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HOMeward THE COURSE OF EMPIRE:
THE POPULARIZATION OF THE AMERICAN WEST
IN GREAT BRITAIN, 1850-1913

by

Ian Craig Breaden

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

Master of Arts

in

History

Approved:

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

1992

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to the memory and Being of Tom Copeland, late Professor of English at Texas Christian University, who wanted to know not merely that I was, but cared for who I was.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all those at the British Library (London) and the National Library of Scotland (Edinburgh) for assisting me with my research. One librarian in particular, whose name I do not know, was kind enough to act as go-between for myself and Colin and Mary Cody.

For what S. F. Colin Cody (S. F. Cody's great-grandson), Mary Cody, and Jean Roberts have done for me, I am afraid "thanks" is a woefully inadequate return. Without them there would simply be no Chapter IV. I can only hope that my chapter does justice to the hours we spent in writing letters, telephone conversations, and photocopying--most of which they paid for.

I am grateful for the invaluable intellectual support of Dr. Clyde A. Milner II (my committee chairman), Ona Siporin, and Dr. Denis Judd. Thanks also to my committee members, Dr. Robert Cole, Jay Butler, and Dr. Mark Damen.

Finally, I have to thank my family, Jennifer Breaden Swedish, Lance Swedish, Tristan Breaden Swedish, Heather Breaden, and my parents, Susannah Watlington Breaden and Dale G Breaden, without whose emotional, intellectual, and financial support this work would not have been possible.

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Ian Craig Breaden

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ABSTRACT

Homeward the Course of Empire:
The Popularization of the American West
in Great Britain, 1850-1913

by

Ian Craig Breaden
Utah State University, 1992

Major Professor: Dr. Clyde A. Milner II
Department: History

Images of the American West in Britain became prevalent in British popular culture during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. This popularity arose out of the shared ethic of the Anglo myth. This myth was based upon the confidence gained from a growing industrial complex and the application of the Christian "Genesis" to the new Edens, the American West and the British Empire.

The Anglo myth could be found in British adventure novels set in both the West and empire. "Buffalo Bill" Cody used it in his Wild West, and Samuel Franklin Cody utilized it in his frontier melodramas as well as in creating his own flamboyant self-image.

The continued existence of romantic, western imagery raises questions concerning myth and reality in the formation of thought about both the American frontier and the British Empire.

(183 pages)

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One might consider the following chapters case studies of the American West in Britain. In Chapter Two, I examine a selection of adventure novels, by British writers, that take place in the West. The impact of Buffalo Bill's Wild West on London in 1887 takes up Chapter Three, while in Chapter Four, I follow the exploits of western showman turned British aviator, Samuel Franklin Cody. However, as we normally think of case studies as unrelated fragments or monographs that remain separate parts of a larger story, I wish to state here that such judgment does not hold up in relation to my subjects.

Indeed, it is unlikely that adventure writers like G. A. Henty, Mayne Reid, Arthur Conan Doyle, and H. Rider Haggard ever had occasion to interact with Buffalo Bill or S. F. Cody. Additionally, the latter two characters probably knew little of these novelists. But they all spun part of the tapestry that unfolded before a British public willing to buy-in to the romance of the American West. In attempting to discover the reasons Britons turned their attentions to romantic visions of the West, I found, first of all, that Buffalo Bill would have stood a meager chance of acceptance in 1887 if adventure novelists had not initially paved the way, just as S. F. Cody's successes with his Wild West exhibitions and frontier melodramas followed in the wake of Buffalo Bill. Secondly, I realized that a

conceptual chain linked the three. By no means accidental in its popularity, the American West in particular had a strong appeal for nineteenth and early-twentieth century Britain.

I have boiled this appeal down to what I call the "Anglo myth," although I use "Anglo" as an abbreviation. The term can just as readily apply to peoples of British-Celtic, and to a lesser extent northern European, extraction. An elaboration on the psychologies that supported the Protestant Reformation and the Industrial Revolution, the Anglo myth functioned in a quasi-religious way, replacing the Christian "Genesis" with a creation story that empowered the British in their empire and the Americans in their West.

Fueled by a millennial fever, the Anglo myth rationalized the extermination of Native Americans (especially after King Philip's War in 1676), the wholesale annexation of native lands, and the reservation/incarceration of Indians. Similarly, in the British Empire, the Anglo myth demanded that the British react harshly to the Sepoy War of 1857, that they quell the Zulu uprising of 1878-1879, and that they go to war with the Boers in 1899-1902. In the adventure novels and Wild West shows of the period, the Anglo myth found expression through dramatizations of one-on-one confrontations between civilization and savagery. These duels, often involving British characters at large in the West, invariably end with

the triumph of civilization, the English gentleman conquering barbarism by keeping his "pluck" up.

To contrast this myth and its object, I use the term "civilization," in opposition to "barbarism" and "savagery" (and all the forms of these words). I must state here, in no uncertain terms, that although I do not place these words in quotation marks, the reader must understand that I believe these words both ethnocentric and ambiguous in definition. I need no convincing that the savagery with which Anglo civilization destroyed native societies is among the greatest crimes committed by humanity in the last 500 years. I use the terms in this text, without quotation marks and, generally, without qualification because: 1) I believe Americans and British alike (with some exceptions in both cases) thought these words well-defined, and to some extent I hope I capture this confidence in the way I present the labels; and 2) such efforts would needlessly muddle the text.

Adventure novelists, Buffalo Bill, and S. F. Cody all believed the Anglo myth. It emerged in the stories they told and the feats they performed. Smoking revolvers, bloody Bowie knives, and snorting horses only enhanced the narration in these adventures, participating in the action as impressive spokesmen for a myth that employed blood and thunder to get its point across and to rid the heathen from its path. However, aside from all the doom and gloom that a late-twentieth century perspective affords, it is equally

necessary to recognize that in the end the conquest of the American West provided provocative and exciting entertainment for its British audience. Starved for things western and having come to expect from its proponents a dazzling adventure, Victorians and Edwardians consumed a West that they simply found romantically appealing.

Yet behind the melodrama and scenery lurked a strong parallel to their empire. Like a tribe gathered around its storyteller, the British demanded a tale they already knew. They may have found they liked the lilt of the storyteller's voice, but it did not hurt that he told the grand saga of the Anglo myth.

CHAPTER II
A CAPTIVE AUDIENCE

"Ethel?" Mr. Hardy asked.

Charley nodded, and then said, with great effort, "...Perhaps she is carried off, not killed."

Mr. Hardy staggered under the sudden blow.

"Carried off!" he murmured to himself. "It is worse than death."¹

"Adele! Adele! I am your father!"

"You! Who are you? The white men; our foes! Touch me not! Away, white men! away!"

"Dearest, dearest Adele! do not repel me: me, your father! You remember--"

"My father! My father was a great chief. He is dead. This is my father now. The Sun is my father. I am a daughter of Montezuma! I am a queen of the Navajoes!"...

"Bring her away!" he muttered..."bring her away! Perhaps, in God's mercy, she may yet remember."²

By the mid-nineteenth century, stock formulations of the American West began to emerge in British adventure novels, in answer not to factual but rather romantic curiosities concerning the newly independent nation. The West held a fascination for Britain, which watched its American sons and daughters, now separated by revolution, develop into a distinct nation that nevertheless retained essentially Anglo values. How would such a nation, having broken from its maternal ties, fare in a rapidly changing, industrializing world? And more than this, how would the

¹G. A. Henty, Out on the Pampas; or, the Young Settlers (New York: Hurst & Company, n. d.), 204.

²Mayne Reid, The Scalp Hunters, a Romance of Northern Mexico (1851; reprint, London: Downey & Co., n. d.), 214-15.

American, English-speaking peoples react to an environment the greater part of which remained wilderness, an apparent virgin land? Authors such as Richard Burton, Charles Dickens, and James Bryce endeavored to answer these questions, but tracts on exotic new religions, American character, or political science did not really supply what many British audiences demanded.

What exactly did Britain want to know? What held the interest of the citizens of a small group of islands, who had busied themselves throughout the previous two centuries with ensuring that the sun would never set on their empire? They desired to hold a front row seat for the unfolding of the drama of western civilization. America was blood kin. The expansion of the United States through the far western reaches of North America represented the grown child making its fortunes, and affirmed through the various rhetorics of "manifest destiny" or "white man's burden" the inevitability of Britain's own conquests. The drama had mythic proportions, and the actors and audience, the mutual builders of frontier and empire legends, neither needed nor desired the facts to aid their imaginations.³

Indeed, the facts often disappointed. Stories of racial genocide, environmental exploitation, and rampant capitalism did not easily match the grander visions of Anglo

³On these basic racial and cultural connections of Britain and Europe to the United States, see the introduction to Richard Drinnon, Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building (New York: New American Library, 1980), xi-xx.

empire building.⁴ Often downright devilish in their conception and usually violent, these shapers of state expansion constructed a brutal drama that did not invite the romance of myth. In this context, the global victory of Anglo civilization appeared at best pyrrhic. The true nature of imperial conquest, therefore, had to hide behind the curtain of nobler motives, otherwise the Anglo machine might steamroll into moral quicksand.

From today's perspective, Britain's need for an expansionist rationale may appear especially acute. The regions it claimed for its own often lay halfway around the world. A life-threatening frontier episode probably did not seem imminent in the life of the average Londoner, whose immediate livelihood depended neither on the clearing of woodlands nor on proximity to a silver mine. Risking one's neck daily simply to procure a living meant surviving the brutal mechanisms of the modern city. That one's nation, then, should willingly invest massive amounts of capital that it could very possibly lose, for questionable motivations, in dangerous regions scantily populated by British citizens, could appear a ridiculous venture. Many Americans had to live in border regions because those areas composed much of America. The Americans could easily rationalize imperial development as immediately necessary to

⁴On the romantic expectations of British travelers in the West, and their subsequent disappointment, see Robert G. Athearn, Westward the Briton (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1953), 6-10.

survival. Britain, compared to America, may have appeared to have more of a choice, and the reasons for choosing to extend Britain's rule had to carry moral weight.

Why, then, tramp around the world to take advantage of less advanced peoples and undeveloped lands? "To feed Britain's industrial machine with raw materials" may have answered the question unsatisfactorily for the great majority of British working in this age, who saw the chasm between classes widening through economic exploitation. Industrialization did not necessarily mean a better life, and the metropolis itself became open to criticisms that its inhumane atmosphere fostered the degeneration of its inhabitants.⁵ Still, the metropolis, or that portion of the world considered truly civilized, constituted home for most British citizens, and few British could resist its attractions.⁶ To remain part of the imperial equation, therefore, the frontier regions had to be portrayed as subservient to the Metropolis.⁷ For a workable imperialism, purposes nobler than simple economic exploitation had to accompany British civilization to the frontier, and,

⁵Gareth Stedman Jones, Outcast London (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 127-51.

⁶Athearn, Westward the Briton, 31-47.

⁷On the role of the metropolis, or mother country, in relation to the frontier, see Richard Slotkin, The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890 (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1986), 39, 43.

likewise, the frontier had to prove that it had more to offer than raw materials.

The ideology and mythology of imperialism developed over centuries and cannot possibly find just treatment in these few pages. Furthermore, one can only surmise the degree to which America or Britain needed such an ideology to carry out their respective courses of empire. Yet the assimilation of the language of American westward expansion into British literature provides a key to understanding imperial ideology of a specific period of time. This phenomenon also suggests significant relationships between the American and British empires. And finally, a grasp of this process aids in understanding the continued presence of one version of the American West in the British imagination.

Although determining the popularity of western fiction in mid- and late-Victorian Britain remains an impossible task (due primarily to lack of sales figures), the proliferation of such literature suggests that the British western had immense appeal.⁸ British authors, perceiving

⁸Richard Slotkin suggests that popularity can be gauged through imitation. "What Cooper's average reader made of Leatherstocking we can only guess; what the man in the street thought of James Gordon Bennett's way of organizing the newspaper version of Custer's Last Stand, or John Ford's way of making a film we do not know for certain. But we do know that literary hacks thought enough of Cooper's work to reproduce innumerable cheap versions of it in dime novels; that moviemakers have elaborated Ford's favorite stories into movie genres and his chosen images into icons." Slotkin, The Fatal Environment, 31. On the popularity of the American, British, and European western in the Old World, see Ray Allen Billington, Land of Savagery, Land of Promise: The European Image of the American Frontier in the Nineteenth Century (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press,

the parallels between British empire and American frontier, wrote virtually identical formula novels set in both regions. Placed in Africa, Australia, South America, or the West, these adventure novels related British feelings toward Anglo expansion, as well as the ideology necessary to the implementation of imperialism.

Central to the ideology, the drama of the spread of civilization to the outermost reaches of the nineteenth-century world consumed most of the novels. And Mayne Reid, G. A. Henty, H. Rider Haggard, and Arthur Conan Doyle utilized "drama" in the grandest meaning of that word. Fact had no place in these authors' tales, although often they claimed, even for the most far-fetched fantasy, a certain degree of authenticity. This claim allowed for the development of the Anglo myth, that the world (and especially the Anglo race) would benefit from the spread of white civilization. Truth or historicity had little to do with their conceptions of authenticity, for the authors related their stories through the metaphors of myth. Their audiences did not desire factual reality, but rather the

1985), 44, 56; Ray Allen Billington, "The Plains and Deserts Through European Eyes," Western Historical Quarterly 10 (October 1979): 476-88; Richard H. Cracroft, "World Westerns: The European Writer and The American West," Western American Literature 20 (August 1985): 111-32; and James K. Folsom, "English Westerns," Western American Literature 2 (Spring 1967): 3-13.

reality of their own moral imperatives, the affirmation of Anglo myth.⁹

What exactly constitutes myth, and how does it relate to nineteenth century Anglo expansion? Richard Slotkin defines myths as "stories, drawn from history, that have acquired through usage over many generations a symbolizing function that is central to the cultural functioning of the society that produces them."¹⁰ Slotkin's definition, while useful in explaining the evolution of myths and their cultural importance, does not demonstrate that myths contain particular elements crucial to their meaning. Myths must possess a certain content, to distinguish them from legends or stories that simply aid in, or add to, the identification of a people. The basic definition of a people relies on their myths, which provide the framework of identity. Alan Dundes asserts that "[a] myth may be defined as a sacred narrative explaining how the world or humans came to be in their present form".¹¹ Myth as the sacred story of a people's creation empowers a group with self-knowledge and the understanding of a unique origin ordained by god or gods.

The necessary aspect of myth, that it relates the genesis of a people or their essential past, does not

⁹On the ahistorical aspects of myth, see Slotkin, The Fatal Environment, 24.

¹⁰Slotkin, The Fatal Environment, 16.

¹¹Alan Dundes, ed., The Flood Myth (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 1.

exclude the possibility of the myth's reworking in the present. And in the case of the nineteenth-century West, expansionist desire not only found expression through mythic language, but in a sense created its own myth. Anglo imperialism plundered its own past, removing myth from the ancient garden of Genesis and placing it in the American West. Reflected in the millennial rhetoric of the early nineteenth century, the West as a regenerative force or latter-day Garden of Eden spurred expansion, which "[was] as much impelled by apocalyptic visions as by physiocratic theories."¹² Placed once again in the mythical garden, the westering, Anglo pioneer perhaps represented a second Adam and another chance for humanity to avoid its original sin. The American empire builder thus desired to participate in his or her own creation, in effect becoming the god who shaped Anglo destiny.

But a very real and significant barrier lay in the path of the self-important Anglo myth. Native Americans had their own version of creation, which did not include whites. It also excluded modern, large-scale agriculture and a rapidly developing industrial complex, both of which figured substantially in the new Anglo mythology. Yet the presence of Native Americans, who at least since King Philip's War had effectively shown the threat they could present,

¹²Klaus J. Hansen, "The Millenium, the West, and Race in the Antebellum American Mind," Western Historical Quarterly 3 (October 1972): 375.

integrated beautifully into the myth of a white civilization that saw itself as chosen by god for victory.

Anglos "required the presence of the savage as a counterimage to the idea of civilization. The one acquired more precise meaning in terms of the other."¹³ In the millennial matrix, whites could convert the Indian, who for some resembled the "prodigal member of the House of Israel," or destroy him using a different rationale, on the grounds that Indians, in fact subhuman, did not have the capability to improve their conditions and to convert to the Anglo myth.¹⁴ In the latter case the natives constituted a serious threat, for association with them could drag whites into the depths of dark sin:

[N]atives [were defined] as nonpersons within the settlement culture and [this racism] was in a real sense the enabling experience of the rising American empire: Indian-hating identified the dark others that white settlers were not and must not under any circumstances become, and it helped them wrest a continent and more from the hands of these native caretakers of the lands.¹⁵

Of course whites themselves had defined the nature of "the dark others" and the associated sin, which in the American garden epic might mean the failure of developing the interior agriculturally and industrially. Fear of this failure could not exist alongside the grand ideas of Anglo

¹³Ibid., 379.

¹⁴Ibid., 380-81.

¹⁵Drinnon, Facing West, xvii-xviii.

destiny, and for this reason whites, targeting the natives, had to "externalize the devil":

Thus, the representative intellectual leaders of the...period stand revealed as subtle but insidious protagonists in a struggle on a darkling plain that neither they nor their antagonists understood. The American West had become a symbol for the fears of men who could not live up to the idealized millennial image of their dreams. As a result, the Indian...became the [victim] of the white man's failure of nerve.¹⁶

White Americans did not have to live alone with their fears, however, because the myth they created, which both produced and assuaged their anxieties, incorporated the whole Anglo race. Implicitly, the destiny of Britain's people also hung in the balance of westward expansion because, as one American scholar asserted in 1837, "the British [my emphasis] family, the noblest of the [Saxon] stock, was chosen to people our country."¹⁷ If Anglo America failed, the reverberations could have devastating psychological effects on Britain's self-image and expansion.

British imperialists recognized this threat, identifying with America's westward movement because it appeared an extension of Anglo power throughout the world.

¹⁶Ibid., 390. The psychology of projecting one's darker thoughts or feelings onto another individual or group cannot be analyzed in depth in this paper. Yet the presence of projection in empire-building might be considered significant and deserves thorough study. Part of what was projected might be understood to be a certain non-religious aspect of the Anglo myth. If this proud, vain myth empowered its followers with god-status, then the myth implicitly rejected the very Christianity from which it came. Perhaps a subconscious knowledge of this "sin" may have been included in Anglo thought.

¹⁷Ibid., 390.

Nineteenth-century British ideology concerning such racial imperialism developed partly out of the apparently humanitarian abolition of slavery.¹⁸ Antecedent to this abolition, however, was a strong Christian sentiment that argued for the improbability of slaves. A respectable Christian could not bind in chains those who might find redemption.¹⁹ Abolition gave the British a moral power, due not only to the intrinsic goodness of the act (albeit only the result of the original evil) but also to the fact that outlawing such a practice rested on principles that assumed a knowledge of who could and could not enter the kingdom of God.²⁰ The British became saviours in the gardens of their empire, redeeming those they thought worthy. This closely resembled "the philosophy of manifest destiny--in essence the doctrine that one nation has a preeminent social worth, a distinctively lofty mission, and consequently unique rights in the application of moral principles."²¹ Such

¹⁸Patrick Brantlinger, Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914 (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988), 174.

¹⁹James Morris, Heaven's Command, an Imperial Progress (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), 33.

²⁰Ibid., 39.

²¹Albert K. Weinberg, Manifest Destiny: A Study of Nationalist Expansion in American History (Chicago: Quadrangle Paperbacks, 1935), 8; quoted in Bradley J. Young, "Manifest Destiny: Neither Manifest nor Destined," Tms, 4, in possession of author. An excellent article on racial and religious bigotry, Manifest Destiny, and the conquest of Mexico, is David J. Weber's "'Scarce more than Apes': Historical Roots of Anglo American Stereotypes of Mexicans in the Border Region," in Major Problems in the History of the American West, ed. Clyde A. Milner II (Lexington, MA: D.

posturing also resulted in part from the early success of imperial ventures, as well as values similar to those of the Americans who, looking to their strides in science and technology, felt that such advances demonstrated the affinity of the Almighty towards their race.²²

The benevolence the British in turn wanted to exercise with the natives of their empire's domain changed, however, with such events as the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Like King Philip's War of 1676 in America, the Sepoy War demonstrated that other races might not take kindly to Anglo incursions. But the "British saw the war as a straight fight between good and evil, and...[i]t was in an Old Testament mood that the Christian public of England now looked out to the smoking desolation of northern India."²³ If the non-Anglo races of empire resisted the assumed righteousness of British rule, the British, as did their brothers in America, would have to clear them from the Anglo path to salvation, down which the British had a duty to walk.

The conviction of Empire was increasingly reinforced by a sense of duty, and became heavily veneered with religiosity. The Victorians were believers....As the mysteries of life were unfolded to them, explicitly in the triumphs of applied science, opaquely in intellectual conceptions like the Survival of the Fittest, so their own particular place in the divine scheme seemed ever more specific: they were called to be

C. Heath, 1989), 251-59.

²²Brantlinger, Rule of Darkness, 173-74; and Young, "Manifest Destiny," 6.

²³Morris, Heaven's Command, 244.

the great improvers, and the instrument of their mission was empire.²⁴

The British believed that America too, despite its many political frictions with England, played an active part in this improvement. Partly for economic reasons, for many British had significant investments in America, but mostly for the sake of racial ties (or so the veneer would suggest), British imperialists considered America a blood brother. "[I]deas of race transmigrated to both sides of the Atlantic and America and Britain adopted one another's ideas of racism," and although perhaps "[m]any opposed expansionism during the 1840s,...few opposed the racism."²⁵ Charles Dilke thought America a "new [extension] of the English genius," which one newspaper claimed could "exert itself as well on the banks of the Ohio, or the Mississippi, as on the banks of the Thames...."²⁶ The Anglo imperial scheme was rooted in economic desire. But it expressed itself in a myth of race, and this expression made Britain's embrace of Anglo America possible. Although a discontented America had broken from Britain and although the two often had political disputes over coveted territories, the underlying myth that drove both empires ultimately bound the two together. The truths of fact might occasionally disagree with this brotherhood, but the truths of myth,

²⁴Ibid., 318.

²⁵Young, "Manifest Destiny," 13.

²⁶Morris, Heaven's Command, 358-59.

however chimerical, fed the romantic imagination. And in the British imagination, the American West thus found a permanent home.

Truth of fact and truth of myth occupied different sides of the same reality, and Henty, Haggard, Reid, and Doyle had easy access to both. But myth held the advantage, offering the kind-hearted inevitability of Anglo expansion without entering into the gritty, cruel details. The readership knew these details to varying degrees, anyway. Especially regarding America, the surfeit of information may have appeared overwhelming. And by the mid- and late-nineteenth century, increased literacy levels in Britain and the rise of inexpensive printing made many works commonly accessible.²⁷ Travel literature proliferated in Britain, particularly after the completion of America's transcontinental railroad, as returned sojourners recorded their trips in excruciating detail and much commentary.²⁸ Many British had relations or friends in America who sought promised employment or new, independent lives.²⁹

²⁷David Thomson, England in the Nineteenth Century, 1815-1914 (New York: Penguin Books, 1970), 176; and Billington, Land of Savagery, 46.

²⁸On British who traveled through the West and the pervasiveness of their writings, see Athearn's excellent Westward the Briton.

²⁹On employment opportunities and migration, see W. J. Reader, Life in Victorian England (New York: Capricorn Books, 1967), 52; Oscar O. Winther, "English Migration to the American West, 1865-1900," Huntington Library Quarterly 27 (February 1964): 159-73, as well as his "Promotion of the American West in England, 1865-1900," Journal of Economic History 16 (December 1956): 506-13. Also see James B.

Expectations, realized or dashed, filled letters and travelogues. Some British settlers languished in barren deserts and a few found gold in the mountains. The West as fact defied, or had too many definitions, but the West as myth, or metaphor of Anglo re-creation, could work wonderfully.

And it had already worked wonderfully, long before American forces marched into Mexico in the 1840s and before railroads crossed the continent in the 1860s-70s. The Anglo presence in America, secured by the opening of the eighteenth century, resulted, in mythical terms, from the conquering of barbaric forces by a religiously destined people. The documentation of this conquest appeared in several forms, but most had a common theme: The threat of white captivity, and the possibility of subsequent corruption of whites by savage forces including both Indians and the environment, required that savagery's eradication. One of the first and most famous of the works dealing with white captivity, written by Mary Rowlandson, recounted her capture by Wampanoags during King Philip's War, and her ultimate return to civilization. Rowlandson's story, a powerful symbol of white survival, became extremely popular

Hedges, "Promotion of Immigration to the Pacific Northwest by the Railroads," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 15 (September 1928): 183-203, and his "The Colonization Work of the Northern Pacific Railroad," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review 13 (December 1926): 311-41.

in Britain.³⁰ Captivity narratives set the standard for subsequent literature concerning America's frontier, and within such a context Reid, Henty, Haggard, and Doyle extended the myth of Anglo civilization.³¹

In analyzing the western novels and short stories of these authors, one must pay close attention to their methods of dealing not only with the American West but also with the British empire. Constructing a paradigm adventure novel aids in accomplishing this task and reveals that similar concerns pervade both types of novels written by the four. The paradigm also suggests reasons for the endurance of certain western archetypes in the British imagination.

John Cawelti has asserted that the essential western adventure novel "unravels itself in an imaginary game world where the fifty yard line is the frontier and the major points of social and geographical topography are an advancing civilization on one side and a savage wilderness on the other."³² Cawelti reduces the western to the narrative of a board game, with its "clearly opposing players" and a strict set of rules.³³ But the western adventure also has the central figure of the hero, who acts

³⁰Norton Anthology of American Literature (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), 141.

³¹On the evolution of the captivity narrative, see Billington, Land of Savagery, 25-28; and Slotkin, The Fatal Environment, 63-64.

³²John G. Cawelti, "Prolegomena to the Western," Western American Literature 4 (Winter 1970): 268.

³³*Ibid.*, 267.

the part of referee in addition to playing a participatory role. The hero uses violence only in reaction to violent injustice, which on the part of civilization means transgressing essentially puritan norms, and on the part of savagery means total defiance of white society. And violence is key to the western:

[Violence] seems to have something to do with the nature and role of the villain and the way in which he represents some of the same values as the hero. When the hero finally commits himself to the destruction of the villain, he is destroying an aspect of himself. To do so, he must become convinced that the lawless individualism which the villain represents is so dangerous that it must be completely destroyed.³⁴

Violence thus allows the progress of civilization. But why does the western hero partially share or sympathize with the values of the villain? Such a hero would appear to present certain dangers to the civilization he supposedly defends, if he too participates in "lawless individualism." The doubtful frontier hero seems a "border" character in more ways than one, fighting for both the extension of the boundaries of civilization within himself as well as without. If civilization did indeed represent the spread of the Anglo myth, of the holy extension of agriculture and industry, then the frontier hero, perhaps unable to embrace the values of his civilization totally, symbolized at once the fear of failure within modern society and that society's ultimate victory over "savagery." Because however prone the hero may have felt to savagery, the protagonist of the

³⁴Ibid., 270.

western depended on violence for his cure and redemption. In the end, justice attended his Colt revolver, Winchester rifle, and Bowie knife, the mass-produced weaponry of modern industry.

Cawelti's introduction to the general western novel provides a valuable framework for constructing a paradigmatic British western. But an important element existed in the British form of the medium, an element that made its version of the West relevant to a self-conscious imperial society, impressing British popular culture with images that still enjoy popularity. In consideration of the ends to which the British hero used violence in the nineteenth-century western or empire adventure novel, one finds that the Anglo myth--stated in no uncertain terms--makes up the greater portion of what Cawelti might call the set of rules. This agrees with what Cawelti has observed, except that its explicit statement in British novels makes the Anglo hero not only referee and player but also the author of the rule-book. And there remains a complement to this basic ingredient, representing the possibility of the hero's failure and the justification of subsequent violence: white captivity.

