west of the Mississippi River. Buffalo Bill's skill as a purely white scout allowed the military to market its authority to a popular audience who was becoming increasingly sympathetic to the notions of white supremacy. The Peace Policy's speculations on Lakota territory and Buffalo Bill's successful hunt with Grand Duke Alexis helped unify white elites behind the army's Native American campaigns. Buffalo Bill's popularized these white supremacist notions by sensationalizing frontier battles in his *Scouts of the Plains*. White racial reunions at the end of Reconstruction and Custer's death at Little Bighorn also boosted popular appeal for Buffalo Bill's army persona. But his play *The Red Right Hand; or, Buffalo Bill's First Scalp for Custer* showed that the white elite was still divided on the degree of violence that the military should enact against Native Americans. In his later performances Buffalo Bill attempted to unify the white elite behind the army by adapting his shows' notions of violence to assimilationist-minded Americans.

Chapter 2: American Manliness and the Formation of Empire in “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West”

1883-1898

“Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” used the Anglo-American man’s struggle in the West to justify the military’s violence against subversive Indian nations. The Wild West show’s 1887 show brochure illustrated the types of violence that white settlers enacted against Native Americans: “attack on a settler’s cabin by hostile Indians. Repulse by cow-boys, under the leadership of Buffalo Bill.”⁶² White settlers were always the proud heroes who rescued the innocent American family from the menacing Indian. This one-sided portrayal of the settler-Indian relationship allowed Buffalo Bill to glorify violence against the “hostile” American Indian. Buffalo Bill gained support for westward expansion by praising white settlers and their drive to divest the American Indian of their land. The white settler’s struggle in the West established them as men who protected their racial strength: “and now the home-life and amusements of the cowboy...[who] carried their lives in their hands and who had to fight Indians, as well as break their necks in rounding up stampeded cattle.”⁶³ Buffalo Bill celebrated the virility of the American cowboy. By fighting Native Americans and rounding up cattle, the cowboy helped settle the West for other white settlers. Many Americans praised the cowboy’s struggle in the West because it ensured the manly vigor of the white race.⁶⁴ In 1893, Buffalo Bill glorified the cowboy’s manliness even more when he placed him alongside other accomplished

⁶² Buffalo Bill's Wild West: America's National Entertainment. N.p.: Buffalo Bill's Wild West, 1887. From Denver Public Library Call Number FF22.

⁶³ Buffalo Bill's Wild West BiddleFord Pamphlet. N.p.: Buffalo Bill's Wild West, 1895. Denver Public Library Call Number FF6.

⁶⁴ Bederman, Gail. *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States 1880-1917*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1995. 86.

horseback riders from Russia, Mexico, the Ottoman Empire, and more.⁶⁵ Buffalo Bill used notions of American manliness to promote military campaigns in the West and abroad.

Although “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” gained broad support, many Indian agents on the reservations critiqued the show’s forthright display of Native American customs. Many Indian agents and missionaries who worked on the reservations believed that “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” encouraged Native Americans to resist the Department of the Interior’s authority: “reports condemned shows for . . . making Indians reluctant to wear Euroamerican clothing, farm, and attend church or school.”⁶⁶ The Native American performers used “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” show to resist the Indian agents’ and missionaries’ assimilationist policies. Buffalo Bill needed them to be “Indians” so that he could reenact the United States’ westward expansion and settlement. The critiques coming from the Department of the Interior threatened to undermine Buffalo Bill’s entire show and livelihood. Buffalo Bill dismissed the Department of the Interior’s complaints by showing his alliance with the Lakota Chief Sitting Bull: “he [Sitting Bull], from his standpoint, fought for what he believed was right, and made a name for himself to be known forever. I now introduce you to Sitting Bull, the Napoleon of the red race.”⁶⁷ Buffalo Bill showed the American public that he was able to befriend Sitting Bull and put aside past conflicts. By presenting Sitting Bull as his ally, Buffalo Bill distinguished himself as a peace broker for the United States and the Lakota nation. This credibility allowed him to market the Wild West show as a space for white-Indian alliances. Buffalo Bill undermined critiques to his show by portraying himself as a peace broker for the Lakota and Apache nations.

⁶⁵ Warren *Buffalo Bill’s America* 422.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ History of Sitting Bull. N.p.: Buffalo Bill’s Wild West, 1885. From microfilm collections at Buffalo Bill Center of the West, Cody, Wyoming.

The United States army strengthened its Native American campaigns in the early 1880s when it forced the Lakota and Apache nations to return to their reservations. After the Lakota victory at the Battle of Little Bighorn, General Alfred Terry tried to force Sitting Bull and his followers to return to their reservation: “he proposed that the band should return and settle at the agency, giving up their horses and arms, which would be sold...[for] cattle.”⁶⁸ Sitting Bull and his followers escaped to Canada after the battle, but American military officers wanted him to return to the agency.⁶⁹ Terry’s pursuance of Sitting Bull demonstrated that the United States was forcing all Native Americans to stay on their reservations. Once Sitting Bull returned to the reservation, Terry would make him and his followers buy cattle and transition into an agricultural lifestyle. The United States army used the reservation system to monitor subversive Lakota Indians, reduce their landholdings, and open up the land for Anglo-American settlement. General George Crook also enforced reservation boundaries when he hunted the famous Apache leader Geronimo: “those Apaches...made raids through Arizona, killing citizens, depredating, and committing all kinds of outrages ...[and I decided] that something should be done.”⁷⁰ Geronimo’s attempts to assert his right to the land provoked extensive military campaigns that sought to break Apache resistance. Crook forced the Apaches onto their reservations because they were killing white settlers and resisting military authority. The United States army used the reservation system to curb Native American resistance and promote white settler rights to the land.

“Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” used popular notions of masculinity to encourage Anglo-American settlement in the West. In his book *American Nervousness*, George M. Beard argued

68 Johnson, Willis Fletcher. *The Life of Sitting Bull and the Indian War of 1890-1891*. Philadelphia, PA: Edgewood Publishing, 1891. 144

⁶⁹ Johnson *Sitting Bull and the Indian War of 1890-1891* 144.

⁷⁰ Hamalainen and Johnson *Major Problems in the History of North American Borderlands* 314.

that the city threatened the Anglo-American man's virility and racial strength: "neurasthenics were highly evolved white men who had overtaxed their vital energies by overstimulating themselves...with civilization."⁷¹ Beard believed that the daily stresses in urban cities weakened the white man's virile energies. An Anglo-American man who was overexposed to urban life could develop headaches, muscle spasms, and even sexual impotence.⁷² The city and its conveniences threatened the Anglo-American man's sexual potency, and thus, his racial strength. Beard compelled many Anglo-American men to rejuvenate the white race's virility by venturing into nature. Young, budding politicians like Theodore Roosevelt sought to show American voters that his hunting and ranching activities made him a man and candidate for office.⁷³ Buffalo Bill attracted American support for his Wild West show by emphasizing the manly qualities of the army scout: "the Army Scout...[is]inured to hardship, experienced in the knowledge of Indian habits and language, [and] familiar with the hunt."⁷⁴ The scout mastered his own virile instincts by tracking Native Americans and engaging in the hunt. Buffalo Bill used the scout's virile characteristics to praise the army's campaigns in the West. By highlighting the scout's virility, Buffalo Bill was encouraging Anglo-American men to envision the West as an escape from urban malaises. "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" promoted the military's campaigns in the West by exemplifying their virile qualities and their adherence to white racial vigor.

Anglo-American men also supported "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" because it linked their notions of manliness to the army's horseback riding skills. The Wild West show's publicist John M. Burke emphasized Buffalo Bill's manliness when he compared him to the mythical centaur:

⁷¹ Bederman *Manliness and Civilization* 86.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Buffalo Bill's Wild West 1886 Courier Program: Salutatory*. N.p., 1886. From Denver Public Library Buffalo Bill Papers Call Number FF20

“now, like a veritable Centaur, he strides his animal, his command so complete that it appears his arms and hands are not needed for use in his horsemanship, but left free to handle his bow and arrow or his rifle.”⁷⁵ Buffalo Bill unified his American expansionist narrative with the classical mythology surrounding the centaur. Many Anglo-American men respected the image of the centaur because it combined the white man’s capacity for civilization with the raw power of the horse.⁷⁶ The centaur represented the Anglo-American’s mastery over nature and his white racial power. By combining the centaur with the American West, Buffalo Bill showed Anglo-American men that he could rejuvenate the white race. Buffalo Bill connected the centaur’s racial vigor to the military when he displayed cavalry drills in his Wild West show: “here too, . . . are gathered the representative detachments of the United States Cavalry, the most noted branch of our army.”⁷⁷ The American cavalry processions demonstrated each soldier’s skill on a horse. Buffalo Bill used the cavalry’s processions to rally support for the army’s masculinity and order as a regiment. American pride for the military’s strength allowed Buffalo Bill to glorify its campaigns in the West. The classical allusions in “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” let him connect Anglo-American view the military as the superior racial and technological power.

Buffalo Bill used the military’s racial vigor to remove Native Americans from the United States’ national narrative. In his 1895 show, Buffalo Bill contrasted the white man’s racial vigor with the Native American’s primitiveness: “here you see the red man at home ensconced with squaw and pappoose within the huts of skin and sinew, the camp fire burning and nothing changed from the days when our Pilgrim Fathers landed on the bleak shores of Massachusetts.”⁷⁸

75 Burke, John M. *From Prairie to Palace*. Edited by Chris Dixon. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 1893. 46.

⁷⁶ Warren *Buffalo Bill’s America* 226.

⁷⁷ Buffalo Bill’s Wild West BiddleFord Pamphlet.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

The unchanged American Indian encouraged white viewers to see him or her as a relic of the past. Anglo-American notions of the preserved Indian came from a variety of anthropological exhibitions that lauded the white man's superior racial qualities. Social-Darwinist theories argued that whiteness showed civilization while Native Americans represented savagery.⁷⁹ Buffalo Bill used Social-Darwinist rhetoric to support the army's racial strength vis-à-vis Native Americans in the West. The United States army rejuvenated the white race's manly vigor by exemplifying their unbounded skill on horseback. Cavalry processions and Buffalo Bill's prowess on horseback showed American audiences that the military upheld the strength of the white race. Buffalo Bill portrayed the Native American as primitive being so that he could justify the military's continued aggression against the weaker race. The Wild West show's allusions to a race war demonstrated that Buffalo Bill was garnering American support for both westward settlement and the military's wars against dissident Indian nations.

The Wild West show's support for a racial war caused governmental Indian agents and missionaries to critique its overt displays of violence. Many Indian agents and missionaries believed that "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" encouraged Native Americans to resist the United States: "besides concern for the well-being of Native performers, the underlying worry was that participating in Wild West shows would undermine government policies of assimilation, which sought to extinguish, not reinforce, traditional ways."⁸⁰ The Native American performers in "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" openly engaged in "Indian" behavior and fought against the United States army. These Indian agents and missionaries wanted Native Americans to abandon their customs so that they could assimilate into the United States. Debates about Native American

⁷⁹ Slotkin *Gunfighter Nation* 63-64.

⁸⁰ Native Performers in Wild West Shows: From Buffalo Bill to Euro Disney by Linda Scarangella McNenly. 47.

performers showed that the American people were divided on their views towards Indians: Buffalo Bill's supporters wanted to see their demise while show critics thought that they should have no place in the performance. Some show critics even claimed that "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" promoted savagery rather than the merits of Anglo-American civilization: "he [Buffalo Bill] calls it the Drama of Civilization, and Congressman James of New York calls it the Drama of Savagery."⁸¹ Indian agents, missionaries, and even some Congressmen believed that "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" was an immoral entertainment. The displays of violence caused critics to denounce the show for its base behavior and lack of good, Christian principles. These critics thought that Buffalo Bill undermined the United States' supposed right to assimilate Native Americans. Although his show rallied support for the Anglo-American's racial superiority, Buffalo Bill's critics believed that its violence could inspire Native Americans to resist the United States. Indian agent and missionary critiques to Buffalo Bill's show demonstrated that he was often performing for a public that could undermine his entire business.

