Disgusting and delightful at the same time, genius and stupidity, organic unity, the highest sophistication next to the most primitive barbarism. America!

(Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt
[Transylvanian-German Daily Paper],
July 14, 1906)

People came from neighboring settlements and from afar to witness the curious show that was about to take place. The streets of Timișoara were humming with anticipation; lively conversations animated coffee shops and restaurants. As the afternoon arrived, the mass of people began a slow retreat toward the small military exercise field on the outskirts of the city (Controla [Control], July 8, 1906). Most people chose to confront the heat of the midsummer sun and cover the distance on foot. Yet one could also see a colorful display of vehicles transporting people from all walks of life: private and rental cars, omnibuses, carts, and bicycles.

In the morning of the same day, three trains arrived at the railway station, transporting 800 people and 500 horses, ready to put on a show.¹ Their

¹ Some details shared by reporters: “The train comprises three sections: the first section consists of a locomotive, 145.659 meters in length, and eighteen numbered sleeping carts for carrying props and stalls and having a total length of 295.05 meters and a weight of 381 tons; the second section contains sixteen wagons with a total length of 261.409 meters and a weight of 357 tons; the third has fifteen wagons with a total length 247.05 meters and a weight of 301 tons. In all, forty-nine carriages make up the three trains” (Controla, July 8, 1906).
arrival from Versecz/Vršac was a “spectacle” that attracted many curious viewers. Locals expressed their admiration for the efficiency with which the space had been prepared. The main tent, under which the show would take place, had a capacity of 12,000, and since the seating area was covered, the presentation could go on regardless of the weather.

Surrounding the main tent were numerous other tents, some of which were open to the public. Perhaps the largest and most popular was the male dressing tent, which displayed a colorful array of costumes for the performers. There was also a lot of commotion around the mobile tent for reporters. A male Native American perched on a platform, attracting attention with his shouts and wielding a sword and shield, was enticing passersby to purchase a ticket for the event if they did not already have one.

Until the program began, visitors could quench their thirst with beer sold by the organizers, try out novelty candy made on the spot, or buy souvenir postcards. A small collection of curiosities—including a tattooed man, cockatoos trained to dance, a snake charmer, and a 25-year-old doll-faced princess who was only one meter tall (Nagyvárad [Oradea], July 21, 1906)—was presented in one of the tents for the price of a separate ticket. Furthermore, for another fifty pence, one could buy a thick picture book with the program of the show. Most of the text from the program book was in Hungarian but it was filled with ads in German. Meanwhile, in the arena, the seated public was entertained by a small but disciplined orchestra playing the latest English songs. At a quarter to three, the show started.³

The Vein Between the Orient and the Occident

Such a scene was typical for Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show during its 1906 European tour.⁴ Following the performance in Versecz/Vršac, the company

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² Presently, a Serbian town situated in the South Banat District. Regarding Banat, in the present chapter, I address only the territory that currently belongs to Romania, neglecting the part that is situated in Serbia. I decided that this offers a more cohesive approach and a stronger focus on the regions that share the main characteristics of having been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and now Romania.

³ The opening scene is a reconstruction of events based on newspaper articles of the time that illustrate a typical scene prior to the show from the viewpoint of the press (Délmagyarországi Közlöny [South Hungarian Bulletin], July 10, 1906; Controla, July 8, 1906; Temesvári Hírlap [Timișoara Gazette], July 10, 1906).

⁴ The territory of modern-day Romania has a long history with variations of circus entertainment. The oldest references mention comedians, acrobats, and horse trainers. The artists mostly came from the West (they were often French, Polish, Italian, English, or Austrian), but a significant number were of Turk-
The Call of the Wild

ventured farther on into what was then the Austro-Hungarian Empire. But I will narrow down the focus to the following cities that belong to the region of Banat (in Romanian and Serbian, Banat; in Hungarian, Bánát) and Transylvania (in Romanian, Transylvania; in Hungarian, Erdély; in German, Siebenbürgen⁵), which are now part of Romania: Timișoara/Temesvár/Temeswar (July 9), Arad (July 10–11), Alba-Iulia/Gyulafehérvár/Karlsruhe (July 12), Sibiu/Nagyszeben/Hermanstadt (July 13), Brașov/Brasso/Kronstadt (July 14–15), Sighișoara/Segesvár/Schäßburg (July 16), Târgu-Mureș/Marosvásárhely/Neumarkt am Mieresch (July 17), Cluj/Kolozsvár/Klausenburg (July 18–19), Oradea/Nagyvárad/Großwardein (July 20), Satu Mare/Szatmár/Sathmar (July 21), and Sighetu Marmăției/Máramarossziget/Marmaroschsiget (July 22).⁶

Both Banat and Transylvania have a long and tumultuous history, which I will briefly describe. In the early modern perception, these regions bore special significance as a frontier between East and West. This was mainly because of the geographical features of the land—namely, the Danube River and the Carpathian mountain range. What is more, Banat was notorious for its swampy grounds and frequent floods. The region was under Ottoman suzerainty from 1552 to 1716 until the siege of Timișoara, led by Eugene de Savoy, which resulted in the conquest of the city and its subsequent integration into the Habsburg Empire. The region was an important strategic area for the two great powers (Micle, Balaci, and Timoc 2017; Diaconescu 2017). Another noteworthy date is 1718 when Banat was annexed to Austria by the Treaty of Passarowitz.

Transylvania remained autonomous under Ottoman suzerainty for almost 170 years, starting in 1526, as a result of the ongoing conflict between the emperor and sultan—a period during which the area was known as the

ish origin, due to the Ottoman influence over the area. They presented exotic tricks such as fire eating or breathing, which gained the admiration of the crowds. There is a mention of a Chinese group of acrobats traveling with a German circus who stopped at Iași, Romania, in 1806. In 1841 a circus with Japanese acrobats passed through the same town. In 1846 Bosco held an Egyptian magic show in Bucharest, which attracted a lot of attention. In the summer of 1886, Bucharest was a stop in the itinerary of the traveling circus troupe “Zanzibar Family” and, at the beginning of the twentieth century, for “The Great Russian Circus.” The most “exotic” performers were thus Chinese, Japanese, Arabs, and Russians (for more information see Butnaru 1967; Iosefini 1968).

5 Siebenbürgen, the German name for Transylvania, means “seven castles.” This stands for the number of ethnic German (Transylvanian Saxon) cities located in the region.