White captivity, updated since the days of Mary Rowlandson, took a new and more general form in the stories of Henty, Haggard, Reid, and Doyle. Captivity can mean a number of things in these tales: held under duress by savages; living with savages out of necessity; and, the

worst of all, "crossing over" or "Indianization"--becoming so captivated by the frontier that the trappings of civilization no longer seem desirable. Whatever form it takes, white captivity drives the stories and links them to the Anglo-American and British mythology, creating a trans-Atlantic bridge constructed of British values imposed on the western landscape. Captivity threatens the hero and makes him, through his survival of the ordeal, virtuous. This captivity and its opposition, the fulfillment of Anglo destiny, constitute the crucial themes of British western and empire adventure stories, all of which develop along similar lines.

Simple in form, the archetype of the British adventure novel, including the western, has several key elements; 1) the British hero, placed in a frontier environment, must endure exotic and savage conditions; 2) in passing various tests of intelligence, physical strength, and courage, the hero employs the aid of a frontier friend, characterized as part sidekick/part anti-hero; 3) these two (or, sometimes, three or four--the hero often attracts quite a following) heroic figures take up frontier occupations, such as herding, planting, or mining, with a good deal of adventuring thrown in--in Cawelti's terms, their game board resembles a playground riddled with dangers, which soon come to the fore; 4) savage forces capture a relative, lover, or friend, and the restoration of the captive becomes the object of the hero and his group; and 5) the stories

culminate in the captive gaining freedom, and a short epilogue of the fate, usually positive, of the hero and his friends, ends the story.

Although formulaic, these characteristics of the British adventure novel prove deceptively simple if one accepts that the Anglo myth played a substantial role in defining them. More than merely artless literary devices employed to sell books to a public that never tired of the same story, these rote plot scenarios most effectively related the values and fears inherent in Anglo expansion. The myth necessitated their utilization, and the manner in which the authors employed the storylines shows that their works, set in the west or regions of empire, told less of specific environments than of epic holy wars. The appeal of the latter, rather than the West in itself, made all the bizarre personalities and quaint trappings of the American West popular. Using the exotic tools of western American conquest only as a means (although the images of these six-guns, lassos, and mustangs would remain in popular culture after their true imperial purpose had evaporated), the British hero of the British western assisted in eradicating savagery and expanding the Anglo domain. Why else would a British hero want to leave Britain?

Indeed, why should anyone desire to leave this self-acclaimed core of civilization? The benefits of residence must have seemed to far outweigh the travails one would surely encounter on the savage frontiers, to which one might

succumb. This last possibility, the likelihood of captivity, gave free rein to Anglo violence and also lent the stories an allure. The hero might sin, cross over or Indianize, or at least find the frontier regions a bit too appealing. Like voyeurs, the British readership could watch its hero tread the border, leaving him alone with his sin and joining him in his thrilling excursions in wilderness taming, comfortable in the belief that adventure stood distinct from savagery.

Most of the time, this distinction held, and for one crucial reason. Only rarely does the hero go to the frontier region out of choice. Given the option, he would rather stay home, in the realm of his established civilization. Forces beyond his control drive him to the border region, a clear indication that, once there, his activities will fall strictly under the heading of "adventure." Because if out of choice he embraces his new environment wholeheartedly, white savagery might result, an unthinkable end for the British hero.

G. A. Henty (1832-1902) mastered the development of the reluctant, if optimistic, hero in more than eighty books written about the West and empire.³⁵ Commonly associated with children's historical fiction, Henty constantly sent

³⁵Information on the work and life of George Alfred Henty, including the importance of young people's adventure fiction in imperial Britain, can be found in Billington, Land of Savagery, 51; W. J. Reader, 'At Duty's Call,' a Study in Obsolete Patriotism (Manchester, ENG: Manchester University Press, 1988), 27-28; and Martin Green, Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire (New York: Basic Books, 1979).

his young heroes unwillingly off to lands that stood ready to ignite in Anglo/native conflict. In Redskin and Cowboy, the protagonist, Hugh Tunstall, utilizes the American West as a means of escape.³⁶ Having in self-defense assaulted the violent and scheming John Symonds, who poses as Hugh's uncle after killing the real Bill Tunstall in the goldfields of California, young Hugh must leave his English estate and sizeable inheritance for the West. The frontier promises to shield his identity and occupy him for four years, until he turns twenty-one, at which time he can return to England and capably defend his honor and estate from his "uncle's" insidiousness. Henty writes here about honor, and does not question Hugh's use of force and timely escape in reaction to Symonds's savagery: "'Well, you did quite right, of course,' [Hugh's friend] Luscombe said, 'in knocking that brute of a fellow down, and if you did split his skull and make your aunt [Symonds's wife] a widow you have nothing to reproach yourself with.'"³⁷ The West provides for Hugh a refuge, where "no one asks another as to his past history."³⁸ It also presents an alternative to a civilized England that would not accept on any conditions a minor's assault of his or her guardian. In Hugh's case, the law might not take into account the defense of honor. This

³⁶G. A. Henty, Redskin and Cowboy, a Tale of the Western Plains (1891; reprint, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906).

³⁷Ibid., 87.

³⁸Ibid., 23.

fault lies in the order of the metropolis, of grown-up civilization and developed legal codes, although Henty portrays this system as ultimately more desirable than a frontier justice based completely on the passions of honor.

No, siree, I don't say as everything out in the plains is just arranged as it might be in New York; but I say that, take the life as it is, I don't see as it could be arranged better. There was a chap out here for a bit as had read up no end of books, and he said it was just the same sort of thing way back in Europe, when every man carried his sword by his side and was always fighting duels, till at last the kings got strong enough to make laws to put it down and managed things without it; and that's the way it will be in this country.³⁹

The West, a young country, could respect the actions of Hugh, a youthful man. But, as Henty clearly implies early in the novel, Hugh will return to the law and civilization of England when he turns twenty-one and symbolically becomes a man, just as the West's coming-of-age depends on its acceptance of institutionalized government and law enforcement. For the time being, the two might potentially maintain a youthful empathy in their Anglo growing pains, and Hugh leaves England, although reluctantly, for his American asylum.

Henty's books about the British empire paralleled his westerns in that the heroes had to take to the colonies as a result of forces beyond their control. These forces often emerged out of a deficient England, although the deficiency often relates to the hero's ambitions. This occurs in Out

³⁹Ibid., 185-86.

on the Pampas, when Frank Hardy, intent on providing a substantial legacy for his sons Charley and Hubert, moves his family to Argentina to ranch and farm.⁴⁰ Although Charley turns up as the central hero in the book, the Hardys as a unit exemplify the enterprising British colonial family. Because England could not offer significant financial prospects, the family would simply move to an outpost of Anglo civilization. In so doing, they would import their native values and exploit the frontier with an Anglo myth rationale. Henty in this case employs the frontier as economic safety valve, without criticizing England, which still represents refined Anglo civilization and the source of the Hardys' values.

The same factor works through Henty's The Young Colonists, when the Humphreys travel to South Africa to begin life anew.⁴¹ Unlike the Hardys, the Humphreys' financial outlook does not guide the family. Rather, the family moves for the sake of Mrs. Humphreys, whose failing constitution cannot withstand the damp English weather. In this scenario Henty paints the frontier region as a physical rejuvenator, representative of a different kind of youthfulness from that apparent in Redskin and Cowboy. The colonial environment of South Africa promises a rebirth both physically and spiritually, where Mrs. Humphreys can

⁴⁰ Henty, Out on the Pampas.

⁴¹G. A. Henty, The Young Colonists (New York: Hurst and Company, n. d.).

recuperate while her family fulfills their civilization's myth of progress by fighting Zulus and profiting from farming and trading. But throughout the book, as in Out on the Pampas and Redskin and Cowboy, there exists early in the story a strong suggestion that the colonial experience, in itself a less obvious yet convincing form of captivity, is viewed only as a passing stage, that once the protagonists resolve their problems, they will naturally look once again to England.

Such loyalty to Anglo values takes a different form in the books of Mayne Reid. Reid, an Irishman who fought in the Mexican War and set most of his novels in the American Southwest, wrote two novels that had an immense impact on the way Britain viewed the West.⁴² In both The Rifle Rangers and The Scalp Hunters Reid uses his heroic figure, Henry Haller, to tell in an eloquent first person of the Anglo conquest of the West.⁴³ Unlike the characters in Henty's novels, Reid's hero at first appears wholly un-British, and Haller, in many ways resembling his creator, seems to have little motivation to get back to civilization.

My foot had pressed the summits of the Andes, and climbed the Cordilleras of the Sierra Madre. I had steamed it down the Mississippi, and sculled it up the Orinoco. I had hunted buffaloes with the Pawnees of the Platte, and ostriches upon the pampas of the Plata....I had eaten raw meat with the trappers of the Rocky Mountains, and roast

⁴²On the life and work of Mayne Reid, see Joan Steele, Captain Mayne Reid (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978).

⁴³Reid, The Scalp Hunters; and Mayne Reid, The Rifle Rangers (1850; reprint, Chicago: M. A. Donohue & Co, n. d.).

monkey among the Mosquito Indians....But, I fear, the spirit of adventure--its thirst--is within me slakeless. I had just returned from a "scurry" among the Comanches of Western Texas, and the idea of "settling down" was as far from my mind as ever.⁴⁴

Haller has no reluctance about leaving civilization, and in this sense more resembles the anti-heroes of James Fenimore Cooper (whose novels were enormously popular in Britain) than the young English gentleman or yeoman farmer heroes of G. A. Henty. Haller would fit well into Cawelti's model, except that the adventurer holds no doubts as to the nature of civilization. Henry Haller represents Anglo ideology in all its shining self-importance. In The Rifle Rangers he goes to the frontier gladly, to fight with the Americans in the war with Mexico. In The Scalp Hunters, trading speculations fuel his sallies into the border region. In both cases, he defends the Anglo myth, in the first explicitly and in the second by at once importing the goods of civilization to distant white outposts and making a tidy profit. Haller loves the frontier, but only as the playground on which one conquers savagery and gains personal wealth.

In contrast to these western novels, one example of Reid's non-western adventures shows that frontiers can vastly differ in appeal. In The Boy Slaves, four British sailors find themselves in the Sahara Desert after their

⁴⁴Reid, The Rifle Rangers, 25-26.

ship wrecks off the Barbary Coast.⁴⁵ Little in this environment invites the kind of admiration Reid affords the West in his long, romantic descriptions. The sailors must deal with savagery, but not out of choice, for Reid seems to assume that only shipwreck might rationally explain their presence in such a harsh environment. In comparison to this desert, Britain clearly represents greener grass.

Opportunity does not abound in the Sahara, adventuring would mean death or slavery, and any toehold civilization might find would only sink into the sand. But this no-man's-land plays well into the adventure novel, because, while the heroes find themselves abandoned by chance to the inhospitable desert, their efforts to get out of the predicament promise to reveal the sailors' total desire for their native civilization.

The type of situation from which the hero strives to escape can take different forms, and can even seem like civilization, as Arthur Conan Doyle demonstrated in A Study in Scarlet.⁴⁶ In his first Sherlock Holmes story, Doyle, as he later did in many of the sleuth's adventures, created a criminal who possessed heroic and civilized qualities, and whose crimes were therefore justified. A Study in Scarlet unfolds as three stories, the first, the murder mystery,

⁴⁵Mayne Reid, The Boy Slaves (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1864; reprint, New York: Thomas R. Knox & Co., 1884).

⁴⁶Arthur Conan Doyle, A Study in Scarlet (1887; reprint, New York: Doubleday, n. d.).

enveloping the other two, both of which take place in the American West and have their respective heroes.

The first of these, John Ferrier, by the vagaries of overland migration, becomes lost and, with his adopted daughter Lucy (whose parents died on the trail), risks dying of thirst in the desert. Brigham Young and the Latter-day Saints, fleeing to the Salt Lake Valley, rescue them after Ferrier promises to become Mormon. A historically grounded twist of fate therefore places Ferrier and his daughter in a unique frontier position. This frontier has unusual properties, because the Mormons are building what resembles a civilization amidst the barriers of the desert, which they had "overcome with Anglo-Saxon tenacity."⁴⁷ However, the Mormon institution of polygamy, what many in the nineteenth century considered, along with slavery, one of the "twin relics of barbarism," taints the city of Saints. From this Anglo form of savagery the reluctant Mormon Ferrier hopes to escape, along with his daughter and her lover, Jefferson Hope.

Hope, around whom the third story revolves, also finds himself placed in a compromising position by forces beyond his control. The hostilities of the Mormon hierarchy take him to the Salt Lake Valley so that he might aid Lucy and her father in their escape. Like Reid's The Boy Slaves, A Study in Scarlet characterizes the frontier environment as a place from which the heroes literally flee to civilization.

⁴⁷Ibid., 58.

Doyle repeats this theme in both The Crooked Man and The Boscombe Valley Mystery.⁴⁸ In The Crooked Man, James Barclay betrays Henry Wood on the Indian frontier during the Sepoy War. Under attack, their regiment needing reinforcement, Wood runs for help. But Barclay, jealous of Nancy Devoy's love for Wood and "'the very man who had arranged the way I [Wood] was to take, had betrayed me by means of a native servant into the hands of the enemy.'" ⁴⁹ Wood spends many years in India trying to escape the fate that placed him in savage conditions. In The Boscombe Valley Mystery, the unlikely hero John Turner, in Australia known as "Black Jack of Ballarat," travels to England from Victoria, having made his fortune robbing gold convoys. A driver on one of the convoys, Charles McCarthy, follows him and blackmails the reformed criminal. While Turner chose his profession as highway robber, his frontier past, which just as easily could have occurred in the West, haunts him. The Boscombe Valley Mystery, like A Study in Scarlet and The Crooked Man, tells the story of escape from savage conditions, within the setting of a Sherlock Holmes mystery.

In Doyle's tales, the return to civilization, which Britain symbolizes, makes the characters' presence in frontier surroundings appear a fluke, a whim of chance that

⁴⁸Arthur Conan Doyle, The Boscombe Valley Mystery (1892; reprint, New York: Doubleday, n. d.); and Arthur Conan Doyle, The Crooked Man (1894; reprint, New York: Doubleday, n. d.).

⁴⁹Doyle, The Crooked Man, 420.

the heroes do not in the first place desire. This type of fate also drives H. Rider Haggard's She, one of the most acclaimed empire novels of its time and an excellent book to use as a comparison to the British western.⁵⁰ In She, Horace Holley and his adopted son, Leo Vincey, travel to Africa to seek a fountain of youth. But they do so reluctantly, and only at the urging of an ancient potsherd, the writing on which suggests that Leo's family has classical origins and long ago came into contact with a mysterious rejuvenating force in Africa. Holley and Leo go out of a sense of duty to Leo's family, each successive generation of which has tried to find this fountain of youth. As in Henty's The Young Colonists, the frontier or savage regions, possessing rejuvenative qualities, lure the heroes to otherwise undesirable lands.

This factor of reluctance pervades the British adventure. British heroes on the frontiers do not especially like the situations in which they find themselves. The same dynamic works, although in variation, through each story, and leaving civilization is simply not done purely out of choice. This connection links the frontiers of the West with those of the empire, and demonstrates an underlying fear of captivity by the border regions and their peoples. But this factor created the

⁵⁰H. Rider Haggard, She (1886; reprint, New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1928). For information on the life and work of Haggard, see Daniel Karlin's introduction to the new reprint of She (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

adventure novel and its appeal, for the heroes bore the Anglo torch of civilization into the wilds of nether regions. How well they kept the torch lighted provided a great deal of adventure, fun reading, and a good index for the likelihood of civilization's expansion. And given the enterprise of the heroes, readers must have had little doubt that "Britons never will be slaves."

The heroes of the adventure novel were nothing if not resourceful. In Henty's Redskin and Cowboy, John Symonds, posing as Hugh Tunstall's uncle, urges the young Englishman to take up riding and shooting on the country estate. Although through these activities Symonds plots to make Hugh meet with an unfortunate accident, Hugh takes to heart the criminal's words, that "a man who can go across any country [on horseback], and can keep his place in the front rank, has much honour among his neighbors....There is another accomplishment we all have in the west, and that is to be good pistol-shots."⁵¹ Hugh works on attaining these abilities, and by the time he escapes to the West, he has nearly mastered them.

But he must put them into practice once in Texas, where he becomes a cowboy after learning that "[if] it wasn't for the cow-boys, the bad men, as we call them, would be pretty well masters of Texas."⁵² Having had enough of "bad men" after experiencing his uncle's wrath, Hugh passes a series

⁵¹Henty, Redskin and Cowboy, 70.

⁵²Ibid., 95.

of tests that well show his preparation in England and his dedication to justice. He helps clean up the town of M'Kinney, and with the help of Bill Royce, learns the ways of the cowboys, who regulate the frontier more than herd cattle. Comments like "'Anyone as is thinking of going for a cow-boy, had best know how to ride, how to throw a rope, and how to draw his pistol as quick as lightning, before he begins,'" and "'Why, if it wasn't for us cow-boys, there wouldn't be no living in the border settlements,'" show Henty's willingness to portray cowboys as the frontier's arms of justice.⁵³ But while the cowboys generally take up the cause of right, Henty makes clear that such a life cannot be permanent for Hugh, who remains essentially a young English gentleman. "These men were the adventurous spirits of the United States. Had they been born in England they would have probably either enlisted or run away as boys and gone to sea....Their life resembled rather that of the Arab or the Red Indian than that of civilized men."⁵⁴

Hugh's friends Royce, Limping Frank, Sim, and Broncho Harry teach him the ways of the frontier and help him survive in the West, but for all his preparations and challenges, Hugh can never fully participate in the border life. Even after his comrades dub him "Lightning Hugh" for his marksmanship, Hugh only reluctantly uses his skills. After learning that a foe "'would have shot you if he had

⁵³Ibid., 109, 187.

⁵⁴Ibid., 187.

been heeled [drawn his gun] first," Hugh asserts that "'I could no more have shot him than I could have flown...for he was really unarmed.'"⁵⁵ Where the cowboys, straddling civilization and the life of a "Red Indian," would have shot the unarmed man in the standoff, Hugh can only tell his enemy with civility that "'[t]here is an end of it, then....You thought you had got a soft thing. You see you've made a mistake.'"⁵⁶ Hugh views his shooting and riding abilities as gentlemanly skills, and the cowboys tend to take the rough-edged perspective of "might equals right." For the young Englishman, the use of a six-gun, or any force, should stand for justice and civilization, which cannot tolerate shooting a man (especially a white man) unless absolutely necessary. Although not on the frontier out of choice, Hugh elects to act as civilized as possible, and the discretion he uses with the skills he develops shows that he will not stoop even to the level of the cowboy, and therefore will not become captive to his environment.

Henty's empire novels exhibit similar values. Early in The Young Colonists, Dick Humphreys demonstrates his will to survive during a killing blizzard in his home of Derbyshire. Once in Africa, Dick practices with his Winchester rifle, and becomes a good horseman. But imminent conflict with the Zulus and Boers does not please the boy. "'I don't think that sort of excitement will be nice...it must be horribly

⁵⁵Ibid., 187.

⁵⁶Ibid., 180.

anxious work to think every time you go out to work that the place may be attacked and everyone killed before you get back."⁵⁷ This type of statement shows little understanding of why the Zulus and Boers might show aggression in the first place, and also implies that justifiable Anglo violence towards the natives and other imperial powers might meet "that sort of excitement."

In Out on the Pampas, the Hardys also prepare in advance for their life in the colonies. Charley and his brother learn the rudiments of planting while still in England, and learn how to shoot. Because "it is just possible that the Indians may be disposed to be troublesome," Mr. Hardy buys the boys American Colt revolvers.⁵⁸ This type of preparation can mean only one thing: that resistance of the natives to Anglo encroachment will meet with violence at the hands of British who intend to make their living off the Argentine land. Like in Henty's other novels, the main British characters go about their colonial lives in a sort of holy glow. Even in their preparations to reap rewards from the Pampas, the Hardys build a house that first appears "like a small dissenting chapel built on the top of a gentle rise."⁵⁹ Their home not only exudes industrious simplicity, it also has an air of religiosity. Writing with these kinds of terms, Henty seems

⁵⁷Henty, The Young Colonists, 25.

⁵⁸Henty, Out on the Pampas, 12.

⁵⁹Ibid., 168.

to suggest that the British possess a certain godliness in their establishments in the wilderness. And the reader can only wonder at the woe that might come to those who cross such settlers.

Mayne Reid's The Scalp Hunters builds on the character of Haller, of whom Reid wrote in The Rifle Rangers. Readers familiar with the first book knew that Haller's adventures had seasoned him for more of the same in the second novel. Here Haller begins his story in typical gentlemanly fashion, lounging about a St. Louis hotel and waiting for his mountain men partners. When they arrive, they all drink and feast heartily, then proceed to talk business, which means that Haller agrees to buy into their trading venture and to travel with them through the Southwest. Unlike Henty's heroes, Haller's talents and resources are simply assumed to exist. He has not prepared because he has not had to. Whereas Henty suggests that such training for the wilderness somehow appears a dirty necessity, a lowering of Anglo pride to ensure frontier safety and prosperity, Reid makes his hero's talents those of a polished gentleman. His trapper partners appear the same way, particularly St. Vrain, with whom he "commenc[es] smoking regalias and drinking madeira at twelve dollars a bottle!"⁶⁰ Because Haller proposes to take part in the trappers' utterly capitalistic trading enterprise, his money remains his greatest qualification. But Reid would not let his readership down, and he provides,

⁶⁰Reid, The Scalp Hunters, 16.

in contrast to the frontiersman-in-the-metropolis, the obligatory description of the mountain men in their element: "Where are the glossy gentlemen of the Planters' Hotel?...[H]ere are none but men in hunting-shirts and slouch hats....The silky black and the diamonds have disappeared, for now the traders flourish under the prairie costume."⁶¹ The mountain men become gentleman in disguise, ready for their virtuous venture on the southern Plains.

These traders maintain civilization in a wilderness, in marked contrast to the ambiguous characters of the scalp hunters, whom Haller later joins. Regarding their encampment, he notes that "[a] wilder and more picturesque 'coup d'oeil' never impressed human vision. It reminded me of pictures I had seen representing the bivouacs of brigands under the dark pines of the Abruzzi."⁶² The Mexican scalp hunters "were swarth and savage looking....Fierce dark eyes gleamed under the broad brims of their hats," the Indian scalp hunters "stoical sons of the forest," and the whites "bold, but good-humoured and generous."⁶³ In his initial contact with their leader Sequin, Haller's ideas of adventuring change and his preparations for the frontier become irrelevant as the savage enterprise of taking Indian scalps for money is placed before him. His greatest task, therefore, no longer assumes the character of the noble

⁶¹Ibid., 18.

⁶²Ibid., 98.

⁶³Ibid., 100, 102.

mastering of frontier sport, but becomes a search for a rationale for his friend Seguin's occupation.

The Boy Slaves differs from Reid's Haller novels because his heroes have no tangible skills that apply to the desert. But Harry Blount, Terence O'Connor, and Colin Macpherson possess something more important, a British background, and "with that true British pluck--combining the tenacity of the Scotch terrier, the English bulldog, and the Irish staghound--the three youthful representatives of the triple kingdom determined to hang on."⁶⁴ Their companion, "Old" Bill, for whom "[i]t would have required a very learned ethnologist to have told to which of his three companions he was compatriot; though there could be no doubt about his being either English, Irish, or Scotch," represents the sum of nationalities and years of experience of the three young men.⁶⁵ A reader could have had little doubt that the land-locked sailors needed more than their heritage to see them through the savagery ahead.

In Doyle's A Study in Scarlet, the heroes, excepting Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, come from America, and Doyle portrays one of them as associated with all the images of

⁶⁴Reid, The Boy Slaves, 106.

⁶⁵Ibid., 7. Although there might be a good case to object to the inclusion of Celts, especially the Irish, on the pro side of the Anglo myth of expansion, it must be remembered that Reid, an Irishman, had an intense loyalty to the United Kingdom, and also that there remains a difference between racism and ethnocentrism, the latter of which separated England and Ireland. On this subject, see Drinnon, Facing West, xvii.

the West. Jefferson Hope "had been a pioneer in California...a scout too, and a trapper, a silver explorer, and a ranchman. Wherever stirring adventures were to be had, Jefferson Hope had been there in search of them."⁶⁶ John and Lucy Ferrier cannot match Hope's frontier background, but because they joined the Mormons only out of necessity and refuse to take part in the savagery of polygamy, they qualify as heroic. In defying a barbaric institution, they in many ways resemble Jefferson Hope, whose frontier activities implicitly defy both the native and natural environments. Doyle portrays this defiance as a virtue, especially in comparison to the polygamy of the Mormons, who go West and fail to escape barbarism. Hope and the Ferriers are therefore prepared to meet the savagery of the frontier.

Like the men in Reid's The Boy Slaves, Henry Wood has little preparation for the frontier experiences he must undergo in Doyle's The Crooked Man. Betrayed into slavery by James Barclay, Wood can rely only on his native British abilities, his love for Nancy Devoy, and his dreams of once again seeing "the bright green fields and the hedges of England."⁶⁷ His grit alone promises to see him through his ordeal, whereas in The Boscombe Valley Mystery John Turner's rough life in Victoria's goldfields prepares him to deal with the scheming Charles McCarthy. More than the other

⁶⁶Doyle, A Study in Scarlet, 61.

⁶⁷Doyle, The Crooked Man, 421.

authors here considered, Doyle creates situations in which his heroes must meet challenges from whites who do not live up to the standards associated with a virtuous Anglo people. But their preparations do not essentially differ, because their ends remain the same: to eradicate obstacles to their chivalrous ideals of civilization.

Such obstacles face Holley and Leo when they set foot in Africa in Haggard's She. But Haggard portrays these two, who resemble Reid's Haller, as if they had prepared for the adventure all their lives. Holley, the narrator and a Cambridge professor, states, "I was gifted by nature with iron and abnormal strength and considerable intellectual powers....I always was a great sportsman...and...I am a good shot," while he describes Leo as intelligent and "there was no doubt about [his] fitness. Leo at twenty-one might have stood for a statue of the youthful Apollo."⁶⁸ The pair also have considerable financial resources and draw upon these to buy enough guns, ammunition, and helpful gadgetry to get them through the story. Haggard's Holley and Leo well represent the British empire as they delve into the African jungle with modern weapons, physical strength, superior intelligence, and moral sensibility.

The protagonists in the British adventure, while rarely going to frontier or wild regions out of choice, nevertheless go well prepared. This suggests that the heroes intend not only to survive, but to continue their

⁶⁸Haggard, She, 173, 181.

lives, as much as possible, as they would if they still dwelt in the civilized regions. The struggle to transplant civilized life connects with what Robert Athearn said about the appeal of the urban West to British travelers: "The metropolitan atmosphere, the commercial enterprise noticed, and the cultural attractions offered, were characteristics familiar to them."⁶⁹ In one form or another, British adventurers in novels sought the same sort of atmosphere, where they could remain civilized British citizens even if chance placed them in a wild or rough-edged environment. Their preparations to meet the wilderness with their civilization meant the difference between life and death and, perhaps of greater importance, the difference between escaping from or succumbing to white captivity.

Captivity means the darkening of the white soul, which first sits in danger through simple knowledge of differing societies.

In Heart of Darkness, Marlow says that Africa is no longer the "blank space....It had become a place of darkness." Marlow is right: Africa grew dark as Victorian explorers, missionaries, and scientists flooded it with light, because the light was refracted through an imperialist ideology that urged the abolition of "savage customs" in the name of civilization.⁷⁰

One can apply Patrick Brantlinger's comments on the evolution of the "Dark Continent" in Victorian literature to a discussion of the American West. The more that Anglo

⁶⁹Athearn, Westward the Briton, 47.