Buffalo Bill countered his negative publicity by marketing his show as a sophisticated presentation on the American West. Many pamphlets from the Wild West show underscored the educational aspects of each performance:

"The people of this country spend every year for amusements more than they pay for their schools, and three times as much as they pay for their churches. Amusement is not only a great fact and a great business interest, it is also a great factor in the development of the national character."⁸²

Buffalo Bill claimed that his Wild West show created a national character for the American public. He displayed the white settler's struggle in the West and celebrated the United

81 "Article 3-No Title." *New York Evangelist*, January 20, 1887, 4. Accessed April 12, 2015. <http://search.proquest.com/americanperiodicals/docview/125338486/D1A176F038644259PQ/31?accountid=31516>.

⁸² Buffalo Bill's Wild West Biddleford Pamphlet.

States army's triumph over Native American peoples. The military's virility and racial vigor were meant to inspire pride in the nation and in its future expansion. Buffalo Bill grounded this nationalist sentiment into educational instruction; the Wild West was portraying *real* military battles against Native Americans. Reenactments of Custer's death at Little Bighorn helped imbue Americans with a sense of pride for the military's current campaigns in the West.⁸³ Buffalo Bill used the rising importance of entertainment to educate Anglo-Americans about their national character and racial strength—and make it appear as truth. By emphasizing the military's racial prowess, Buffalo Bill attracted more Americans to his nationalist visions of the United States. Buffalo Bill also claimed that more Americans would see his show because of the declining interest in paying for Church activities and services. The Church reflected many of the Indian agents' ideals because it wanted to assimilate Native Americans into the nation through missionary activity. Increasing interest in entertainment allowed Buffalo Bill to make his show embody nationalist sentiment and undercut the government's assimilationist programs.

The educational qualities of "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" also made it emphasize the merits of Anglo-American civilization more than its overt displays of violence. Buffalo Bill's 1895 show pamphlet exemplified the army's ability to restrain its violent behaviors when fighting Native Americans: "it [the conflict] is short, sharp and decisive, and soon the Indians, who have not been killed, are on the run. The pioneer's rescue is accomplished. But ah! Some other day—who can tell?"⁸⁴ Buffalo Bill showed the American public that the military valued the white settlers' safety over the Native Americans' destruction. The military used violence in "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" as a way to uphold Anglo-American civilization. This abstention from excessive force conformed to popular conceptions of American masculinity; a true white

⁸³ *Buffalo Bill's Wild West/Rough Riders*. N.p., 1898. Denver Public Library Box 2.

⁸⁴ Buffalo Bill's Wild West BiddleFord Pamphlet.

man only used violence when necessary, and never cultivated self-consuming vendettas.⁸⁵ “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” downplayed military violence and emphasized the nation’s racial vigor in its place. Many Indian agents and missionaries saw Native Americans as barbaric or childish; “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” displayed the Anglo-American’s superior racial qualities and, at the very least, gained passive support from missionaries or Indian agents who were not staunchly opposed to the military.⁸⁶ Buffalo Bill unified American support behind the army by exemplifying its virile qualities and commitment to the spread of white settlement over that of violence.

Buffalo Bill highlighted the military’s high-brow and manly qualities when he publicized his alliance with the Lakota Chief Sitting Bull. When Sitting Bull traveled with the Wild West show in 1885, Buffalo Bill discussed his new friendship with this Lakota chief: “I [Buffalo Bill] have never been insensible to the abstract rights that civilization, as our progress is called, has perhaps unconsciously trodden upon, and in time of peace, I am strongly the red man’s friend.”⁸⁷ This alliance helped Buffalo Bill distinguish himself as a Lakota-American peace broker. Buffalo Bill actively sought out Sitting Bull and professed their alliance to a receptive American public. He wanted Americans to see that the military could maintain peace in Indian Territory; Buffalo Bill claimed to have established a truce by reconciling the United States’ differences with Sitting Bull. Through this alliance, Buffalo Bill showed that the military could restrain its violent campaigns and move beyond its previous conflicts. The end to Lakota-American tensions showed that the military was committed to Anglo-American expansion. It only fought Native Americans to forward white settlement; this image of the military allowed Buffalo Bill to offset

⁸⁵ Warren *Buffalo Bill’s America* 197.

⁸⁶ Slotkin *The Fatal Environment* 318-319.

⁸⁷ *History of Sitting Bull*. N.p.: Buffalo Bill’s Wild West, 1885.

Indian agent visions of an overtly violent and savage Wild West show. Buffalo Bill attracted more American to his Wild West show by exemplifying the military's strength as an Indian peace broker.

Sitting Bull's entry into the Wild West show illustrated the ways that Native Americans came to support Buffalo Bill and the United States army. After his flight to Canada in the late 1870s, Sitting Bull and his followers returned to their South Dakota reservations because of their lack of resources.⁸⁸ Sitting Bull decided to travel with the Wild West show because he "expressed a strong desire to meet the noted frontiersman who contributed so largely to his defeat in 1876."⁸⁹ Buffalo Bill pursued Sitting Bull after the Battle of Little Bighorn and forced the Lakota chief to seek refuge in Canada. Sitting Bull wanted to travel with the Wild West show so that he could personally meet Buffalo Bill; an alliance with the American could help him bargain for better conditions on the Lakota reservations. The Lakota-American alliance would give Sitting Bull a chance to see the United States and argue on behalf of his people; his "submission" to the American army was a means to his larger goal. Sitting Bull's support for the United States army helped Buffalo Bill validate the themes of his Wild West show and discredit Indian agents' critiques to his entertainment.

The United States army's capture of Geronimo also allowed Buffalo Bill to portray the military as a Native American peace broker. As a friend and supporter of Buffalo Bill, General Nelson Miles professed his admiration for the Wild West show:

"the wild Indian life as it was a few years ago will soon be a thing of the past, but you appear to have selected a good class of Indians to represent that race of people, and I regard your exhibition as not only very interesting but practically instructive."⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ "Statement of General Miles": *Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of the Rough Riders of the World*. N.p., 1894. Denver Public Library Call Number FF26.

Miles believed that his arrest of Geronimo in 1886 crushed Native American resistance and domesticated the “wild Indian.”⁹¹ He wrote this report of “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” one year after Geronimo’s arrest. Buffalo Bill published this statement in his 1894 show so that he could exemplify the military’s triumph over the Apache nation. The military thwarted Native American resistance and made them act as subservient to the United States government. Americans who initially supported the government’s assimilationist policies would see that the military was the guarantor of peace in the West; it made Native Americans stay on their reservations and submit to the Indian agents’ demands. Buffalo Bill put Miles’ quote in his 1894 show pamphlet because it vindicated his celebration of the United States’ expansion. Miles helped Buffalo Bill assert that these Native Americans were passive and willing to seek peace with the United States. Buffalo Bill’s alliance with General Miles helped him glorify the army’s Native American campaigns and its methods for assimilating the Apaches into the nation.

“Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” gained broad support for its ability to stop Native American resistance and uphold peace in Indian Territory. Both Sitting Bull and Geronimo sought to subvert American authority by leaving their reservations; this was their open statement against the military’s oppressive Indian policies. Both Native American leaders sought to escape the United States’ laws by crossing the national borders; Sitting Bull sought refuge in Canada while Geronimo retreated into Mexico’s northern provinces. With army help, Buffalo Bill argued that the Wild West show brought peace to Indian Territory; he publicly professed his alliance with Sitting Bull and indirectly portrayed Geronimo’s submission to the government. Buffalo Bill used these military victories to prove to the American public that the army could break Apache and Lakota resistance movements. Military authority could make Native Americans willingly

⁹¹ Utley, Robert M. *Geronimo*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012. 213

submit to the government's assimilationist policies. Buffalo Bill used Native Americans like Sitting Bull to make his show Indians seem like submissive peoples. They regularly lose to the white settler in his Wild West shows, and now the military has actually bested the Native American in the West. Buffalo Bill counteracted Indian agent complaints about his Native American performers by showing that the military made them subservient to government rule.

With the military's triumphs in the West, Buffalo Bill framed the United States army's prowess alongside other powerful horseback riders. In 1893, Buffalo Bill created the "Congress of the Rough Riders of the World" exhibit; this showed European and American cavalry displays, and also included Turkish, Mexican, and Cossack horseback riders.⁹² Buffalo Bill removed Native Americans from United States history when he described the skill and grace of the Russian Cossack: "the [Russian] Cossack of the Caucasian lines...[has a] system of warfare which bears a striking similarity to that which prevailed on the American frontier a few years ago, [and] is the finest school for the development of military horsemanship."⁹³ Buffalo Bill's attempts to diminish Native American racial potency date back to the beginning of his Wild West show; in this case, however, he was replacing the Cossack's strength and virility with that of the Native American. By removing Native Americans from the West, Buffalo Bill was asserting the military's strength and comparing it to the Cossack. Buffalo Bill gained more support for the military by aligning it with exotic horseback riding warriors. This allowed him to erase the Native American from United States history and rally unadulterated support behind the military.

The culmination of the military's strength came when Buffalo Bill compared the United States army to a slew of other European empires. In his 1894 show season, Buffalo Bill

⁹² Warren *Buffalo Bill's America* 422.

⁹³ Burke *From Prairie to Palace* 43.

compared the United States army to the other prestigious English, French, and German armies of the world: “they will present the various evolutions and exercises of their armies, and in due course will introduce on horseback...[their] sabre and lance exercises.”⁹⁴ The defeat of Sitting Bull and Geronimo helped Americans see their army in a global context. Buffalo Bill brought back masculine notions behind horseback riding and used them to boost the United States army’s white racial vigor. By comparing the United States cavalry to other European empires, Buffalo Bill was trying to exemplify America as an empire that could match British, French, or German force. The displays of these military drills were often so compelling that one American reporter said that “the change in the show is always going on, and is always towards perfection.”⁹⁵ American pride in these processional drills could inspire even the show’s harshest critics to reverse their viewpoints. Buffalo Bill strengthened the military’s image for the American public when he exemplified its imperial power next to other formidable European nations.

Buffalo Bill used popular American support for the military to justify the United States’ invasion of Cuba in 1898. The expansion of American wealth and markets encouraged industrialists to look for overseas markets; this search for markets was one of the main causes for the United States’ war against Spain and its seizure of Cuba.⁹⁶ Buffalo Bill used his show’s masculine tropes to support the military’s entry into Cuba. The top of the pamphlet read “Cuban Heroes” in an 1898 show pamphlet while text described Buffalo Bill’s reenactment: “insurgent veterans direct from battlefields, hospitals, and Spanish military prisons...appearing with Col. Cody under the auspices of the Cuban Junta.”⁹⁷ Buffalo Bill recreated the United States’ military

⁹⁴ “Military Representatives.” *Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of the Rough Riders of the World*. N.p., 1894. Denver Public Library Call Number FF26.

⁹⁵ *Philadelphia Ledger* (Philadelphia, PA). "Buffalo Bill Here: The Wild West Opens Its Season in This City." April 29, 1896. From Microfilm series at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West Cody, Wyoming.

⁹⁶ Warren *Buffalo Bill's America* 463.