6 In Buffalo Bill’s Wild West 1906 schedule the city names were in Hungarian and German.
Principality of Transylvania. At the end of the seventeenth century, the region was integrated into the Austrian Empire, and from the end of the nineteenth century until 1918 it belonged to the Hungarian side of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1918 Banat and Transylvania were united with other regions, fulfilling the ideal of a "Great Romania" (Papacostea 2018).

One of the main characteristics of the two regions was that they were spaces of great ethnic and confessional diversity. The ethnic structure was influenced by the socio-political context of the time and by the changes that took place regarding religion. Viewing the regions with our attention on language, religion, and origin rather than considering it a nation of estates, the space shared a mosaic of ethnicities, including Romanians, Hungarians, and Germans (Brie 2009). Zeroing in on the period of interest, between 1850 and 1910 there was a significant change in the ethno-confessional makeup of the population. Based on these statistics, we can observe an increase in the number of Hungarians and a decrease in other ethnicities.

As for the confessional level, important trends in the social dynamics of the population were caused by a series of factors. According to Ioan Bolovan and Sorina Paula Bolovan (2010), the three main factors were: (a) the growth of the Hungarian population being partly due to an above-average rate of natural increase, (b) the Hungarians participating to a lesser extent in emigration, and (c) the process of assimilation. It is this volatile ethno-confessional context that will serve as the backdrop for the analysis of the reception of the Wild West Show.

7 The following data are from Bolovan and Bolovan (2010) for Transylvania based on the census that was conducted by the Empire seven times between 1845 and 1910:

a. The period that encapsulates 1906; 1900 compared to 1910: Romanians 55% to 53.7%; Hungarians 29.5% to 31.6%; Germans 11.9% to 10.7%; Serbians and Croats 1.1% to 1%; Slovaks 0.5% to 0.6%; Ruthenians 0.4% to 0.5%; others 1.5% to 1.9%.

b. The start (1850) and the end (1910) of the census: Romanians 59.5% to 53.7%; Hungarians 26% to 31.3%; Germans 10.7% to 9.3%; Serbians and Croats 0% to 1%; Romani 3.8% to 0%; Slovaks 0% to 0.6%; Armenians 0.4% to 0%; Ruthenians 0% to 0.4%; others 0.2% to 1.9%.

It is important to mention that there were changes in the method of data collection regarding ethnicity, which could have affected the outcome. At the beginning of the period, Austrian officials determined the neam (nationality) based on the preference of respondents; after 1867, Hungarian officials categorized ethnic belonging based on the mother tongue. This could be one of the possible explanations for the ethnicities enumerated above, which show up only at the beginning of the census.
The Call of the Wild

Buffalo Bill and His Wild West Show

Initiated in 1883 by William Frederick Cody (Buffalo Bill), the Wild West Show soon turned into a worldwide phenomenon, with tours across America and Europe (Cody 1978). After the success of the first European tour in 1887–92, a second one followed in 1902–69 which also covered the territory of Austria-Hungary that is now part of Romania (Griffin 2010). In fact, the creator of the program never thought of it as a circus but rather as an “educational show” about the romanticized history of the American West (Cody 1978).

While some of the newspaper articles did present the show as a circus (Foajă Poporului [Paper of the People], July 22, 1906; Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt, July 11, 1906; Gross-Kokler Bote [Great Târnava Messenger], July 1, 1906), other sources refer to it as a highly instructive ethnic show. Such statements were mostly present in the publicity pieces published before the presentation, which were often drafted under the supervision of John M. Burke (also known as Arizona John).

As for the public reception, according to reviews, it was not so much the circus acts that caught the attention but the opportunity to learn more about the New World. In one article, the show was described as an “ethnographic map—a model of images and knights” or a “true slice of the American life” (Kronštädter Zeitung [Kronstadt Newspaper], July 16, 1906). According to another:

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8 William Frederick Cody (1846–1917) was born in LeClaire, Iowa, and became a symbol of the Western frontier. In his lifetime he took on a wide array of jobs: he worked for the railways, was hired by the Pony Express, and even worked in a gold mine. Furthermore, he had an impressive military career; as a scout for the United States Army, he participated in several campaigns against Native Americans. But probably the activity in which he distinguished himself most was hunting for buffalos. In this area he proved his skills time and again, earning him the nickname Buffalo Bill. Later, his personal experiences were dramatized and presented as scenes of his Wild West Show (Cody 1978; Griffin 2010).


10 “You shouldn’t trust that this is a circus as any other circus. The representations that will be given are very instructive, races from the entire world will parade in front of the public, each race showing what it has that is heroic, extraordinary in its life” (Telegraful Român [Romanian Telegraph], July 12, 1906). In another article, it is said about the Wild West Show that “it aims to reproduce a comprehensive picture of life on the American frontier” (Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt, July 11, 1906).
Timea Barabas

Talking of the representation given at Brașov, we must state that we did not find so impressive the artistic manifestations, which are nowadays offered by modern and renowned circuses, but the mass representations of the different American breeds, which offered us a slice from the life of the people from the American continent. (Gazeta Transilvaniei [Transylvanian Gazette], July 18, 1906)

Among Buffalo Bill’s numerous skills, we can also safely count marketing: by promoting the show as educational, he differentiated it from other circus performances, elevating its status. And the Wild West Show did deliver. There were acts similar to what could be viewed at the circus, mainly the display of physical skills; but there were also aspects that made it stand out, such as the dramatic representation of a fragmentary history of the Western frontier (as experienced by Buffalo Bill).

The experience was not limited to the stage. Spectators could stroll around the backstage area to watch the performers off set, without the choreography, stage lights, and sound effects. This was the closest they could get to observing these “exotic” people in their “natural” habitat—where and how they lived, objects of everyday life, and their daily routine. Newspaper reporters were also keen to take the readers backstage (Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt, July 14, 1906; Kronstädter Zeitung, July 9, 1906).

It was made clear in media statements that the entertainment was high class and played in some of the greatest cities and even to royalty (Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt, July 11, 1906; Gazeta Transilvaniei, July 11, 1906). The program supposedly remained unchanged for the general public—having something in common with royalty was an element that flattered the audience. According to one source, “The fact that representatives of the royal families all across Europe have viewed this show demonstrated once and for all that this is not only educational and funny but worthy of a select audience” (Gross-Kokler Bote, July 15, 1906).