⁷⁰Brantlinger, Rule of Darkness, 173.

civilization learned of the West, the more it realized how strongly the West differed from its civilized sphere. The human binary thought process polarized the two for the sake of comparison and valuation, in this case from an Anglo perspective. In adventure novels this process manifested itself in a reflection of a contemporary principle: only one could represent civilization. Any real knowledge of the "other" threatened the sanctity of the Anglo world. Yet conquering the far reaches of the world and carrying out the destiny of Anglo civilization meant coming into contact with other, often foreign environments. This entailed almost unspeakable dangers, for an Anglo civilization entrapped or enthralled by savagery meant no Anglo civilization at all. Ironically, then, the Anglo fear and rejection of the frontier becomes a symbol of the spread of Anglo civilization.

In a sense, Hugh has already become captive to a savage environment in Henty's Redskin and Cowboy. Like most of the characters in the novels discussed, Hugh ends up in the West by no choice of his own, and must support himself in this environment as best he can. This entails facing up to the "bad men," whites who have given into savage frontier instincts. But, primarily, Hugh and his companions must face the native populations, including both Indians and Mexicans, in fighting captivity at the hands of their environment and human (or sub-human) forces. "'The Injuns have come down and attacked Gainsford. They have killed

five or six men and most of the women and children. They have carried off five or six girls, and old man Rutherford's Rose is among them.'"71 Hugh and the cowboys quickly enlist in an expedition sent to recover Rose Rutherford, the literal white captive.

Hugh soon distinguishes himself in the effort, which becomes a match of wits between the whites and the Indians. He develops a plan to distract the hostile forces, by luring them into believing that a conquerable number of cowboys lies near the Indian village. But, only feinting, Hugh and the cowboys in reality take a different position while only a handful of their forces bait the Indians. The cowboys accept Hugh's plan with enthusiasm, in a demonstration of Henty's use of British "pluck." "'It beats me altogether...how yer should have hit on a plan like that when I, who have been fighting Injuns...for the last twenty years, couldn't see my way no more than if I had been a mole. You may be young on the plains, Lightning...but yer couldn't have reasoned it out better if yer had been at it fifty years.'"72 This passage suggests that perhaps the speaker had lived too long on the plains, and that only Hugh's temporal proximity to civilization can save the situation.

Yet years on the plains do not necessarily mellow one's attitude toward "Injuns," and one of the cowboys states that

⁷¹Henty, Redskin and Cowboy, 204.

⁷²Ibid., 219.

"I would kill a Red-skin at sight just as I would put my heel on a rattlesnake," while another exclaims "They have killed our wives and children, why shouldn't we pay them back in the same coin?"⁷³ This markedly contrasts with Hugh's point of view, and the young hero remarks before the fight that "I tell you fairly I couldn't shoot men down, however hostile, in cold blood."⁷⁴ Hugh prefers to use his native British intelligence, and likewise Hugh's friend Broncho Harry refuses to kill out of vengeance, "'[b]ecause we are whites and not Red-skins."⁷⁵ Henty makes clear that stooping to savagery to fight savagery cannot be justified, and Hugh's plan works so well that no fighting men remain in the village when the cowboys arrive to save Rose. The cowboys free the captive without themselves becoming captive to savage behavior.

But violence is on the horizon, for the deceived Indians trail the party of cowboys, and in a classic confrontation the Indians try to vanquish the whites. This constitutes a defensive action for the cowboys, a grim struggle to save themselves from captivity, and Henty contrasts the purposefulness of the cowboys with the wild abandon of the Indians. "The rattle of musketry was incessant, but far above it rose the yells of the Indians.

⁷³Ibid., 220, 228.

⁷⁴Ibid., 220.

⁷⁵Ibid., 228.

The whites fought silently."⁷⁶ Hugh once again plots successfully to extricate the party from their pursuers, and soon the cavalry appears to secure the situation.

Among the cavalry's forces, Hugh's English friend Luscombe resurfaces, and tells Hugh of his plans to return home. England also attracts Hugh, who suspects his life on the plains may hurt his chances for a civilized life, and states that "'it is just as well to stop before one gets to fond of it.'"⁷⁷ But Hugh does not return to England until he and Bill Royce aid in recovering yet two more white captives, this time from the hands of Mexicans, whose lands lie "at the borders of civilization."⁷⁸ In the process, Hugh learns the true source of his own exile to and captivity in the West. He meets friends of his murdered uncle who confirm that Bill Tunstall died at the hands of Symonds. Hugh returns to England with Limping Frank and Sim, and the three confront Symonds, whom Frank kills in the subsequent fray. Hugh marries Luscombe's sister and settles down to the life of an English squire. Not only did the frontier fail to capture him, but he saved several prisoners from the hands of savagery while having a definite civilizing influence on the cowboys who surrounded him. Hugh succeeded in every possible way, civilizing the

⁷⁶Ibid., 256.

⁷⁷Ibid., 268.

⁷⁸Ibid., 273.

frontier and then returning intact to the heart of the Anglo world.

Henty's The Young Colonists has a much more historical tone than Redskin and Cowboy, the former set amidst the Zulu Wars and conflicts with the Boers. Henty takes care not to let his adventure interfere with extensive explanations of troop movements and strategies. Yet white captivity still plays a significant role, initially taking the form of the Humphreys' exile to Africa due to Mrs. Humphreys' illness. Their Anglo way of life cannot continue in England, but they do not expect to concede their civilization to the African environment. This includes the Zulus and the Boers (who resemble Henty's Mexicans), both of whom Henty portrays as colorful and skilled, but ultimately savage. War heightens the risk of succumbing to the environment, and Dick Humphreys and Tom Jackson quickly become involved in many skirmishes and battles. After the battles of Isandula (Henty's spelling) and Rourke's Drift, both of which the boys watch from atop a hill, the two are forced to give themselves up to the omnipresent Zulus. Expecting mercy because they surrender, Dick and Tom soon learn that the Zulus mean to kill them. They escape when the Zulus confront a detachment of British soldiers. "[A]s the little band [of British]...fell upon the Zulus they saw, to their astonishment, two English boys, armed with assegais, attacking these in the rear. In another minute the Zulus

were all cut down...."⁷⁹ Dick and Tom, both heroes and captives in this version of a Henty captivity narrative, must fight their way out of bondage. The story repeats itself two more times in the novel, as the boys first escape pursuing Zulus, and then hostile Boers, during a trading expedition.

Henty returns to a more ahistorical theme, and a more traditional captivity story, in Out on the Pampas. The Indians, who "'never deliberately kill white women, always carrying them off,'" capture Charley's sister Ethel during her visit to a neighbor's home.⁸⁰ The Indians murder her hosts and again, as in Redskin and Cowboy, Henty makes captivity appear decidedly worse. "Mr. Hardy staggered under the sudden blow. 'Carried off!' he murmured to himself. 'It is worse than death.'"⁸¹ The Hardys and their friends give chase, and soon recover the girl from the "wild cavalcade of dark figures."⁸² Henty caps the story with a grand bow towards the civilizing influence of whites. He inexplicably reconciles the two forces, throughout the book the greatest of foes, and after the recovery of Ethel the "two parties...mingled amicably, mutually pleased at the termination to the hostilities; and no one would have

⁷⁹Henty, The Young Colonists, 83.

⁸⁰Henty, Out on the Pampas, 208.

⁸¹Ibid., 204.

⁸²Ibid., 243.

guessed that a few hours before they had met in deadly strife."⁸³

No one, especially the late-twentieth century reader, "would have guessed." Because of the inevitable nature of Anglo civilization as portrayed in the British adventure novel, the victorious, yet merciful, British do not take revenge by carrying off native captives in the literal sense. They do insist, however, that the Indians play by Anglo rules, a subtle form of Indian captivity not explicitly stated by the author. Once it is revealed to the Indians that these rules are indeed more fair, the natives naturally accept them, and old enemies can "mingle amicably"--on Anglo terms, of course. In both The Young Colonists and Out on the Pampas, the colonial families return to England, having grown rich and healthy off their frontier ventures, in the process fighting captivity and spreading civilization.

Mayne Reid's The Scalp Hunters explores several forms of captivity, concerning both Haller's association with the scalp hunters under Seguin, as well as more straightforward accounts of white captivity. As Henty does in Redskin and Cowboy, Reid reveals the raw frontiersmen, in this case the scalp hunters, as having partially succumbed to the savagery of the wilderness. Seguin and his men lead marginal existences to such an extent that Seguin does not want his activities known in his own household, telling Haller that

⁸³Ibid., 269.

"'what you do know of me [may not] be not uttered here.'"⁸⁴
 On the face of things, hunting Indian scalps for profit cannot find justification in the Anglo myth--its insidiousness has too little subtlety. But soon the reader learns of Seguin's noble ends, that only the recovery of his daughter from the hands of the Navajoes has spurred him to his profession. "'The wild Navajo had been here: my household gods [sic] were scattered and broken; and my child, oh, God! my little Adele, was carried captive to the mountains!'"⁸⁵ Seguin feels that leading the band of scalp hunters best represents the way to track the Navajoes and recover Adele. After learning of Seguin's plight, and personally interested in his fate because the hero loves Seguin's other daughter Zoe, Haller agrees to join the band of hunters to rescue the captive.

But Haller's companions exude the horrific effects of frontier excess, exemplified by Old Rube, whose "shirt was open, displaying the naked breast and throat, and these, as well as the face, hands, and ankles, had been tanned by the sun, and smoked by the fire....The whole man, clothes and all, looked as if he had been smoked on purpose."⁸⁶ How could a civilized man such as Haller accept this sort of purposefulness as positive, especially from a man who seemed to have "something wanting. What was it? I was not long in

⁸⁴Reid, The Scalp Hunters, 69.

⁸⁵Ibid., 84.

⁸⁶Ibid., 109.

conjecture. When fairly in front of him, I saw what was wanting. It was his ears!"⁸⁷ Old Rube himself had fallen victim to a scalping, and his calling, like Seguin's, becomes one of at least half-civilized purpose, a justified, if sickening, vengeance. Still, Haller's discomfort remains obvious, and Reid repeatedly refers to Rube, who calls himself and the other scalp hunters "niggurs," as "the smoky old sinner."⁸⁸

Civilization held captive by a band of scalp hunters is bad enough, even when its end, in context, justifies it--but civilization held captive by Indians is far worse. Reid paints a savage Navajo, who plays no second to the Mexican or even the dreaded Apache in The Scalp Hunters. Like many native peoples in frontier adventure novels, the Navajoes of The Scalp Hunters practice the worst savage custom: "I have heard the Navajoes are cannibals.' 'It is true. Look at them this minute! See how they gloat upon that chubby little fellow, who seems instinctively to fear them. Lucky for the urchin it's broad daylight, or he might get chucked under one of those striped blankets.'"⁸⁹ The savage Navajoes not only threaten to take civilization captive, they also threaten to consume it. Scalp hunting thus pales next to Indian savagery:

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Ibid., 118.

⁸⁹Ibid., 36.

'[I]f they [the scalp hunters' exploits] were true in all their horrid details, they would fall far short of the cruelties that have been dealt out by the savage foe to the inhabitants of this defenceless frontier. If you knew the history of this land for the last ten years; its massacres and its murders; its tears and its burnings; its rapes and spoliations; whole provinces depopulated; villages given to the flames; men butchered on their own hearths; women, beautiful women, carried into captivity to satisfy the lust of the desert robber!'⁹⁰

This passage sums up the fear of white captivity as well as white ignorance. There exists a distinct confusion of cause and effect concerning intrusion and frontier, as whites alone merit consideration as "inhabitants of this defenceless frontier," when in reality the true "savage" inhabitants suffered the cruelest of captivities. It also reveals a special fear of the natives taking women captives, threatening both female sexuality and the virility of the white male.

And, since it is the stuff of romantic adventure, Reid uses it to the hilt. Adele plays the role of no ordinary white captive to the Navajoes, who "'saw that [white women] were fair,'" but rather the part of "'a sort of queen among them, possessed of strange powers and privileges.'"⁹¹ For Reid, Adele as a representative of civilization appeals to the Navajoes, who hold her in high esteem. But her capacity for converting the natives turns on her, and instead she becomes enamoured of them, manifesting ultimately a great

⁹⁰Ibid., 82.

⁹¹Ibid., 249, 86.

fear of white civilization. After a long chase and cunning plot (reminiscent of Henty's Redskin and Cowboy captivity sequence), the scalp hunters recover Adele from a hideout closely resembling Canyon de Chelley. Yet Adele resists recognition of her father: "'My father! My father was a great chief. He is dead. This is my father now. The Sun is my father. I am a daughter of Montezuma! I am a queen of the Navajoes!'"⁹²

Seguin has little time to dwell on this personal devastation, however, because the Indians return, give chase, and reveal that while Seguin lured them from their village, they turned the tables and plundered the scalp hunter's home, from which they took Seguin's wife and Zoe. In the ensuing scuffle, they also capture Haller, and now that the Navajoes have captured him and his love, he becomes more personally involved with the necessities of frontier craft, although he formerly "was merely a passive spectator of the scenes enacted, and in general disgusted with their enactment."⁹³ Haller escapes, rejoins the others, and together, posing ironically as Indians, they rescue the remaining white captives. The heroes, however, must still deal with Adele:

She is no longer in the Indian costume. That has been put aside. She wears the dress of civilized life, but she wears it reluctantly. She has shown this, for the skirt is torn in several places, and the bodice, plucked open, displays her bosom, half

⁹²Ibid., 214.

⁹³Ibid., 288.

nude, heaving under the wild thoughts that agitate it.⁹⁴

But Haller's friend St. Vrain, rejoining the party, reveals that he and Adele have a romantic history, and through their love the former captive remembers her past life. Haller, Sequin, and civilization have confronted and escaped captivity intact, meeting the savage environment, partaking when necessary, and ultimately mastering "the wild thoughts that agitate" their hearts.

Similarly, in Reid's The Boy Slaves, the captive sailors weather their ordeal across the Sahara Desert without falling prey to their environment. This epic of captivity (320 pages of enslavement) is replete with parallels to Reid's western novels. The young Scot Colin MacPherson

had read many books relating to the prairies of America, and their savage denizens. He was forcibly reminded of these by what he now saw in this oasis of the sandy Saära....The men, mostly idle,--ludicrously nonchalant,--reclining on their saddle-pads, or skins, inhaling the narcotic weed, apparently proud in the possession of that lordship of wretchedness that surrounded them....Colin was constrained to compare the savage life of two continents....In the Comanche of the Llano Estacado, or the Pawnee of the Platte, he would have found an exact counterpart of the Ishmaelitish wanderer over the sandy plains of the Saära.⁹⁵

Captivity constitutes the common denominator of "the savage life of two continents," as Harry, Terence, Colin, and Bill, at the mercy of the "savage denizens," troop across the

⁹⁴Ibid., 312.

⁹⁵Reid, The Boy Slaves, 128.

desert, where "they could meet no men...who would not be their enemies."⁹⁶ Suffering many hardships at the hands of their slavedrivers, and enduring an equally savage environment that "appeared to be a labrinth of sand-hills" with their "true British pluck," the sailors convince their captors that the British embassy would pay dearly for their restoration.⁹⁷ "'They belong to a country the government of which will not allow its subjects to remain in bondage,'" states a merchant who meets the slavers.⁹⁸ The concept, "to remain in bondage," conjures horrific scenes of a debased Anglo civilizaton, and inversely echoes James Thomson's "Rule Britannia," in which he asserts "Britons never will be slaves." But the threat of permanent captivity gives Reid's novels their edge and adventure, ties his western and empire books together, and makes the ultimate conquest of "savage denizens" that much more compelling in the context of Anglo myth.

Yet savage captors in adventure novels do not necessarily have racial characteristics differing from those of the heroes, as Arthur Conan Doyle's stories best demonstrate. In the three stories here considered, Anglos fill both savage and heroic roles. In A Study in Scarlet, the Mormons appear cartoonishly bad, Doyle falling for and writing about all the worst rumors, which Richard Burton

⁹⁶Ibid., 63.

⁹⁷Ibid., 57.

⁹⁸Ibid., 294.

pointed to (and discredited) when commenting on descriptions of the Mormons as "White Indians."⁹⁹ Where other authors quickly accepted Native American stereotypes, Doyle constructed a Mormon savage out of the barbaric relic of polygamy:

The supply of adult women was running short....Strange rumours began to be bandied about--rumours of murdered immigrants and rifled camps in regions where Indians had never been seen. Fresh women appeared in the harems of the Elders--women who pined and wept, and bore upon their faces the traces of an unextinguishable horror. Belated wanderers upon the mountains spoke of gangs of armed men, masked, stealthy, and noiseless, who flitted by them in the darkness. These tales and rumours took substance and shape, and were corroborated and recorrobated, until they resolved themselves into a definite name. To this day, in the lonely ranches of the West, the name of the Danite Band, or the Avenging Angels, is a sinister and an ill-omened one.¹⁰⁰

For Doyle, polygamy made the Mormons as savage as the Indians. They ambush peaceful immigrants, steal the women, and force the new wives to participate in barbarism.

John Ferrier enlists Jefferson Hope to save his daughter Lucy from the harems of Joseph Stangerson and Enoch Drebbler, who want to add her to their collection of wives. Although Brigham Young himself threatens him, Ferrier stands firm: giving his daughter up to polygamy would be as bad as leaving her to the Indians, and in any case Hope had already asked for her hand in marriage. Hope returns to Utah to

⁹⁹Sir Richard F. Burton, The City of Saints and Across the Rocky Mountains to California (1862; Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1990), 2.

¹⁰⁰Doyle, A Study in Scarlet, 63.

guide the Ferriers from the Salt Lake Valley, but the "Avenging Angels" capture the father and daughter. They kill John Ferrier and force Lucy to marry Drebber. Lucy soon dies in her captive state. Hope, for whom Utah remains too dangerous, vows revenge from a distance, and, catching up with Drebber and Stangerson in London, he takes the lives of these icons of barbarism, murder, and white captivity. Sherlock Holmes uncovers Hope's conspiracy and remains ambivalent to Hope's motivations, although he clearly does not disapprove. Hope becomes an object of pity, the last victim in A Study in Scarlet of frontier captivity, for years of "overexposure and under-feeding among the Salt Lake Mountains" brings on an aortic aneurism, and he soon dies.¹⁰¹

Similarly, John Turner dies at the end of The Boscombe Valley Mystery, after murdering the man who held him captive, in England, for a crime that should have remained on the frontier in Australia. Charles McCarthy exhibits all the signs of having let frontier treachery overcome him, and Turner calls him "a devil incarnate."¹⁰² Turner plays the reformed sinner, and his murder of the heathen McCarthy rids him of the last chains that bind him to his past, Australia, and savagery. Turner's absolution becomes complete with his death, and like in Hope's case, Doyle suggests that one might trace Turner's fragile condition to his frontier days.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 77.

¹⁰²Doyle, The Boscombe Valley Mystery, 215.

In The Crooked Man, Henry Wood does not die at the end of the story, but the epic proportions of his long absence from England leave him with a crippled frame. Neither does he kill his enemy, James Barclay. Wood's betrayer dies because "'the bare sight of me [Wood] was like a bullet through a guilty heart.'"¹⁰³ Barclay's knowledge of his own savage action kills him. Anglo civilization, presented in the crooked frame of Wood, sees its own darkness in the form of Barclay.

H. Rider Haggard's She, like Reid's The Scalp Hunters, tells the story of several concentric captivities, the first and most obvious one concerning the mere presence of Leo and Holley in Africa. In one telling passage, a crocodile and lion duel to the death:

Then, all of a sudden, the end came. The lion's head fell forward on the crocodile's back, and with an awful groan he died, and the crocodile, after standing for a minute motionless, slowly rolled over on to his side, his jaws still fixed across the carcass of the lion, which we afterwards found he had bitten almost in halves.¹⁰⁴

This metaphor suggests that the wilderness could trap and consume civilization, as the creature of the jungle, the crocodile, destroys the symbol of Britain, the lion. The lion also symbolizes Leo, and Haggard foreshadows the young man's captivity amongst the savage Amahagger, who guard She-who-must-be-obeyed, Ayesha. A beautiful white queen, Ayesha

¹⁰³Doyle, The Crooked Man, 421.

¹⁰⁴Haggard, She, 206.

rules the Amahagger using the wisdom gained from her prolonged existence and mastery of "the rolling pillar of life." Freudian implications and "Asia" parallels aside, Ayesha's character may symbolize the Anglo presence in Africa and, because she holds the key of life or regeneration, the grail of imperial desire.¹⁰⁵ But she also represents the dangers of imperial presence. Ayesha lives among the Amahagger not out of choice, but because she awaits the spiritual return of the civilized Kallikrates, Leo's ancestor, who she killed in a jealous rage. While she rules the Amahagger, she therefore also remains captive in their land, which houses the mechanism of the source of life that enables her to wait for her perfect love. Her predicament checks the evolution of her own personal improvement or civilization, and Haggard repeatedly portrays her as both beautiful and dangerous.

When Leo and Holley become captive to the Amahagger, whom like Reid's Navajoes the author portrays as cannibalistic, they subsequently fall into Ayesha's hands.¹⁰⁶ Ayesha recognizes in Leo her Kallikrates, and both Leo and Holley worship Ayesha's devastating beauty, trapped by an African white queen who has knowledge of the "pillar of life." In a sense, the two parties capture each other, Ayesha depending on Leo while Leo and Holley fall

¹⁰⁵On the psychological and imperial symbolism in She, see Karlin, introduction to She.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 224, 266.

shamefully under the control of Ayesha's cool intellect and beauty. One feels such a situation cannot last, especially after hints from Holley that Ayesha's character possesses too little Christianity and too much passionate savagery. And Haggard does not disappoint: Ayesha takes Leo to the pillar of life for their marriage ceremony, where both he and Holley will also become all but immortal. But Ayesha cannot take this sort of baptism twice, and Haggard makes her savage origins clear, in very Darwinian terms, as she wilts before the life force. "'Oh, look!--look!--look!' shrieked Job [Holley's British servant], in a shrill falsetto of terror....'[S]he's shrivelling up! she's turning into a monkey....'"¹⁰⁷ Ayesha dies, and Holley and Leo, no longer under her spell or protection, flee from the cannibalistic natives. After many hardships they return to England.

Haggard's She represents a complex version of white captivity in the empire adventure novel, with its dense metaphors of imperial ambition, savagery, and civilization. Ayesha symbolizes both the Anglo influence on the frontier and the negative reverberations of the environment on civilization. This environment and its people capture and captivate Holley and Leo, who as English in the imperial age are repulsed by and attracted to the alternately savage and civilized white queen, who can offer a prolonged life, but at a cost perhaps not worth bearing.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 340.

The British western novel appealed to its readership because it presented the same values manifested in the ideology of imperialism, which at the time symbolized more than political and economic absorption. Imperialism carried religious baggage that contained the nineteenth-century version of the Anglo creation myth, voiced in the millennial, racial rhetoric of "manifest destiny" and "white man's burden." These polemics of religion and race bridged the numerous political gaps between the United Kingdom and America, and partially explain the popularity in Britain of things American. The British western well expresses this by communicating the same essential story that one finds in empire adventure novels. Fate, rather than choice, takes the hero to the frontier, for although the "West may be a fine place to visit,...no self-respecting Englishman would want to live there."¹⁰⁸ Thus, in both empire and western novels, the hero or heroes fit into what Walter Nugent calls the Type II frontier, whose "people were the colorful few: cowboys, forty-niners, prostitutes, gunfighters, and mountain men. They were transients on the make, most of them male."¹⁰⁹ Although both the West and the British empire had their settlers' frontier, considered Type I, the adventure novels focus on the second category, what one

¹⁰⁸James K. Folsom, "English Westerns," Western American Literature 2 (Spring 1967): 12.

¹⁰⁹Walter Nugent, "Frontiers and Empires in the Late Nineteenth Century," Western Historical Quarterly 20 (November 1989): 400.

might term the itinerant frontier of the wildcat capitalist. Fate may have resigned our heroes to the savage frontier, but the frontier also possesses curative powers. Symbolizing spiritual regeneration or reaffirmation, physical rejuvenation, and economic recovery, the border regions represent the means of return to civilization rather than the place in which a truly civilized person settles. In one way or another, then, all the heroes are "transients on the make."

Once in the border region, the hero quickly learns, or supplements his previous knowledge of, the arts of survival. He enlists the help of fellow Anglos and occasionally the classic "noble savage." Mayne Reid's Coco, in The Scalp Hunters, wears white buckskin and possesses a European education, Roman features, and a nickname suggestive of enlightenment, El Sol. El Sol's sister, on the other hand, never away from her native environment, has features Haller describes as "savage" and is called, in contrast to El Sol, Luna.¹¹⁰ H. Rider Haggard's Leo and Holley find assistance from a civilized Amahagger named Billali, G. A. Henty's Hardy family recovers Ethel with the help of a reformed Indian called "the Raven," and Arthur Conan Doyle's Jefferson Hope plays both hero and civilized frontier dweller.

The adventure novel heroes on the frontier of empire also show a more direct debt to the American West in their

¹¹⁰Reid, The Scalp Hunters, 106, 113.

preparation for, and battling of, frontier forces. Brandishing Colt revolvers and Winchester rifles, Haggard's and Henty's British heroes in Argentina and Africa battle Indians and Africans with weapons commonly associated with the West. Henty takes the West/empire parallels even further, filling 36 pages of Out on the Pampas with the western adventurers of Seth, an all-wise American frontiersman. Reid's Colin Macpherson compares Arab and Indian, and Doyle's John Turner had led a rough life in Victoria, which closely resembled California goldfields.

Perhaps western parallels emerge in empire literature because images of western America offered the greatest contrast between savagery and civilization, or perhaps the popular captivity narrative, an invention of the American frontier, proved too compelling to resist. Given the power of the captivity narrative, the West as primary subject, or as object of comparison could simply not be left out of the adventure of Anglo imperialism.

By 1887, British and American writers of both pulp and more respectable fiction had firmly constructed an archetypal American West in the British mind. American identity entrenched itself in this literary West, and British readers may have perceived both a mirror of their empire and a distinct American personality that had previously proved elusive. And although historian Sarah Blackstone has asserted that "[t]hese books were strictly adventure tales with no moral messages about the plight of

the Indian or the despoiling of the land," such a suggestion does not ring entirely true.¹¹¹ Anglo adventure novelists often dwelt at length on the broad sweep of western America and its native inhabitants, applying their own temporal and cultural moral language to these subjects, generally concluding that the wilderness existed for civilization's use. Any "plight" with which Native Americans had to grapple came from their own savage souls.

From a contemporary perspective, then, the adventure novel might have represented a heightened version of the moral play of Anglo civilization. Thus, on the "darkling plain" of morality, the American West of popular literature must have appeared comfortingly familiar to many British. This Anglo America lost much of its English character in the West, but retained basic English values, implicitly in the Anglo myth, that appealed to British sensibilities. The western adventure and dime novel created the Anglo Briton or American who inhabited an exotic land full of adventure while heroically defending essentially English standards, rescuing captives and overcoming the darkness of the natives. The Westerner resembled the British imperial soldier or colonist, but British audiences could share the mythic adventure of the western hero's conquests while remaining somewhat detached. Unlike the empire, the American West did not require the personal or national

¹¹¹ Sarah J. Blackstone, Buckskins, Bullets, and Business: A History of Buffalo Bill's Wild West (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 5.

involvement of British citizens. Distanced from the real West, the British could enjoy this Anglo frontier that appeared free from political or moral failures. And failure did not easily enter the life of William Frederick Cody, who, as Buffalo Bill, caught the imagination of England in 1887.