⁹⁷ *Buffalo Bill's Wild West/Rough Riders*. N.p., 1898.

engagements in Cuba. Americans who saw the military's triumphs in Cuba saw the culmination of the United States' empire; the army had asserted its authority on overseas territory and reaffirmed its masculine image. Buffalo Bill publicized the United States' entry into Cuba because he wanted to exemplify the military's white racial vigor. The military has defeated Native Americans in the West, and now it can conquer all peoples who do not possess its racial strength. Buffalo Bill's demonstrations of military might compelled many Americans to support the military because of the patriotic propaganda from the "Rough Riders." The bulging pride in the American military carried Buffalo Bill's audience with him as he supported its campaigns in the West and abroad. America's entry into Cuba represented the height of Buffalo Bill's popularity because it built national support around empire and the military's racial superiority and manly vigor.

The Wild West show unified American support behind the military by glorifying its white racial vigor. Many prominent neurologists like George M. Beard proclaimed that Anglo-American men needed to rejuvenate their racial vigor by escaping the city and mastering the elements. "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" show gained broad support by connecting American notions of masculinity to the daily struggles that the white settler had in the West. By the mid-1880s, Buffalo Bill defined manliness in context with his equestrian skill; this allowed him to assume the role of a classical centaur who could master the elements and his own racial strength. Buffalo Bill contrasted the military's white racial vigor with notions about the preserved Native American; he used popular racial theories from the time to denote the Amerindian as savage and incapable of modernization. By diminishing the Native American's racial strength, Buffalo Bill could write them out of United States history. But his imperialist rhetoric had some opponents who claimed that his Native American performers needed to be assimilated into the nation. The

disfavor around “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” show illustrated the differing opinions that Americans had towards “Indians”; some believed that they helped distinguish the military’s strengths while others thought that their mere presence could threaten America’s racial character. Buffalo Bill catered to these show critics by exemplifying the army’s ability to maintain peace in Indian Territory. The American showman invited Sitting Bull into his 1885 tour to prove that his military force could create a Lakota-American alliance. And with the capture of Geronimo in 1886, Buffalo Bill could claim that Native Americans were becoming passive agents who submitted to assimilationist policies. The newfound strength of the army allowed Buffalo Bill to glorify its power alongside other European nations. The increasing global recognition of an American empire encouraged Buffalo Bill to glorify the military’s invasion into Cuba. Buffalo Bill tried to fashion the United States as an empire that was on par with other European powers; he did this during his 1887-1892 of Great Britain.

Chapter 3: Civilizing the Indian: “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” and its Exportation of American Empire to Great Britain 1887-1892

“Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” show tour to Europe unified British and American imaginations of white imperial rule. British subjects like the businessman and mining magnate Cecil Rhodes believed that the Anglo-Saxon race had to colonize the African continent: “Africa is still lying ready for us [and] it is our duty to take it...we should keep this one idea steadily before our eyes that more territory simply means more of the Anglo-Saxon race.”⁹⁸ Rhodes thought that Great Britain had the right to colonize Africa because of its racial vigor and imperial prestige. British dreams of an African empire came to fruition during the 1884-1885 Congress of Berlin, where Great Britain and other European powers divided the continent into different colonial territories.⁹⁹ Cecil Rhodes and other British colonials now had African lands that could further their ambitions for empire in both Africa and India.¹⁰⁰ Although these imperial experiences were not the same, both territories gave many British subjects a sense of their superior racial stock and capacity for civilization. Great Britain’s colonial expansion in the mid-1880s attracted British support for “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” and its visions of American empire. Buffalo Bill connected British imperial objectives to those of the United States: “all of us combined in an exhibition intended to prove to the center of old world civilization that the vast region of the United States was finally and effectively settled by the English-speaking race.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Rhodes, Cecil. "Confessions of Faith." University of Oregon. Accessed April 28, 2015. <http://pages.uoregon.edu/kimball/Rhodes-Confession.htm>.

⁹⁹ Berenson, Edward. *Heroes of Empire: Five Charismatic Men and the Conquest of Africa*. Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2011. 81.

¹⁰⁰ Burton, Antoinette. *Burdens of History: British Feminism, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture 1865-1917*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1994. 6.

¹⁰¹ Cody, William F. *The Wild West in England*. Edited by Frank Christianson. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 2012 (originally published 1888). 26

The United States facilitated Anglo-American settlement because of its desire for imperial prestige. By linking Great Britain and the United States to imperial expansion, Buffalo Bill equated the American's racial superiority to that of the British. Buffalo Bill used his Wild West show to gain British support for the military's expansionist campaigns in the American West.

Buffalo Bill publicized British praise of his show to rebut American critics who condemned the performance's display of Native American customs. William Barrows, a contributor to the religious journal known as the *Andover Review*, critiqued the army's penchant for violence towards Native Americans: "the army is in necessary antagonism to the Indian, [and] is naturally adapted to develop their most offensive qualities, and bring to light the discouraging features."¹⁰² Barrows was one of the many critics who believed that the military had to transfer its control over Indian Affairs to the Department of the Interior. These critics, who became the "friends of the Indian," wanted to assimilate Native Americans into the nation by teaching them middle-class Protestant values. To Barrows and other assimilationists, "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" was an impediment to the Interior's objectives because it allowed Native Americans to act as Indians.¹⁰³ The assimilationists' condemnation of both the military and Wild West show proved that these critics viewed Buffalo Bill as an army representative who sought to undermine the Department of the Interior's authority. Throughout his tour in Europe, Buffalo Bill had to display the military's commitment to empire and interest in Amerindian assimilation. If he failed either task, he could accumulate show critics and possibly lose his entire business. Buffalo Bill counteracted these critics by emphasizing his show's refined taste: "her Majesty would arrive, I was informed, at five o'clock, and would require to see everything in an hour. A

102 Barrows, William. "The Education of the Indians." *The Andover Review: A Religious and Theological Monthly*, November 1891, 429. Accessed April 18, 2015.

<http://media.proquest.com/media/pq/hnp/doc/749780402/fmt/ai/rep/NONE?hl=assimilations>
¹⁰³ Warren *Buffalo Bill's America* 361.

soldier is frequently ordered to accomplish the impossible—I had been tolerably used to that sort of thing.”¹⁰⁴ The Wild West show performed for Queen Victoria and did so under very short notice. Not only did Buffalo Bill emphasize his show’s respectability for British royalty, but he also underscored the military efficiency of each performance. Buffalo Bill garnered American support for his show abroad by exemplifying its moral instruction for Native Americans.

British subjects valued “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” because it reflected the Anglo-Saxon’s obligation to civilize their backward colonies. Many British feminists in the late-nineteenth century believed that they had to help non-Western women overcome their “savage” cultures: “the vocabulary of Victorian social reform and philanthropy at home was, moreover, steeped in...emerging discourses of social Darwinism and institutional anthropology.”¹⁰⁵ British feminists engaged in the larger discussions on the Anglo-Saxon’s racial superiority to non-white, non-Western peoples. They had a stake in Great Britain’s imperial rhetoric because they saw themselves as good philanthropists and worldwide social reformers. The feminist support for social reforms in Great Britain targeted women from colonial India because these peoples were “subjects in need of salvation.”¹⁰⁶ British women viewed Indian women as culturally backward and racially inferior, and this gained support from other British subjects because they too believed in Social Darwinist theories about the racial inferiority of the Indian woman.¹⁰⁷ Buffalo Bill mirrored British notions towards Indian women when he described the savage characteristics of Native American women: “the expectant mother betakes herself of the seclusion of some thicket...[and] in a few hours she returns with the baby in its cradle...and goes about her usual

¹⁰⁴ Cody *Wild West in England* 75.

¹⁰⁵ Burton *Burdens of History* 2.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁷ Warren *Buffalo Bill’s America* 316.

duties as if nothing had happened.”¹⁰⁸ The lack of pain in childbirth marked Native American women as a savage and related their characteristics to British notions of a subhuman Indian woman. Buffalo Bill gained British support for his show because it reaffirmed white imperialist notions against the racialized other. By describing Native American practices, Buffalo Bill connected British colonial legacies to the United States army’s campaigns in the West. This allowed him to justify the American military’s imperial expansion onto Amerindian Territory.

Buffalo Bill also connected British pretensions to Indian religions with the United States’ control over Native American reservations. Many British reformers condemned India’s backward religions and its non-Western traditions: “images of an enslaved Oriental womanhood were the common possessions of Victorian social reformers and exercised much of the rhetorical force behind humanitarian narratives.”¹⁰⁹ British feminists believed that Indian religions were uncivilized because they made women perform exotic rituals and customs. These practices compelled many British feminists to dismiss Indian religions because they did not conform to “civilized” Western traditions. Humanitarian and social reforms into India hinged on the British cultural pretensions; many British feminists thought that their beliefs could help the lives of many Indian women.¹¹⁰ Many British subjects supported these feminists’ claims because of the Social-Darwinists their bolstered their racial strength over that of the Indian. Buffalo Bill’s show attracted many British subjects because it illustrated the United States’ civilizing missions in the American West: “with no chance of success in war, [and] with no possibility of providing food for themselves, they [Native Americans] thoroughly comprehend that their only hope for the

¹⁰⁸ *Buffalo Bill's Wild West 1887: The Indians at Home*. N.p., 1887. Archive from Denver Public Library Buffalo Bill Papers. Call Number FF24.

¹⁰⁹ Burton *Burdens of History* 8.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

future is in...grazing cattle and tilling the soil.”¹¹¹ The American military has forced Native Americans to labor for their food and wages. Buffalo Bill showed his British audience that the military colonized the American West by coercing its indigenous to abandon their cultural beliefs and traditions. British feminists supported “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” and the army because it “civilized” America’s non-white peoples; other British subjects valued the show and the military because of its commitment to empire-building. “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” linked Great Britain’s civilizing missions with those of the United States.

Great Britain’s and the United States’ civilizing missions allowed Buffalo Bill to claim that both of these empires were racially superior. Many British feminists thought that reforms for Indian women would exemplify the Anglo-Saxon’s racial superiority: “women were induced—by the state, by eugenicists, by doctors, and by all manner of social reformers—to bear responsibility for racial strength and racial purity.”¹¹² Many Anglo-Saxon women believed that they had to represent Great Britain’s racial purity by displaying their racial strength and their drive for social reform. These actions for the Anglo-Saxon woman had racial dimensions; many British feminists believed that they had to show compassion for the “savage” Indian women and attempt to save them from their strange spiritual beliefs and lowly disposition. The British feminist movement to civilize India gained support from other British subjects because they too strived to maintain their own racial superiority through eugenicists and other social reforms. Buffalo Bill used the story of the American explorer John Nelson to show his British audience that the United States also protected its racial purity: “to the majority of dwellers in the realms of civilization it is hard to realize that hundreds of our race and blood, [as] very often intelligent and

¹¹¹ *Buffalo Bill's Wild West 1887: The Indians at Home*. N.p., 1887.

¹¹² Burton *Burdens of History* 50.

even accomplished men, gladly...[embrace] the nomads of the plains.”¹¹³ Nelson’s Native American wife and mixed-blood children were a remnant of an earlier United States; most Anglo-Americans did not marry Native Americans anymore. Buffalo Bill praised the United States’ racial character because it now separated the civilized Anglo-American from the savage Native American. John Nelson’s story allowed Buffalo Bill to celebrate the explorer’s white characteristics—like intelligence and accomplishment—while degrading the American Indian’s racial strength. British subjects would be attracted to “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” because it mirrored their own racial prejudices against Indian women. By exemplifying the United States’ lack of interracial marriages, Buffalo Bill showed the British public that the military has successfully forced Native Americans onto reservations where they could not marry Anglo-American men. This act solidified the United States’ racial purity and made it resemble the noble Anglo-Saxon race.