The main source of inspiration for the show was Cody’s personal experience. He dramatized events from his life (although not exclusively), including select scenes from the Battle of the Little Bighorn (1876), adventures of the Pony Express, and the confrontation between Buffalo Bill and Yellow Hand, which always ended with Cody holding above his head the feathered headwear and a tuft of his opponent’s hair (Ionescu 1999).
In both Banat and Transylvania, the show consisted of twenty-two acts presenting, among other things, cowboys riding and taming horses, throwing a lasso, shooting exercises, “customs of the Indians from times of peace and war,” scenes from the life of Cossacks, Japanese, Arabs, and so on (Foatia Poporului [Paper of the People], July 22, 1906). Therefore, Buffalo Bill painted the Wild West according to a personal narrative, reenacting history from the viewpoint of the victor. It is interesting to note that he was not the only one who legitimized his narrative voice; some scholars did as well, including the Romanian scholars Adrian-Silvan Ionescu and Aurelian Stroe (2000, 151): “To be fair, he was the most appropriate person to recount this history because he was one of the active participants in its making.”

A couple of days before the show, Burke arrived to make the necessary preparations.11 Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show was always met with high expectations (cf. Baraniecka-Olszewska 2020), as a result of the marketing campaign run beforehand: posters (3 meters high and 10 meters long) were displayed in populous areas of the city, and ads were published in local newspapers (Gross-Kokler Bote, July 1, 1906). The ads were usually formatted as a long strip and found on the last pages of newspapers.12

In this case, Banat and Transylvania presented an ethnically diverse group of people, and such ads were printed in Romanian, Hungarian, and German newspapers.13 These usually followed a strict format and displayed little variation. To begin with, they all presented the following information regarding the shows: date and location; ticket prices (usually between two
Timea Barabas

Figure 12.1. Advertisement in Romanian published at Controla, June 30, 1906. The text roughly translates as follows: “Timişoara. Only for one day! Monday July 9. 2 performances. Same show in the afternoon as in the evening. Buffalo Bill’s Wild West. Congress of ROUGH RIDERS of the World. The bravest riders from the world. Under the personal tutelage of Colonel CODY V. F. (Buffalo Bill). Buffalo Bill the master of riding makes admirable exercises with guns on horseback, as the horses gallop fast. 100 Indians from North America. A great theatrical scene with several acts. The Battle of the Little Bighorn or Custer’s Last Stand. 2 great performances. At 2 in the afternoon and at 8 in the evening. The ticket house opens at 1.30 and 7.30. Seat prices: first seat 2 cor.—numbered seat 4 cor.—reserved seat 5 cor.—lodge 8 cor. Children under 10 pay half price. Tickets can be pre-purchased for the seats with 5 and 8 cor. on the day of the performances from 9 a.m. at Jacob Csendes, Timişoara Hunyadi Street, no. 5. Performances at Verşeţ on July 8, at Arad on July 10 and 11.”

and nine crowns depending on the category, with children under ten receiving a 50 percent discount); where and when tickets could be purchased; the number of shows (followed by assurances that there were no variations between performances); a short presentation of the program; and mention of the previous and following cities on the tour. Furthermore, there was usually a sketch accompanying the text. While the headline invariably displayed the portrait of Buffalo Bill, sometimes there was also a sketch of a Native American, Buffalo Bill riding a horse, or other representations of an ethnic group from the show (figs. 12.1 and 12.2).

Buffalo Bill’s journey through Banat and Transylvania has been previously addressed by scholarly literature, the results of which I have integrated into my analysis to various degrees. To begin with, Adrian-Silvan Ionescu (1999; Ionescu and Stroe 2000) created a detailed
reconstruction of the Buffalo Bill shows based on the press of the time. His systemized approach offers a valuable foundation for the events, upon which to build a fresh analysis. Furthermore, he addressed the representation of the Native “Indian”\(^\text{14}\) and the American in the imagination of the public. Building on his work, Elena Andreea Boia (2007, 2009a, 2009b, 2010) has written extensively about the nuances attributed to the Other—Native American and cowboy—during the nineteenth century in the region.

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\(^{14}\) News articles at that time employed the term “Indians” to refer to the native inhabitants of North America. Fully aware of the negative connotations the word carries today, I have decided to use it in order to present the press materials of the day in a reliable manner. The term “Indian(s)” appears deliberately in quotation marks.
Among the Hungarian scholars who have written on the topic, Olivér Perczel and Zoltán Györe are of particular importance to the present study. Perczel (2013) wrote a monograph on Buffalo Bill and compiled a comprehensive account of the cities visited in the 1906 Hungarian stretch of the tour based on local Hungarian newspaper articles and archival documents. Later, in a study with Györe (2016), the two scholars chose to focus on only a few localities from the Banat region and added both German and Serbian media sources (although these were relatively few).

Building on the insights of the aforementioned works, the primary aim of this study is to analyze, through the apparatus of the press, firstly, how the staged Other from Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show was represented in the region of Banat and Transylvania; and secondly, how these representations might influence the local ethno-confessional groups in the process of (re)defining their own identity and positioning as groups. Within this scope, I will address the concept of “nesting theories,” especially “nesting orientalisms” (Bakić-Hayden 1995; Todorova 1997). Subscribing to Edward Said’s (1978) perspective, I will treat the opposing constructs addressed here more as “projects” than as geographical locations.

Variations on Nesting Theories

There is an ever-growing body of work dedicated to variations on nesting theories, the foundation of which consists of Edward Said’s work on orientalism (1978), with later influences by Larry Wolff (1994). The main benefit of orientalism as rhetoric is that it relies on the difference between (north-)west and (south-)east (Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1992; Bakić-Hayden 1995). The term was derived by Said from how “easterners” who lived in Europe were represented in popular discourse, but he also draws on colonialism. By “orientalism” he referred to the tendency of Europe to represent

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16 Nagykikinda, Nagybecskerek, Pávasz, Versec.
17 The authors suggest that Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show was scarcely covered in Serbian newspapers due to their predominantly political inclination. They tended to cover news that had a more direct impact on the Serbian community of the region (Perczel and Györe 2016).
itself as “rational” and “progressive” in contrast to the Orient, which was seen as “mystical” and “backward” (Said 1978). Wolff (1994) took things one step further by suggesting that these labels are not confined just to the early travel journals but also appear in the works of influential writers of the caliber of Voltaire and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

The theory is of further value in that it creates a framework for addressing practical issues of power relations, bringing into the discussion the dichotomy of domination and submission on a multilevel playing field that includes politics and economy. As for the downside of this orientation, Milica Bakić-Hayden and Robert Hayden (1992) identify as the major threat its reliance on a categorization of human reality as a whole. However, they suggest a way around this, firstly, by underlining that the dichotomy does not apply to the represented phenomenon, and secondly, by highlighting the elusiveness of the phenomenon thus addressed. Bakić-Hayden (1995) also brings into the discussion essentialism, in the sense that both cultures and ideologies stand accused of incorporating different essences into the representations used for describing the East–West dichotomy.