Chapter III

The First Scalp for Victoria:
The Wild West in London, 1887

And when there was nothing left but heaps of bones, the Wasichus [whites] came and gathered up even the bones and sold them.¹

Myth does not argue its ideology, it exemplifies it.²

Audiences know what to expect, and that is all they are prepared to believe in.³

Buffalo Bill had existed in dime novel literature since 1869, and through the efforts of enterprising authors had led a fictional life that attracted a large European following. As a flesh and blood Westerner, Cody dominated the London entertainment scene from April through October 1887, during which his Wild West exhibition drew millions of British, including both royalty and subjects. They came to have their expectations fulfilled, to believe that West already made familiar by pulp novels. Cody did not disappoint his audiences. He represented a West created by and for him, integrating fact and fantasy into a remarkable re-creation of the West, a pageant manifest with motifs of Anglo destiny. As a real dime novel hero who had withstood the dangers and temptations of savagery, Cody stood in front

¹John G. Neihardt, Black Elk Speaks (New York: Pocket Books, 1972), 181.

²Slotkin, The Fatal Environment, 19.

³Tom Stoppard, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead (New York: Grove Books, 1967), 84.

of a faithful, British dime novel readership, and delivered his dime novel life.

Cody hardly needed to improve on the facts of his history.⁴ Through 1891, he participated in or witnessed many of the major events commonly associated with the American frontier, including what Frederick Jackson Turner defined as that frontier's closing.⁵ As much as anyone of his own time, Cody's experiences qualified him as spokesman for the late Anglo frontier.⁶

Born in 1846 in Iowa, Cody moved with his family to Kansas in 1854. There Cody's father met his death in one of many abolitionist/slaveholder altercations that earned the territory the name of "Bleeding Kansas." Fatherless and on the frontier, Cody worked hard to help provide for his

⁴This biographical sketch of Cody, as well as the following outline of his early show career in America, is drawn primarily from Don Russell, The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960). See also Nellie Snyder Vost, Buffalo Bill (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1979); Joseph G. Rosa and Robin May, Buffalo Bill and His Wild West, A Pictorial Biography (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989); Paul Fees, "In Defense of Buffalo Bill: A Look at Cody in and of His Time," in Myth of the West, by Chris Bruce et al. (Seattle: Henry Art Gallery/New York: Rizzoli, 1990); and Don Russell, The Wild West; or, A History of the Wild West Shows (Ft. Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1970).

⁵It is significant to note that when Turner delivered his address on the closing of the frontier at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, Cody's Wild West performed its drama of the frontier just outside the exposition grounds. See Russell, Lives and Legends, 374-78; and Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in The Frontier in American History by Frederick Jackson Turner (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986).

⁶Fees, "In Defense of Buffalo Bill," 141.

family. He transported goods and drove cattle for local supply outfits. He rode for the Pony Express, and at age eighteen, Cody joined the ranks of Union soldiers and fought in the Civil War. After the war, when military attention focused on the final wresting from Native Americans of the western territories, the army valued the services of scouts, like Cody, who knew the terrain. The army also appreciated Cody's hunting skills, and through his efforts to provide fresh meat to officers, and then to laborers on the Kansas Pacific Railroad, Cody gained the title of "Buffalo Bill."

The beginning of Cody's rise to fame outside the military and railroad establishments occurred during the summer of 1869 at the battle of Summit Springs. "Summit Springs...was one of a very few... [Indian] fights that would satisfy Hollywood and the writers of Westerns. The cavalry charged with bugle blowing, a woman was rescued,...and the troops suffered no losses."⁷ Reports credited Cody with engineering the surprise attack of General Carr's Fifth Cavalry on a group of Arapahoes, Sioux, and Cheyenne. Less than two weeks after the battle, Cody met temperance lecturer E. Z. C. Judson, also known as Ned Buntline.

In Buffalo Bill, not William Frederick Cody, Buntline found a real-life hero and a subject for a novel he planned to write on border warfare. In the winter of 1869-70, Buntline published a book that purported truth. Buffalo

⁷Russell, Lives and Legends, 129-30.

Bill, the King of Border Men, catapulted Cody to national fame despite the fact that very little, excepting Cody's moniker "Buffalo Bill," corresponded to the scout's life.⁸

But Cody's fame did not rest completely on imaginary laurels. Prominent military commanders praised Cody's abilities, not only in connection with Summit Springs, but also in regard to his other services as scout, dispatch carrier, and hunter. While Buffalo Bill's fictional star ascended, Cody's real abilities as a plainsman began attracting international patrons. In the winter of 1872, General Sheridan appointed Cody to guide a buffalo hunt for the Grand Duke Alexis of Russia, one of several notable visitors who utilized Cody's skills in organized hunting parties. In this and other hunts, which often more closely resembled regal pageants on a grand scale, Cody honed his showmanship, and the evolution of his Wild West saw its genesis.⁹

By the fall of 1872, Cody had attracted attention as guide and dime-novel hero. He had entertained royalty, and Fred G. Maeder had dramatized Buntline's book for the stage. Cody himself saw the play, and when "the audience [learned] that the real Buffalo Bill was present, [they] demanded his appearance."¹⁰ Ultimately, Cody could not resist the audience's demands, and in late 1872 he went to Chicago to

⁸Ibid., 149-61.

⁹Ibid., 162-84.

¹⁰Ibid., 182.

perform, as himself, in Buntline's The Scouts of the Plains. The play, although not a dramatic landmark, revealed to Cody the power his presence, and the subject matter he represented, could have over an audience. In that winter of 1872-73, his audiences, "had witnessed the birth of the Western. It is not surprising that [they] did not recognize it, for neither did its creator, Ned Buntline. Buffalo Bill, knowing less about the stage, just possibly did."¹¹

If Cody did recognize this new form, he would not yet stake his fortunes on it. Through 1876, he spent his winters playing himself on the stage, and resumed his role as army scout in the summers. His experiences on the plains would influence his performances in the theatre. And in the summer of 1876, performance followed Cody to the frontier, in a key event that brought theatre to the plains and myth to reality.

Nine days short of America's centennial celebration, several thousand Sioux and Cheyenne wiped out George Custer's detachment of Seventh Cavalry at the Little Bighorn River. The army believed that the summer would provide enough action for its forces, and had braced itself the previous winter. Cody even closed his theatrical season early, so that he might participate as a scout. But nothing prepared the army and nation for the surprise of Custer's annihilation. A shocked America, poised to embark on its second century, lionized Custer and swore revenge with a

¹¹Ibid., 196.

unity that, until this time, had seemed impossible in the post-Civil War era. The Anglo myth drew the nation together where the facts of civil war and increased industrialization would have made the existence of an enemy common to Americans of all sections unlikely.¹² The remaining U. S. forces swept the northern plains in search of errant tribes, and as part of this action Cody encountered and killed a Cheyenne warrior named Yellow Hair.

The facts of the event remain unremarkable in the context of the Indian Wars. In connection with a larger maneuver, Cody and several soldiers intercepted a party of Cheyenne who appeared intent on cutting off an army courier. Cody's mount, on stepping into a hole, threw the scout, and a bullet from Cody dispatched Yellow Hair's horse. On the ground, Cody and Yellow Hair (whose name through misinterpretation became Yellow Hand) exchanged shots, and the Cheyenne perished. Cody did little more than fulfill his duty and save his own life, but he made a spectacle of the event, and his method suggests Cody had committed himself to a career as a performer. The morning of the fight he wore a flashy, black stage costume fashioned after the style of the vaquero, undoubtedly donning "the costume so that he could tell audiences the following winter that he was wearing the authentic attire of a scout of the

¹²For an exhaustive study of this event in relation to American history, industry, and myth, see Slotkin, The Fatal Environment.

plains...."¹³ Cody also scalped his victim, and declared the topknot the first scalp for Custer. Cody, "a curious admixture of thespian and assassin," achieved a full circle of performance; having taken the West to the stage, he returned to the plains and surrounded his West with footlights.¹⁴ The Yellow Hand fight capped Cody's successes as a scout. It would have brought glory to any soldier, but "it was Buffalo Bill, the stage star, who risked all in the most chivalrous of arts....What if John Wayne, after whipping the Japanese on film, had actually led the charge up Mount Suribachi?"¹⁵

Cody had drawn the symbolic blood of vengeance, satisfying a nation newly reunified by the intention of conquering a common enemy once and for all. The fact that Yellow Hand held limited tribal power and consequently had negligible influence on plains warfare, mattered little. America, divided north from south, looked west for its identity, and in killing Yellow Hand for Custer, Cody performed one of the first distinctly American acts. With two bullets and a knife, Cody ended his career as a scout and became a showman, representing no longer simply western, but American, values.

¹³Ibid., 232

¹⁴Quote from Evan S. Connell, Son of the Morning Star (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984), 335.

¹⁵Fees, "In Defense of Buffalo Bill," 146.

In this much-studied conflict with Yellow Hand, Cody also went a long way, perhaps unwittingly (although Cody's knack for showmanship suggests otherwise), towards bridging the gap between Anglo-American and British popular cultures. The medieval-style tourney occupies a substantial position within western European lore, and the romance of duel transferred well to the American frontier.¹⁶ Boiling down warfare to one-on-one confrontation easily distinguishes the foes and their respective camps, allowing differences between right and wrong, or civilization and savagery, to appear in their greatest relief.

British authors of adventure novels had already used this technique in relation to the West and empire. In Mayne Reid's The Scalp Hunters, Harry Haller meets in battle a Navajo, who "[s]uddenly...wheeled, and throwing his lance to a charge, came galloping....I had just time to throw up my rifle and parry the charge."¹⁷ Such "lances" and "parries" occur no fewer than four times in the book. In a similar vein, one of Henty's cowboys in Redskin and Cowboy compares the West to medieval Europe, where "'every man carried his sword by his side and was always fighting.'"¹⁸ Throughout the volume, epic clashes of forces leave no doubt that the

¹⁶On the connections between medieval Europe and the American West, see Lynn White, Jr., "The Legacy of the Middle Ages in the American Wild West," Speculum 40 (April 1965), treated and quoted in Drinnon's introduction to Facing West, especially xii.

¹⁷Reid, The Scalp Hunters, 154.

¹⁸Henty, Redskin and Cowboy, 185.

line between civilization and savagery remains, for Henty, prominently demarcated.

Cody's use of such romance enhanced his own image of a western knight errant, and the dramas in which he acted in the next seven years, many of which incorporated the Yellow Hand encounter, would prove extremely popular throughout America. Cody had authenticated his Buffalo Bill, proving the claims of truthfulness that accompanied his performances, and had performed a distinctly Anglo act in which the symbolic line between savagery and civilization found its greatest prominence. His audiences had confidence that the man on the stage before them had ridden the plains, defended the West, avenged Custer, and through it all remained an admirable representative of civilization. This man would not and could not lie to them, for they accepted his myth as their own. "Fact and fiction were from that moment [of the Yellow Hand fight] conjoined in Buffalo Bill....Cody's audiences believed him;...and the show's narrative carried...the force of truth."¹⁹

From 1876 to 1883, Cody continued with his dramatic combinations in the winter, retiring for the summer to his ranch at North Platte, Nebraska. His stage career capitalized on his plains exploits and other Anglo westering efforts against savage elements, including the "White Indians" of the Mountain Meadows Massacre (in which a group of Mormons, decked out in Native American attire and led by

¹⁹Ibid.

John D. Lee, ambushed and rifled a non-Mormon emigrant train--Lee's capture and execution, some twenty years after the dark episode, inspired the reenactment). Also during this period, Cody's experiences in ranch life influenced his future as a mythmaker of the West in several ways.

While on the ranch, Cody could relax, and away from the hectic pace of the itinerant stage combination, he began to write. In 1879, he published the first of many autobiographies. He also lent his name to ghostwritten dime novels, most of which Prentiss Ingraham penned. Ned Buntline wrote several more Buffalo Bill novels, and the recurrence of Cody's name in military reports and the journals of foreign travellers, who had enlisted Cody as a guide, made Buffalo Bill an international figure.²⁰

More directly related to the business of the ranch, Cody encountered a type of laborer that he would incorporate into his mythic West: the cowboy. The unusual skills of the cowboy, performed in a harsh environment that demanded fortitude and courage, appealed to Cody. In the late 1870s and early 1880s, the cowboy as a western persona remained relatively embryonic. But various events soon changed the cowboy's status, and in the following twenty years, he became an enduring symbol of America.

²⁰For specific Buffalo Bill titles, see Albert Johannsen, The House of Beadle and Adams (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950). Commentary on the writings of Cody and those who he guided can be found in Russell, Lives and Legends, 162-73, 265-284.

At first, the cowboy received little good press, which associated him with the western range wars and villainous highway robbery. Even President Chester Arthur chastised cowboys, calling them "desperadoes" for "committing acts of lawlessness and brutality which the local authorities have been unable to repress."²¹ But Cody saw the cowboy as a brave laborer, and given the anonymity of the cattle driver in 1879, "Cody found it necessary to define both 'round-up' and 'cow-boy'....He was to make both household words."²²

Cody's determination to recognize the cowboy as a positive Anglo-western type led to a fruitful meeting with his future partner and also to one of the first large-scale celebrations of cowboy life. According to Nate Salsbury, who would co-own and manage Buffalo Bill's Wild West until his death, the idea of a show based upon American equestrian skill emerged from an argument he had in Australia with an agent of Cooper and Bailey's Circus. The agent believed Australian horsemanship superior to the American equivalent, while Salsbury "ventured the opinion that our cowboy and Mexican riders could beat the civilized, or uncivilized world in all that the term horsemanship implies."²³ This debate occurred in 1876, and apparently Salsbury, a

²¹Quoted in Frank Bergon and Zeese Papanikolas, eds., Looking Far West: The Search for the American West in History, Myth, and Literature (New York: New American Library, 1978), 273.

²²Russell, Lives and Legends, 261.

²³Nate Salsbury, "The Origin of the Wild West Show," Colorado Magazine 32 (July 1955): 206.

prominent and busy actor, felt prepared to wait six years before developing his idea. He saw the "central figure" for his show in Cody, "a very popular man with a certain class of the public and...notorious enough for my purpose."²⁴ In 1882, the pair conferred and agreed to put together a show that would exhibit all the aspects of life in the West, while concentrating on horsemanship. Suspecting that Ned Buntline's novels had created a Buffalo Bill sensation in Britain, Salsbury travelled there to "look the ground over with a view to taking the show to a country where all its elements would be absolutely novel."²⁵

But while Salsbury scouted Europe, Cody proceeded to test his own ideas of a western exhibition and took his first earnest step towards producing a full-blown version of the West. On the Fourth of July, 1882, Cody made rodeo history with his Old Glory Blowout at North Platte, Nebraska. Essentially a contest of riding and shooting for local ranching talent, the Blowout celebrated the cowboy and marked the beginning of organized rodeo. It also signalled the first coalescence of Cody's ideas of the West into one event. The enormous success of the Blowout, built on the exhibition of cowboy skill, undoubtedly suggested to Cody that all the Indian fights, scouting expeditions, and grand buffalo hunts that had taken up his life might, in

²⁴Ibid., 207.

²⁵Ibid., 206.

reenactment on a large scale, draw the same kinds of crowds that filled North Platte on July 4th.

Eager to present a full Wild West exhibition and unable to wait for Salsbury, who possibly had trouble generating the necessary financial backing, Cody proceeded. On 19 May 1883, Cody and another western showman, Dr. W. F. Carver, opened a Wild West show in Omaha. The show struggled through the summer in a series of fits and starts, suffering from rough organization and internal feuding. But this first tour proved that eager audiences would receive such an exhibition. Previous attempts at presenting western elements in a circus format had met with mostly negative results. P. T. Barnum's buffalo display became a farce, and neither "Wild Bill" Hickok's staged buffalo hunt nor various Indian exhibitions "[were] as broad in scope as Buffalo Bill's Wild West proved."²⁶ Cody formulated a Wild West within a more unified, western context. His renowned frontier experiences lent the exhibition authenticity, while his years on the stage and his production of the Old Glory Blowout gave him experience in presenting large-scale spectacles.

But other factors and players also contributed to Cody's solid, if rough, start in the Wild West in 1883. By the mid-1880s, the itinerant circus had become a popular form of entertainment, and "Buffalo Bill's Wild West was launched on the upswing....It was the beginning of the

²⁶Russell, Lives and Legends, 288.

Golden Age of the Circus. By 1885 fifty and more shows were on the road...."²⁷ Cody also had the ability to surround himself with talented agents and performers. He employed John G. Burke, an indefatigable press agent and promoter, as his general manager. A man like Burke ensured that local papers would rave over the Wild West: the Hartford Courant even proclaimed that Cody had "out-Barnumed Barnum."²⁸ Cody's basic philosophy for the show, that it should resemble an exhibition as much as entertainment, demanded he use performers with western backgrounds. One of these, Frank North, a ranching partner of Cody's, turned the ideological tables on his boss after a rocky early performance, projecting one element in the future success of the exhibition and guessing rightly the potential of utilizing myth. He told Cody: "To make it go you want a show of illusion, not realism."²⁹ To the fortunate late-twentieth-century observer, this advice appears especially valuable. The windows of the Victorian audience's soul may have opened more readily for the illusions of the Anglo myth than the realities of brutal frontier life. To "make it go," Cody had to concede that authenticity included as much illusion as realism.

²⁷Russell, The Wild West, 7.

²⁸Hartford Courant, unknown date, quoted in Russell, Lives and Legends, 297.

²⁹L. O. Leonard, "Buffalo Bill's First Wild West Rehearsal," Union Pacific Magazine (August, 1922), 26-27, quoted in Russell, Lives and Legends, 294.

The final factor in ensuring success for the Wild West rested in the competence of Cody's business partners. When Cody and Carver parted ways at the close of the 1883 season, Nate Salsbury once again figured in Cody's plans. Salsbury, himself an actor of some repute, knew show business and its management. When he, Cody, and Adam Bogardus (one of the show's expert marksman) joined in a partnership in late 1883, the partners' ambitions became plain. The Wild West would not remain merely another circus, and they "undertook to carry on the enterprise to be known as 'Buffalo Bill's Wild West--America's National Entertainment.'"³⁰

The following four years saw a steady growth in the popularity of the Wild West. Its proprietors had determined it should succeed, and even when, in the winter of 1885, a riverboat accident on the Mississippi left the show with little property, the troupe opened on time in New Orleans. Performers in the Wild West became stars: In a serendipitous series of events, Sitting Bull added to Annie Oakley's popularity by dubbing her "Little Sureshot," and Annie Oakley's subsequent fame and presence in the show lured Sitting Bull to join the Wild West for the 1885 summer season. The show also promised to draw crowds by experimenting with sophisticated sets, including moving stages and a ventilator that created miniature cyclones.

What exactly did Buffalo Bill's Wild West present to audiences? The announcer's monologue from the 1885 season

³⁰Russell, Lives and Legends, 300.

provides the most vivid picture.³¹ The show began with the announcer qualifying the content of the performance:

Before the entertainment begins...I wish to impress upon your minds that what you are about to witness is not a performance in the common sense of that term, but an exhibition of skill, on the part of men who have acquired that quality while gaining a livelihood. Many unthinking people suppose that the different features of our exhibition are the result of what is technically called "rehearsals." Such...is not the fact,...and anyone who witnesses our performance the second time will observe that men and animals alike are the creatures of circumstances, depending for their success upon their own skill, daring and sagacity....In the far West, the names we offer to you this afternoon are the synonyms of skill, courage and individual excellence.³²

Who could resist these claims to authenticity, not to mention the real possibility of a truly "wild" performance? As the audience caught its breath, the cowboy band provided music for the entrance procession of the cowboys and Indians, who the announcer then introduced. Cody himself entered on the heels of a eulogy that included his military record, emphasizing his role as "one of the avengers of the lamented Custer."³³

Cody welcomed the audience, and the show began with a horse race between a cowboy, a Mexican, and an Indian. An exhibition of the method of the Pony Express rider followed, preceding one of the show's climaxes, a reenactment of

³¹William F. Cody, from copyright deposit TS in Library of Congress (Washington, D. C., 1 June 1885), reprinted in Bergon and Papanikolas, eds., Looking Far West, 335-39.

³²Ibid., 335-36.

³³Ibid., 336.

Cody's fight with Yellow Hand. Cody and the Wild West's cowboys staged a mock battle with the show's Indians, ending with Cody's vanquishing of the Indian portraying Yellow Hand and the scout's taking of the (fake) "First Scalp for Custer." Annie Oakley then made short work of a series of clay pigeons, after which several cowboys rode bucking broncos. During this portion of the show, Buck Taylor, the first of many "King of the Cowboys," demonstrated his riding skills, picking up hats and handkerchiefs off the ground while riding at a gallop. Cody returned to the spotlight at this point, in an exhibition of his shooting skills, followed by a performance, by the Indians, of several native dances. The germ of what would become, in the next decade, the Congress of Rough Riders (an aggregation of riders from around the world incorporated into Buffalo Bill's Wild West), then found expression in the presentation of an African native astride an elk. The show ended with an attack by the Indians on a settler's cabin. Of course, Cody and the cowboys ultimately repulsed the aggressors.

Buffalo Bill's Wild West grew to such popularity on the strength of these reenactments and demonstrations that by 1886 the company drew steady crowds even during extended stays. During a six month run at Staten Island, New York, followed by another lengthy visit to Madison Square Garden, the show gained international fame.³⁴ The British, who had

³⁴Russell, Lives and Legends, 318-23; Rosa and May, Buffalo Bill and His Wild West, 91-94; Yost, Buffalo Bill, 179-81.

read so many of the Buffalo Bill dime novels, received word through prominent English travelers, namely famed actor Henry Irving, that Cody now brought these adventures to life in the New York arena, subtitling his show there "The Drama of Civilization."³⁵ Mark Twain recognized the Wild West's unique American qualities, as well as the potential success such a show might enjoy in Britain: "It is often said on the other side of the water that none of the exhibitions we send to England are purely and distinctively American. If you will take the Wild West show over there you can remove that reproach."³⁶

Cody soon had a chance to do just that. Representatives of the American Exhibition, one of the attractions slated for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee the following summer, wanted Buffalo Bill's Wild West to appear in London, as part of the exhibition, from May through October. Cody had awaited such an opportunity for three years, and preparations for setting up the London show began immediately. John Burke went to London in the late fall of 1886 to make preparations, and even then "Buffalo Bill was more talked about than any other man in the world."³⁷

By the time the troupe departed for London on 31 March 1887, Cody had amassed enough letters of introduction, as

³⁵Rosa and May, Buffalo Bill and His Wild West, 92.

³⁶New York Dispatch, 18 July 1886; quoted in Russell, Lives and Legends, 321.

³⁷Tribune (Lincoln County, Nebraska), n. d., 1886; quoted in Yost, Buffalo Bill, 180.

well as official honors, to ensure that his reception in England would befit a gentleman. Army generals armed him with letters crediting Cody with performing shows both truthful and representative of the expansion of American civilization. General Wesley Merritt stated that Cody's military "reports were always free from exaggeration," implying the same for the Wild West show, and General Nelson Miles regarded the "Exhibition as not only very interesting but practically instructive." These and other references "formed a solid backing for presenting to far-away London...the showman as one who had actually been all that he was represented to be."³⁸

Cody also exchanged his title of "Honorable" for "Colonel." He had gained the former as a representative-elect for his Nebraska district, and although he never actually legislated, he nonetheless used the title to its greatest advantage. Before Cody left for England, Nebraska governor John M. Thayer appointed him an aid-de-camp, thus making Cody a colonel in the state militia. These titles, especially "colonel," aided Cody immensely in Britain, whose press found his military connections and jewelled officer's sword impressive.³⁹

³⁸Merritt and Miles letters quoted and commented on in Russell, Lives and Legends, 325-36; and Program, "Buffalo Bill's Wild West," 1887, Pamphlet 10, pp. 2, 26, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland.

³⁹Yost, Buffalo Bill, 184.

London was abuzz with the coming of Cody. Henry Irving reported to London's Era that

[i]t is an entertainment in which the whole of the most interesting episodes of life on the extreme frontier of civilization in America are represented with the most graphic vividness and scrupulous detail....No one can exaggerate the extreme excitement and "go" of the whole performance. It is simply immense, and I venture to predict that when it comes to London it will take the town by storm.⁴⁰

Furthermore, "Brick" Pomeroy, an American friend of Cody's in London, stated that "[m]en ask me every day how [Cody] looks and acts; his size and habits; where he was born, [and] how he came to have such a singular name." Pomeroy also related how "prominent citizens" surrounded John Burke, asking him questions about Buffalo Bill.⁴¹

The Wild West troupe arrived at Gravesend on 16 April, and the years on the entertainment circuit of America paid off as the show set up its camp and performance area at Earl's Court within a day, much to the amazement of the British.⁴² The show did not officially open until 9 May,

⁴⁰Era (London), n. d., quoted in Burke, Buffalo Bill From Prairie to Palace (New York: Rand McNally, 1893), 202.

⁴¹Tribune (Lincoln County, Nebraska), n. d.; quoted in Yost, Buffalo Bill, 180.

⁴²Yost, Buffalo Bill, 187. The speed and efficiency with which its managers handled the itinerant Wild West continued to mystify the British. "Perhaps the most amazing fact about the Wild West Show is that during many provincial tours it played only one day, or two performances, at each site. This was in spite of the enormous difficulties involved in loading up and moving...." Yet the Wild West had mastered railroad transport, and "[n]ot surprisingly the most interested spectators on the show's German tours had been Prussian army officers. Their concern was less with the Wild West than with the methods of rapidly mobilizing

and this difference allowed ample time for Cody's publicity machine to take full effect.⁴³ The efficiency of the Wild West contrasted the lethargy of the rest of the American Exhibition and stood as an early indicator of the Wild West's preeminence and popularity in relation to the remainder of the enterprise.

Indeed, the quality of the American Exhibition drew flak even from the New York Times, which printed a letter from a knowledgeable "Inquirer" praising the Wild West but condemning the rest of the Exhibition as wholly un-American in concept and presentation, attributing both to English backers.⁴⁴ The London Times noted the lateness of the Exhibition in opening and its dullness, but also commended Cody: "Though this exhibition was opened yesterday it will still take a few days to establish complete order....As far as the more amusing section of the exhibition goes, everything may be regarded in complete readiness....The 'Wild West' is in full swing."⁴⁵

large numbers of animals and men." G. M. Candler, "The Day Buffalo Bill Came to Bath," in America in Britain (Bath, ENG: The American Museum in Bath, n. d.), 6.

⁴³On the advertising and business abilities of Buffalo Bill's Wild West in Britain, see Claire Jones, "The Greatest Shows on Earth and their Posters," and Candler, "The Day," in America in Britain, 5-15; and on marketing in England, see W. J. Reader, Life in Victorian Britain (New York: Capricorn Books, 1967), 162.

⁴⁴New York Times, 3 April 1887.

⁴⁵Times (London), 10 May 1887, p. 10. Also see the Times (London), 18 April 1887, p. 10; and Globe and Traveller (London), 9 May 1887, p. 7.

And so was Buffalo Bill. The American Exhibition needed him much more than he needed it. He represented the success of the Anglo myth, one who had ventured into the wilderness, tamed it, and returned unscathed. On arriving in England, Cody "considered the reality, 'all of us combined in an expedition 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.'"⁴⁶ Cody wanted his trip to England to appear a duty rather than a profitable entertainment venture, and he therefore insisted that his Wild West had little "show" about it: "The word 'circus' was always anathema on the Buffalo Bill lot. So was 'show'....If cornered on this, its general manager and press agent, John M. Burke, certainly one of the world's top publicists, would insist that it was an exhibition."⁴⁷ The Wild West "exhibited" the "Drama of Civilization," and "Cody had always claimed that it was just such 'truth'...that was enacted in the Wild West, which he would therefore never allow anyone to call a 'show.'"⁴⁸

Cody dwarfed the American Exhibition with his own, even before the opening of the Wild West in London. Advertisements for the Exhibition in London's Globe and

⁴⁶W. F. Cody, Story of the Wild West and Camp-Fire Chats (Philadelphia: n. p., 1888), 706; quoted in Rosa and May, Buffalo Bill and His Wild West, 102.