Buffalo Bill displayed the United States’ racial superiority so that he could showcase its industrial expansion and its economic strength. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Great Britain has marketed its imperial glory and its technological prowess through large expositions: “beginning with London’s Crystal Palace Exhibition in 1851,...the fairs were entertainments, prompts to tourism, and theaters of consumerism, but they also modeled a world of international competition, or competitive nationalism.”¹¹⁴ The advent of glass structures increased Great Britain’s imperial prestige and its consumer culture. London’s Crystal Palace Exhibition showed many British subjects that their empire can lead Europe towards an industrial future. Great Britain’s exhibitions in the late nineteenth century reflected the pride that many British subjects

¹¹³ *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West 1887: John Nelson and His Indian Family. N.p.*, 1887 Denver Public Library Call Number FF24.

¹¹⁴ Bender, Thomas. *A Nation among Nations: America’s Place in World History*. New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2006. 131

had for their empire. Buffalo Bill gained British support for his Wild West show by modeling it after past exhibitions: “an imposing covered bridge—the Washington bridge—connects the exhibition proper with the Grand Stand, which has been erected in the arena of the “Wild West,” whence no less than 20,000 spectators can witness the ‘Sports of the Wild West.’”¹¹⁵ “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” appeared with the 1887 American exhibition in London. Both entertainments demonstrated the United States’ technological prowess and its racial vigor: the American exhibition provided a model of the Washington Bridge while “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” showed the Anglo-American’s penchant for sports like shooting or horseback riding. Buffalo Bill merged his show with the American exhibition so that he could rally British support for the United States’ pastimes and activities in the West. Even though British leisurely pursuits did not exactly match those of the American cowboy, many British subjects respected Buffalo Bill’s show because it reaffirmed the United States’ technological and imperial pride. “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” mirrored past exhibitions in Great Britain, and thus, unified British imperial imaginations with those of the United States.

Many British subjects also supported “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” show because it inspired Anglo-American and Anglo-Saxon men to see their virility as the safeguard against imperial decay. Edward Berenson outlined the threats that challenged British ideas of racial power and imperial glory: “the relative peacefulness of the years after 1815, combined with growing prosperity, the feminization of family life, and the advent of emancipated women—all of these phenomena appeared to threaten male power, independence, initiative, and even sexual potency.”¹¹⁶ Conversely, British men felt that they had to exemplify their Anglo-Saxonness by

¹¹⁵ *American Exhibition at the Earl's Court*. N.p., 1887. Found in the Denver Public Library, in the Buffalo Bill papers. Call Number FF5.

¹¹⁶ Berenson, Edward. *Heroes of Empire: Five Charismatic Men and the Conquest of Africa*. Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2011. 124.

exhuding their manly traits. Many British men believed that their society weakened the Anglo-Saxon race by softening their virile inclinations for violence. For many Anglo-Saxon men, the rise of the effeminate man threatened to undo Great Britain's imperial expansion and its racial strength. An increasing number of British subjects sought to counteract their empire's declining virility by publicizing the daring adventures of the famous explorer Henry Morton Stanley. His struggle against the elements, the terrain, and the African tribesmen made British subjects see him as the protector of Great Britain's empire.¹¹⁷ Buffalo Bill embodied ideals of British manhood in the Wild West show: "the innate English love of horsemanship and feats of skill presaged an appreciative community which I [Buffalo Bill] must say from the first to last never disappointed us."¹¹⁸ Many British subjects liked the Wild West show's display of horseback riding tricks because it demonstrated the United States' mastery over nature. The American cowboy ventured into the West and exemplified the United States' racial vigor by controlling his horse. Buffalo Bill showed his British audience that the United States maintained their imperial drive through mastering the unruly bronco and the harsh terrain of the West. British audiences viewed "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" as proof that the United States has colonized the American West. The virility of the Anglo-American man allowed Buffalo Bill to connect British notions of manliness with the United States' drive to settle the West for the white settler.

Buffalo Bill used British interest in their remote colonies to attract intrigue for his Wild West show. In addition to British notions of manliness, many Anglo-Saxon men saw themselves as imperialists who used their colonies to travel to a distant time: "the references to mythical heroes resonated widely in Britain, where the Victorian era saw a revival of ancient Roman legends, chivalry, and...a vogue for Scandinavian and Germanic folktales featuring supernatural

¹¹⁷ Berenson *Heroes of Empire* 116.

¹¹⁸ Cody *Wild West in England* 44.

saviors and saints.”¹¹⁹ Many British subjects saw the imperialist as someone who could travel to past times and relive the glories of conquest. British explorers like Stanley specifically located the colony as the exotic; colonial Africa was the space where British subjects could relive these classical tales.¹²⁰ Buffalo Bill increased British interest in the exotic when he described Native American religions: “a Homer might find many an Indian hero as worthy of immortal fame as Achilles for his efforts to save...his friend’s soul and ensure him a transit to the ‘Happy Hunting Grounds.’”¹²¹ The Native American warrior wanted to save his friend’s body and would put himself into any type of danger to do so. The British audience reading this would respect the proud Native American warrior but see him as exotic; he reflected nineteenth century visions of legendary heroes. By putting the Native American into a mythical context, Buffalo Bill encouraged British subjects to view the West as an unknown and pre-colonized space. That justified the American military’s expansion into the West and the drive to challenge oneself against the Native Americans and the terrain.

Despite the Wild West show’s popularity in Great Britain, many American reformers condemned Buffalo Bill for the poor treatment that Native Americans received during his tour. The Department of the Interior oversaw Indian Affairs on the reservations, and its members believed that their Native American wards engaged in immoral activities when they traveled with “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” show: “the litany of evil attributed to them—syphilis, drunkenness, debauchery, rebelliousness, laziness, and just plain sin—...[demonstrated] America’s latent antitheatricalism.”¹²² Governmental Indian agents contested Native American participation in

¹¹⁹ Berenson *Heroes of Empire* 125.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ *An Indian’s Religion: Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*. N.p., 1888. From Denver Public Library Buffalo Bill Papers. Call Number FF24.

¹²² Warren *Buffalo Bill’s America* 369.

“Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” show because they wanted them to develop a moral conscience. Many Indian agents wanted Native Americans to embrace agriculture, Euro-American clothing styles, and some form of Christianity. To these reformers, the Wild West show counteracted their instruction because it allowed Native Americans to embrace immoral behaviors and their own cultural beliefs. Buffalo Bill dismissed the critiques to asserting his diligent care for the Native American performers: “the statements and general inference in the *Herald* about starvation and cruelty in the Wild West camp are ridiculously untruthful, . . . would that every white man in the world was as well fed, clothed, and looked after as our red tourists.”¹²³ The fact that the prominent *New York Herald* posted critiques of “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” showed that these Indian Agents had the power and influence to discontinue its tour. Buffalo Bill counteracted these claims by demonstrating his care for the Native American performers; they were well-fed, clothed, and constantly monitored. The Wild West show continued to perform in Europe because of the care that Buffalo Bill showed for his Native American performers. By refuting the *Herald*’s faulty claims, Buffalo Bill devalued the Department of the Interior’s knowledge on Indian Affairs. This allowed him to boost his show’s image and make it reflect his stronger management the Interior’s Native American wards.

Buffalo Bill managed his Native American performers so well that even British reporters praised his Indian policy. One British reporter from the *Evening News and Post* realized that he maintained peace in Indian Territory by hiring Native American performers:

“‘Plenty Horses,’ another leading chief, remains to adorn West Brompton and to learn by travel the salutary lesson that the Caucasian is by no means played out. This is the moral which the American government has all along been endeavoring to bring home to the

¹²³ *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and Courier Program: Explicit Denial of Various Charges Made Against Buffalo Bill*. N.p., 1893. From Denver Public Library Buffalo Bill Papers call number FF25.

redskin, and which is the most powerful force for the maintenance of peace in Indian Territory.”¹²⁴

Although Buffalo Bill used his Native American performers to complement the Wild West’s image, he also wanted them to realize that they could not defeat the British or American armies. Buffalo Bill exemplified the American military’s power through enormous cavalry displays that one British reporter saw as a “violent...repression of fiercely energetic forces struggling to break forth and demonstrate themselves.”¹²⁵ By showing Native Americans the army’s superior force, Buffalo Bill convinced many of them to submit to governmental authority when they returned to their reservations. Buffalo Bill used the military’s displays of force to claim that he was reforming Native American behaviors; this allowed him to disprove Indian agents who said that his show corrupted his performers. And to British subjects, their acknowledgement of Buffalo Bill’s policy showed that some of them understood the Native American’s complex position in the United States. The British subjects who internalized this debate realized that Buffalo Bill’s show was the “most powerful force for the maintenance of peace in Indian Territory.” This proved that many British subjects favored Buffalo Bill’s policy over that of the Indian agents. They saw “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” and they respected his show’s management of Native American performers. Buffalo Bill exemplified the military’s force so that he could convince the British and American critics that the army forwarded empire and reformed dissident show Indians.

¹²⁴ *Evening News and Post* (London, England). "The Wild West: With Special References to the Fiery Untamed Wildness of Its Indian Chiefs." May 14, 1892. From Buffalo Bill Center of the West Cody, Wyoming. Microfilm on Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show abroad.

¹²⁵ *The Sun* (London, England). "Clad Mostly in Paint: Buffalo Bill's Indians Turn Themselves Loose." May 31, 1888. Clad mostly in Paint. *The Sun* May 31st, 1888. Buffalo Bill Center of the West Cody Wyoming. Microfilm role.

Native American performers also supported “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” because he gave them work that they enjoyed and an escape from the reservation. When Buffalo Bill’s show Indians returned from Europe, the Indian Agent Daniel F. Royer found that all the Native Americans performers “spoke in the highest praise of Mr. Cody and his treatment of them while abroad.”¹²⁶ Native American performers had a stake in supporting “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West”; it allowed them to earn money and help their families living on the reservation. The widespread support for “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” showed that he achieved additional support from Native Americans because they wanted to travel with his show. They also helped forward his reputation by being committed to saying positive things about their voyage; that was the way that they insured their future job and extra income for their families. Thus, “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” also attracted support for the army because the Native American performers willingly supported the show and all of its themes.

The Wild West show gained additional fame and respect through Buffalo Bill’s commitment to military efficiency. Buffalo Bill exuded his pride when the prince of Wales decided to inspect his fairgrounds: “he and his party determined to make an inspection of the stables where our 200 broncho horses and other animals were quartered. I never felt prouder of the military method that pervades our equine arrangements.”¹²⁷ The Prince of Wales probably wanted to inspect the fairgrounds because he was “an earnest sportsman and a bold rider to hounds.”¹²⁸ This man wanted to judge “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” and see if it compared to his standards. Buffalo Bill implied that the prince was happy because of the orderly equine arrangement in the stables. The Wild West show appealed to European royalty because it

¹²⁶ *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show and Courier Program*. N.p., 1893.

¹²⁷ Cody *The Wild West in England* 65.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

adhered to strict military methods. Buffalo Bill documented the prince's approval in his book *The Wild West in England* so that his show conformed to European ideals of grace and order. And in particular, Buffalo Bill said that the military arrangements helped him gain the prince's support; Buffalo Bill used the military to highlight the show's organization for his European audience. Royal support for "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" enabled him to make his show appear as a world-class entertainment that could dismiss Indian agents' critiques.