To address the East–West dichotomy, which became one of Said’s theoretical legacies, Bakić-Hayden and Hayden (1992; and Bakić-Hayden 1995) developed the term “nesting orientalism” for a graduated scale of “Orients.” Thus the dichotomy was replaced by a continuum along which subjects can move more fluidly between varying degrees of “oriental” and “occidental” based on different reference points. For example, Turks are commonly seen as “Eastern” by the Balkans, while the Turks would label themselves as “Western” when compared to Arabs, whom the Turks in turn label as “Eastern.” Relying on hierarchies, the theory addresses the issue of how groups define themselves in relation to one another. Furthermore, Bakić-Hayden and Hayden dealt with a variation of orientalism by moving the focus of analysis to the Balkan region, specifically to Yugoslavia.

Building on the concepts of her scholarly predecessors, Maria Todorova (1997) expanded the general theoretical framework, by introducing the concept of “nesting Balkanisms” to address the duality of the Balkan identity construction. She centers her work on the stereotypes associated with the Balkans by the overlapping of Balkanist and mostly socio-political discourses.

Orientalism and Balkanism do share certain similarities, since both are discursive formations and rely on strong metaphors and a series of differ-
entiating factors: the concrete geographic and historic particularities of the Balkans in contrast to the more symbolic nature of the Orient; the absence of colonialism in the Balkans; differences of ethnicity, religion, and language; and the “ontology of the Balkans” as opposed to the more metaphoric level associated with the Orient (Todorova 1997, 194).

This framework is significant for dynamic regions such as Banat and Transylvania that were home to an ethno-confessional mosaic under Ottoman, Habsburg, and Austro-Hungarian rule. The three main groups addressed in this study are Romanians (Orthodox/Roman Catholic), Hungarians (Reformed/Roman Catholic), and Germans (Evangelist). Such delimitations have been and continue to be used as a means of defining space “in terms of symbolic geography, inclusion and exclusion of cultural elements native to its various regions” (Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1992, 5).

Methodology and Source Materials

For the current analysis, I rely mainly on the press discourse about Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show in Banat and Transylvania, which I corroborate with scholarly literature. Data were collected, primarily, from articles and ads in the local newspapers of the cities Buffalo Bill visited in July 1906. I use the document analysis method to identify representations of the Other, as outlined in the images of the North American/cowboy and the Native American/“Indian.” Based on this, I will outline the different gradations associated with these representations by the public.

The ads followed a strict template that varied little across countries. The articles can be broken down into two groups: press advertisement campaigns (usually paid articles that offered a positive review of the show), which could be published both before the show (Burke frequently visited press houses and talked to the journalists about the Wild West Show) and after; and more “objective” or even critical descriptions written by reporters. The main difficulty with this categorization lies in correctly identifying the source materials. There is no information available on the possible monetary compensation for the selected articles and, what is more, the name of the journalist does not appear. Usually, the pieces were signed simply “REP.” (short for reporter). To a certain extent, we can rely on deduction; however, the categorization is not meant to be and should not be taken as definite.
The Call of the Wild

The fact that the present analysis is rooted in the press of the time is both the weak point of this study and one of its greatest strengths. There are several reasons why this path was chosen, but the most pragmatic one concerned the lack of other source materials. The upside to this is that due to the particularities of the analyzed region, the newspapers are in different languages and address different ethno-confessional groups. Thus, the original materials are in Romanian, Hungarian, and German (the extracts presented here are my own translation). Scholars conducting media-based research, such as Gay Mason (1992), underline the importance of this medium and its multiple roles as a messenger but also as a conveyer and constructor of a particular ideology and social concepts. However, the press can take on other roles, as well. For example, Nicolae Teșculă mentions one of the very newspapers that was included as source material for the present study—Gross-Kokler Bote. He wrote, “It was meant to be a paper that represent[ed] the position of the county, but it became a newspaper that faithfully reflect[ed] the society from Sighișoara and ways of spending free time” (Teșculă 2005, 434). The press is an apparatus of the state or the people through which reality is filtered, a version of which is made available for the masses. It is this particular aspect that I am most interested in. How and why did the press of Banat and Transylvania of the early twentieth century portray staged otherness in the Wild West Show the way it did and in no other way?

Instances of Constructing the Other

In the deconstruction of the Wild West project, I have identified the dominant representations of the performed otherness as North Americans/cowboys and Native Americans/“Indians.” There is a third category of ethnic groups from other lands that took part in the show, such as Arabs, Cossacks, Cubans, Japanese, Mexicans (Foaia Poporului, July 8, 1906; Gazeta Transilvaniei, July 11, 1906). I have found only a few references to them in the press.18 One reason for this could be that the public was already

18 Rather uncharacteristically, a short article was dedicated exclusively to the Japanese, in which the focus fell on the progress the people made in the domains of mechanics, commerce, and military: “The Japanese group presented in the ‘Wild West’ shows reveal in the simplest of ways the giant strain this country has made to get from the stage of semi-barbarism, at which it previously was, to that of the clear military strength of the West” (Gazeta Bucovinei, July 9, 1906).
familiar with these ethnic groups, as they performed in circuses and variétés (*Gross-Kokler Bote*, July 1, 1906; see also Iosefini 1968; Butnaru 1967). Because of this, and also because this group represents such great diversity, I have decided to focus solely on the two main categories. I will explore each of these categories, as presented in the press, in the context of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show in Banat and Transylvania, and I will then discuss the relations between these representations of staged otherness and the ethno-confessional mosaic of the region. But first, a short discussion of how the “Promised Land” was present in the imaginary of the people before the arrival of Buffalo Bill.

The American frontier was not completely unfamiliar to the people of Banat and Transylvania. Other scholars (Stanciu and Cernovodeanu 1985; Boia 2007, 2010) have already conducted an in-depth analysis of the materials available at the time and the impact these had on the cultural imaginary. I will present a summary of their research. The earliest mentions date back to the writings of men of letters from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who briefly described natives from Central and South America. However, some of the sources concerning these peoples were not accessible to the masses until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when information about Native Americans from the North started becoming part of the popular knowledge through, among other avenues, school textbooks, encyclopedias, and translated works. At about the same time, people began having stronger connections in the New World, either to locals who emigrated or to travelers (Boia 2010). In his study, George James Patterson (1986) mentions the first group of Romanian immigrants in the mid-nineteenth century from Banat, Transylvania, and other regions, who set out for the other side of the Atlantic. The precise starting point of Romanian emigration is still debated by scholars but is usually placed at the end of the nineteenth century (specifically, 1895) or the beginning of the twentieth. There was also

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19 Maximilianus Transilvanus, Nicolae Olahul, Iacob Paleologul din Chios, and Jan Ámos Komenský (Boia 2007).