⁴⁷Russell, Lives and Legends, 5.

⁴⁸Fiedler, Leslie A., et al., Buffalo Bill and the Wild West (New York: publisher unknown, 1981), 86.

Traveller recounted the wonders of the Wild West in large type, while mention of the Exhibition merited little room, if any at all.⁴⁹ On 16 April, weeks before the show had even opened, the London Illustrated News called the Wild West "an event of first-class international importance, and a link between the affections of the two kindred nations...."⁵⁰ The Daily Telegraph considered Cody "this American Achilles of the cowboy Iliad."⁵¹ The statement ran on 21 April, and the early dates of these articles suggests Cody had already made quite an impression on Londoners as a man whose adventures in the West summoned classical allusions and bridged the Atlantic with the stuff of myth.

The feelings of fraternity Cody engendered would only increase in the coming days. On 28 April, former prime minister William E. Gladstone visited the Exhibition grounds, spending most of his time at the encampment of the Wild West, whose band played "Yankee Doodle" when his carriage arrived. Gladstone talked with Red Shirt, a Sioux chief, and John Nelson, who "conducted Brigham Young to Salt Lake City...and is in all respects one of the most interesting of the many interesting people that make up the

⁴⁹Globe and Traveller (London), 9 May 1887, p. 7, and 11 May 1887, p. 8.

⁵⁰London Illustrated News, 16 April 1887; quoted in Carolyn Thomas Foreman, Indians Abroad (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1943), 202.

⁵¹Daily Telegraph (London), 21 April 1887; quoted in Rosa and May, Buffalo Bill and His Wild West, 107.

'Wild West' personnel."⁵² After a short preview of the Wild West show, Gladstone made a few telling remarks, paraphrased by the Times:

He expressed the great pleasure that he had derived from all that he had seen....There was a magnificent destiny reserved for the United States....The destinies of America loomed so large that the mere thought of what was contained in them became almost overwhelming....[T]hey would overshadow by the magnitude of their population...every other portion of the Anglo-Saxon race....But with their opportunities would also come their responsibilities, and...it would be incumbent upon them to set a...noble example....[T]hey had gone through one of the most wonderful struggles known in the history of man. That struggle had reached a result which the mass of the people of England hoped it would reach....[Britain and the U. S.] had duties to one another, and they ought also to have affections to one another.⁵³

Coming, ironically, from a man who never wholly supported Britain's own empire-building, Gladstone's statements, replete with suggestions of manifest destiny, the responsibility of "white man's burden," and the racial ties of the two nations, effectively sum up the nature of the Wild West's drawing power. That this educational event also promised grand entertainment remains, of course, the other half of the equation.

Such suggestions were not left unheeded by the American contingent. In his memoir of the Wild West's tour of Britain, From Prairie to Palace, John Burke reprinted an

⁵²Times (London), 19 April 1887, p. 16.

⁵³Ibid.

article he wrote for the London Illustrated News, expressing in his flowery prose the same thoughts.

We frankly and gladly allow that there is a natural and sentimental view of the design which will go far to obtain for [the Wild West] a hearty welcome in England. The progress of the United States, now the largest community of the English race on the face of the earth, though not in political union with Great Britain, yet intimately connected with us by social sympathies; by a common language and literature; by ancestral traditions and many centuries of common history; by much remaining similarity of civil institutions, laws, morals, and manners; by the same forms of religion;...is a proper subject of congratulation....It would be unnatural to deny ourselves the indulgences of a just gratification in seeing what men of our own blood, men of our own mind and disposition in all essential respects, though tempered and sharpened by more stimulating conditions, with some wider opportunities for exertion, have achieved in raising a wonderful fabric of modern civilization, and bringing it to the highest prosperity, across the whole breadth of the Western Continent, from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. We feel sure that this sentiment will prevail in the hearts of hundreds of thousands of visitors to Buffalo Bill's American camp....⁵⁴

Additionally, Americans back home also viewed the Wild West in these terms.⁵⁵ General W. T. Sherman sent Cody a letter, expressing his thoughts on the subject, that a London paper subsequently printed. Sherman called the Wild West "a palpable illustration of the men and qualities which have enabled the United States to subdue the 2,000 miles of our wild Western continent and make it the home of

⁵⁴London Illustrated News, n. d.; quoted in Burke, From Prairie to Palace, 203-05.

⁵⁵Although in the States, especially in Cody's home of Nebraska, there was some debate as to Cody's qualifications for representing America's achievements. See Yost, Buffalo Bill, 179-203.

civilization....The English people always have, and I hope always will, love pluck and endurance. You have exhibited both...."⁵⁶

As one might expect, Punch, the weekly London satire, looked suspiciously upon the whole affair, commenting on these sorts of statements with tongue firmly in cheek and perhaps with a good deal of wisdom. Under a cartoon depicting Gladstone (in Indian garb) and the Sioux Chief, Red Shirt, smoking a peacepipe ran the caption: "'Red Shirt,' chief of the Seeyou-at-West Kensington Indians, receives a visit from 'Grand Old White Collar,' alias 'Strong Will,' chief of the Oppper Sishun Hinderuns.'"⁵⁷ Along with this political stab was printed an accompanying article by "Our Own Special Earl's Court Interpreter," recounting in a novel way the conversation between Red Shirt and Gladstone, changing their names to "Yellow Slippers" and "the Distinguished Statesman."

"I had better put a poser to him, to open with," observed the Distinguished Statesman, thoughtfully. "Ask him what, in his opinion, will be the probable effects of the forthcoming Show on the financial prospects of the General Omnibus Company, and the Metropolitan District Railway respectively...."

"He does not understand," explained the Trapper [interpreter].

"Dear me, that's awkward," rejoined the Distinguished Statesman....

Affairs assum[ed], therefore, a rather threatening aspect [Yellow Slippers having given a war whoop and then a challenge of a tomahawk duel to the Distinguished Statesman], and "Yellow Slippers"

⁵⁶Era (London), 21 May 1887, p. 7.

⁵⁷Punch, or the London Charivari, 7 May 1887, p. 227.

[was] understood...to express a wish that instead of meeting the "Great White Father," surrounded by pale faces, at West Kensington, he [wanted to] come across him alone on the deserted plains of the real Wild West.⁵⁸

Comments concerning profits the large crowds would offer to the city's transportation systems proved scathing enough, considering that many saw the Exhibition as a cultural, rather than monetary, exchange. But Punch rarely let up, and capped its appraisal of Gladstone's presence at the Wild West with "Opinions of 'Red Shirt.' (Supplied by our Own Thought Reader.)":

Never been in the House of Lords, but prepared to bet that it's not equal to the show at West Kensington.
If asked again by Mr. Gladstone whether I can see "those similarities between Englishmen and Americans which might be expected to exist between kinsmen and brothers?" shall certainly once more reply, "Do not know so much about their being kinsmen and brothers."
Never met Mr. Gladstone in my life before, but reckon he's a first-rate hand at getting out a smart and high-toned advertisement."⁵⁹

Punch hit the nail on the head. Guests such as Gladstone advertised the show as proper for all citizens, including those considered "prominent." In fact, Cody did enough elbow rubbing with high society to ensure his total acceptance in its circles. Punch went so far as to proclaim the Wild West "Belgravia Bob's Show," describing it as composed of

nearly three thousand chaperones, debutantes, dancing-men, and millionaires....It exhibits the

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid., 225.

chasing and capturing of county heirs by the wily dowager and her talented assistants and daughters....Belgravia Bob explains the mysteries of pilling at the Club, baccarat, and flying kites. He also has an encounter with a grass widow (from India) in which he comes off second-best. Mr. Henry Irving is expected to be delighted with the Show, and to say "that it speaks to him from its heart, and is the best thing that has ever been produced by London--outside the Lyceum Theatre," wherein much of the Show is often seen.⁶⁰

The Era lamented that

[i]t will be a deplorable, though not improbable, result of the popularity which we feel sure will attend the Wild West Show if London society, in one of its erratic manias, elects to make "lions" of these manly and muscular heroes of the saddle and lasso....No London reunion will be considered complete without the presence of a stage-driver or a cow-boy. The creme de la creme will, of course, seize upon Buffalo Bill and Buck Taylor, whose visiting-list will soon become inconveniently full.⁶¹

Apparently the Era feared the edge of wildness that sparked the show might become dulled by too much socializing on the behalf of the performers. After all, the cowboy represented "a code of honor which, half-savage as it is, he adheres to with far more rigidity with the denizens of civilized districts." The border character, with his "indifference to peril, perfect fealty to a friend, extreme amiability and openness, coupled with a readiness to 'shoot' as soon as a certain code of civility has been

⁶⁰Ibid., 23 April 1887, p. 193.

⁶¹Era (London), 23 April 1887, p. 13.

transgressed," made the expansion of Anglo civilization possible.⁶²

Nevertheless, the mingling of the border and core of civilization continued, and Cody even visited the House of Commons, where a "great many members conversed with Colonel Cody, who seemed much interested in the business of the house."⁶³ The Native Americans of the troupe (most of whom were Sioux from the Pine Ridge Agency) accompanied Cody in many of his outings, showing up in full plains regalia at the Drury Lane theatre and several of London's gentleman's clubs.⁶⁴ The Indians caused a sensation in London. They represented no longer the immediate threat of savagery, especially as they walked the streets of the city, but rather a fascinating relic of a quickly disappearing frontier. In this nostalgic context, the Times could describe Red Shirt as having "a remarkable face, handsome, dignified, placid, and even benevolent, and no darker than the face of many an Englishman."⁶⁵ The Native Americans could once again receive treatment as "noble savages," whom even royalty would salute.

The greatest publicity and social confirmation the Wild West could receive came in the first two weeks of May. On 5

⁶²Ibid., p. 8.

⁶³Ibid., 7 May 1887, p. 7.

⁶⁴Yost, Buffalo Bill, 188-203; and Times (London), 27 April 1887, p. 6.

⁶⁵Times (London), 27 April 1887, p. 6.

May the Prince and Princess of Wales visited the Wild West, accompanied by an entourage of lesser royalty from around Europe. In a dress-rehearsal that the show badly needed (the Indians were all new to the Wild West), the troupe gave London its first taste of the attraction (through newspaper reports--the performance was strictly private) and proved the exhibition merited royal attention.

The presentation began when "the entire company rode out on the arena from an ambush of rocks, the Indians in full warpaint, and what scanty clothing they wore covered with beads and feathers. The sensation they produced was instantaneous and electric."⁶⁶ Cody then exhibited his shooting skills, and Buck Taylor displayed his riding feats. Sharpshooters Annie Oakley and Lillian Smith "were both congratulated upon their prowess by the Prince of Wales," and the cowboys demonstrated "their amusing struggles with bucking ponies and mules...."

The great features of the entertainment were, however, the attacks made upon an emigrant wagon, a stage coach, and finally a settler's hut by a troop of Indians on the war path, and the gallant rescue in each case by a company of scouts under the command of Buffalo Bill. These incidents, enlivened by the piercing war whoops of the Indians, afforded very interesting spectacles, a good deal [of] realism being introduced into the mimic affrays.⁶⁷

The "realism" of myth had apparently overcome any truth of fact in these three "great features," especially when one

⁶⁶Times (London), 6 May 1887, p. 5.

⁶⁷Ibid.

considers that in reality westering pioneers experienced surprisingly few attacks by Indians. The Prince and his party heartily appreciated the myth, their myth, which they symbolized as much as Buffalo Bill. After the performance, the Prince examined the Wild West encampment. Red Shirt made a positive impression on the Prince, the latter telling him that "'we are immensely pleased with what we have seen'" and sharing a smoke with the Sioux leader.⁶⁸ The ninety-minute show and subsequent tour so pleased the Prince that he "signified their intention to occupy the Royal box as frequently as possible during the season."⁶⁹

The greatest honor for the Wild West, however, came one week later. The Sioux shaman Black Elk, who had participated in the Little Bighorn fight and travelled to Britain with the Wild West, recalled that Queen Victoria "came to the show in a big shining wagon, and there were soldiers on both sides of her....That day other people could not come to the show--just Grandmother England and some people who came with her."⁷⁰ Victoria, the representative of nineteenth-century imperialism, enjoyed this dramatization of the Anglo myth so much that she stayed for the whole show, ignoring her previous instructions that she could attend only one hour of the performance. After the exhibition, the performers were introduced, and Red Shirt

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Neihardt, Black Elk Speaks, 187.

"was...then presented, and the Queen expressed her pleasure at seeing him. Red Shirt replied that it made him glad to hear it; he had come a long way to see Her Majesty."⁷¹ According to Black Elk, the Queen told the Indians, "I am sixty-seven years old. All over the world I have seen all kinds of people; but today I have seen the best-looking people I know. If you belonged to me, I would not let them take you around in a show like this."⁷²

Such sympathy, however, did not deter Victoria from returning for another performance on 20 June, nor did it keep her from stating in her journal that, while the "cow boys, are fine looking people,...the painted Indians, with their feathers, & wild dress (very little of it) were rather alarming looking, & they have cruel faces."⁷³ But her presence on 11 May made the greatest impression on the Wild West and the British public. The effect she could have on publicity was not to be overlooked, and because "Queen Victoria's tastes were catholic," her interest in a performer as unorthodox as Buffalo Bill "could guarantee or enhance his success with the general public."⁷⁴ The Queen's attendance also had a great impact on the American

⁷¹Times (London), 12 May 1887.

⁷²Neihardt, Black Elk Speaks, 188.

⁷³Queen Victoria's Journal, May 11, 1887, The Royal Archives, Windsor Castle, quoted by gracious permission of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II; quoted in Rosa and May, Buffalo Bill and His Wild West, 119.

⁷⁴Display 55, Theatre Museum, a branch of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England.

performers and showed the importance of the ties between the two nations. Victoria had made very few public appearances since the death of Prince Albert, and her visit to the Wild West constituted a significant return to public life and functions (although the performance itself was private). Additionally, the Queen recognized the American flag, something of a first in British history.

The incident thrilled, unspeakably, every American present, and with the impulse of the West our company gave a shout such as had never before been heard in Britain....For the first time in history a British sovereign had saluted the Star-Spangled Banner, and that banner was carried by a delegate and exalted attache of Buffalo Bill's Wild West....Never before, since the world commenced, has such a gathering honored a public entertainment. Caesar and his captive monarchs, the Field of the Cloth of Gold, nothing in history can compare with that assemblage of the mighty ones of the earth that honored the Wild West upon this occasion.⁷⁵

The "incident," while certainly spurring thousands of British to attend the Wild West, did not meet wholly with approval by the British press, who had long waited to report on the Queen's renewed attendance at English productions. The Era suggested "[n]ow that the French [Paris Hippodrome] and American shows have been patronised by the Queen, we may hope that Her Majesty will consider the propriety of encouraging native enterprise...."⁷⁶ The Globe asserted that "[h]er visit to 'the Wild West'...will have given

⁷⁵William F. Cody, Life and Adventures of Buffalo Bill (Chicago: John R. Stanton & Co., 1917); quoted in Bergon and Papanikolas, Looking Far West, 341-2. Also see Foreman, Indians Abroad, 200; and Yost, Buffalo Bill, 192.

⁷⁶Era, 14 May 1887, p. 13.

reflected pleasure to her subjects, and made them feel less acutely that our monarchy is an article of faith rather than an actual and visible presence."⁷⁷ The article goes on to criticize the Queen's command of a private performance and the increasing alienation of the people from the monarch.

If her subjects could not attend the Wild West with Queen Victoria, they could at least go to the show secure in their hearts that the Wild West represented one aspect of their civilization's triumphs and that it had royal sanction. The American Exhibition opened on 9 May, and although the "object of the promoters was to show what improvements Americans had made since they reclaimed the forests from the families of the red men...", the Times did not shrink from relating that "this is entirely a private enterprise, the main purpose of which is to pay those who risked their money on it."⁷⁸ Cody certainly wanted to make money, but the nature of his own exhibition transcended that of the gadgetry set up in the adjoining buildings at Earl's Court. He presented the drama of Anglo expansion in mythic terms, while the various agricultural and industrial implements presented the same values, but on a factual scale of considerably less grandeur.

It is not supposed to be, and nobody even affects to suppose, that the Great British nation yesterday assembled in its thousands...to inspect the Christmas cards, letter files, extract of beef, and artificial teeth, which represent at

⁷⁷Globe and Traveller (London), 12 May 1887, p. 1.

⁷⁸Times (London), 10 May 1887, 10.

present the triumphs of American progress in the van of civilization. Artificial teeth are, no doubt, glorious things, and--though that is not saying much--beat nature in an easy canter. But it was not concerning mastication...that Mr. Gladstone came to discourse with Red Shirt the sage; it was not the Christmas cards that the Prince of Wales came to visit; it was not over the extract of beef that Archdeacon Farrar read a prayer "with a peroration." The hearts of the people had flown forward to the Wild West, and were beating for Buffalo Bill....⁷⁹

"Flown forward" sums up the situation succinctly.

After long introductory speeches by the Exhibition officials, the exposition opened, and "the spectators at once began to pour down the avenue connecting the main building with the 'Wild West.'"⁸⁰ Not counting standing onlookers, a capacity crowd of twenty-five thousand people witnessed Buffalo Bill's Wild West during its first public show in London.⁸¹

Unquestionably the Honourable Colonel Cody is a great man. He has followed Carlyle's advice to the young, and cleared his mind of cant--nay, he has cleared ours. He has frankly accepted...that the great public heart cares nothing for artificial teeth--no, not even when they become machinery in motion. The frantic rush across the bridge from the machinery, even while it was just starting, to the Wild West, must have been bitterly disheartening to the machinery. Never, we are told, have so many people been seen under one roof in this country as crowded the amphitheatre to revel in the exploits, not of scientific automata worked by steam, or of biscuit tins and wax-work pumpkins, but of their fellow creatures, presented in dramatic form. And the fact is wholesome. It is true that [exhibitions]

⁷⁹Globe and Traveller (London), 10 May 1887, p. 4.

⁸⁰Times (London), 10 May 1887, 10.

⁸¹Ibid.; and Globe and Traveller (London), 10 May 1887,

cannot always get the co-operation of a Prince, an Archdeacon, and a Gladstone. But, then, one cannot always get a Buffalo Bill.⁸²

Cody would probably have approved of this assessment of his position within the American Exhibition, but he might have taken umbrage at the passage, "presented in dramatic form." A short biography of Cody and description of the Wild West's significant elements, available for sale on the Wild West lot, made clear that, no ordinary entertainment, the show reenacted rather than dramatized events. "Romance has played a pretty part; but, even that, with all its fantastic phantasmagora, has not given a glimpse of the career of that little band of pioneers trappers and scouts....This little book is compiled with the object of introducing to the public the life and habits of these men."⁸³ Cody wanted his show to resemble a history lesson, and given the words of Sherman, who believed it "practically instructive," and the approval of other figures of authority, Cody generally succeeded in this endeavor. Later in the year, the Birmingham Gazette reported that "[a] better idea of the dangers pioneers confront,...of the way in which the Wild West has been 'settled' and civilized, can be obtained from one visit to this exhibition than by reading a score of histories and a cartload of

⁸²Globe and Traveller (London), 10 May 1887, p. 4.

⁸³The Life & Adventures of Buffalo Bill; Habits and Customs of the Indians; and Cowboy Life in the Wild West (London: F. Wells/American Exhibition,, 1887), 1.

descriptions."⁸⁴ The programs of the show both reflected and produced such confident pronouncements. The London audiences received not a program proper but rather a brief, one-page overview of the show and then thirty pages of extensive description of the show's participants and events, including "A Few [15] Reasons Why You Should Visit 'Buffalo Bill's Wild West.'"⁸⁵ Most of the latter stress the instructive properties of the exhibition. The program's centerpiece illustrations depict the "Death of Custer in the Battle of the Little Big Horn," and a rather bloody "Death of Yellow Hand--Cody's First Scalp for Custer." The caption belies Cody's educational intent, stating that Yellow Hand's band numbered eight hundred warriors when in reality only a few Indians engaged the troopers.⁸⁶

But misstatement of, or even blatant deception in, the facts mattered little. Buffalo Bill's Wild West did not portray a factually real frontier, despite its claims, but conversed with its audience truthfully in mythical language. "We can conceive a tribal storyteller as being in important ways a part of his own audience, a receiver and believer of the myths."⁸⁷ Although conditioned by a modern industrial

⁸⁴Birmingham (ENG) Gazette, n. d. November 1887; quoted in Russell, Lives and Legends, 338.

⁸⁵Buffalo Bill's Wild West, America's National Entertainment, pamphlet 10, p. 26, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 14-15. The Yellow Hand fight is detailed in Russell, Lives and Legends, 226-35.

⁸⁷Slotkin, The Fatal Environment, 29.

world that systematically set its storytellers apart from their audiences, Cody related to his British audiences in a very "tribal" way. Using in particular the imagery of the Yellow Hand fight, Cody told of the struggle of Anglo civilization in its efforts to overcome the non-Anglo, savage world. He both produced and believed the spectacle of his life, witnessing like the audience his own feats as he performed them again and again. Cody thus assured himself and his spectators that he was their greatest representative, that through repeated performances that resembled more a genuflection at a shrine, he would take the first scalp for Custer. By gathering up even the bones of a dead frontier and selling them, Cody exemplified the Anglo myth, which bemoaned the corpse while rejoicing in triumph.

True to form, Punch did not buy the bones, at least at the price Cody asked. It afforded enough space and attention to Cody to indicate the importance of his presence, but apparently felt his Wild West signified little more than sound and fury. "Toby," the imaginary M. P. who kept Punch's diary of Parliament, spoofed the King of Belgians and took a jab at the relative importance of the House of Commons: "'Always like to advance by degrees, mon frere,' he said to me; 'so take House of Commons en route for Buffalo Bill.'" ⁸⁸ Punch also used the Wild West to its satirical advantage in commentary more directly relating to Parliament. Accompanying a cartoon depicting an M. P.

⁸⁸Punch, 23 April 1887, 196.

astride a bucking horse labelled "House of Commons" and captioned "Wild West-Minster! or, 'Buck-Jumping' Extraordinary!!," a song (sung to the air "John Peel") entitled "Wild West-Minster!" recounted the adventures of "Arthur Peel."⁸⁹

Regarding the show, Punch took it for just that, a show, and criticized (through spoof, of course) both its audiences and its content for assuming it otherwise.

From what I saw there, I gather that Life in the Wild West is a theatrical, circus-like sort of existence; that everyone dresses in a fancifully embroidered costume,...that there is a good deal of tan about, and that there are highly coloured canvas mountains, trees, and blue sky all round up to a certain height, above which can be seen the attic-windows of the neighboring houses; that Noble Savages ride in at full gallop,...that they swoop and whoop, and squeak and shriek, in all the bravery of their paint and feathers; and that is...the only "bravery" they display, as there is nothing particularly daring in coming out...to attack four harmless travellers...and, on the appearance of Buffalo Bill and the Cowboys, to gallop away again in abject terror....In fact, whenever the Noble Savages come into collision with the Cowboys, they get the worst of it. But is this the true story of Wild West life? Why should the Noble Savage be always beaten by the Cowboys?...One day the Indians will turn sulky and refuse to play any more....I should let the Indians win now and then, just for a treat.⁹⁰

Criticizing the show for its affected realism and putting the Anglo myth in its place, Punch then switched its sights to the personality of Cody and treated him to a turn on its spit. In the process it also suggested, once again,

⁸⁹Ibid., 14 May 1887, pp. 234-5. Unfortunately, I cannot ascertain the identity of "Arthur Peel," although it may be Arthur Balfour.

⁹⁰Ibid., 4 June 1887, p. 269.

that the General Omnibus Company had a great deal of profit coming for its services in shuttling Londoners to the Wild West. In a mock autobiography, signed by Buffalo Bill, an imaginary Cody responds to the editor's desire to hear some of Cody's "Still Wilder Reminiscences."

Yes, I certainly could do this, and in a way fairly to astonish you, were it not for that lack of leisure which a continual flow of invitations to the mansions of the nobility...of this Metropolis forces upon....That they should pay their homage to my world-famed courage and accomplishments, and wish to have my intensely picturesque figure...adorning...their gilded saloons, is only natural.⁹¹

Cody then proceeds to tell his adventure, an encounter with the driver of an omnibus, the chairman of which concern he was walking with.

As the chairman who had been watching the duel from a neighbouring door-step, came up, I swung the Omnibus driver's top-knot in the air and shouted at my loudest, "The first scalp for the Boss of the Big Show!" And thus I relieved the General Omnibus Company of an uncivil servant....What other roles I may fill before I leave these shores it is impossible at present to foretell; but that I am equal to any and every call that can possibly be made on my courage, philosophy, intelligence, intrepidity, and tact, cannot, I should say, for a moment be doubted by those who have read the modest and retiring manifestoes that have hitherto been submitted to the public under the unassuming title of Buffalo Bill.⁹²

Punch offered the most scathing (albeit humorous) criticisms of the show, but its underlying respect for what

⁹¹Ibid., 18 June 1887, 300.

⁹²Ibid.

Cody pulled off surfaces in their index for 1887, illustrated by the figure of Punch on a bucking bronco.

Commentary came from other quarters as well. The audience wanted a bit more savage violence, and Cody complained that "[t]he Englishmen got so that if nobody was hurt during a performance they were disappointed, so when no one was hurt, I would instruct one of the boys to pretend to be injured, and they wouldn't know the difference."⁹³ They were not wholly disappointed, because the "King of Cowboys," Buck Taylor, broke his leg in a fall from a horse in the first weeks of the run. The Era offered more constructive, if at times gruesome, criticism than Punch or the audiences.

One of the three attacks by Indians, for instance, might with advantage be removed and replaced by some novel "sensation." Could not a prairie fire be managed? We would also suggest for consideration the advantage of the introduction of a little scalping. Why should not the Indians overcome a party of scouts, and "raise their hair?" Wigs and scalps are not very expensive, and carmine is decidedly cheap. But it will be a long time before public curiosity will be glutted, and until then "Buffalo Bill" may be content to "let her rip...."⁹⁴

Cody indeed "let her rip," and although he actually did implement, in Birmingham, a prairie fire, he obviously quite satisfied his audiences with his setup in London. Attendance figures remained consistently high, and on Whit Monday (30 May) an estimated 60,000 attempted to see the afternoon performance, only one of three shows that day.

⁹³Leavenworth Times, 29 January 1889; quoted in Rosa and May, Buffalo Bill and His Wild West, 121.

⁹⁴Era (London), 14 May 1887, p. 9.

"[S]o dense was the mass of people at the Wild West portion of the entertainment that it became necessary to stop the influx of visitors. Barriers had to be hastily extemporized and a reinforcement of police sent for...."⁹⁵ By this time, London considered the American Exhibition part and parcel of the Wild West, rather than vice versa, a telling Times article speaking of the "three performances" of the "American Exhibition" rather than the "Wild West" specifically.⁹⁶

On 20 June, Queen Victoria, the Prince of Wales, and their entourage returned to the Wild West in another salute to Cody's popularity and influence. During the performance, with Cody at the reins, the show's "Deadwood stage" carried the kings of Denmark, Greece, Belgium, and Saxony, as well as the Prince of Wales. Afterward, the Prince, referring to the ride and the increasing popularity of poker in England, told Cody, "Colonel, you never held four kings like these before." Cody responded with, "I've held four kings, but four kings and the Prince of Wales [Cody later changed his story to "four kings and the Royal joker"] makes a royal flush...."⁹⁷

The crown of England had honored the Wild West twice, and the British crowds followed its example by filling the

⁹⁵Ibid., 4 June 1887, p. 10.

