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**Review of *Buffalo Bill and the Wild West* By Peter H. Hassrick,
Richard Slotkin, Vine Deloria, Jr., Howard R. Lamar, William
Judson, and Leslie A. Fiedler**

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American cultural history. It also includes a cornucopia of splendid pictures, illustrating virtually every phase of Buffalo Bill's life. In addition it has a valuable chronology of events amounting to a short biography of Cody, a useful chronology of Buffalo Bill on film, and a significant bibliography. The main thrust of the essays in this volume is to resurrect Buffalo Bill and, as it were, to rescue the old scout from the damage done to him by Robert Altman's film "Buffalo Bill and the Indians, or Sitting Bull's History Lesson." In this the authors succeed admirably, bringing real scholarship to replace Altman's rather self-indulgent use of Buffalo Bill to explore the arcane mysteries of film and reality.

In an elegant essay, Peter Hassrick makes abundantly clear Cody's influence on American painters, especially Remington, while at the same time placing his Wild West Show in the context of a long tradition of American Wild West shows, including those by George Catlin and John Mix Stanley early in the nineteenth century. Richard Slotkin probes a bit deeper into the American psyche and notes that Cody was entrapped by dime novel fiction at one point in his life and was forced to live up to a fictional role. He acted out this role in his Wild West Shows, a popular ritual that became a paradigm of American values in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Slotkin calls this paradigm a myth. He is particularly astute in noting a shift in focus in the Wild West Show, from the winning of the West to the winning of the world, which involved an embracing of all the Darwinian values of imperialism. Curiously he fails to see that this was not an abrupt transition, because the winning of the West was also a phase of imperialism.

Vine Deloria, Jr., is concerned with Cody's treatment of the Indian, and in this respect he invariably gives him high marks. Howard R. Lamar focuses on the emergence of the cowboy as hero and convincingly demonstrates Cody's role in making the cowboy a hero. He also calls attention to the critical contribution made by the Texan, Charles A. Siringo, whose autobiography, *A Texas Cowboy; or, Fifteen Years*

Buffalo Bill and the Wild West. By Peter H. Hassrick, Richard Slotkin, Vine Deloria, Jr., Howard R. Lamar, William Judson, and Leslie A. Fiedler. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Brooklyn Museum, 1981. Illustrations. 96 pp. \$11.95.

In many ways this is a most useful catalogue. It features six essays by distinguished scholars all intent upon reassessing Buffalo Bill's place in

on the Hurricane Deck of a Spanish Pony (1885) far antedates Owen Wister's classic, *The Virginian* (1902), often thought to be the first work to celebrate the cowboy as hero. Lamar's essay is perhaps the most valuable in this collection.

William Judson, in his essay dealing with Cody on film, has thin material to work with, since Cody apparently appeared for the most part as a peripheral or authenticating figure in early westerns. He does well, however, in dealing with Cecil B. DeMille's classic *The Plainsman*. He also rightly condemns the various Pony Express films, but he unfortunately seems to be mesmerized by Altman's fiasco.

The best that one can say about Leslie A. Fiedler's essay on "The Legend" is that it is superficial. Given Fiedler's past interest, this reviewer had hoped for a brief account of "Love and Death in the Life of Buffalo Bill." In my opinion Fiedler missed a great story when he failed to probe more deeply into Buffalo Bill's relations with his wife and various other ladies, including his daughter, Irma, for whom he built a hotel in his town of Cody, Wyoming. Perhaps Fiedler, like the other authors, was suffering from an undue attack of reverence for the old hero, who, after Altman was finished with him, became a cultural underdog. All these authors, with a generosity of spirit, have sided with the underdog in relatively uncritical fashion. Thus, with the essays, the splendid pictures, and the impressive exhibition, perhaps we can now consider Buffalo Bill "resurrected."

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