20 Some of the most important works as presented by Boia (2007) were *Ars heraldica* (1695) by Ferenc Pápai Páriz, which presented mainly information about body art, decoration, and body modification practices (including intrusive practices such as cutting off fingers to mourn the loss of a loved one, perforation of the lower lip, tattooing); and *Elemente de geografia pentru scoalele populare române greco-orientali* (1869) by Zaharia Boiu, which follows the narrative of natives being oppressed by the colonizers.
a trend toward a greater percentage of Romanian emigration originating from territories belonging to the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Gârdan 2012). An early twentieth-century Hungarian newspaper from the Banat region mentions that:

It is not poverty, but the hope of getting rich quick and easy that drives people away from here. In three years 352 people moved out only from Pancsova [a city in Banat region] and from Torontál and Temes county 30,257. A staggering number. (Határőr [Frontier-Guard], July 29, 1906)

Most of them went to the United States and Germany.

Two main categories emerge in this context: the Natives (referred to as “Indians”) and the émigré Europeans (English, French, German, Italian—among which the English dominated in the imaginary), referred to as North Americans. The latter became highlighted in the public imaginary as “one from the North, the trader, industrialist, inventor, Yankee, the individual who spoke his mind” (Boia 2009b, 161). The Natives were gradually outlined as “the survivor, isolated in the ancient forests of North America, a strong personality who refuses at any cost to abandon his old customs and beliefs” (Boia 2007, 102). One thing is clear, the people from Banat and Transylvania did not have a neutral attitude toward America. The imaginary was fueled from various sources (literary but also firsthand accounts from traveling acquaintances), and Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show was perceived as an opportunity to piece together all the previously available scattered information but, above all, to see the people of those distant lands in real life. The Natives, especially, constituted a subject of intrigue, which drew in the crowds. A newspaper article even mentions the valuable opportunity children had to meet some of the famous Native Americans they had been reading about:

The little ones, for whom it will be a great pleasure . . . to be introduced to—and to find themselves face to face with— . . . chiefs, whose ancestors, known to kids from books about redskins, offered them so many hours of happiness. (Gross-Kokler Bote, July 1, 1906)
Cowboys

There is not much mention of the “cowboys,” physical characteristics (which is not surprising, since they were not so different from the locals). It was more common for the press to dwell on their skill set. What caught the attention was mostly “the dexterity of the so-called American ‘cowboy’ in riding, domesticating wild horses, [and] the throwing of the so-called ‘lasso’” (Gazeta Transilvaniei, July 18, 1906). It was the character traits that were presented in ample detail. We can observe in press accounts how the cowboys are placed within a dichotomous framework and become the harbingers of progress in the wilderness: “It is about the life of the first pioneers in the American Far West and the changes they brought upon those abandoned regions” (Gazeta Bucovinei, July 2, 1906). “They were indeed worthy of admiration, as they offered us the most interesting scenes from the fights of Europeans with the wilderness of the West” (Telegraful Român, July 17, 1906).

One of the main metaphors associated with American cowboys is that they were “people of action” who enacted change even in the harshest of places. But it is important to note that in the above examples, at least, the contrast is not explicitly between two groups (cowboys and Native Americans) but, rather, a subject (cowboys) and an object (land) associated with the other group (Native Americans).\(^\text{21}\) This label is in line with the prior representation of North Americans in the public imaginary of Transylvania. Boia (2009a, 2009b, 2010) extensively researched this aspect and followed its evolution across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She concluded that by directing attention to certain character features, people sought an explanation for the success of North Americans.

They tried to answer the question: How must you be like as a people, that your country, a federative republic with a history of 100 years, at most, could have an economic, scientific, technological, etc., momentum without precedent, to practically compete with the most advanced states of the Old World? (Boia 2009b, 161)

\(^{21}\) When it comes to the land, the approach of the Native Americans clashed with that of the settlers, in that they did not appropriate it and saw it as an inseparable part of nature (Matei 1969).
A rather interesting feature of the representation of the cowboys, especially when compared to the homogeneous take on Native Americans, is that rather than being considered as a group, individuals are named and highlighted. It is in these individuals that the “essence” of the whole is condensed. Without a doubt, Buffalo Bill was a central figure in this sense. He was described as “the most interesting personality from his gigantic troupe” (Gross-Kokler Bote, July 1, 1906).

Even today, when with his already white hair and beard he showed up in front of the Indians, cowboys, and Japanese, this extraordinary rider, the creator of all the wonderful numbers of the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show, kept his spectators at the edge of their seats. (Gross-Kokler Bote, July 1, 1906)

He was met with a great amount of admiration from the public. His “bravery,” “daring,” “cold-bloodedness,” and “patience” were believed to have secured his streak of victories in life (Revășul, July 14, 1906). The press almost seemed to have been caught in a competition when glorifying him. However, if we look at the articles more carefully, there are a couple of observations to be made. To begin with, the articles reviewing the show unanimously spoke of William Frederick Cody in great terms, dwelling mostly on his skill set and attributes, which I have mentioned. However, there were also publicity articles that appeared in the press before the event and with the considerable contribution of an official press agent (John M. Burke). These pieces are more focused on strengthening and perpetuating the myth of Buffalo Bill.

Major Burke, who was at our office yesterday and who remained the inseparable companion of Buffalo Bill for 40 years, told us a couple of things about his career. The Archives of the American Government and the history of the West from the region of the Mississippi [sic] river are full of Buffalo Bill’s merits. Famous commanders and officers of the state asked for his advice in the civil war between South America and North

22 But he was not the only one. Among the other frequently named artists was Johnny Baker, who impressed reporters as a rider and marksman: “Worthy of mention is also the representation of Colonel Cody and of the American Johnny Baker, who distinguished themselves as excellent marksmen, shooting with phenomenal precision glass globes thrown into the air” (Gazeta Transilvanei, July 18, 1906).
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[between the northern and southern United States], and in the fights against Indians, his services were priceless . . . The fight against Indians that lasted for 300 years ended due to Cody’s contribution. (Gazeta Transilvaniei, July 12, 1906)