⁹⁶Times (London), 31 May 1887, p. 7.

⁹⁷William F. Cody, Story of the Wild West, 742-48; quoted in Russell, Lives and Legends, 331.

seats at nearly every performance until the show closed in October. But attendance at and enthusiasm over the show does not tell the whole story of Cody's impact on his British audiences. According to John Burke, during that summer of 1887, London went mad for things western.

A walk around the principal streets of London at this time would have shown how...the Wild West had 'caught on' to the popular imagination. The windows of the London bookseller were full of editions of Fenimore Cooper's novels....It was a real revival of trade for the booksellers, who sold thousands of volumes of Cooper,...while Prentiss Ingraham's realistic "Border Romances of Buffalo Bill" had a tremendous sale. There is no doubt that the visit of the Wild West to England set the population of the British Islands to reading, thinking, and talking about their American kinsmen to an extent theretofore unknown.⁹⁸

Furthermore, several of London's theatres paid Cody what one might consider the greatest type of compliment: they attempted imitation. In scaled-down versions, of course, and on the theatre stage, four melodramas with western themes played to London audiences. Frederick Corder revived his two-year-old "The Noble Savage," to correspond with Cody's arrival in April. In addition, Alfred Stafford's "The Wild West," George Roberts's "Buffalo Bill," and Charles Hermann's and H. J. Stanley's "Buffalo Bill, or, Life in the Wild West," all had runs that summer and directly invoked the name of Cody or the show.⁹⁹

⁹⁸Burke, From Prairie to Palace, 202.

⁹⁹Lord Chamberlain's Plays, Mss 53379-101, 53379-102, 53379-111, Department of Manuscripts, the British Library, London, England; and Allardyce Nicoll, A History of English Drama, 1600-1900, vol. 5 (Cambridge, ENG: Cambridge

Of the bizarre plot of "The Noble Savage," the Era reported that "[a]n opera company...is wrecked on the land of the Washamucks--a tribe of Indians that will not be found represented in Buffalo Bill's camp...."¹⁰⁰ Stafford's "The Wild West," "suggested by the advent of Buffalo Bill," unfolded in the "Wild North West of Canada, during the Red River War."¹⁰¹ While the "name of Buffalo Bill does not appear in the list of characters,...the drama contains the amount of narrows escapes...common to the class of piece to which it belongs, and there is a waterfall scene in the second act which excites admiration."¹⁰² Focusing on "Buffalo Bill," the Era asserted that "[t]he halo which the popularity of the 'Wild West' Show has illumined around the head of Buffalo Bill has suggested to Mr. Stewart the production...of a drama of which the hero of the prairies is the principle character, and which contains several scenes of Western American life."¹⁰³

Cody's influence also had political consequences. On 31 October, the day of the Wild West's final performance in London, a "meeting of representative Englishmen and Americans was held, under the presidency of Lord Lorne, in support of the movement for establishing a Court of

University Press, 1946).

¹⁰⁰Era (London), 7 May 1887, p. 14.

¹⁰¹Ibid, 18 June 1887, p. 7, and 11 June 1887, p. 9.

¹⁰²Ibid., 11 June 1887, p. 9.

¹⁰³Ibid., 4 June 1887, p. 14.

Arbitration for the settlement of disputes between this country and the United States."¹⁰⁴ The Times left no doubt that the American Exhibition, and most particularly Buffalo Bill's Wild West, deserved credit for this effort.

At first sight it might seem to be a far cry from the Wild West to an international Court. Yet the connection is not really very remote. Exhibition of...scenes from the wilder phases of American life certainly tend...to bring America nearer to England. They are partly cause and partly effect....Those who went to be amused often stayed to be instructed. The Wild West was irresistible. Colonel Cody suddenly found himself the hero of the London season....All London contributed to his triumph, and now the close of his show is selected as the occasion for promoting a great international movement....Civilization itself consents to march onward in the train of "Buffalo Bill." Colonel Cody can achieve no greater triumph than this....After all, the Americans and the English are one stock. Nothing that is American comes altogether amiss to an Englishman....[T]he Wild West...is racy of the American soil. We can easily imagine Wall Street for ourselves; we need to be shown the cowboys of Colorado. Hence it is no paradox to say that Colonel Cody has done his part in bringing America and England nearer together.¹⁰⁵

Through the language of the Anglo myth, Cody had struck a chord in the British. Neither restrained by, nor possibly even cognizant of, the factual truth, Buffalo Bill gave his audiences what they had come to expect from dime and adventure novels, namely the drama of Anglo expansion in its most basic terms of conflict and victory. Additionally, he assured London society that he was pure gentleman, and his

¹⁰⁴Times (London), 1 November 1887; quoted in Burke, From Prairie to Palace, n. p., and in Russell, Lives and Legends, 336-7.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

life, as he presented it, bore this out. Interacting with savagery on the frontier, he nonetheless conquered the savage impulse within himself and without. He survived the trial in the name of civilization, even if he applied this principle as an afterthought, manifesting it in displays of the Wild West's "Drama of Civilization." Cody's domination of London's 1887 season influenced everything from book sales to politics to theatre productions, and promised success in subsequent tours of Britain and Europe into the early 1900s. Indeed, the pervasiveness and popularity of Buffalo Bill's Wild West in the following years would spawn numerous imitations. One of these provided the vehicle for a man who became a pioneer on two frontiers. S. F. Cody came to Europe with an opportune name and a Wild West show that exhibited nineteenth-century ideas of savagery and civilization, but he soared into British history on the wings of distinctly twentieth-century accomplishments.

CHAPTER IV

Eastward Ho!: Samuel Franklin Cody,
A Pioneer on Two Frontiers

Perhaps to Englishmen--half savage still on the pinnacle of their civilisation--the very charm of the land lies still in its empty barbarism....You are left a savage again....You are a naked man, facing naked nature.¹

On 16 October 1908, Samuel Franklin Cody wheeled his aeroplane onto the green fields of Farnborough. He fastened his machine to a tree, and roughly gauged the condition and power of the plane's engine against this well-worn hitching post. Untying the machine from this forlorn, lightening-blasted Scottish Pine, Cody and his assistants prepared for another day of tests. But instead of short-hopping around the green as they had done for the last six months, the aeroplane and Cody took to the air, attempted a slow, curving turn, then crashed. Unscathed but certainly dazed, S. F. Cody walked away from the wreckage the first man in Britain to achieve a sustained flight in a heavier-than-air, machine-powered aeroplane.

It may not at first appear unusual that such a flight should take place, for five years had elapsed since the Wright brothers had flown at Kitty Hawk. Yet Cody was an American Wild West showman, often confused with Buffalo Bill, working within an aggressively British military establishment that believed in neither amateurs nor

¹G. W. Steevens, With Kitchener to Khartum (London: Blackwood, 1898), 325-26; quoted in W. J. Reader, At Duty's Call, 54.

aeroplanes. Times had changed dramatically since the halcyon days of empire. Romantic dreams of world conquest and the money needed to support such visions had significantly diminished, especially following the Boer War. The Anglo myth had transformed significantly and impressive frontier characters had become nostalgia, relics of a past whose suspect actions had begun to wrinkle the imperial facade. As the racial and ethnic "others" of the Empire and Europe began to close in on the tidy world of British superiority, "frontier" came to mean something else entirely. The confused, shoestring-budgeted British War Office viewed Cody's flight as only one of many developments in the swirl of expensive and questionable aeronautical experiments. But the grandly goateed and moustachioed "Cowboy Cody" persevered, and a consideration of his world reveals the churning of turn-of-the-century British values, particularly the adaptation of the Anglo myth from the savagery of wilderness to the barbarism of the modern state.

Samuel Franklin Cody's life in America remains, at best, shrouded in a haze of hearsay. His early activities, all of which may or may not have occurred, appear at times too romantic for fact but too detailed for fantasy. Cody's grandfather probably immigrated to the United States from County Antrim, Ireland. The family may have settled in Texas, and Cody's father, also Samuel Franklin, reportedly

fought for the Confederacy in the Civil War.² Depending on the sources consulted (no birth certificates exist), Phoebe June Cody gave birth to Samuel Franklin Cody on the sixth or seventh of March, 1860, 1861, or 1862.³ On the return of Cody senior from the war, the family moved from Birdville, Texas (now a part of Ft. Worth), onto a ranch in Wise County, about forty miles north. The census records from the period reveal none of these names or moves, and we can rely only on faint, secondhand glimpses of Cody's life from his birth to 1893, when he first appears in Europe.⁴

²Mary Cody, Kent, England, to author, Logan, Utah, Summer 1991, p. 1. The records of Texas Confederates that I have consulted have not included Cody's father. Cody's early life has to be scrapped together from contemporary news articles and Cody's plays, in particular La Velo (The Bike--Paris), 27-29 October 1893, trans. Dorothy Rakley, n. p.; Samuel Franklin Cody, "The Klondyke Nugget," 1898, Tms 249, Lord Chamberlain's Plays, Department of Manuscripts, the British Library, London, England; and Samuel Franklin Cody, "Nevada," 1904, Tms 56, Lord Chamberlain's Plays, Department of Manuscripts, the British Library, London, England.

³W. J. Drinkwater says 1862 in his "Colonel Cody--ace Edwardian Aviator," n. p., n. d., p. 20; La Velo, a French bicycling paper, in a bout of confusion, senility, or printing error, states both 1860 and 1861. Cody's certificate of naturalization in England, on the other hand, is nearly illegible when it comes to dates, and I must admit that on this document it could be any of the three, but most probably 1862. Samuel Franklin Cody, Certificate of Naturalization, 21 October 1909, General Register Office, London.

⁴Tarrant County Census, 1870-1910, and Wise County Census, 1860-1910, United States Bureau of the Census. Tarrant County's records for the 1860s, possibly a vital link, are unfortunately lost. Regarding Cody's alleged presence in the Montana cattle industry in the 1870s-80s, I checked without success the 1880 Montana Census for all the possible names of his associates and family.

There exist two versions of the odyssey Cody embarked upon that eventually led him to Europe. The first, most probably fictional, sends Cody herding cattle up the Chisholm Trail from Ft. Worth to Ellsworth, Kansas, at the age of twelve.⁵ Undoubtedly an experienced ranchhand, Cody in his twentieth year met an English horse dealer, John Blackburn Davis, who commissioned the young Texan to deliver several horses to England. Cody fell in love with Davis's daughter, Lela, and after further trips to England (presumably in the same capacity), he married her and the couple took up ranching in Texas. The financial help of Lela's father could not support the family, which now included two sons, Leon and Vivian (and later a third, Sam). Cody decided to try his hand at mining gold, and in 1883 headed for Alaska while Lela and the boys returned to England. Having no luck in the goldfields, Cody returned to ranching in Texas.⁶ On an 1885 cattle drive, he learned the rudiments of aeronautics from a Chinese cook who taught him the art of kite flying. In 1887 Cody met Adam Forepaugh, who owned a Wild West show similar to Buffalo Bill's and even employed Dr. W. F. Carver, with whom Buffalo Bill had begun his Wild West career. Carver had just quit the show,

⁵This first version is suggested in bits and pieces elsewhere, but is tied together in Tracy Peeters, "Cowboy Cody and His Fabulous Flying Machines," Texas Highways (July 1991): 11-13.

⁶In the 1898 program for Cody's "The Klondyke Nugget," the Alexandra Palace Theatre related that Cody lived in the Klondyke in 1883-84. Program, "The Klondyke Nugget," Alexandra Palace Theatre, u. d. [1898?].

and needing another marksman, Forepaugh hired Cody for his shooting and riding skills. As "Captain Cody, King of the Cowboys," he toured with Forepaugh until Lela wrote and told him of Buffalo Bill's great success in London. Taking a chance, Cody made for England, and his career soon entered the history books.

While this account may contain some kernel of truth, enough of its points remain factually incorrect or overly vague to make the story tenable. The second version, written in 1893 presumably from Cody's own words, balances the first and helps to piece together a plausible picture.⁷ The French bicycling paper La Velo, reporting on an 1893 race between Cody (astride a horse) and a bicyclist named Meyer, contains the first and most thorough biography of Cody. The paper's citation of specific places and dates suggests that Cody told the story and, whether truthful or not, it shows Cody's familiarity with the West. Additionally, Cody's narration of his life resembles, in its method, Buffalo Bill's mingling of fact and fantasy in the creation of a West that bespoke a truth of mythical rather than actual reality.

According to La Velo, Cody began life in desolate Birdville. The son of Buffalo Bill Cody (La Velo's only glaring error), S. F. grew up in the violent atmosphere of the "relentless war against the Red Skins, because, at that

⁷La Velo, n. p. The events of this second version of Cody's life are also outlined in Great Cavalcade of the Air, no publisher, n. d., p. 38.

time, the latter, considering the Pale Faces as invaders, never missed a chance to scalp them, to kidnap their wives and children, or, at the least, to rustle their cattle."⁸ The elder Cody then left, and the rest of the family moved to their ranch. Cody farmed and hunted to help make ends meet, living the life of the cowboy, who

has to be able to shoot straight, throw a lasso, mount any horse he might be offered; he must be a veterinarian, a blacksmith, a tailor (especially of clothes made from hides); he must do his own laundry, wear it without starch, cook his own food, and look on women as of little importance; all these qualities make whoever follows this profession, and who necessarily carries his life in the hollow of his hand, a being without fear, a loyal friend, or an unforgiving and dangerous enemy.⁹

In the spring of 1874, the Codys and surrounding ranchers met an attack by Indians, who stole the cattle and burned down the ranch houses. Cody himself, wounded in the thigh and "whose scalp would have been so valuable to the Indians," had crawled into a patch of bushes and watched the scene unfold.¹⁰ After the Indians dispersed, Cody dragged

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid. No hint of this battle, presumably in the Wise County (north central Texas) area, can be found in various histories of the Indian Wars in Texas. However, it should be noted that one of the more famous Texas battles, at Adobe Walls (in the Panhandle), occurred in the Spring of 1874. While historically of no real connection with random cattle raids, such as the one La Velo relates, it is conceivable that Cody could have drawn on his knowledge of the battle, which quickly became the stuff of legend, to tell a good story to the paper. However, it should also be remembered that the Texas Rangers were officially formed in the Fall of 1874, in response to the very kind of raid in which Cody may have been involved.

himself to the nearest town, Ft. Worth, where he received medical attention.

"From this moment on, he went from one adventure to another, each more extraordinary than the others, hunting wild buffalo [and joining in] frenzied gallops across the prairie in pursuit and capture of 'mustangs,' (wild horses)."¹¹ Cody then entered ranching in earnest, earning sixty dollars a month as a "head cowboy" in the Texas panhandle. In the spring of 1881, the cattle firm of Hughes and Simpson hired Cody as trail boss on a cattle drive from Wheeler County, Texas, to Custer County, Montana. Cody made a success of the trip, losing remarkably few cattle over a distance of 1,300 miles and during the many difficult crossings. La Velo follows Cody up this trail with such excruciating detail, naming rivers, fords, mileage, and numbers of cattle and men, that the account seems convincing. Also in this year Cody married, but to whom the article does not say.

Cody's subsequent achievements on the trail led to a meeting with Adam Forepaugh in 1888. Possibly with Forepaugh's Wild West Cody "took a ship to England," where he participated, in an unknown capacity, at the 1890 French Exhibition. In 1892, the Casino de Paris hired him, perhaps as a marksman and rider, and during this tenure he participated in the race outlined by La Velo.

¹¹Ibid.

The difficulty of tracing Cody in America leads eventually to the question, "Was his name really Cody?" As Jean Roberts, who lives in Cody's former home at Aldershot, England, and is currently researching Cody's life, has remarked,

It appears very fortunate for a man in a Wild West Act with a similar appearance to W. F. Cody to have the same name. It must have helped him greatly in the early days as I imagine people were confused as to which Cody they were booking for their hall or theatre when in France he was called "son of Buffalo Bill"!¹²

Such confusion would only increase over the years, especially after King Edward VII addressed Cody as "Colonel," possibly thinking the aviator Buffalo Bill.¹³

While certain advantages of calling oneself Cody during Buffalo Bill's heyday appear obvious, and might even suggest a sort of benign fraud, one must consider whether or not the affectation, if so it was, either gave undue advantage to Cody or significantly altered the course of his life. At the time few, if any, challenged S. F. Cody's name, although Cody and Buffalo Bill, whose management remained sensitive to various infringements on his Wild West, would most probably have had occasion to meet or to know of one another. Additionally, Cody's British naturalization certificate lists the name as his own, and after Cody's

¹²Jean Roberts, Aldershot, England, to author, Logan, Utah, 6 October 1991, pp. 2-3.

¹³Mary Cody, Kent, England, to author, Logan, Utah, Summer 1991, p. 2.

death his first wife, Maud Maria Lee Cody--an American, made a successful claim to Cody's estate.¹⁴

But the most potent argument on behalf of S. F. Cody remains the times in which he lived. The American West had a highly transient population and an inefficiently kept census could not possibly keep track of its movements. In an atmosphere where individuals continually underwent recreations in changing physical and economic environments, alterations in one's identity, figuratively or literally, could mean the difference between hardship and prosperity. Also, Cody's sense of self, much like Buffalo Bill's, transformed as he recounted day after day, to eager audiences, the drama of the westering experience. Myth absorbed fact in the production of a reality that Anglo civilization could understand and grasp as its own. Cody did not represent, or claim to represent, Buffalo Bill (although he never denied any connection a confused, paying public might care to make). His shooting, riding, and acting spoke for themselves and to his audience, which expected neither a real West nor a critique of Anglo civilization.

¹⁴Certificate of Naturalization; and Maud Maria Cody, estate claim, 22 May 1914, General Register Office, London. A 61-year-old Maud Maria Lee (her maiden name), is listed in the U. S. Census for Tarrant County (Ft. Worth area) for 1910, although any other Lees, including her father, Joseph Lee, do not match up in previous censuses. Texas Census, 1910, soundex, U. S. Bureau of the Census. It must be allowed that Cody may have changed his name in the States, perhaps when he was hired by Forepaugh, but this can only be speculation, and considering that the name Cody is not uncommon in Texas, it would appear that it was his own.

Thus, one way or another, a man named Cody made it to Europe in the late 1880s or early 1890s, leaving his first wife, Maud Maria, in America. We know that he did at one time have care of John Blackburn Davis's horses, and did in fact meet, fall in love with, and marry (through common law) Elizabeth Mary Davis, also known as Lela. Lela had also left her first marriage, to Edward King, without a divorce, and brought with her three sons, Leon Charles Clive King, Vivian Evelyn Garnet King, and Edward John King, and a daughter, Lizzie C. M. King.¹⁵

Excepting Lizzie, Cody and his new family set off on a tour of Europe, billed as "The Great Codys." Calling his Wild West experiences into play, Cody, "The Cowboy Pistol Shot of the Rockies," shot cigarettes out of Lela's mouth and performed various feats of trick riding. Leon and Vivian, who took the Cody name, became sharpshooters, Vivian described as "The Youngest Rifle & Pistol Shot on Earth." Edward, who kept the King name in spirit by changing his

¹⁵Lela was born in 1852 and married Edward King in 1873. Birth Certificate BXBZ 050599 and Marriage Certificate MX 361598, General Register Office, Chelsea, England. Edward was born in 1875, Leon in 1879, Vivian in 1882, and Lizzie in 1873. Birth Certificates BXBZ 051362, BXBZ 176016, BXB 397844, and BXBZ 103587, General Register Office, Chelsea, England. John Blackburn Davis died in 1890 at age 70, and is listed as a "manager at Horse Dealers." He may have worked for William Bramley. Death Certificate DA 839236, General Register Office, London, England; and Mary Cody, Kent, England, to author, Logan, Utah, Fall 1991, p. 2. Davis's date of death suggests that he may have known Cody before 1890, and therefore Cody might have made trips to England before joining Adam Forepaugh and leaving America permanently, perhaps lending some credence to what I called the first version of Cody's life.

surname to Leroy, played the obligatory Indian.¹⁶ In 1893 the troupe went to St. Petersburg, France, in 1894 to Germany, and travelled to Italy in 1895. Also in 1895, S. F. and Lela had their only child, Samuel Franklin Leslie Cody, born in Switzerland.¹⁷

Perhaps not completely satisfied with the limited format of a small-scale Wild West show, Cody decided to present fictionalized (or were they?) accounts of his life in the West. Through the medium of melodrama, Cody realized he could incorporate his family's shooting and riding skills into a coherent storyline. This idea, while adding some spice to British melodrama, was not new. For years, sharpshooter Frank Frayne had thrilled American audiences with his plays, which featured as much shooting as script to get the plot across.¹⁸ Cody eventually wrote three melodramas that still exist, including "The Klondyke

¹⁶"Samuel Franklin Cody," produced by John Coleman, 60 minutes, videorecording of BBC South 2 television program, 1988.

¹⁷Roberts to author, p. 4; and Cody to author, Fall 1991. S. F. L. Cody, following in his father's footsteps, became a pilot, serving in the 41st Squadron of the Royal Flying Corps during World War One. He was killed in action on 23 January 1917 in France, after an illustrious if short career. Swiss Birth Certificate 1895/1870, Basel-Stadt, Switzerland; and Ministry of Defence, Record of Service of 2nd Lieutenant Samuel Franklin Leslie Cody, P17479, Middlesex, England.

¹⁸That is, until poor Mr. Frayne accidentally killed his wife during a performance. See Roger Hall, "Theatrical Marksman: Frank Frayne," in Theatre West: Image and Impact, ed. Dunbar H. Ogden, Douglas McDermott, and Robert K. Sarlós (Atlanta: Rodopi, 1990), pp. 179-86.

Nugget," "Nevada," and "Viva or Woman of War."¹⁹ He also may have written two other plays, "An Indian Bride," and "Calamity Jane," although these dramas are not extant.²⁰ To understand Cody's plays, particularly "The Klondyke Nugget" and "Nevada," in the context in which Cody and his family performed them, one must consider the melodrama and its relation to western themes.

With its simple dramatic structure and good guy/bad guy morality, the melodrama provided a format that promised instant success to any author who might wish to tell a western story onstage. According to historian and dramaturge Rosemarie Bank, the primary images of the West, related through adventure novels and essays in the first half of the 1800s, proved especially compatible with the form of melodrama, which became extremely popular in the latter half of the century.²¹ Like Harry Haller in Mayne Reid's The Scalp Hunters or Hugh Tunstall in G. A. Henty's Redskin and Cowboy, the "hero of the melodrama becomes the American Adam, taming the wilderness or preserving the tender first shoots of civilization on the frontier."²² The

¹⁹Cody, "The Klondyke Nugget;" Cody, "Nevada;" and Samuel Franklin Cody, "Viva or Woman of War," n. d., Ms. photocopy in possession of author.

²⁰Richard Sassaman, "The Cowboy and His Kites," Air and Space (November 1991): 106; and "Galaxy of Wreaths and a Flower-Bedecked Grave, Reminiscences of 'England's Greatest Aviator,'" unknown newspaper, August 1913.

²¹Rosemarie Bank, "Frontier Melodrama," in Theatre West, ed. Ogden, McDermott, and Sarlós, 153.

²²Ibid.

"tender first shoots" represent regeneration, the possibilities of a second chance. In an increasingly industrialized world caught in the vicious circle of what Henry George termed "progress and poverty," the rapidly disappearing frontier becomes the coveted utopia.

But interest in this edenic, utopian frontier is a terrific power that may doom such a paradise to extinction. Anglo civilization, fleeing from eastern city squalor to unspoiled western wilderness, clings to traditional norms of progress--indeed, ideas of personal or collective progress lead people from the metropolis in the first place. This progress includes the concepts of moral taming and economic exploitation--concepts which build cities and fuel industry, but which in their latter stages quickly exhaust the resources of an urban environment. Western utopia, therefore, developed by its inhabitants along familiar lines, can rapidly evolve into a nightmarish mimic of the East.²³

The melodramatic representation of such a utopia therefore takes on a rather "schizophrenic" character.²⁴ Still, the authors of late nineteenth century melodramas managed to deal with the split personality by emphasizing a certain type of villain. One will recall that savagery--including both native peoples and environments--played the enemy in Anglo adventure novels. Certainly, exceptions

²³Ibid., 158.

²⁴Ibid.

existed, but authors most often recognized different lands and peoples as sources of evil threatening to obstruct the expansion of Anglo civilization. In the melodrama, a significant shift took place, and civilization's greatest foe became, appropriately, civilization. That is, an agent of civilization's darker side, "his evil nearly a natural force, though sometimes compounded by the elements, hostiles, predators, or privation."²⁵

The corruptions of civilization coalesce into the character of the Anglo villain, who becomes the convenient catch-all for the evils revealed within the play. He thus accentuates the inherent goodness of the heroic, truly civilized characters. His character also enhances the virtues of wilderness, making the "frontier in the stage melodramas...not a particularly dangerous place,...a world little more dangerous than any eastern city...."²⁶ Even in dealing successfully with the villain, which the heroes and heroines invariably do, they rarely stoop to vigilantism or uncivilized violence, again marking a significant departure from western adventure novels. The heroic characters "do not shoot, stab, hang, or otherwise work mayhem upon villains. To do so might make punishment appear personally motivated rather than the extension of a just Providence."²⁷ Although no longer the omnibenevolent god within the western

²⁵Ibid., 153.

²⁶Ibid., 155-6.

²⁷Ibid., 156.

garden, the religiously empowered Anglo myth still courses through the veins of melodrama, except here the threat comes from within its civilization's own "heart of darkness."

In 1898, S. F. Cody wrote "The Klondyke Nugget," realizing the adaptability of the frontier to melodrama and no doubt aware of the enormous popularity of such theatre in Britain.²⁸ Simple and engaging, the plot of "The Klondyke Nugget" unfolds around Rosie Lee and Joe Smith, two lovers whose happiness Sam Deats (who Rosie knows as George Exelby) threatens to destroy. Steve Grey, the captain of an English emigrant train (of which Joe is a member), enlists Rosie's father, Tom Lee, to lead the train through the Chilcoot Pass to the Klondyke goldfields. Rosie accompanies her father in the trek, and Joe falls in with Ted Lee (Rosie's brother), and a virtuous Indian named Waco, the three planning to enter into a mining venture together. Sam, consumed by jealousy for Rosie's love, follows the train and attempts unsuccessfully to kill Joe. Unable to carry out this deed, Sam joins forces with Bill Sykes, an old partner-in-crime from California who knows Sam's real identity. The pair

²⁸ The frontier, it might be pointed out, was not necessarily the primary focus of interest for audiences. As Bank states, "[D]istinct 'frontier' dress, speech, and manners do not disturb the characters' conformation to type. Accordingly these features are aspects of 'local color' rather than characteristics which define the aspects in the play." Ibid., 154. The popularity of the melodrama in Britain can be judged from perusing the overwhelming number of titles from the period that suggest melodramatic content. These are found in the Lord Chamberlain's Plays (Day Books), Department of Manuscripts, the British Library, London, England.

plot to jump the profit-making claim that Joe, Ted, and Waco have staked. Worming his way into their partnership, Sam convinces Ted and Joe that Indians plan to attack Tom Lee's home, to which Tom and Rosie have returned. To hold their claim, Ted and Joe leave Waco in charge of the mine, playing right into the hands of Sykes and Deats, who plan to kill Waco and take up the claim. To throw off suspicion, Deats accompanies Joe and Ted, leaving Sykes behind to finish Waco. But Sykes botches the job, and Waco survives the assault of the villain, who believes the Indian dead. Ted and Joe return to find their claim jumped by Sykes, and Deats becomes the silent partner. Sykes is then shot, but before he dies he utters Joe Smith's name in front of a crowd of onlookers. The Dawson City authorities jail Joe, Deats testifies against the Englishman, and the judge finds Joe guilty of the murder, sentencing him to immediate execution. Right before the firing squad shoots, Waco reappears and admits to justifiably killing Sykes. Waco also reveals Deats's other identity, pulling off the villain's fake beard to show that George Exelby, Rosie's unrequited lover, and Sam Deats are one and the same. The court arrests Sam and pronounces Joe innocent. Sam escapes and attempts once again to come between Joe and Rosie, who marry soon after the trial. But when Sam tries to kill Rosie and her father, whom he traps in their cabin while Joe

is out, Waco once again comes to the rescue and kills Deats, ending the play.²⁹

Cody adds extra color to "The Klondyke Nugget" by utilizing many of the stunts performed in his Wild West exhibitions. Rosie, played by Lela (who had apparently gained some degree of shooting skill in her "Great Cody" experiences) takes "a few shots by way of practice," followed by Ted Lee and Vivian Lee, played by Leon and Vivian, respectively.³⁰ The trick-shooting neither affects the play's plot nor adds to character development (we don't even see Vivian again, and Ted has little to say), but certainly must have made for a fun show. Cody himself, who portrayed Sam Deats, exhibited his impressive shooting skills in a somewhat absurd barroom scene that also has little to do with the play.