"Buffalo Bill's Wild West" even triumphed against British show critics because it reinforced positive ideas about the military's civilizing mission in the West. In an article from the newspaper called the *Brighton Star*, a British reporter heavily criticized the Native American performers in "Buffalo Bill's Wild West": "if the sight of a crowd of semi-clothed savages, who, if report speaks true, ought to be hung for the atrocities which they have committed...can be termed amusing or entertaining, then I suppose that Cowboy Cody and his crew are both."¹²⁹ British critics of "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" mirrored American complains; they felt that the show's Native American performers were hostile beings who degraded the entertainment's overall image. But the main show critique was against the Native Americans; there was no direct attack against Buffalo Bill's reputation. This reflected the common paternalistic sentiments of the late-nineteenth century; white elites in both Great Britain and the United States contrasted their superior racial characteristics with those who were not white.¹³⁰ Even though many British and American show critics detested "Buffalo Bill's Wild West," they respected his allusions to white racial supremacy and the Anglo-American's westward expansion. "Buffalo Bill's Wild

¹²⁹ Brighton Star (London, England), May 14, 1892. Article from Buffalo Bill Center of the West Cody, Wyoming. In microfilm collection.

¹³⁰ Slotkin *Fatal Environment* 342-343.

West” still thrived in the face of show critics because they passively supported the show’s images of whiteness and American empire.

Queen Victoria’s visit to “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” helped him market his show as high-class entertainment. Buffalo Bill believed that Queen Victoria’s visit to his show demonstrated the alliance between Great Britain and the United States: “for the first time in history, since the Declaration of Independence, a sovereign of Great Britain had saluted the star spangled banner, and that banner was carried by a member of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West.”¹³¹ Her respect for the Star Spangled Banner showed British and American audiences that “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” was high-brow entertainment. The Queen of England supported the show and made it a must-see for all distinguished royals. Buffalo Bill used the Queen’s salute to portray himself as the American ambassador for Great Britain; he was the one who unified both powers behind the glory of empire. Queen Victoria’s support for the Wild West show allowed Buffalo Bill to celebrate the United States’ empire and see Great Britain as its ally. His audience with Queen Victoria immediately annulled the complaints from American show critics. Royal admiration for “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” show made it an entertainment that promoted empire and not immoral behavior. By promoting the Queen’s patriotic sentiments for the United States, Buffalo Bill organized British support for America’s military prowess and imperial expansion in the West. This triumphalist union between the United States and Great Britain allowed Buffalo Bill to rally both empires a shared history that glorified America’s westward settlement.

The imperial unity between the United States and Great Britain allowed Buffalo Bill to recreate American imaginaries of its racial and imperial past. Buffalo Bill highlighted Great Britain’s and the United States’ racial links when he talked to the Lakota Indian Red Shirt and

¹³¹ Cody *Wild West in England* 77.

the British ex-Prime Minister William Gladstone: “the ex-Premier puzzled him [Red Shirt] exceedingly, however, by inquiring...if he thought the Englishman looked enough like the Americans to make him think they were kinsmen and brothers. Red Shirt set us all laughing by replying that ‘he wasn’t quite sure about that.’”¹³² Buffalo Bill and William Gladstone agreed that British and American citizens had the same racial roots. The United States’ and Great Britain’s common blood ties let Buffalo Bill merge America’s racial vigor with that of the British. “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” show inspired many Americans to imagine their empire as linked to Great Britain; this racial link allowed new imperial imaginaries of the United States’ right to conquer the Native Americans in the West.

Buffalo Bill attracted British subjects to his Wild West show by showing the common connections between their empire and that of the United States. Many British feminists lead the discussion about Great Britain’s obligations to “civilize” its colonial territory India. Armed with Social Darwinist notions, British feminists believed that Indian were possessed backward customs and traditions; it was their job, as Anglo-Saxon women, to improve the life of their downtrodden colonial subjects. Buffalo Bill used his Wild West show to exemplify the United States’ civilizing mission for Native Americans. In the shows, the United States military forced Native Americans to be noble farmers who gave up their traditional customs; this resounded well with British subjects who wanted to “civilize” their Indian counterparts. “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” also generated American notions of racial purity that appealed to British audiences; John Nelson and his family were now an anomaly in the United States because of the increasing awareness about Anglo-American racial purity. Buffalo Bill showed his British audience that the United States used the military to force Native Americans onto reservations, and thus, uphold

¹³² Ibid.

white racial purity in the West. But despite Buffalo Bill's popularity, many Indian agents and missionaries in the United States criticized his show for its immoral behavior and its celebration of Native American culture. Buffalo Bill counteracted these show critics by exemplifying the sophisticated quality of his entertainment. He proved that he constantly monitored his Native American performers and that he organized his horses with military efficiency. Even if show critics continued to critique his performances, Buffalo Bill used the support from European royalty to undermine their claims. The Queen of England supported the Wild West show for its glorification of empire and the Prince of Wales admired it for its military order; Buffalo Bill exhibited that the United States had an empire that matched Great Britain's. But amidst the Wild West show's success abroad, the outbreak of a potential Native American war in South Dakota threatened to undermine Buffalo Bill's entire reputation.

Chapter 4: “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” and the Glorification of the Military’s Reputation in the Events Leading up to the Massacre at Wounded Knee 1890-1891

Indian agents and missionaries in the United States soon faced a growing religious craze in the Lakota reservations that threatened the stability of the region. An inexperienced Indian agent named Daniel F. Royer feared a Native American ritual known as the Ghost Dance and fomented white-Indian tensions by requesting army occupation of the Pine Ridge Agency.¹³³ Started by a Paiute Indian named Wovoka, the Ghost Dance was a Christian-influenced Native American ritual that enabled its participants to envision the coming of the messiah and resurrection of past relatives. The spread of this ritual to the Lakota reservations complicated the intent of the Ghost Dance; prominent Lakota Indians like Luther Standing Bear and Short Bull wondered if Wovoka’s ritual was supposed to end white presence in the United States or harmonize with them.¹³⁴ Divergent interpretations on the Ghost Dance converged with a jurisdictional struggle over Indian Affairs between the military and the Department of the Interior. The Lakota Chief Little Wound described the complexities that these governmental bodies had on events in the reservation: “what is the white man afraid of? Why has he brought the soldiers here to deprive us of the dance? After robbing us of our game and lands, does he now want to rob us of our Great Sprit and our religion?”¹³⁵ The Department of the Interior authorized white settler entry onto Lakota land back in 1868, and the potential threats to these Americans compelled the military to enter this land and exert its authority. Competing authority between the military and the Department of the Interior depleted Lakota resources and caused

¹³³ Warren *Buffalo Bill’s America* 376-377.

¹³⁴ Maddra, Sam A. *Hostiles: The Lakota Ghost Dance and Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma, 2006. 40-41.

¹³⁵ "Ghost Dance of Indians: Chief Little Wound Explains Its Significance and Why the Tribes Indulge in It." *New York Times*, November 14, 1897, 21. Accessed April 1, 2015.

these Native Americans to support the Ghost Dance. The ambiguous government-military jurisdiction in the Black Hills enhanced their mutual animosity and obstructed any actions towards understanding or preventing the Massacre at Lakota men, women, and children at Wounded Knee Creek in December of 1890.

Buffalo Bill attempted to present the army as the superior arbiter of Indian Affairs in the events leading up to Wounded Knee by emphasizing his experience as a white-Indian go-between. From the death of General Custer onward, many Indian Agents and military officers harbored a grudge against Chief Sitting Bull, and the spread of the Ghost Dance raised suspicions about his role in it. General Nelson A. Miles, a prominent commander lauded for his capture of Geronimo, believed that Buffalo Bill could successfully capture Sitting Bull and move him off the reservation: “this redoubtable showman knew the Hunkpapa leader [Sitting Bull] and... was also a brigadier general in the Nebraska National Guard, which gave him credence in Miles’s eyes.”¹³⁶ Buffalo Bill’s previous experience in the military and his connections to prominent Native Americans like Sitting Bull enabled this showman, as an outsider, to influence political events on the reservations. The impetuses behind Buffalo Bill’s entry into Lakota territory went deeper than just his search for fame; he had to portray the military as the chief manager in this conflict so that he could support his show. When the Department of Indian Affairs received news on Buffalo Bill’s endeavor, Indian Agent James McLaughlin nullified his task because it could provoke Sitting Bull to attack white settlers living near the South Dakota reservations.¹³⁷ McLaughlin’s desire to avoid additional conflicts reflected his low opinion of both Buffalo Bill’s and the military’s expertise in Indian Affairs. The military-government

¹³⁶ Greene, Jerome A. *American Carnage: Wounded Knee, 1890*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma, 2014. 173.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

tensions over Sitting Bull's arrest hampered Buffalo Bill's attempts to market his pro-army image. Buffalo Bill's connection to General Miles, however, enabled him to suppress the Ghost Dance with the help of other military officers. In order to lessen support for the Ghost Dance on the reservation, Buffalo Bill hired Native American prisoners at Ford Sheridan to travel with his Wild West show. General Miles, of course, helped Buffalo Bill legitimate these actions.¹³⁸ By choosing Native Americans who were deemed hostile to the United States government, Buffalo Bill "enlightened" these Lakota Ghost Dancers and broke their urge to resist the United States. Buffalo Bill's attempts to take Native Americans off their reservations demonstrated his alliance with the military and the different ways that he attempted to undermine governmental authority in Indian Affairs. Buffalo Bill utilized his image as army scout to heighten the military's reputation for suppressing the Ghost Dance and maintaining order amongst subversive Lakota Indians.

Many American military officers assumed that Sitting Bull was part of the Ghost Dance because of the traditional Native American militarism that surrounded spiritual movements. In the 1760s, Native American resistance to British victory from the French and Indian war manifested itself through a Delaware Indian known as Pontiac: "I know that those whom you call the children of your Great Father supply your wants, but if you were not bad, as you are, you would do well without them."¹³⁹ Pontiac was encouraging the Delaware Indians to embrace their own nativist culture and resist the Anglo-Americans' attempts to sell them guns and alcohol, among other things. The addition of morals such as "good" and "bad" suggested that he was using a religious argument to justify their Nativist revolt against British encroachments upon

¹³⁸ Maddra *Hostiles* 96.

¹³⁹ Smithsonian. "Pontiac, an Ottawa chief, voicing the proclamations of the "Master of Life," 1763." Smithsonian Source. Last modified 2007. Accessed April 29, 2015. <http://www.smithsoniansource.org/display/primarysource/viewdetails.aspx?PrimarySourceId=1186>.

their land. There were religious arguments which fueled militaristic stances against the British. And the Delaware prophet Neolin believed in this speech called the “Master of Life” because he had a revelation where he learned that his people were corrupted by British influence.¹⁴⁰ There was a combination of militant and religious tropes in this revolt that British audiences definitely noticed side by side. The same was the case for Tecumseh and the Shawnee prophet Tenskwatawa. Due to the Anglo-American encroachments upon their land during the War of 1812, Tecumseh attempted to create a Pan-Indian alliance against the fledgling United States: “Brothers, the Great Spirit is angry with our enemies; he speaks in thunder, and the earth swallows up villages, and drinks up the Mississippi. The great waters will cover their lowlands; their corn cannot grow.”¹⁴¹ Tecumseh also believed that religion could unify Native Americans against the United States’ westward expansion. Tenskwatawa, Tecumseh’s brother, echoed these sentiments and proved that he was the religious prophet while his brother was the organizer and fighter.¹⁴² These connections between the religious leader and the military organizer showed the complexity of Native American spiritualism and the United States’ automatic connections behind militant leaders like Sitting Bull and religious ones like Wovoka.