The title of colonel was frequently evoked for publicity purposes. It offered even more importance to the persona (Ionescu and Stroe 2000), although this was merely an honorific title received before the first European tour of 1887 for being on the staff of the governor of Nebraska (Snyder Yost 1980). Another illustrative example of great marketing skill is how Cody’s biography was advertised in newspapers, with grandiose descriptions similar to those above. What is more, another source was added to fuel the imaginary of the Wild West project:

Buffalo Bill, the renowned American lieutenant [sic] William Cody, is the subject of today’s account; both the youth and elderly will read with great interest the biography of this last great scout, as it is told by his sister in the book, which is available in German translation from Engelhom Publishing in Stuttgart. This book, elegantly presented and playfully illustrated, costs only 3 crowns and 60 hellers and it is available for sale at the Séraphin Library at the original price. (Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt, July 12, 1906)

However, while some presented Buffalo Bill in an almost mythical light, others took a different approach, by focusing on more pragmatic aspects, like his entrepreneurial spirit. This is emphasized in press accounts from across the main ethnic groups (Romanians, Hungarians, Germans) (Kronstäder Zeitung, July 16, 1906; Revașul, July 14, 1906). Reporters never tired of offering impressive numbers and statistics associated with the logistics of this giant traveling association, and Buffalo Bill’s ability to create and successfully manage it was worthy of admiration. It was not only how quickly and efficiently all members were coordinated in setting up the tents and making the necessary preparations but also their punctuality—a particularly important observation, as pragmatism and entrepreneurship were core features of the representation of the group’s essence. As previously observed by Boia (2009b), Buffalo Bill stood as living proof that bravery and pragma-
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tism can make anything possible and his characteristics were extrapolated to an entire nation. Based on this representation, it can be concluded that the white Americans were described in a positive light by the press. They have been labeled with positive attributes regarding both their skill set (e.g., riding, shooting) and their traits (bravery, entrepreneurship, action orientation, pragmatism, organization), which elicited admiration and respect in the eye of the spectator and the reader.

Right in front of us we have Buffalo Bill, a true colonizer. We can admire his boundless bravery, boldness, cold-bloodedness, patience, steadfastness, and dexterity in all points of the production, which anyway he has already proved in the bloody battles against the Indians in the United States, from which he always emerged victorious. (*Revașul*, July 14, 1906)

Besides all this, what can be more convincing than a personal account told by an “insider”? In an article that appeared in the Hungarian newspaper *Nagyvárads*, the reporter ran into a local actor from the Comedy Theater in the role of the presenter from the tent of curiosities at the Wild West Show. An interesting conversation ensued, in which the local described his motivation for moving to and staying in America as a mainly financial one, underlining that it is possible to make a good living there through honest work. This “insight” perpetuated the myth of the “Promised Land” and it must have had a stronger pull on the public, as the words were spoken by one of “their own” and contained some concrete information:

I went to America and left behind my acting dreams. It is not a shame to work hard and here at home nobody pays me 80 forints per week, how much I make now. Besides this, my future is made with Buffalo’s circus. In America there is a different life, you only need to work for it. (*Nagyvárad*, July 21, 1906)

**Native Americans**

Around this strange patch of the “new world” were strolling by the people of the “old world.” They were looking here and there, saying Ah and Oh. (*Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt*, July 14, 1906)
Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show presented the opportunity for validating and consolidating imaginary projections of these “exotic” people that the public was familiar with only indirectly, as mediated mainly by the available literature at the time. People seemed eager to test the authenticity of these staged Others, which they did by visual comparison: “The Indians are still playing an important role, and for us, they were the most interesting; they are undoubtedly authentic if we compare them with the physiognomies of the illustrations of geography books” (Kronstädtter Zeitung, July 16, 1906).

At this point, we can detect a vicious circle of self-fulfilling representations. The Native Americans from the show were displayed in such a way as to be easily recognized by the public and to validate their expectations. Furthermore, their role in the production was scripted by and in accordance with the perspective of Cody, a member of the other group. At the same time, the public, eager to confirm their “authenticity,” might have read the visual cues in a self-validating manner. So, unsurprisingly, the eyes of the spectator first rested on the physical appearance of the Native Americans, who appeared covered with “colorful and dirty rags, almost identical for women and men” (Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt, July 14, 1906), or “wearing warrior adornments and marks” (Gross-Kokler Bote, July 1, 1906). What is particularly interesting in the extract quoted below is that the “Indians” are not seen as particularly beautiful, in contrast with another group, different from the cowboys, the Circassians. This is an illustrative example of the dynamics of gradation in “nesting orientalism.” Although the Circassians are inclined toward the negative labels associated with the “oriental,” in this case they are the ones ascribed positive characteristics of beauty and elegance when compared to Native Americans, who were defined as not so easy on the eye but strong. Thus the complementary pairing of the metaphors and representations is meant to highlight these two points on the spectrum.

On small but fast horses were riding the Indians with brown, wide, and wrinkled faces. When they were laughing, their wide mouths stretched out to their ears and made visible two rows of white teeth. They were authentic Indians, like the ones met by Leatherstocking. None of them was beautiful, their arms were streaked by the weather, but [they had] strong bodies.
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A very good impression was left by the slender bodies of the Circassians, who exuded elegance. They have a beautiful appearance, with strong features, and dark and pointy beards. (*Kronstädtier Zeitung, July 14, 1906*)

While Native Americans apparently did not make such a positive impact with their appearance, that was not the case when it came to their skill set. There appears to be a consensus of admiration across the press expressed especially for their riding abilities, a characteristic for which they were renowned worldwide. Here we have another example of a comparison between two representations of staged Others. While the Native Americans and the European Americans were oscillating at opposite ends of the spectrum, when it came to their physical abilities the two converge. Both were deemed to be excellent riders and valued for this. “In front of our eyes a full display of the Indians’ unbeatable artistry in riding naked and without a saddle, seeming as if they were glued to the backs of lightning-fast horses” (*Telegramul Român*, July 17, 1906). “The American Indian is also a Rough Rider; in his own way of getting on and off the unsaddled horse he wins admiration from connoisseurs” (*Gazeta Bucovinei*, July 2, 1906).

Furthermore, when it came to their personality, Native American performers appeared to oscillate between extremes—“sometimes disappointed, at other times excessively thrilled” (*Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt, July 14, 1906*). In parallel to this unpredictable and chaotic character, another character type was outlined—the silent, contemplative kind. True to the preexisting image of the Native Americans, they were seen as both free and wild, displaying great physical abilities but also spiritual. It is also interesting to note that both portraits were often present in the same article (*Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt, July 14, 1906*). In this, the eye of the “Indian chief” is rather used in its metaphorical sense, as a window to the wild and free spirit of the people.