Joe: Now Sam: show us a little of your shooting, the boys tell me you're a crack shot.

Sam: Yes! but what'll I shoot at? will you throw your hat up[?]

Joe: No: but Ted has got a basket of snow balls.

Sam: Capital, that [is] just what I like to shoot at, I reckon, I can just make a young snow storm, if he can throw them up fast enough.³¹

What exactly Ted was doing with a basket of snowballs, why these were Sam's favorite targets, and why the villain does not subsequently threaten anyone with his "crack" shooting, matters little. It helped draw the crowds, as did the

²⁹Cody, "The Klondyke Nugget."

³⁰Ibid., 4.

³¹Ibid., 34.

fantastic scene wherein Sam tries to kill Joe by tampering with a bridge while Joe, Ted, and Waco cross.

Sam [aside]: Here they come! Smith in the lead, now the wooden bridge will deside [sic] who is to be Rosies [sic] husband.

(SAM throws lasso over rail of bridge, takes saw in teeth and climbs up, saws off centre brace of bridge, then hides behind large tree stump....)

Joe: Come along Ted, we must put our best foot forward, if we want to overtake the train by sundown.

Sam [aside]: Joe Smith you have stepped between me and the one I love, and you shall pay dearly for it.³²

This exciting conclusion to the first act ends with Joe's horse plunging through the bridge as Joe saves himself by clinging to the remnants of the structure. Cody used live horses onstage, a testament to his expert horsemanship in a scene where his Wild West experiences ably matched the plot.³³

Blasting away at snowballs and sending horses through collapsing bridges make for a great show, but behind the flash one finds a play that well fits the category of frontier melodrama. The love interest of Joe and Rosie, the jealousy of Sam and his evil machinations, and the

³²Ibid., 14.

³³ The English audiences expressed concern about the possible abuse of Cody's horses. The Alexandra Palace, where the "Klondyke Nugget" premiered, printed the following in the program: "With reference to several letters which have been sent to the S. P. C. A. complaining of the scene in which a horse falls through a wooden bridge,...the [S. P. C. A.] expressed their opinion that there was no danger whatever and that the entire performance throughout was free from any cruelty." Program, "The Klondyke Nugget," Alexandra Palace Theatre, n. d. [1898?].

climactic, satisfying conclusion conform to the essential plot characteristics of the melodramatic form in general. The fact that the author places the villain in a wilderness region speaks to the larger issue of the relationship between the frontier and the metropolis, of savagery and civilization. No longer villains, Native Americans in this play either portray nobility (witness Waco and his impeccable English) or inept henchman who receive ridicule from the swaggering Sam Deats.³⁴ In neither case do the Indians threaten, on their own, to monkey-wrench the Anglo machine. All responsibility for such actions falls to Sam.

Like a fundamentalist renouncing his faith, Sam openly promises to work havoc on Joe and Rosie, suggesting that civilization's capacity for evil matches its promises of progress: "Well Lee! you know my character, I mean trying hard to win [Rosie] fairly; failing this, I will try foul means...."³⁵ As part of the neat reversal of savagery in frontier melodrama, Sam's "character" also promises to corrupt his Indian cohorts. Promising Raven, an Indian chief in league with the villain, the "white squaw for a wife," Sam plays on the sexual dynamic of white captivity and drives Raven to tell his warriors that "our motto is

³⁴On admitting his guilt in connection with Sykes's death, Waco poetically proclaims "Hold!!! Let the captive free, he is innocent; Waco! Chief of the Piegiens fired the fatal shot! and he will fire one other shot, and George Exelby...will know from whence it comes." Ibid., 60. On Indians' portrayal, see Ibid., 20.

³⁵Ibid., 7.

kill cut and destroy [sic]."³⁶ But still empowered by the Anglo myth and projecting his own criminality onto all Indians, Sam asserts, "These red devils are never good, until they are dead and buried," and uses other racial epithets to characterize both Waco and Raven's gang.³⁷

Cody's "Klondyke Nugget" played to British audiences that may have seen the Anglo values of empire quickly retreating to their island. The presence of British symbols throughout the drama, therefore, must have appealed to them. Joe Smith, who has "been accustomed to take the first place," possesses an Englishness that shines throughout with his frequent use of the encouragement, "keep your pluck up."³⁸ When the conspiratorial Sam tells Tom Lee that the captain of the emigrant train might not pay the guide for his services, Tom responds, "Oh no! an English man's word is his bond, whatever he promises to pay me I'll get."³⁹ The greatest nod to Anglo virtue comes as Joe faces his execution and Rosie, recalling the court sits on the British side of the Klondyke, divines a way to stall the punishment.

Judge: Are you ready boys...[?]

Miners: Yes!

Judge: Then present arms!--take aim!--

³⁶Ibid., 21. It is significant that the fears of white captivity are still used here, but they originate in Sam Deats rather than in the Indians, who are portrayed more as victims than perpetrators.

³⁷Ibid., 23, 28.

³⁸Ibid., quotes on 3, 21.

³⁹Ibid., 6-7.

(Rosie pulls Union-Jack out, and swings it in front of Joe.)

Rosie: Shoot!--if you dare,--remember we are on British soil.

[And later, after Joe is saved...]

[Sheriff] Wilson: It's a good job that we are on English soil; for it was the Union Jack that detained the execution previous to Waco's arrival.⁴⁰

"The Klondyke Nugget" opened at the Alexandra Palace Theatre in September 1898.⁴¹ The theatre proclaimed it "a Spectacular Drama in the strict sense of the word, depicting in a most realistic manner mining life in the Klondyke gold regions."⁴² When the play moved to St. George's Theatre, Walsall, it received a positive response. One reviewer wrote:

The drama is full of highly sensational incidents, and affords opportunities for...the Messrs. Cody to exhibit their skill as crack shots; while the performances of some trained horses lend further aid to the exciting situations of the play....As Sam Deats Mr. F. S. Cody [sic] plays with much force, and gives a picturesque personality to the part. Mr. Duncan McRae makes a capital Joe Smith, and Mrs. Lela Cody is well placed as Rosie....Altogether the play forms an acceptable addition to the list of sensational American dramas.⁴³

In 1903 (the play ran, off and on, for about six years), the management of the Theatre Royal, Aldershot, said that

⁴⁰Ibid., 60, 65.

⁴¹"Alexandra Palace Daily Programme," 24 September 1898.

⁴²Program, "The Klondyke Nugget," Alexandra Palace Theatre, u. d. [1898?].

⁴³Review, "The Klondyke Nugget," newspaper unknown (the style resembles the Era, although England had a number of theatre papers), 5 December 1898.

"[l]overs of sport would do well to make an especial effort to see...the entertainment." The program also reported, "On Friday night there will be a shooting competition, which will be open to all comers, who are at liberty to try conclusions with Col. Cody."⁴⁴

In 1904, S. F. Cody replaced "The Klondyke Nugget" with "Nevada," possibly writing himself completely out of the performance as his aeronautics experiments began to take more of his time.⁴⁵ Like "The Klondyke Nugget," "Nevada" takes place in a mining camp in which the intrigues of a disguised villain threaten to overcome the involved love interests. Moselle, the adopted daughter of an old miner named Vermont and the matron of the camp, Mother Merton, returns from her eastern school to the camp and to her lover, a young miner named Dandy Dick. Moselle brings with her one of her teachers, Agnes Fairlee, who is in search of her brother, Richard. Dandy Dick's friend, Tom Carew, falls in love with Agnes. Meanwhile, three other men show up in the camp. Silas Steel, a young man from Vermont who travels the West selling "Busted's Balm" and searching for his long lost father, stops in. Nevada, a crusty, gold-hungry old miner, wanders through the camp intermittently, muttering

⁴⁴Program, "The Klondyke Nugget," Theatre Royal and Opera House, Aldershot, 29 June 1903.

⁴⁵ Cody's "Nevada" may have been written earlier, but it wasn't registered with the Lord Chamberlain until 1904. Cody took a lesser part in the plays as his other career took off, by 1903 relinquishing his role of Sam Deats to Edward Leroy, and often taking no part at all. Program, Theatre Royal.

about the gold mine he discovered and then lost in a fit of amnesia caused when he accidentally hit himself in the head with his pick. And the villain of the story, "Detective" Jerden, a. k. a. Stephen Carliss, arrives in pursuit of an accused counterfeiter, Richard Fairlee (Agnes's brother).

Tom, recognizing that Dick is Richard Fairlee, from a photo Jerden shows him, turns Dick in, not wanting Moselle to get hurt. In doing this, Tom loses Agnes. But Tom and Agnes soon learn that Stephen Carliss framed Dick, and Dick escaped west not out of guilt but because he panicked. Tom (who by this time has regained Agnes's love) and Agnes try to help Dick escape Jerden's grasp, but Dick, not recognizing Jerden, wants to face the music and establish his innocence for the sake of Moselle. As Stephen Carliss, however, Jerden wants only to get Dick alone so that he can kill the one man who might prove Carliss's guilt. But Win-Kye, a Chinese laborer in the camp, foils Jerden by discovering that the detective wears a false beard, and soon reveals Jerden's true identity.⁴⁶ Carliss makes a run for it, but manages to run off the face of a cliff, and thus frontier itself disposes of the villain.

⁴⁶It is worth noting that both Win-Kye and Jube, a black laborer in the camp, succumb to racial stereotypes prevalent in many frontier melodramas, depicted as buffoonish but generally well-intentioned characters. The one African American that shows up in "The Klondyke Nugget" does not fair so well, hung for a crime, not vital to the play's plot, in which others are equally guilty. These disturbing elements are treated thoroughly in Stuart W. Hyde's exhaustive "The Representation of the West in American Drama from 1849-1917," (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1954).

The play ends with a number of reunions. Dick and Moselle are restored to one another. Tom and Silas, happening upon Nevada's gold mine, shake the old miner into remembering that he left his family to search for gold, and we soon find that although his wife died, Vermont and Mother Merton took in his baby daughter. Moselle and Nevada are reunited, as are Vermont, also known as Deacon Steel, and Silas.

"Nevada" well presents the "schizophrenic" frontier of late-nineteenth century melodrama. Full of references to the pure if rough-edged and violent frontier, the play enacts the difficulty of reconciling the values of wilderness and those of civilization.⁴⁷ That Dick must flee from a metropolis that might not understand his involvement in Carliss's counterfeiting scheme appears to throw civilized law into a shadow. Yet Dick, once caught by Jerden, cannot tolerate the frontier justice that Tom and Agnes want to enforce in order to help him escape. And when the miners catch on to Carliss's plan, his run-for-it over the cliff, not frontier justice, decides his fate.

In addition, gold fever plays a major part in "Nevada." Both Vermont and Nevada leave their families for gold, and Tom, a seemingly reluctant miner, asserts,

The pure ore of a loving heart is not to be compared to the glittering lie we take to ourselves with which to purchase happiness. The ore purifies and ennobles its possessor, the other

⁴⁷Cody, "Nevada," 6, 13-14, 17-18, 21, 51, 76.

too often drags us down to the dust from which we
filch it.⁴⁸

This eloquent summation of the acquisitive, hungry engine that powered westward expansion, leading to numerous conflicts of interest that would eventually soil and extinguish romantic visions of the frontier, may have given British audiences food for thought. At the very least, from a present perspective this passage offers parallels to the British expansion into South Africa's gold region that eventually resulted in the Boer War. Coming out of this conflict a bloodied and transformed world power, the British recognized a new use for S. F. Cody, whose career as a showman would quickly become a sideline.

Leading up to the beginning of the Boer War in 1899, the British Empire had enjoyed "a century of easy victories, secure in their tribal jokes and customs, confident in their leaders, [and] anxious only about the racing results...."⁴⁹ By 1884, the year that fifteen world powers meeting at the Berlin Conference acknowledged the "scramble for Africa," the publishing revolution had pervaded Britain.⁵⁰ Cheap newspapers such as Alfred Harmsworth's Daily Mail fed a public who had learned that "simply seizing African territories, to rule, improve or exploit them by their own

⁴⁸Ibid., 27.

⁴⁹James Morris, Farewell the Trumpets, an Imperial Retreat (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 64-5.

⁵⁰Reader, At Duty's Call, 49, 19-20.

methods, was...quite justifiable."⁵¹ Largely the work of penny presses, adventure novels, and exhibitions such as Buffalo Bill's Wild West, all of which expounded on a century of Anglo successes, an Old Testament, "Lord of Hosts" war psychology developed. Britain may have begun to see war for its own sake as virtuous, for "there was an unspoken assumption, unconnected with Darwin or Clausewitz, that He had ceased to be Hebrew and had taken up British nationality."⁵²

Attempting, with a great degree of success, to instill Britain with a Spartan attitude, authors such as G. A. Henty, Erskine Childers, and G. W. Steevens wrote many of their works for boys, the future leaders of Empire. Encouraging boys to fight, and fight fairly, either on the cricket green or in any situation where honor was on the line, young adult literature prepared its readership for a life of war within the British imperial world.⁵³ The popular literature of the time also encouraged idolatry in regard to prominent figures of Empire, such as Nelson, Gordon, and Kitchener, and in "its ancestor worship, its

⁵¹Morris, Farewell the Trumpets, 36.

⁵²Reader, At Duty's Call, 21.

⁵³Ibid., 11, 28, 32. It should be noted that part of this tradition included the formation of various troops of boy scouts under the direction of Major Baden Fletcher Smyth Baden-Powell. Reader traces the influences of these elements to the beginning of World War I, when 2.5 million young men in Britain alone volunteered for service, an unprecedented phenomenon.

ritual, its emphasis on authority, it linked tribal atavisms with cultural self-satisfaction and technical advance."⁵⁴

With the development of a war ethic that stressed honor and sportsmanship (for the team competitiveness of rugby and cricket as well as the individual accomplishments of riding and shooting were highly prized), also came the acknowledgement that when these elements applied to war they took on a savage aspect. As one writer declared,

You may call the show [the bloody retaking of Khartoum by Kitchener] barbaric if you like. It was meant for barbarians. The English gentleman, if you like, is half barbarian, too. That is just the value of him.⁵⁵

In a sense, a statement such as this indicates that the British Empire had come full circle. As in the frontier melodrama, where the darkneses of civilization receive recognition, Britain may have finally realized that putting down savagery required a comparable savagery. However, in the tradition that had made Britain's one of the most remarkable stories of the nineteenth century, the Anglo myth lent justification to such barbarism. Although the self-satisfied "snobberies" of the imperial machine "were more often a matter of habit than intent, they placed the African

⁵⁴J. M. MacKenzie, Propaganda and Empire (Manchester University Press, 1984), 255; quoted in Reader, At Duty's Call, 37.

⁵⁵Daily Mail, n. d. (1898?); quoted in Reader, At Duty's Call, 53.

or Asian subject...at a perpetual disadvantage. It was as though the British were gods themselves."⁵⁶

But despite the fact that by Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee (1897) a good number of British saw "the whole wide Empire, even the world itself, only as a response to themselves," many of Europe's other nations had begun in earnest to compete with Britain.⁵⁷ In addition, threats from within the empire began to come to the fore. Although Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain attempted colonial reform, the historian James (Jan) Morris has suggested that Chamberlain did not understand the nature of the problems. Too heterogeneous and diffuse to work logically, the British empire depended more on pomp than administration, intimidation more than force.⁵⁸ "Empire gave the British a finger on every pulse, a say in every conference; but at the same time it made them subject to all the world's anxieties...."⁵⁹

What appeared at first a small and manageable "anxiety," the Boer War turned into a drawn-out headache for the British, with their initial victories diminished by subsequent fierce guerilla warfare on the part of the Boers. Tensions between the Dutch Boers and the British had existed

⁵⁶Morris, Farewell the Trumpets, 56, and also on this theme, 48, 95.

⁵⁷Ibid., 29.

⁵⁸Ibid., 59-61.

⁵⁹Ibid., 91.

since the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars. The Zulu War (1878-1879) only managed to fan the flames. The discovery of gold near Johannesburg in the Transvaal, the desire to possess rights to the metal, and the abuse of British residents and laborers within the region finally ignited the war in October 1899.⁶⁰

Although the British defeated the Boers in 1902, the imperial enthusiasm with which they had begun the war suffered. The Boers did not present themselves as an enemy the British could understand. Essentially European, although well-assimilated to the South African environment, the Boers "were far more dangerous, being better armed and organized, than the general run of the British Empire's opponents, even the Afghans and the Sikhs."⁶¹ Meeting a colonial native force in war was one thing; joining war with a German-supported, European contingent was quite another. And although the Boer War had popular support from the beginning in Britain, many objected to the conflict.⁶² The British met an enemy with whom they had little familiarity and who would not give them the kind of fight they had come

⁶⁰Ibid., 66-8.

⁶¹Reader, At Duty's Call, 10.

⁶²Morris, Farewell the Trumpets, 93-94. Morris states, "There were humanitarians who thought imperialism a sin, moralists who thought it a fraud, radical politicians who thought it an error, economists who thought it an unnecessary fiscal device and socialists who thought with Karl Marx that it was merely an undesirable extension of capitalism....The Boer War, however, revealed dissensions on an altogether different scale. There had been powerful opposition to it from the start." Ibid., 101-2.

to expect from previous colonial wars. The Boer War turned the British war enterprise into something no longer so recreational. "'We are only sportsman,' one wounded officer was heard to say...as he hauled himself...towards the chaos of the hospital, 'only sportsman, after all....'"⁶³ By the war's end, everyone in Britain knew "that a single colonial war, against an enemy with a population half that of Birmingham, had tried the Empire to its limits."⁶⁴ And, more than this, everyone knew that the empire would never be the same, for Queen Victoria was dead.⁶⁵

When she died in 1901, the Queen took the imperial spirit with her own, as if she chose to leave when both their bodies had become too weary to go on. But although the spirit of empire may have left, the corpse remained to haunt imperial Britain for the next half century. Following the Boer War, the British realized that the stakes had gone up in the game of empire. War with European powers over mutual interests seemed imminent, especially after Germany supported the Boers and the French had shown their determination to stay in Africa. Modern warfare would become a contest between competing technologies and hardware linked with a showdown involving the increasingly archaic grandeur and pomp of competing empires. And into this

⁶³Quoted in Ibid., 99.

⁶⁴Ibid., 93.

⁶⁵Ibid., 104.

deadly brew, which would eventually ferment into World War I, stepped Samuel Franklin Cody and his man-lifting kites.

Where and how Cody came to learn the principles of kite-flying remains something of a mystery. He may have picked up the basics from a Chinese cook on the cattle trails of America. Or perhaps he became interested in kites when Australian kite pioneer Lawrence Hargrave toured England in 1899, demonstrating his kites. In any case, by the turn of the century Cody realized that a well-developed kite system would attract the attention of the military. During the Boer War, the British had used man-lifting kites for observation. But these kites, designed by the brilliant commander Major B. F. S. Baden-Powell, had a box construction and used several cables, making the observer's ride uncomfortable.⁶⁶

Cody's design employed a series of kites that had dihedral wings, which made for greater stability. Three kites, of varying sizes up to 400 square feet with a 36-foot wingspan, provided enough tension on a single cable to allow a fourth kite, with a wicker chair attached, to ascend the line. The pilot controlled up and down movement with a locking pulley. Cody's design proved so superior that in 1901 the British patent office awarded him patent 23566 for his system.⁶⁷

⁶⁶Sassaman, "The Cowboy and His Kites," 106.

⁶⁷Ibid., 106-7.

But despite his initial success, Cody continued his career as a showman, not yet ready to offer his invention to the military. However, while touring with "The Klondyke Nugget," Cody experimented with his kites, which soon drew crowds comparable to those that came to see his melodrama. The two exhibitions proved a lucrative collaboration. Cody found that he could advertise his show by experimenting with his kites, and the money he made from the play he put back into his aeronautical tests.⁶⁸ From July to September 1902, Cody conducted a series of meteorological experiments, "on behalf of the Newcastle 'Chronicle.'"⁶⁹ During one of the tests, Cody fractured his arm, but rather than fear that the kite exhibitions might come to an end as a result, the Newcastle Daily Chronicle seemed more concerned that the showman might not feel up to "The Klondyke Nugget." Edward Leroy replaced his stepfather, and the show went on without a hitch. Cody even created his own sideshow, so that the audience could witness his shooting skill.

The rifle and revolver shooting of the Cody family is wonderful at all times, and now that the head of the family is a cripple pro. tem. it hardly suffers at all in this respect. His aim is as accurate as ever, the only difference being that he is unable to manipulate the weapon so deftly as is his wont.⁷⁰

This report ends with a wonderful example of Cody's public relations abilities with respect to his dual career:

⁶⁸Cody to author, Summer 1991, p. 3.

⁶⁹Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 2 September 1902, p. 3.

⁷⁰Ibid., 15 July 1902, p. 10.

He promises that efficiency of his new flying machine will be occularly [sic] demonstrated in Gateshead before the week is out. There will be a shooting competition at the Metropole on Friday night, open to all comers.⁷¹

Cody continually presented his cowboy imagery in conjunction with his aeronautics. Dressed in his duster coat and broad-brimmed hat, he could at one moment demonstrate his kites and the next moment, in perfect character, shoot at a basket of snowballs. From the Newcastle Chronicle's sketch of Cody and his sons, all decked-out in quasi-western attire, to the later motion picture of Cody and a group of (authentic?) American Indians climbing into his aeroplane, "Cowboy Cody" retained his western identity.⁷² A pioneer and survivor of the western American frontier, Cody may have realized that the symbols and romance of his early days ably suited the frontier of the skies.

Following the Boer War, the skies soon became the object of exploitation for European military powers. Realizing that the conquest of this frontier could decide the outcome of future wars, the British War Office conceded that Cody's kites represented more than an interesting complement to the eccentric showman's melodramas. The British command had learned from the Boer War that, unlike captive balloons, the "military value of these kites lay in

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid., 4 September and n. d., 1902. Several films of Cody were made and are admirably collected in Coleman video, "Samuel Franklin Cody."

the fact that they could be raised aloft in breezes or winds...."⁷³ Knowing this, and having spent much of 1902 to early 1903 manufacturing kites in a rented shed at Alexandra Palace, Cody lobbied the Admiralty on 6 February 1903 to consider his machines.

Dear Sir,

Having completed and patented an aeroplane, or superior design of kite, suitable for signalling purposes, transmitting messages, and capable of taking a man up for the purpose of reconnaissance, I should be pleased to bring the same before your notice. I am prepared to demonstrate [the kites] in the presence of any officials you may approve during the coming summer.

Faithfully yours,

S. F. Cody⁷⁴

The British Navy accepted Cody's offer, and preliminary tests witnessed by Colonel Templer, superintendent of Britain's aeronautic establishment, then called the "Balloon Factory," proved successful.⁷⁵ The Admiralty ordered an extensive review of the kites' capabilities, and in March and April 1903 Cody demonstrated his invention at Whale Island. Tests aboard H. M. S. Seahorse surpassed expectations, and the officer in charge, Prince Louis of Battenburg (Lord Mountbatten's father) reported:

⁷³Alfred Gollin, No Longer an Island: Britain and the Wright Borthers, 1902-1909 (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1984), quote one 22; also relating to kites, see 82-84, 87, 88, 98, 136, 147. Gollin's is an exhaustive work on early aviation, perhaps the only resource that comprehensively covers worldwide developments up to World War I.

⁷⁴Coleman video, "Samuel Franklin Cody."

⁷⁵Ibid.; and Gollin, No Longer an Island, 64.

"The results achieved by these kites are remarkable, and they should prove useful, not only for wireless telegraphy, but for distant signalling, especially from destroyers....At present it cannot be said that they are to be relied on for man-lifting either on land or at sea, except in very favorable weather. But as the inventor has only been working at them for two years, there seems to be no reason why their efficiency in this respect should not eventually justify their use for this purpose also."⁶

On the heels of this triumph, however, Cody acted rashly, demanding from Britain's frugal military apparatus 25,000 pounds up front for his kites, 1,250 pounds per annum to instruct a kite corps, and an additional 25,000 pounds if the Navy accepted his patents.⁷ The Admiralty flatly rejected the proposal, and Cody once more found himself in the unenviable position of salesman to a British establishment wary of expenditure. Going with his strengths, Cody decided that publicity might restore his credibility.

Concluding that a public relations coup should certainly demonstrate the utility of his kites, Cody eyed the English Channel and determined that a voyage from Calais to Dover might do the trick. With boat in tow, the Cody kites could show that their services included locomotion. In "Kiteboat Voyage. Daring Journey Across The Channel. Mr. Cody's Story," Cody recounted the trip in detail, in so doing proving that his kites could not serve as locomotion,

⁶Report of tests aboard H. M. S. Seahorse, 13-18 April 1903; quoted in Coleman video, "Samuel Franklin Cody."

⁷Coleman video, "Samuel Franklin Cody."

despite the fact that the "wind was so light that this experiment affords no proof of the great speed of which the kite-boat is capable."⁷⁸ On that day in November 1903, Cody took 13 hours to reach Dover, yet, ever the optimist, Cody concluded that "I have spent about 23 pounds on the attempt, but against this must be set the 11 shilling fare from Calais to Dover saved by travelling in my own boat."⁷⁹

Also "against this must be set" the substantial amount of attention Cody received as a result. His improvisation on the typical sailing vessel, even if it did fail in effectiveness, attracted an admiration on which he was determined to build. In the Spring of 1904, Cody published a pamphlet that set forth the advantages of his kite system, for observation, wireless telegraphy, and yes, even towing boats.⁸⁰ Cody also recognized that kites constituted only the jumping-off point, that they pointed the direction in which he planned to travel.

I do not wish to assert that I have produced a flying machine in the full sense of the term, but I must confess that I have ambitions in that direction; and I hope at no very distant date to play an important part in the conquest of the air.⁸¹

Cody soon had the chance to play the part he wished, for in June 1904 the British command assented to further

⁷⁸Daily Mail (London), n. d., November 1903.

⁷⁹Ibid.; and Sassaman, "The Cowboy and His Kites," 107.

⁸⁰Samuel Franklin Cody, The Cody Naval & Military War Kite (Guy Whittam & Co., 1904).

⁸¹Ibid., p. 3.

tests, this time conducted at the Balloon Factory in Aldershot. In true Cody style, the cowboy asked for, in addition to a crew for his kites, an extra accommodation.