The intent and nature of the Ghost Dance from the viewpoint of Lakota Indians were both hostile and peaceful towards Anglo-Americans. Although Chief Little Wound participated in the Ghost Dance, he explained that he wanted to maintain friendly relations with the United States: “He would like to have his men have farms and have their own houses and keep them and stay in their own homes. He was a church man (Episcopalian) and tried to do good for his people. But

¹⁴⁰ "Pontiac's Speech to an Ottawa, Potawatomi, and Huron Audience, 17631." American History Class. Accessed April 29, 2015. <http://americaninclass.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Pontiac.pdf>.

¹⁴¹ Voelker, David J., ed. "Tecumseh Address to the Osages." historytools.org. Last modified 2006. Accessed April 29, 2015. <http://www.historytools.org/sources/tecumseh.pdf>.

¹⁴² "The Prophet: Shawnee Leader." In Britannica. N.p.: n.p., 2015.

now they were hungry and sick. Bad men were stealing his property.”¹⁴³ Chief Little Wound was promoting his Christianity in order to ally himself with the United States; he was teaching his men how to farm, and thus, was following the objectives set out by governmental assimilationists. The lack of rations for the Lakota Indians and white settler theft of their reservations made Chief Little Wound’s people desperate for some type of aid. Participation in the Ghost Dance, to Chief Little Wound and his followers, was only a way to help his people face the stark reality of starvation and unauthorized land theft. To Chief Little Wound, the Ghost Dance was not a direct threat or attack against the United States or Anglo-Americans. To other Lakota Indians and Native American nations, the Ghost Dance was a tool to resist Anglo-American racial dominance: “all the great chiefs and warriors of the past, returned to life, [and would] to lead the Indians to victory over their white oppressors”¹⁴⁴ Other Native Americans used the Ghost Dance to imagine the coming of a new age where the Anglo-American race would dwindle and dissipate. The Native Americans who engaged this viewpoint of the Ghost Dance were also starving and subject to land theft like Chief Little Wound’s people; the difference was that some Native Americans believed that the Ghost Dance would give them divine ordination to end the United States’ hegemony over Native American lands. The fact that both of these viewpoints came from Christian theologies about the coming of the Messiah suggested that Native Americans interpreted the religion to suit their own purposes. The complex interpretations behind the Ghost Dance explained the complexity of the events surrounding Wounded Knee.

Buffalo Bill sought to rejuvenate both his show’s and the army’s reputation by attempting to vilify Sitting Bull as the leader of the Ghost Dance. After Buffalo Bill’s European tour, many

¹⁴³ Johnson *Life of Sitting Bull and the Indian War of 1890-1891* 377.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

American reformers critiqued Buffalo Bill's inability to care for his Native American performers like Kills Plenty: "But one of the Indians in this group, Kills Plenty, was taken ill and had to be hospitalized in New York. His companions—Eagle Horn, White Horse, Bear Pipe, and Kills White Weasel—waited for him to recuperate. He, too, soon died."¹⁴⁵ Buffalo Bill's popularity was on the decline because many American reformers were able to cite the Wild West's poor conditions through the death of Kills Plenty. These threats to Buffalo Bill's publicity made him strive to find a way to strengthen trust in his ability to take care of Native Americans for his European tours. If he could not do this, then he would not be able to take any more Native American performers and his show would lose popularity. Buffalo Bill saw his opportunity to revive his image when he realized that American officials in the military and Department of the Interior blamed Sitting Bull for the spread of the Ghost Dance: "Buffalo Bill had a commission from Gen. Miles to go direct to Sitting Bull's camp on Grand River and get at the bottom of the Messiah craze, with almost unlimited authority to act. This was buffalo Bill's first visit to that section since the Custer massacre."¹⁴⁶ The emphasis on arresting Sitting Bull showed that the United States government equated the military leader to Wovoka's idea of the Ghost Dance. The religious and the military leaders were blended together and the United States government automatically assumed that Sitting Bull had to be involved in this ritual. And in the Black Hills where the military's and the Interior's jurisdiction was not clear, the army used Buffalo Bill to exemplify their superior management of Indian Affairs in this region. Buffalo Bill, through his connections to Nelson Miles, could rejuvenate his show's image by arresting Sitting Bull and reaffirming his commitment to stopping Native American resistance movements. The craze

¹⁴⁵ Warren *Buffalo Bill's America* 371.

¹⁴⁶ Johnson *Life of Sitting Bull and the Indian War of 1890-1891* 377.

around arresting Sitting Bull allowed Buffalo Bill to prove his knowledge of Indian Affairs and strengthen the military's authority in the Black Hills.

Many officials in the United States government blamed Sitting Bull for the spread of the Ghost Dance because of the rumors and fear circulating around the white settlers who lived near the Black Hills. Nelson Miles, as he moved U.S. troops towards the center of Ghost Dancing activity on the Pine Ridge Agency, started seeing the terror that white settlers and some Native Americans alike felt towards the Ghost Dance: "on November 19th there were rumors of fighting, which were not, however, confirmed. Rushville was thronged with refugees from Pine Ridge, both whites and Indians."¹⁴⁷ General Miles witnessed the growing chaos surrounding the Ghost Dance; both white and Native American individuals fled Pine Ridge because they feared Lakota hostility towards non-believers. The rumors spreading around the Ghost Dance highlighted the terror and uncertainty that both Anglo-Americans and Native Americans faced; the mere sight of this ritual terrified people and made them believe that violence was inevitable. With this terror surrounding the Ghost Dance, many military officers and Indian agents looked for a scapegoat in order to offset the growing pandemonium in the region. Buffalo Bill's comments about Sitting Bull equated him to the leader of the Ghost Dance: "'of all the bad Indians,' said he [Buffalo Bill], 'Sitting Bull is the worst. Rocky Bear and Red Shirt are fighting chiefs and will do whatever is necessary to defeat Sitting Bull. They were with me. He can always be found with the disturbing element, and if there is no disturbance he will foment one.'"¹⁴⁸ Many American officials in the government feared that Sitting Bull would use the Ghost Dance as a way to rally support and attack white settlers in the region. Rocky Bear and Red Shirt were former performers

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Brooklyn Daily Eagle (Brooklyn, NY). "Buffalo Bill on His Way to Take Command of the Nebraska Militia." November 24, 1890. From Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave. Golden, Colorado.

in “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” like Sitting Bull; to Buffalo Bill and other military officers, this was proof that these chiefs would prevent Sitting Bull from becoming too aggressive. Many military officers and Indian Agents immediately decided that Sitting Bull was the main culprit behind the Ghost Dance rather than the lack of rations that compelled Lakota Indians to dance for their salvation. Buffalo Bill and General Miles were looking for ways to expediently solve the conflict, and they elected to arrest Sitting Bull rather than fix rations or use collective coercion to undermine Sitting Bull’s resistance, blaming it solely on the religious revival. This emphasized Buffalo Bill’s dedication to supporting the army; he was willing to bolster his reputation by arresting Sitting Bull but appeared insensitive to the Lakota struggles on the reservation.

James McLaughlin annulled Buffalo Bill’s authority to arrest Sitting Bull by exemplifying his own superior knowledge of American Indian Affairs. McLaughlin believed that Buffalo Bill’s attempt to arrest Sitting Bull was a poor move that would result in open conflict: “I [McLaughlin] desired to have the police make the arrest, fully believing that they could do so without bloodshed, while, in a crazed condition of the Ghost Dancers, the military could not; furthermore, the police accomplishing the arrest would have a salutary effect upon all the Indians, and ally much of the then existing uneasiness among the whites.”¹⁴⁹ McLaughlin undermined Buffalo Bill’s authority by saying that he would not be able to arrest Sitting Bull without provoking an armed response from his followers. McLaughlin was devaluing Buffalo Bill’s credentials because he believed that the military was ill-equipped to handle Sitting Bull’s arrest. By using the Indian Police, McLaughlin was implied that the government had more control over Indian Affairs than the military did. The Indian Police were a faction of Lakota

¹⁴⁹ McLaughlin, James. "An Account of the Death of Sitting Bull and of the Circumstances Attending It." PBS. Accessed April 28, 2015. <http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/resources/archives/eight/sbarrest.htm>.

Indians who thought that the Ghost Dance posed further threats to white-Native American relations. Prominent members like the self-named Lakota Indian George Sword attempted to break support for the Ghost Dance so that the Lakota nation would no longer antagonize the United States.¹⁵⁰ By having an Indian Police force that allied with government policy, McLaughlin demonstrated that the military did not have the necessary connections to understand the Ghost Dance or successfully arrest Sitting Bull. Therefore, knowledge of Native American affairs was the way for both the government and the military to negotiate their rightful authority to arrest Sitting Bull.

The accidental death of Sitting Bull on Agent McLaughlin's behalf allowed Buffalo Bill to revive the military's rhetoric and boast about the its superior authority and management of Indian Affairs. Sitting Bull died when the Indian Police attempted to arrest him and the chief's followers attempted to stop the arrest. The skirmish resulted in four dead, three wounded, and among the dead was Chief Sitting Bull.¹⁵¹ This rapid pace of events underscored the partial Native American animosity towards Sitting Bull and McLaughlin's inability to successfully conduct the arrest of this Lakota chief. Among other military officers, Buffalo Bill viewed McLaughlin's actions as a disaster: "He [Buffalo Bill] declared that the killing of Sitting Bull, while its effect was good, was a cold blooded murder, promoted by...the Indian Police who...shot him [Sitting Bull] to death while reading him the warrant of his arrest."¹⁵² Buffalo Bill distanced himself from government mismanagement of Sitting Bull's arrest by stating that McLaughlin murdered this Lakota chief. These statements against McLaughlin's efforts helped Buffalo Bill undercut the government's authority in the Black Hills and argue that his previous

¹⁵⁰ Maddra *Hostiles* 32.

¹⁵¹ Greene *American Carnage* 184-185.

¹⁵² *Aspen Daily Chronicle* (Aspen, CO). "Cody on the Indian War." February 5, 1891, 3. From Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave Golden, CO.

mission to arrest Sitting Bull would have succeeded. Buffalo Bill, however, found ways to unite the white elite in the United States government by saying that Sitting Bull's death was beneficial to ending the Ghost Dance. White racial unions between the military and the Department of the Interior allowed Buffalo Bill to justify the United States' aggression against the Lakota nation while still undermining McLaughlin's authority as an Indian Agent.

The explanations for the death of Sitting Bull proved that both the military and the government were still more interested in their own image than the welfare of the Native Americans. An editor of the New York Tribune, Willis Fletcher Johnson found that "there was a quiet understanding between the officers of the Indian and military departments that it would be impossible to bring Sitting Bull to Standing Rock alive, and that if brought in nobody would know precisely what to do with him."¹⁵³ Although the military and the Department of the Interior vied for authority on the Lakota reservations, both factions believed that Sitting Bull's very existence threatened to spread the Ghost Dance. Even Buffalo Bill agreed that Sitting Bull was causing unrest on the reservations and would be better off dead. Sitting Bull was a proclaimed ally to Buffalo Bill during their 1885 tour, but this soured relationship proved that the showman was a devoted supporter of the military. Buffalo Bill included Sitting Bull in his show when it exemplified the military's peace-keeper status in Indian Territory, and vilified this Lakota chief when he threatened to undermine the army's authority in the Black Hills. But the death of Sitting Bull did not stop the spread of the Ghost Dance; indeed, Sitting Bull's followers joined Chief Big Foot immediately after the murder. Sam Maddra highlighted this change in authority: "with the death of Sitting Bull, several of his followers fled south and were taken in by the Minneconjou traditionalist Chief Big Foot...the seventh cavalry intercepted the band five days

¹⁵³Johnson *Chief Sitting Bull and the Indian War of 1890-1891* 179.

later, arrested them, and took them to camp at Wounded Knee creek.”¹⁵⁴ The death of Sitting Bull directly led to the massacre at Wounded Knee because the United States army detained more of Sitting Bull’s followers in an attempt to monitor the remaining Ghost Dancers. Both the government and the military were so focused on securing their reputation by capturing Sitting Bull that neither faction addressed the causes behind the Ghost Dance and the reasons for its popularity.