You were watching with admiration the divine eye of the Indian chief; he was looking back at you with a majestic distance and did not express an ounce of care. Not even when it was time for him to clean the dirty crusts from his face to apply fresh colors. (*Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt, July 14, 1906*)
Moving on to their social structure, a German newspaper article perceived it as completely lacking any form of order (Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt, July 14, 1906). This trait is of particular importance as it presents a twofold opposition: to the imaginary projection of the North American as an entrepreneur of civilization (as seen in the above section) and also to the self-definition of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a place of order. The indirect comparison served to further elevate one of the most admired traits of the European American group, that of pragmatism, entrepreneurship, and punctuality. So the subjects (the group by and for whom the narrative was written) position themselves on an axis by comparing themselves to the “clockwork” European Americans and the “chaotic” Native Americans somewhere in between, but tending more toward order.

The interior of the men’s tents seemed like a swarm in the storage closet filled with the junk of a traveling merchant. A continuous movement of people around thousands of things, either ordinary or exotic, little splendor and some shine, a lot of rags, no system, no order. (Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt, July 14, 1906)

While some representations of “Indians” converge in the direction of “primitiveness,” they were also portrayed as spiritual, contemplative, and with a complex character, toward which both reporters and spectators express mixed feelings—mainly awe, sympathy, and curiosity23 (they were frequently declared the favorites of the show24), only with scattered hints of contempt. One such example is the reporter behind one of the most critical articles about the Wild West Show from a German newspaper, who described the Native “Indians” in a very critical and sarcastic tone (Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt, July 14, 1906); but then again, he did so with other staged ethnic groups as well.25 Above all, he was harshest on the production itself.

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23 “An Indian was walking in the square, followed around by a braver child, to the delight of the foreigner” (Kronstädter Zeitung, July 14, 1906); “Indian chiefs, whose ancestors were known to children from books about Indians, offered them so many hours of joy” (Gross-Kokler Bote, July 1, 1906).
24 “The Indians still play an important role, and to us, they were the most interesting” (Kronstädter Zeitung, July 16, 1906).
25 Regarding Cossacks: “You were admiring the figure of a Cossack; he was picking his nose, in the most serene moment, and afterward ate the fruit of his labor . . . Ah O!” (Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt, July 14, 1906).
Blurred Lines

The categorization of the Other can go both ways. As Bakić-Hayden (1995) observes regarding Yugoslavs, those living in areas that formerly belonged to the Habsburg monarchy saw themselves as superior to those living in areas previously ruled by the Ottoman Empire. But further divisions could also be observed within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as lands east of Hungary were perceived to be more “backward.” It is also worth mentioning the position adopted by the Wild West Show’s European tour manager, Charles Eldridge Griffin (2010). He saw Hungary (including areas that are now part of Romania) as a “backward agricultural land”—referencing the lower attendance rate at the show from cities other than Budapest (although according to local newspapers there was high attendance), claiming that people preferred to be out on the field at the time of the show. Furthermore, he drew attention to the high degree of illiteracy and how stores relied on illustrations for this reason. But most importantly, he touched on another essential aspect—ethnic diversity. Surprised at how many languages were spoken, Griffin commented, “We think we have a race problem in America, but it is more complicated and acute in Eastern Europe, and it is not a matter of color, either” (2010, 114).

If you do not seek artistry at Buffalo Bill, then you can freely admire the successes and the dimensions of his work. A Hungarian enterprise would not be capable of such a thing. For a Hungarian, this might seem like nothing much. But it is not so. This is a work only the Americans or British would be capable of. (Nagyvárad, July 21, 1906)

The aforementioned “project” of Banat and Transylvania was outlined with blurred lines and represented an ethnically diverse group of people. This was a period when national identity was gradually forming and emerging, during which process people relied on comparisons to other cultures and nations. Before examining nuances in representations of the staged Other and ethno-confessional group relations, it is crucial to mention that the majority of the articles that constituted the database for this study were entertainment-centered. These pieces presented the impressive logistics behind the Wild West Show and portrayed the event in such a way as to
attract more publicity and spectators. Here we can find only a few glimpses of the Other being seen as “civilized” or “savage” (Nagyvárad, July 21, 1906) and other such paired metaphors.\textsuperscript{26} But it is in the few critical articles that we find more detailed accounts of the two groups that elevate the representation beyond this dichotomic approach. Furthermore, these pieces proved to hold some valuable reflections that offer timid insight into how a particular ethno-confessional group might relate to these “exotic” Others.

True to an orientalist schema, while both the cowboys and Native Americans were part of the same Wild West, they were categorized differently. As expected in this framework, the cowboys, coming from European countries, were seen as representatives of the “civilized world” on a civilizing mission in the wilderness of the Western frontier. Furthermore, they also served as a mirror for the “savageness” of Native Americans in this project. Thus, the representation of the two groups is strongly interdependent; it is on their dynamic that the project of the New World is based. In some articles, the two groups were condensed into a polarized metaphor pair: “The exotic curtain from the back of the arena moved and amid war cries, wild Indians and all sorts of wildlings emerged howling, but also the brave riders [appeared]” (Nagyvárad, July 21, 1906). Highlighting the “primitiveness” of this performed Other served as a means of reaffirming one’s own cultural superiority. But this was not exclusively the case. Interestingly, the representation continues beyond an orientalist dichotomy, venturing into gradations and perhaps, even more importantly, incorporating mixed characteristics for the “disadvantaged” group.

In her research about the attitude of people from Transylvania toward Native Americans from the nineteenth century until World War I, Boia (2007) outlined a number of tendencies that may be visible in the present, narrower context as well. Firstly, she noticed a fascination manifested by the locals toward the Native Americans’ strong personality, wisdom, and calm. Secondly, the more negative feelings were targeted at their perceived cruelty both toward Europeans and between tribes. But all digressions were reined in under the umbrella of compassion manifested toward a race perceived as on the verge of extinction.

\textsuperscript{26} “[Buffalo Bill’s Show] offered us the most interesting scenes from the fights of Europeans with the wilderness of the West” (Telegraful Român, July 17, 1906).
I would like to contribute to these observations by bringing into focus a fresh series of aspects that were highlighted in the press reception of the Wild West Show. The first of these refers to the physical aspect of this “exotic” race, which was seen as a reflection of the Native Americans’ “wild” nature. This “wildness” was also addressed in its own right in the press discourse; however, this might have been to a significant degree owing to the dramatic nature of the show. The Native Americans’ lack of social organization is accentuated when compared to the image of European Americans as efficient entrepreneurs. Finally, I argue that the predominant attitude in the press discourse around Buffalo Bill’s “Indians” is not compassion but rather curiosity and intrigue.