Please arrange to unload and pick up Mr. Cody's apparatus from Aldershot Station on Monday morning next. Also give your personal attention to Mr. Cody during these experiments, and place at his disposal one NCO and eleven rank-and-file, with a riding horse.⁸²

With his horse, which he subsequently trained and named Bergamo, and his 12 assistants, Cody began his trials at Aldershot, originally planned to last three months. But the tests proved such a success, that the command gave Cody a two-year contract, at 1000 pounds a year, to develop his kites and instruct his crew in their use.⁸³

While not receiving the riches he had originally envisioned, Cody gladly accepted the offer and set to improving his device. In 1905, he produced an unrestrained man-lifting kite, as well as a restrained, motor-powered kite.⁸⁴ His contract extended, in 1906 Cody was named chief kite instructor at Farnborough, a few miles up the road from Aldershot, where a massive, new factory housed the Balloon Sections. Cody had endeared himself to the inhabitants of the Aldershot area, and although it seems unlikely that such a character could fit into the "conventional hide-bound British Army[,]...accepted he was, and respected by all

⁸²Order name unknown, June 1904; quoted in Coleman video, "Samuel Franklin Cody."

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Ibid.; and Coleman, "The Flying Cowboy," 8.

ranks and, with his horse Bergamo, he became a familiar sight in Aldershot."⁸⁵

Perhaps Cody's amiability engendered such feeling. His Americanness must have appeared friendly, or at least did not seem a danger, to the increasingly worried British establishment. Following the disappointing conclusion of the Boer War, the "hide-bound" British army found that its enemies had taken a form that disturbingly resembled its own. No longer would the wars of empire necessarily start with native uprisings that the British could easily put down with nationalistic enthusiasm. Threats from competing European powers had become apparent, and although France and Britain "patched up their relationship" with the Entente Cordiale, the British still had to deal with Germany.⁸⁶ Germany had supported the Boers during their war with Britain, and with the German industrial/military complex growing, it thus seemed the likely new "other" opposing the British Empire.⁸⁷ In this context, being "British" took on a new meaning, for the Britons could not lord the title over their equally civilized European rivals as they had tended to do with the heathen of Empire. A sense of national, European-style patriotism took hold of Britain, and became

⁸⁵Sassaman, "The Cowboy and His Kites," 107; and Coleman, "The Flying Cowboy," 11.

⁸⁶Morris, Farewell the Trumpets, 146, 46.

⁸⁷Reader, At Duty's Call, 56.

interdependent with the imperial psychology of the Anglo myth.⁸⁸

Aggressive feeling towards Germany sprung from several sources, and in the process of making Germans the new savages, both literature and militarism played a role. Because Germany and Britain resembled more than differed from each other, it might at first seem that the British may have been hard pressed to find reasons to despise a nation even more Spartan and obsessed with efficiency. Indeed, many British intellectuals could not make this conceptual leap. H. H. Munro (Saki), for instance, wrote in 1914 When William Came, a novel in which Germany successfully invades Britain and turns out a benefit to British culture.⁸⁹ Authors like Saki excepted, many in Britain's literary community felt that a German invasion would have quite the opposite effect. Many also believed an invasion imminent. Like in Erskine Childer's Riddle of the Sands, in which two British youths uncover a German plot to take over England, novels and adventure stories related the fear of an invasion engineered by espionage.⁹⁰

⁸⁸Ibid., 40.

⁸⁹Saki (H. H. Munro), When William Came, a Story of London Under the Hohenzollerns (New York: Dorset Press, 1988); Saki and his contemporaries are discussed throughout Reader, At Duty's Call. Munro went to war, with the rest of the world, soon after he wrote this book. He was killed in action in 1916.

⁹⁰Reader, At Duty's Call, 72.

This fear boiled down to two elements. First, Britain employed a significant number of German workers, popularly associated with menial labor that allowed good cover for a spy. Second, and even more disturbing to the late-twentieth century historian, German workers and "higher-ups" alike were commonly thought of as Jewish expatriates intent not only on taking jobs away from the lower classes but also on permeating the middle and upper classes of British society.⁹¹ This bigotry resulted from the rise of several British statesmen of German-Jewish descent into Britain's power-structure, as well as from the recent immigrations caused by the eastern European pogroms.⁹² Anti-semitism fit nicely into the Christian-based Anglo myth, and provided an impetus for directing hatred, however psychologically projected it may have been, towards Germany. But perhaps more threatening to British sensibilities than the nebulous and imaginary Jewish spy rings, the military machine that Germany had constructed reached higher and higher in its climb towards modern warfare technology. It eventually ascended into the skies, and the real fears of domination by air superiority came to the fore in a Britain committed now not only to imperialism and patriotism, but also to an arms race.

⁹¹Denis Judd, "Was The Wind in the Willows a Breeze or a Hurricane? Images of Class, Sex, and Empire in Books for Edwardian Children, 1901-1914," lecture, 6 April 1992, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

⁹²Ibid.

As the British looked into the heavens they had cause to consider their island. Protected by the English Channel, for nearly 1000 years the peoples of Britain had relied upon this natural moat for national security. Aerial warfare brought the effectiveness of such safeguards to an end. No more could a powerful navy alone defend British interests, and the emergence of airships meant that "England is no longer an island....It means the aerial chariots of a foe descending on British soil if war comes."⁹³ Given the position of the British, sitting atop an empire unprecedented in breadth or strength but now seen as vulnerable, aerial war devices posed an especially wicked threat to the seat of imperial power. An attack on London could well mean the end of the empire, and the Germans realized this. Ferdinand August Adolf, Count von Zeppelin, had developed a dirigible that clearly had military potential. With this machine in its arsenal, Germany found that many of its people believed an attack on Britain would prove successful, and prominent Germans such as Rudolf Martin encouraged a preemptive strike.⁹⁴ Future Prime Minister David Lloyd George had witnessed the capabilities of the Zeppelin. Although he and Winston Churchill, a Liberal at that time (1908), felt that military expenditures had grown out of control, they recognized the advantages of

⁹³Lord Northcliffe quoted in Gollin, No Longer an Island, 193.

⁹⁴Gollin, No Longer an Island, 315-355, 395.

building an air fleet to combat the Germans, and appealed without success to the British War Office to take measures.⁹⁵

Through the efforts of newspaper publishers like Lord Northcliffe, the British people came to see the danger of their predicament and the value of an air force.⁹⁶ But no one really knew what to expect from an air war, and in 1908 many (including the War Office) still believed that the Wright brothers had not even managed controlled flights.⁹⁷ However, enough knowledge and hearsay had accumulated so that when H. G. Wells published, in serialized form, The War in the Air in 1907 and 1908, the fear of German air superiority had reached a fevered pitch.

In his eloquent and inimitable way, Wells relates the tale of Bert Smallways, a well-meaning ne'er-do-well who witnesses firsthand a war in the air, started by Germany, that ends in the collapse of modern technology, world monetary systems, and civilized governments.⁹⁸ Throughout

⁹⁵Ibid., 346-49. Churchill and Lloyd George were later members of the Committee of Imperial Defense, but still their urgings went unheeded. Ibid., 397, 400, 410, 420, 425, 438.

⁹⁶Ibid., 324-25.

⁹⁷Although following their pioneering flights of 1903, the Wrights had consistently improved their machines until by 1908 they possessed the only truly maneuverable airplanes. They spent most of the years up to World War I trying to sell their machines to dubious governments, particularly the British. Gollin, No Longer an Island.

⁹⁸H. G. Wells, The War in the Air (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1910).

the story, Bert remains passive, although he sees most of the action from the German flag airship (which holds him prisoner), commanded by the villainous Prince Karl Albert, who well represents the new "other" of the British Empire.⁹⁹ Intensely critical of the British imperial establishment, symbolized in Bert, Wells lends insight into the problems that confronted a modern state grown too big for its shoes.

Of all the productions of the human imagination that make the world...confusingly wonderful, there was none quite so strange, so headlong and disturbing, so noisy and persuasive and dangerous, as the modernisation of patriotism produced by imperial and international politics.¹⁰⁰

Wells believed that Anglo civilization, particularly that of Britain and America, had no idea how to handle these elements of patriotism and politics, and warned that any war in such an atmosphere, using weapons not yet fully understood, would doubtlessly lead to this civilization's downfall.¹⁰¹

Although fascinated by flight, a fine scholar and a brilliant thinker, Wells, a man of his time (perhaps reluctantly), fell prey to the same exaggerated fears felt

⁹⁹Ibid., 173. The Prince's cruelty easily parallels the evils of the "bad men" in earlier adventure novels. Asia is also presented as an "other." Ibid., 278.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 97.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 69, 158, 173. The novel ends with Bert still alive but also with a Britain reduced to a medieval-style society.

by Britons in general.¹⁰² He did, however, have a sensitive finger on the pulse of Britain, and realized the nature of the changing times and the national obsession with flying.

[I]n those days if ever one heard a man saying in a public place in a loud, reassuring, confident tone, "It's bound to come," the chances were ten to one he was talking of flying.¹⁰³

In addition, Wells recognized the appeal of a character like S. F. Cody.

The world had thrown up a new type of gentleman altogether--a gentleman of most ungentlemanly energy, a gentleman in dusty oilskins and motor goggles and a wonderful cap, a stink-making gentleman, a swift, high-class badger....¹⁰⁴

Cody, like his predecessor Buffalo Bill, had indeed become something of a gentleman. The future of Britain lay partly in the ingenuity of inventors much like him. With flair and daring, Cody worked indefatigably towards supplying Anglo civilization with the means by which it might continue its grand parade. In April 1906, with aeronautics enthusiast Colonel John Capper the new commandant of the Balloon units, Cody and his crew at the Balloon Factory started work on a dirigible.¹⁰⁵ By 3 October 1907 Cody and Capper had completed work on and had tested the airship Nulli Secundus ("Second to None"). On 5

¹⁰²Wells's involvement in British aeronautics is outlined in Gollin, No Longer an Island, 281-83, 410, 414, 424.

¹⁰³Wells, The War in the Air, 11.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 7-8.

¹⁰⁵Gollin, No Longer an Island, 85.

October they flew the ship to London, intending to circle the city and return south to Farnborough. When they reached London, they flew over Kensington Palace, Hyde Park, then Buckingham Palace. Historian Alfred Gollin has suggested that in doing this, "John Capper revealed a capacity for showmanship which set at defiance his usual reputation as a stern military disciplinarian."¹⁰⁶ However, one must remember that Cody accompanied Capper and probably engineered the flight. Cody had a long history of revealing his "capacity for showmanship," and in all likelihood directed both this energy and the airship over the powerful symbols of the British Empire. The sight of the airship caused quite a commotion, and H. G. Wells even felt obliged to include the incident, fictionalized, in The War in the Air.

It was like a bolster with a broken nose, and below it, and comparatively small, was a stiff framework bearing a man and an engine with a screw that whizzed round in front and a sort of canvas rudder behind....It went overhead perhaps a thousand feet up,...going now very fast before a gentle south-west gale, returned above the Crystal Palace towers, circled round them, chose a position for descent, and sank down out of sight.¹⁰⁷

More than a "gentle south-west gale," strong winds forced Cody and Capper to land at Crystal Palace. The Nulli Secundus never flew again, for several days later, after Cody and Capper had returned to Farnborough, another gale

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 267.

¹⁰⁷Wells, The War in the Air, 10.

nearly blew the ship from its moorings at Crystal Palace. Posted to take care of the machine, its attendants had to destroy the Nulli Secundus's balloon to prevent the dirigible from drifting away with the wind.¹⁰⁸

Following the demise of the Nulli Secundus, Cody received permission to begin work on an aeroplane. Capper let Cody use the engine salvaged from the equally unsuccessful (and comically misnamed) Nulli Secundus II, but the commandant of the Balloon School, not completely confident that Cody's experiments would amount to anything, turned most of his attention to the work of John Dunne. During the next several years, the young aviator Dunne had the advantage over Cody in that his British background appealed to Capper's sense of national pride.¹⁰⁹ But what Cody lacked in nationality, he made up for in effectiveness. When Cody flew into history on 16 October 1908, Dunne was still struggling to get his machines to lift off of hillsides in Scotland.

¹⁰⁸Gollin, No Longer an Island, 268-9.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 169-70, 229-31, 233, 272, 277. Another competitor of Cody's was Alliot Verdon Roe, a private experimenter who, like Dunne, eventually became an important figure in British aviation. In all fairness, Dunne's aeronautical career was as equally beset with obstacles and disappointments as Cody's. Gollin has suggested that Capper may have even disliked Cody, but subsequent events do not bear this out.

Following his pioneering success that October, Cody received no recognition from the War Office.¹¹⁰ The plane had crashed, the flight had taken up only 1,400 feet and 27 seconds in the first place and had in fact proved nothing conclusive about the possibilities of aeroplanes other than that they could indeed fly. The War Office added injury to insult when, in February 1909, it decided to strip down the Balloon School at Farnborough, and, perceiving Cody as little more than an eccentric showman, kicked the aviator out of the factory.¹¹¹

But despite the nay-sayers, Cody knew that, in what has since been called British Army Aeroplane Number One, he had achieved only the first of many controlled flights. He trusted his ingenuity and common sense. "No elaborate calculations marked his methods of design....If he liked the look of [a sketch] he would build it. And the astonishing

¹¹⁰It was only in retrospect that Cody's achievements were recognized, and even then the memorial erected in his honor for years asserted that Cody had flown on the 16th of May rather than October. According to John Coleman, "Cody never really had a good press, and even though he had achieved the first flight, his crash at the end confirmed many cynics in their belief that he was not a real airman--still just a showman. Perhaps their prejudice was because he was an American and he had beaten his nearest rival, A. V. Roe, to make the first successful powered flight." Coleman, "The Flying Cowboy." Cody was later recognized as instrumental in making Britain "air-minded" and was credited with contributing to Farnborough one of its greatest moments. Coleman video, "Samuel Franklin Cody"; and Gollin, No Longer an Island, 304.

¹¹¹The story of the Aerial Navigation Committee, the arm of the War Office that decided Cody's and Capper's fate, is fascinating in and of itself, and receives excellent treatment in Gollin, No Longer an Island, 392-432.

thing was that these machines actually worked."¹¹²

Following his instincts, Cody set up shop at Laffan's Plain, an open field a couple of miles from Farnborough. For the next six months, during which he still worked under contract as a kite instructor, Cody sent notes of his "Flying Cathedral" experiments to Capper.¹¹³

Soon out of a job, although perhaps realizing some profit from his melodramas, Cody knew that his survival depended on his aeroplanes. Newspapers like the Daily Mail and assorted competitions, particularly the Michelin Cup, offered significant prize money for aeroplanes that established British and world records. Cody already had made several other "firsts" in aeronautics since his 1908 flight. In August 1909 he took Colonel Capper for a ride in his plane, and Capper thus became the first aeroplane passenger in Britain, followed shortly by Lela Cody and then Capper's wife.¹¹⁴ The next month Cody set a world record, in the new Cody Number One, for speed and distance,

¹¹²Great Cavalcade of the Air, p. 38.

¹¹³Apparently this sufficed to fulfill his contract. It has been said that Cody's notes to Capper were the first test-pilot notes in Britain's distinguished airplane history. "Flying Cathedral" became a common name for the bi-planes of the period, originating with Cody's "catahedral" wing design. Despite similarities to the Wright design, with which Capper was familiar, Cody's design had significant differences, most particularly the wheeled undercarriage. Coleman video, "Samuel Franklin Cody"; and Drinkwater, "Colonel Cody," 20.

¹¹⁴Mary Cody, Kent, England, to author, Logan, Utah, 17 December 1991, p.3; Coleman video, "Samuel Franklin Cody"; and "Hero of a Thousand Flights," 4.

travelling 40 miles in one hour, at an altitude of 600 feet.¹¹⁵ But these achievements, however noteworthy, did not support Cody financially.

By October 1909, higher stakes lay on the horizon. That month Cody completed a circular mile at Doncaster and received 1000 pounds for the first British subject to complete the challenge.¹¹⁶ Cody dealt with the small detail of his nationality by becoming a naturalized British citizen at the Doncaster competition; after all money was on the line.¹¹⁷ This proved only the beginning of Cody's successes in contests that upped the ante more and more, testing the skill of Britain's pilots. On 31 December 1910, flying his Michelin Cup plane, Cody completed a closed circuit of 94.5 miles in two hours. Aboard his Circuit of Britain model, Cody failed to win the prize in July 1911, but impressed the audience as the only Briton to complete the circuit, despite terrific technical difficulties. C. J. Gray, editor of Aero magazine, celebrated Cody's perseverance, asserting,

He is as true a gentleman who ever lived, honest, kind-hearted, a thorough sportsman, a magnificent flyer, full of pluck and as straight as they make

¹¹⁵"Showman Who Turned Aviator," unknown publisher, n. d., 568; and Paul Chapman, "S. F. Cody--Pioneer of the Air: Kites, Airships, and Aeroplanes," lecture, 19 March 1991, Yeovil, England.

¹¹⁶"Showman Who Turned Aviator," 568; and Coleman video, "Samuel Franklin Cody."

¹¹⁷Certificate of Naturalization. No longer the same showman, Cody listed his occupation as "Aeronautical Engineer."

them. If ever a man deserved public benefit, it is Samuel Franklin Cody.¹¹⁸

Public benefit may have proved slow in coming, for Cody still battled the perceptions many had of him as simply a showman, but Cody certainly prospered financially, if only for a brief period. In 1910 he successfully sued the British War Office for copyright infringement, yielding Cody 5000 pounds. In September 1911 Cody won the Michelin Cup I for distance and time, flying his Circuit of Britain plane 185 miles in four hours, 47 minutes. Cody, the private cottage-industrialist, managed to outpace all the competition, most of which had financial backing. Tommy Sopwith, his closest rival, flew only 150 miles. Cody received 500 pounds for the effort.¹¹⁹ The following month, flying the same plane, Cody won 400 pounds for his performance in the Michelin Cup II, open to British aviators only, in which he flew 125 miles in 3 hours, 6 minutes.¹²⁰

In late 1911, the British military establishment decided it could no longer quibble internally over the usefulness of aeroplanes, and announced that the following summer it would buy the best machine Britain's aviation circles could offer. The standards were tough: an acceptable plane would have to carry 350 pounds, stay aloft

¹¹⁸C. J. Gray quoted in Coleman video, "Samuel Franklin Cody."

¹¹⁹Coleman video, "Samuel Franklin Cody"; and Chapman, "S. F. Cody."

¹²⁰Ibid.

for four and a half hours, achieve a ceiling of 4,500 feet, and travel at 55 miles per hour. In addition, the craft had to show itself capable of taking off and landing in a plowed field. This last requirement Colonel Capper had insisted upon, and reflected his national sentiments.¹²¹ By 1911 the Wright brothers had made clear that their machine still maintained superiority amongst any competitors. But the Wright plane used skids and took off with the aid of a catapult. Capper had dealt extensively with the Wrights when they had initially tried to sell their plane to the British government. The Wrights had asked a fair price for their quality machine, but the frugal British government had declined to pay, and in the process Capper's relationship with the Wrights suffered. He subsequently believed that Britain should buy a British-built aeroplane.¹²²

Cody's planes had always used wheels to take off and land, and his muddy, rutted testing ground at Laffan's Plain easily resembled a plowed field. Cody set to work. He intended to get the government's contract, and adding to his stock, which included the Circuit of Britain plane, he built a monoplane. Unfortunately, on 3 July 1912, Cody wrecked the biplane that had served him so well, and on 8 July disaster struck again when the monoplane crashed. Cody survived, but not so much can be said for a bystanding cow.

¹²¹Coleman video, "Samuel Franklin Cody"; and Gollin, No Longer an Island, 311.

¹²²Gollin, No Longer an Island.

Showing his "pluck," Cody pieced together one plane from the remnants of the two carcasses, entered the military trials at Lark Hill on 31 July 1912, and against more than 30 fierce, corporate competitors, won the day and a 5,000 pound contract.¹²³

The British government ordered four planes from Cody, but he built only two, for in April 1913 one of the planes crashed, killing a pilot named Harrison.¹²⁴ The government dropped the model, and Cody, once again at loose ends, continued his experiments. He developed an aeroplane/field ambulance, fitted with stretcher and first-aid kit.¹²⁵ But most of his attention focused on his waterplane. The seaplane, the largest Cody had yet constructed, had a 60-foot wingspan, a length of 44 feet, stood 14 feet, six inches high, weighed one ton, and carried a 100 horsepower engine.¹²⁶ Cody spent most of the summer of 1913 testing this monster.

On 7 August 1913, after a successful morning of trials, Cody took several passengers for rides in his new plane, demonstrating its power, maneuverability, and size. His last passenger was W. H. B. Evans, a famed cricketer. The two passed over Bull Hill at Farnborough several times. And then, the wings of the plane folded, and the machine

¹²³Coleman video, "Samuel Franklin Cody."

¹²⁴Chapman, "S. F. Cody."

¹²⁵Coleman video, "Samuel Franklin Cody."

¹²⁶Drinkwater, "Colonel Cody," 20.

plummeted towards a copse near the hill. The waterplane twisted into the trees, but not until the pilot and passenger had slipped from their seats while the plane was still high off the ground. Falling to earth from an altitude of about 300 feet, Cody and Evans died instantly upon impact.¹²⁷

Britain received the news of Cody's death with shock. Many also felt, or perhaps wished, that Cody and Evans could have saved themselves. The Times printed an extensive report of the inquest, during which H. E. Perrin, secretary of the Royal Aero Club, surmised that Cody and Evans might have avoided death if they had used safety straps, for, excepting the wings, the waterplane had remained remarkably intact when it hit the trees.¹²⁸ But Perrin, as well as Leon Cody, also testified that the aviator took all necessary safety precautions, and that the plane had performed admirably up until that fateful flight. The Times concluded the article by stating, "The funeral of Mr. Cody, which will have some military aspect, will take place to-day."¹²⁹

This announcement may well have been the understatement of 1913. Of the 50,000 people that lined the road from

¹²⁷Cody's death certificate states that he died "by accidental collapse of an aeroplane at the Cove, Farnborough." Death Certificate DA 819282, General Register Office, London.

¹²⁸Times (London), 11 August 1913.

¹²⁹Ibid.

Farnborough to Aldershot to pay their respects to Cody, many came from the British Army, which had representatives from nearly every regiment present at the march. The British Army gave Cody a funeral with full military honors, the only civilian to be buried in the military cemetery at Aldershot.¹³⁰ Outpourings of grief and respect arrived from across Britain. Churches held services, and tributes came from the Army Council, theatre guilds, fellow airmen, and even King George. T. O. M. Sopwith said, "This is the biggest blow, sentimentally at any rate, which the cause of aviation has yet suffered." The King agreed, stating that he "always appreciated [Cody's] dogged determination and dauntless courage."¹³¹ In death, Cody received the understanding and admiration that had proved elusive in life. Ezra Read composed "Aeroplane Waltzes, Dedicated to Colonel Cody," and poet J. Poulson wrote a verse that well summed-up Cody's unusual position in British aeronautics.¹³²

Crank of the crankiest, ridiculed, sneered at;
 Son of a boisterous, picturesque race.
 Butt for the ignorant, shoulder-shrugged,
 leered [?] at;
 Flint-hard of purpose, smiling of face.
 Slogging along on the little-trod paths of life;
 Cowboy and trick-shot and airman in turn;
 Recklessly straining the quick-snapping lath
 of life.
 Eager its utmost resistance to charm.

¹³⁰Coleman video, "Samuel Franklin Cody."

¹³¹Unknown newspaper, "Galaxy of Wreaths and a Flower-Bedecked Grave--Reminiscences of 'England's Greatest Aviator,'" n. d. (August 1913).

¹³²Ezra Read, Aeroplane Waltzes: Dedicated to Colonel Cody (London: London Music Publishing Stores, n. d.).

Honour him now, all ye dwarfs who belittled
 him!
 Now, 'tis writ large what in visions he read.
 Lay the white wreath where your ridicule
 riddled him;
 Honour him, now he's successful and--dead.¹³³

The bitterness of this verse, and particularly the sorrow and sentiment that lay behind it, failed to cross the Atlantic. American papers gave sufficient notice of Cody's death in front page obituaries, but did not share with Britain the continued fascination with Cody's western life.¹³⁴ Perhaps the American press simply did not realize the impact Cody, a cowboy native of the West, had on British aviation. After all, the British seemed to recognize his contributions only in retrospect. But Cody always knew his own worth, and played cowboy or aviator as suited the need. In either role he represented Anglo civilization in its desperate search for a balance of scientific progress and frontier romanticism. Cody's melodramatic theatrics and his daring aeronautics offered thematically unified pictures of the same reality of the Anglo myth. Dressed in long coat and cowboy hat, Cody would arrive, astride Bergamo, at his aeroplane's storage shed. Wheeling his aeroplane onto the rough green at Farnborough, towards the beleaguered little tree that served as the hitching post for his "flying

¹³³"Galaxy of Wreaths."

¹³⁴Even the Fort Worth Record, 8 August 1913, p. 1, was vague and uninterested with regard to Cody's American origins. They did not recognize him as a home-town boy, only noting that he was a showman with a resemblance to Buffalo Bill.

horse," Cody embodied the merger of modern technology with frontier horse sense.¹³⁵

¹³⁵Daily Telegraph (London), 16 May 1958. The spirit of this tree, by the way, has been preserved in the form of an aluminum cast that stands, where the tree originally was, as a monument to Cody's first flight at Farnborough.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In 1987, the Irish rock band U2 released their fifth record, entitled The Joshua Tree. Essentially a concept album, The Joshua Tree takes for its primary subject the exploitation of the American West. With songs like "Bullet the Blue Sky," "Red Hill Mining Town," and "In God's Country," U2 demonstrates effectively that our civilization is building on the tradition of Anglo expansion in the West as it continues to "stoop so low to reach so high."¹ Extending to the American West the Situationist philosophy of what musicologists call "punk" music, the album contains the stark imagery of overthrown idols.² The American West, stripped of its facade and Wild West showiness, appears a disappointing landscape of lost hopes.

Have times changed? Have we finally come to the conclusion that what we believe about our civilization may

¹U2, "Red Hill Mining Town," The Joshua Tree, compact disc 7 90581-2, Island, 1987.

²In simple terms, Situationism is the belief that once something becomes a spectacle or rote performance of routine, that action is then meaningless. In performing these routines, society often fails to see the reality of its actions, and neglects to re-create its situations in accordance to this reality. This phenomenon can be applied to adventure novels, Buffalo Bill's Wild West, S. F. Cody's melodramas, and popular perceptions of the West in general. On Situationism and the impact of "false idols" on culture in the last two centuries, see Guy Debord, Society of the Spectacle (Detroit: Black and Red, 1983); and Greil Marcus, Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

roaring lion and trumpeting elephant, and even "Captain Apollo, The Human Missile." But dwarfing all of these, an Anglo-featured Native American in plains dress, with arrow stretched over bow, dominated the poster. Minus Captain Apollo, the circular would have done justice to any of the Wild West shows of a hundred years ago. That same month, I heard a London blues band play their new song, entitled "Billy the Kid." In July, while talking to a Scot in a Welsh pub, I found that in his opinion Clint Eastwood's spaghetti westerns represented the true West.

Once I started looking for it, the West in Britain began to emerge all around me, in the strangest of places. These encounters, and similar ones arising in the American West, have ultimately led me to address the question, "When considering the West, how can we distinguish between myth and reality?" I now believe that to this query no answer exists, for it asks an impossible question. Like the levelling of mountains, the irrigation of deserts, and racial genocide, myth is a part of the reality of the American West. It influenced the destructiveness meted out by Anglo civilization, made the conflagration justifiable and the truly noble deeds that much better. Standing "on the pinnacle of their civilisation," armed to the teeth with modern industry and self-created Providence, the British looked West through Cody's plays, Buffalo Bill's "exhibitions," and adventure writers' fictions, and just possibly saw themselves.

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