Buffalo Bill distanced himself from the Interior’s murder of Sitting Bull so that he could save the military’s reputation. He, like many others, thought that Sitting Bull’s death would calm the Ghost Dance, and thus, both he and other Indian Agents overlooked Native American grievances because each governmental body jealously guarded their own authority. Buffalo Bill wanted to prove that he was a white-Indian go-between who knew Sitting Bull from their 1885 tour and could reason with this Lakota chief. When Buffalo Bill criticized McLaughlin’s failures, he was trying to prove that the Department of the Interior had no one who truly understood Sitting Bull’s motives or those of the Lakota. Sitting Bull’s death allowed Buffalo Bill to critique the Interior’s supposed inability to enact directives in a peaceful manner. Buffalo Bill was able to use his American Indian knowledge to strengthen his connections to both Sitting Bull and the military. The fact that Buffalo Bill also wanted Sitting Bull dead showed that his claims to superior American Indian knowledge were largely unfounded because the death of this Lakota Indian did not end the Ghost Dance. Nonetheless, Buffalo Bill’s claims to having insight into American Indian affairs allowed him to continuously critique the Interior Department’s policy while strengthening the military’s drive to crush Lakota resistance in the Black Hills.

¹⁵⁴ Maddra *Hostiles* 93.

One of the many ways that Buffalo Bill undercut the Interior Department's authority was by connecting their religious instruction on the reservation to the spread of the Ghost Dance. During an interview, Buffalo Bill said that he thought the spread of the Ghost Dance came from the Interior Department's missionary activity in the Black Hills: "a religious Indian...is the worst sort. Now, I am a deeply religious man. And I like religion among other men, except Indians. Down in Pennsylvania, at camp meetings, they work men up into such a religious furor that something's bound to break loose before long."¹⁵⁵ Buffalo Bill was referring to the Carlisle school in Pennsylvania that forced Native Americans to adopt Christianity in order to assimilate these people into the United States. To Buffalo Bill, religion made Native Americans become Ghost Dancers who become so devoted to prayer that they lose their ability to conduct peaceful relations between the United States and the Lakota nation. Before the Carlisle school was forcing Native Americans into Christianity, the Department of the Interior authorized missionaries to act as Indian agents who would assimilate the United States' indigenous population into the nation through agriculture, Christianity, and instruction in English. This was known as President Grant's Peace Policy.¹⁵⁶ Buffalo Bill's critiques against religious Indians ranged as far back as Grant's Peace Policy because he believed that the introduction of Christianity on the reservations allowed Paiute prophets like Wovoka to create the Ghost Dance and spread it to places like the Black Hills in South Dakota. Buffalo Bill was arguing that any religious instruction for Native Americans would cause them to do anything but assimilate into the United States.¹⁵⁷ These critiques of both the present and past policies of the Interior Department allowed Buffalo Bill to legitimate the military's control over Indian Affairs.

¹⁵⁵ *Buffalo Bill Ready: His Views on Religious Indians Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave Golden CO. Robert Haslam scrapbook.*

¹⁵⁶ Slotkin *The Fatal Environment* 284.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Buffalo Bill also protected the army's reputation and that of his own "authentic" show by proving that his Native American performers did not engage in the Ghost Dance or other subversive behavior. When he returned from the 1887-1892 tour of Europe, "he brought his braves from Europe to Washington to show the refining and ennobling influence which European travel had had upon them...his next step was to procure recommendations from army officers, showing Secretary Noble the military wisdom of allow some of the restless Sioux braves to be taken away from the reservation, under his charge."¹⁵⁸ Buffalo Bill was trying to counteract the negative comments that governmental Indian Agents said about his show. Many Indian Agents worried that "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" subjected Native Americans to immoral activities in Europe like drinking, gambling, prostitution, and more. These moral arguments against "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" occurred during the show's performances in the United States as well, which proved that these American critics disliked the show's divergence from the Interior Department's assimilationist agenda. Buffalo Bill, therefore, used his Wild West show to prove that he was making Native Americans more "civilized" and "refined" than their counterparts. And with this supposed enlightenment of his Native American performers, Buffalo Bill linked the military and its order and efficiency to his ability to make his entourage conform to Anglo-American cultural sensibilities—at least at face value. "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" had a dual purpose in showing the United States' westward expansion: he wanted to commemorate the history of America's expansion and prove that Native Americans were become more civilized with the progression of each show. In addition, Buffalo Bill "enlisted many [Native Americans] on the side of the government, doing splendid service."¹⁵⁹ Buffalo Bill put many of

¹⁵⁸ *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and Courier Program: Buffalo Bill Victorious—The Sioux and His Wild West Shows*. N.p., 1893. Found in Denver Public Library Buffalo Bill Papers Call Number FF25.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

his Native American performers in the Indian Police to prove that they were willing to work with the interests of the United States. Thus, the Interior's failures in arresting Sitting Bull stood squarely on the shoulders of the government. Since Buffalo Bill procured loyal Native American troops, he made the government unable to debunk the military's reputation by saying that his Native American performers were "savage" or sympathetic of the Ghost Dancers.

The massacre at Wounded Knee in December of 1890 allowed Buffalo Bill to emphasize the military's commitment to maintaining peace in Indian Territory. Colonel James Forsythe initiated the slaughter of Lakota men, women, and children when he attempted to take the guns away from Chief Big Foot and his followers: "the Indian warriors, who were firmly and naturally convinced that they were about to be put to death...drew their rifles from beneath their blankets and opened fire."¹⁶⁰ Although the Lakota people attacked American soldiers, the army regiment under Forsythe greatly outnumbered the Native American resisters and proceeded to attack noncombatants at Wounded Knee creek.¹⁶¹ The military's actions at Wounded Knee mirrored those of Sitting Bull's death; Colonel Forsythe and his troops attempted to quell white-Indian tensions but instead provoked a massacre. But many military officers and Indian Agents did not condemn the United States army's overt aggression towards the Lakota nation. In fact, Buffalo Bill praised General Miles' campaigns against other Native American Ghost Dancers during an interview for the *Aspen Daily Chronicle*:

"There were critical points when the entire West was trembling for the safety of thousands of settlers. Nebraska militia posted along the state line...enabled General Miles to concentrate his troops so as to corral the Indians in the Bad Lands. The Wounded Knee affair was an unfortunate accident."¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Johnson *Sitting Bull and the Indian War of 1890-1891* 437.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² "Cody on the Indian War" 3.

Even though Colonel Forsythe massacred Lakota men, women, and children, Buffalo Bill focused on General Miles' successful campaigns against other Ghost Dancers. The United States military was able to subdue Lakota Ghost Dancers and protect the white settlers in the process. Buffalo Bill emphasized General Miles' successes in order to display the military's triumphs and disregard the events at Wounded Knee. By calling the massacre of Lakota Indians an "unfortunate accident," Buffalo Bill downplayed Colonel Forsythe's actions and made the events at Wounded Knee seem like a mistake in an otherwise successful campaign. Buffalo Bill discussed the military's experience in fighting Native Americans in order to underscore its ability to protect white settlers and control Indian Affairs in the Black Hills.

Buffalo Bill gained the Interior Department's support for the military by placing "hostile" Lakota Indians into his Wild West show. In the aftermath of Wounded Knee, the Secretary of the Interior John W. Noble decided to imprison Lakota Sioux Ghost Dancers at Fort Sheridan. Buffalo Bill gained Noble's consent for hiring these Lakota Indians into his Wild West show's 1891-1892 tour in Europe: "Secretary Noble has also given his consent for Colonel Cody...to make up a party of some 100 [Indians]. The Indians at Fort Sheridan are in the nature of a cross between a nuisance and a white elephant."¹⁶³ Noble attempted to calm white-Indian tensions after Wounded Knee by allowing Buffalo Bill to take Lakota Ghost Dancers for his Wild West show. Buffalo Bill's success in hiring Native American performers demonstrated that the Department of the Interior relied on this showman for maintaining peace after Wounded Knee. And in addition to passive support from the Interior Department, "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" received high praises from the high-ranking officer Nelson Miles: "their [the Native American performers'] service with Cody and Salsbury gave them much money for themselves and

¹⁶³ *Castle Rock Journal*. "A Good Riddance." March 18, 1891. 2. From Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave

families, and most valuable information as to the strength and advantages of the white race; they have been much improved by the service.”¹⁶⁴ Miles supported “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” because it would show Native Americans the power of the Euro-American race and stop the spread of the Ghost Dance. The military constantly wanted to exemplify its control over Indian Territory during and after Wounded Knee; Buffalo Bill, as a loyal friend of Miles, was the mouthpiece for the army’s mastery over dissident Native Americans. Noble relinquished the Department of the Interior’s authority in the Black Hills when he allowed Buffalo Bill to hire Lakota Ghost Dancers and use the Wild West show to garner support for the military’s Native American campaigns.

Many Lakota Ghost Dancers also supported the “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” because they could earn money and escape from the prison at Fort Sheridan. When Buffalo Bill was choosing Lakota Ghost Dancers for his Wild West show, many of them were happy to leave: “the Indians were, of course, glad to do anything to get out of prison.”¹⁶⁵ Although Buffalo Bill claimed that he was the white guardian to these Lakota prisoners, many of these Native Americans were simply looking for an excuse to leave the reservation. And in addition to freedom from the reservation, Buffalo Bill paid these Native American performers because he believed that they had a right to choose their own labor.¹⁶⁶ By paying Native Americans performers, Buffalo Bill was likely trying to argue that he was “enlightening” them to Euro-American culture and teaching them how to model contractual laborers who could eventually assimilate into the nation. The promised material benefits and escape from Fort Sheridan compelled many Lakota Ghost

¹⁶⁴ Nobler, John A., and E. A. Crofton. "The United States and the Show Business." *Christian Union*, May 14, 1892, 927. Accessed April 17, 2015. <http://search.proquest.com/americanperiodicals/docview/137136991/E3E6A0ED27534327PQ/4?accountid=31516>.

¹⁶⁵ “A Good Riddance” 2.

¹⁶⁶ Maddra *Hostiles* 98.

Dancers to see “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” as a way to bring money back to the reservation and perform their cultural activities for an interested audience. And for many Lakota Indians, their presence in the United States and abroad could help them understand Euro-American cultures and become a peace broker for their people. Even though they reenacted the United States’ Westward expansion and their own defeat, many Lakota performers supported the military’s and Buffalo Bill’s agenda because it allowed them to resist the Department of the Interior’s oppressive policies.

Buffalo Bill’s connections to General Miles allowed him to outmaneuver American assimilationists who opposed Native American participation in the Wild West show. The American missionary Mary C. Collins was adamantly against “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” and its usage of Native American performers. As a Lakota speaker and friend of Sitting Bull, she was convinced that “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” made him despise Euro-American society and the benefits of assimilating into the nation. She brought her case against “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” to Benjamin Harrison, who was then the president of the United States and sympathetic to her arguments.¹⁶⁷ Despite her protests, General Miles concluded that the Secretary of the Interior already allowed Buffalo Bill to incorporate Lakota Ghost Dancers into his show: “Wm. F. Cody received the strong endorsement of General Miles to his application to take a band of late hostiles to Europe...[and] the application was promptly honored by Secretary Noble.”¹⁶⁸ Miles counteracted Collins’ claims by saying that she had no right to undo an agreement that he already settled with Noble and Buffalo Bill. The Miles-Buffalo Bill alliance allowed the latter to receive

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Leeds, Josiah W. "The Indian Question: The Government Nullifies Its Rule against Taking Indians." *The Friend: A Religious and Literary Journal*, May 30, 1891, 350. Accessed April 23, 2015. <http://media.proquest.com/media/pq/hnp/doc/476831222/fmt/ai/rep/NONE?hl=mary%2Cc%2Collins%2Cmary%2Cc%2Collins&cit%3Aauth=Leeds>

the necessary military credentials to hire Native American performers for his Wild West show. Although he largely agreed with Collins' arguments, President Benjamin Harrison never rescinded Buffalo Bill's right to hire Native American performers. Collins could not reverse Miles' order.¹⁶⁹ Buffalo Bill was able to act as a white-Indian go-between because he had Miles' support; the military appeared unified in its stance against Lakota Ghost Dancers while the Department of the Interior either condemned or lauded the Wild West show. It was likely that Harrison passively sided with Buffalo Bill because he wanted a solid military policy that could bring peace to Indian Territory. The Buffalo Bill-Miles alliance popularized the Wild West show and the military's uncontested dominance over American Indian Affairs.

The Wild West shows that followed Wounded Knee emphasized the military's ability to maintain peace in Indian Territory and commemorate this massacre. In Buffalo Bill's 1893 show program, he praised General Miles' and the military's successful management over Lakota Indians in the Black Hills: "it is a war with a most wily and savage people, yet the whites are restrained by a human and peaceful desire to prevent bloodshed, and save a people from themselves."¹⁷⁰ Military action and management of this conflict helped white settlers move past the massacre at Wounded Knee and finally feel safe again. And through his presentation of hostile Lakota Indians, Buffalo Bill was showing that his actions with the military helped remove potential belligerents from the tension-riven battlegrounds in the Black Hills. Buffalo Bill was showing his European and American audiences that the military's main priority was peace; the prevention of additional skirmishes in the Black Hills was Buffalo Bill's way of celebrating the military's accomplishments and allowing Wounded Knee to fade into memory. Despite his

¹⁶⁹ Maddra *Hostiles* 104.

¹⁷⁰ Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and Courier Program. N.p., 1893.

celebrations of the military's triumphs, Buffalo Bill never staged an official Battle of Wounded Knee; he did, however, continue to show Custer's Last Stand and the Lakota triumph.¹⁷¹ Buffalo Bill was trying to gain support for the military without going into the controversial events that would mitigate the military's reputation. And the fact of the matter was that American critics did not care that Native Americans still did not make enough wages to support themselves on their reservation, and assumed that Anglo-American civilization must spread in any way, even if that meant massacre.¹⁷² Buffalo Bill marketed the positive aspects of the army and played to the American public's interest in seeing the spread of civilization and the closing of the American West.

Buffalo Bill used his connections with General Miles to support the army's management of Indian Affairs in the events leading up to Wounded Knee. The Lakota reservations in the early 1890s had conflicting military and Interior Department authorities; this dated back to President Grant's Administration and its seizure of reservation land. But despite these jurisdictional conflicts, Buffalo Bill was determined to stop the Lakota Ghost Dancers who scared white settlers and threatened to disrupt the region. He used his past connections with Sitting Bull to support the military and work towards a productive solution to counter the spread of the Ghost Dance. By portraying his superior knowledge of Indian Affairs, Buffalo Bill could back the military and its authority in the region. Buffalo Bill's ventures into Lakota Territory provoked the Department of the Interior to nullify his mission; this allowed the Indian agent James McLaughlin to discredit Buffalo Bill and the army's image. McLaughlin used the Indian Police force because he thought Sitting Bull would be more responsive to it, but his plan failed when he killed the Lakota Chief. Buffalo Bill distanced himself from the Interior's blunder and reaffirmed

¹⁷¹ Warren *Buffalo Bill's America* 383.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

the military's superior knowledge of Indian Affairs. Despite his protests to the Interior's mistakes, his passive support for Sitting Bull's death showed that he aligned with their actions. Buffalo Bill's outraged response, therefore, underscored his attempts to discredit the Interior's authority in Indian Affairs. And when the military's Massacre at Wounded Knee happened in December of 1890, Buffalo Bill devalued the deaths of innocents and portrayed the military's successes in counteracting an open white-Indian war. Buffalo Bill supported the military's responses to a potential Indian war; his description of Wounded Knee as an "unfortunate accident" and the lack of response to it exemplified general Anglo-American indifference to Lakota suffering. Many Lakota Ghost Dancers were imprisoned in the reservations after Wounded Knee; Buffalo Bill used his Wild West show to take these Native Americans to Europe and express his ability to make them see the power of the United States. He used his show tours to convince Native American to assimilate into the nation. Buffalo Bill gained so much authority over Indian Affairs that the American missionary Mary C. Collins was unable to stop the Wild West show; even president Benjamin Harrison refused to halt this action. The inability to stop "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" show demonstrated that he handled dissident Lakota Ghost Dancers and solidified the army's authority in Indian Affairs. The Massacre at Wounded Knee was the last concerted Native American revolt, and soon, Buffalo Bill was unable to promote the once untarnished glory of the frontier.

Conclusion: Buffalo Bill and his Legacy on Borderlands Theory

“Buffalo Bills’ Wild West” show illustrated the ways that popular entertainment in the late nineteenth century influenced the United States’ westward expansion. Ned Blackhawk expressed the popular notions that many historians have about the United States’ wars against Native American peoples: “violence in these [war] narratives becomes the unfortunate and inexorable result of clashing, if not antithetical, difference, a regrettable counterpoint to American expansion.”¹⁷³ The United States and the indigenous of North America seem to be locked in a battle of wills, where the rise of the former became a sad but true fact of its history. Buffalo Bill’s experience with Indian agents and missionaries, however, showed the contrary. He had to constantly market the army’s image to a public who did not immediately glorify America’s westward expansion. The process through which the white elite allied behind the military’s campaigns in the West came through constantly imagery of empire and its benefits. Buffalo Bill supported the military in order to show his American and British audiences that the United States’ empire could assimilate people into this increasingly complex, multilingual nation.

The Native American performers in “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” served to show how the military could maintain peace in Indian Territory through excessive force. Buffalo Bill used his relationship with Sitting Bull to exemplify the military’s peace keeping strategies. After the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876, Buffalo Bill included Sitting Bull in his show tour and proclaimed their Lakota-American alliance. Through past violence, Buffalo Bill could claim that he had an ally who would willingly submit to the United States. And this was not unique for Sitting Bull; Buffalo Bill took Native American Ghost Dancers off their reservations and proved

¹⁷³ Blackhawk, Ned. *Violence over the Land*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008. 202.

that the military could make them submissive to the government. Although many Americans protested his show's violence and its "wild" Indians, Buffalo Bill still managed to hire new Native American performers who willingly traveled with him. He may have prided himself on being a racially pure Anglo-American, but his interest in hiring Native Americans emphasized the unique ways that he built his military persona and enforced it upon the West.

In fact, the main criticism surrounding Buffalo Bill was that he was *too* familiar with Native Americans. If we look deeper into the complaints that Indian agents had about the show, we see their fears of having a Native American perform on stage. Although assimilation was their main goal, these agents and missionaries regularly feared that Buffalo Bill consorted with them and promoted a show that did not exude notions of white supremacy. And this fear dated back to Grant's Peace Policy; advocates of his administration wanted to counteract the military's "savage" wars in the West and enact a program that could gradually assimilate Native Americans into the United States. As white elites who deemed Native Americans as childish or barbaric, Peace Policy advocates believed that their reforms would help *whiten* the nation. Social reformers enacted the same policies against immigrants in an attempt to make them work for their wages and conform to white elite ideas. The military, meanwhile, was also proclaiming its whiteness; Buffalo Bill was a proud scout of the Great Plains who exemplified white racial power and contempt for the Indian foe. It was these very visions of whiteness that allowed Buffalo Bill to become famous. The geographical borderlands of this nation vanished, as Adelman and Aaron showed us in the introduction; but what these historians did not realize was that the borderlands returned through the military's and the Interior Departments debates about whiteness, and in turn, civilization. Each governmental body was trying to show that their

program could include Native Americans into the nation, and that the opposite agenda was savage, lowly—or even un-white.

Although this competition for whiteness may seem more like an ideological borderland, it soon took geographical proportions when “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” traveled to Europe. Buffalo Bill appealed to a British audience by displaying scenes from Native American life; these performances included discussions of their religion, their dwellings, and their practices in childbirth. It was these images that attracted the British audience to the Wild West show. British subjects saw their own visions of colonial India through Buffalo Bill’s portrayal of Native Americans; his Wild West shows compared Great Britain’s empire to the United States when it exemplified each power’s commitment to “civilizing” their colonial territory. Buffalo Bill wanted the army’s management over Indian Affairs to serve as a model for British Empire in India or Africa. Native Americans were the bridge through which the United States and Great Britain unified on their common imperial legacies. They provided the fodder and the intrigue for the United States and Great Britain to unify and see themselves and from the same racial stock. These types of alliances allowed Buffalo Bill to gain the Queen of England’s approval for the military’s civilizing mission in the United States. Buffalo Bill’s struggle to display the military’s whiteness and sophistication forced him to make the Native American the common border through which empires could find mutual discourses about the subhuman other.

Buffalo Bill’s alliance with Nelson Miles was the way that he strengthened the military’s reputation and removed the Interior Department from control over Indian Affairs. The military-Interior Department struggles for whiteness manifested themselves in the Lakota reservations in the wake of the Ghost Dance. Buffalo Bill attempted to use his connections to Sitting Bull so that he could quell the Ghost Dance and bring peace to the reservation. Indian agent James

McLaughlin countered Buffalo Bill's mission and showed how the ideological struggles over Indian policies came to a head on the reservations. Buffalo Bill praised the military's actions during Wounded Knee when he said that it prevented any additional bloodshed on behalf of white settlers. He made the army seem active in protecting American citizens, and make the Department of the Interior seem passive. But his greatest triumph in Indian Affairs was when he hired Native American Ghost Dancers to travel with him to Europe; this made the military act as the agent who managed Indian Affairs while the Department of the Interior appeared to do nothing. The military-Interior competitions on the Lakota reservation showed that their ideological borders took geographical proportions. And with this divide in the authority of the white elite, Native Americans had the opportunity to make money through "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" and exert some of their individual authority.

Buffalo Bill's legacy in nineteenth century America shows us that we must look beyond the United States' claims to a hegemonic order. The United States created an empire in the West and subjugated countless Native American peoples; Buffalo Bill was often the primary mouthpiece for this rhetoric. But the population was not unified around his rhetoric; Buffalo Bill had to constantly adjust his shows to fit the interests of Indian agents or British subjects. The broad support for American expansionism only came in the heyday of Buffalo Bill's entertainment; but even at the height of empire, show critics threatened to break his business and his entire propagandist aim. Buffalo Bill was very often dependent upon his critics, but he was especially reliant on his Native American performers. They gave his show life and he had to make his job opportunities appeal to them. And in a time when Native American performers were so contentious, Buffalo Bill had to change his show's image for his public, and eventually, alter the image of the army. The United States military had to appear as an expert on Indian

Affairs; that often meant that the army had to negotiate with people like Sitting Bull rather than enact expansive campaigns in the West. And through it all, Native Americans had a degree of agency; they could choose to work for Buffalo Bill, they could receive money for their services, and they could slightly influence the character of his shows. Historians used to claim that the United States always forced Native Americans into submission; I hope that my work defines the borderland as something that is always set, but never maintained.

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