Boia’s (2007) argument in favor of all-encompassing compassion is based on references in various media sources of the “imminent” disappearance of the race owing to factors such as conflicts with Europeans, epidemics, and intertribal conflict. But this was not present in the press narrative of the time related to the Wild West Show. Rather, it was an attitude of almost unbridled curiosity that pushed both reporters and the public to follow and observe the Native Americans even backstage and made them an object of fascination. This might be because the press covered the Native Americans as part of an entertainment show and did not offer a wider perspective beyond the stage lights.

Some were indeed acting in such a way as if they wanted to crack each other’s heads, but they became a laughing stock: heads were not cracked. The fact that they desire to be so authentic—and could not be—exposed them. When illusion made a step forward, such a vulgar effect was produced, that it brought on laughter . . . The rare achievement of these artists lacking culture has the taste of exotic champagne; this champagne is consumed, but on the ground of an old Germanic culture, it rather has a taste of wish-wash. (*Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt*, July 14, 1906)

In this excerpt, we see a clear positioning of the German ethno-confessional group in indirect relation to the Other through the medium of the staged otherness itself. Here the Other is not named, and although it can be deduced from the context that the author is referring to the Native Americans, the piece might also be alluding to the performers or the
European Americans who were orchestrating the show. The reporter starts by acknowledging the exotic nature of the show and highlighting its value by comparing it to “exotic champagne.” This simile is accurate only if the object of analysis is considered in a void, but in the context of “an old Germanic culture” the performance loses its value and becomes only a “wish-wash.” This illustration incorporates in an exemplary way the gradations of “nesting orientalism” described by Milica Bakić-Hayden (1995). The Other is built up, only to pale in comparison with the group of reference; this serves as quite an efficient technique to magnify the effect. The exercise can be read as a retaliation of Eastern Europe against being branded as “backward” by the “progressive” West (Bakić-Hayden 1995) by taking the comparison to another level, that of culture and heritage. So, in this new paradigm, it is Eastern Europe, specifically the ethno-confessional group of Germans, which is self-proclaimed as culturally superior to the people of the West.27

Turning to the Hungarian newspapers, there are a couple of noteworthy reflections that warrant attention. According to accounts from the press of the time (Nagyvárad, July 21, 1906), on the largest tent of the improvised settlement, the Hungarian flag flew alongside the American one. The article also states that the orchestra sang the Rákóczi March,28 to the delight of the public. It does not explicitly mention which ethnic group the public belonged to. These details, which serve as highly significant symbols of Hungarian identity, are not mentioned in any of the German or Romanian newspapers that I have had access to.29 On a similar note, regarding the reaction of the spectators, another Hungarian reporter relates overhearing the following conversation during a representation of the Rough Riders.

This hints at a series of differences among the ethno-confessional groups, revolving mainly around a sense of delimitation and national identity. It has

27 On the popular reception of Wild West shows in Germany between 1885 and 1910, see Ames 2008.
28 Also known as the Hungarian March (Hungarian Rákóczi induló), the Rákóczi March dates from the beginning of the nineteenth century and served as an unofficial state anthem for Hungary prior to the hymn (Hungarian Himnusz) written by Ferenc Kölcsey, which remains the official national anthem of Hungary today. An earlier version known as the Rákóczi Song (Hungarian Rákóczi Nóta) contained lyrics directed against the Habsburgs and the oppression of the Hungarians under their reign, calling the people to rise under the command of Francis Rákóczi II (a Hungarian nobleman who led the Hungarian uprising against the Habsburgs in 1703–11). See Nagy 2017; Várkonyi 2015.
29 Dagnosław Demski identifies a couple of other such discrepancies in the narrative of Polish and German newspapers published in Poznań regarding ethnic shows displayed in the zoological garden at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century (Demski 2020).
perhaps become clear by now that there are no similar accounts in Romanian
ewspapers. But this in itself may suggest a particular narrative. Referring to
the liberation and unification of the Romanian people, the historian Nicolae
Iorga (1906) noted that at the beginning of the twentieth century national
aspirations were far from widespread. In the case of the other major ethno-
confessional groups, faint suggestions regarding their national identity were
occasionally made in the media, while the complete absence of this subject
from the Romanian narrative might just be due to the fact that national
identity had not yet been consolidated. But other factors cannot be excluded,
such as the legislative actions set in motion during that period and a priv-
ilege-based stratification of society based on confessional considerations.
While Orthodoxy was ostensibly tolerated, political power was reserved
for those belonging to the confessions associated with the Hungarian and
German ethnic groups (Roman Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran, Unitarian),
which in itself was a rather peculiar situation considering that in Central
Europe the norm tended to be one state religion (Bărbulescu et al. 2014).

If we turn to data from the Austro-Hungarian census, there are inter-
esting connections between religious belief and the social dynamics of the
population. The confessions most commonly associated with the Hungarian
ethnicity were Reformed and Roman Catholic, of which the first suffered
a slight decline, but the second experienced a significant increase in the
aforementioned period. The religions associated with Romanian ethnic-
ity, Orthodoxy and Greco-Catholicism declined or went through a mod-
est increase, while Protestantism linked to Germans became less common.
Scholars like Ioan Bolovan and Sorina Paula Bolovan (2010) have concluded
that a considerable number of people belonging to the Orthodox or Greco-
Catholic faiths converted.

Finally, although it would be interesting to follow a line of internal ori-
entalisms in which the stratification is inverted, focusing on intragroup
rather than intergroup division and comparison, the present study does
not touch on this aspect. Such a dichotomy continues to exist between the
various regions of present-day Romania but is also characteristic of other

30 The religious makeup between 1850–1910: Orthodox (Romanians) 30.9% to 34.3%; Greco-Catholic
(Romanians) 31.5% to 23.7%; Reformates (Hungarians) 14.4% to 13.2%; Roman-Catholic (Hungarians)
10.6% to 18.9%; Evangelist (Germans) 9.6% to 5%; Unitarian (Hungarians) 2.2% to 1.3%; Mosaic (Jews)
0.8% to 1.5%; other religions 0% to 0.1% (Bolovan and Bolovan 2010).
spaces, as noted by Milica Bakić-Hayden and Robert Hayden (1992) concerning Yugoslavia. Observations from their case study can easily be transposed to the Banat and Transylvania regions. The segregation is based on a political, religious, and cultural line of argumentation. So, the territories that are favored are those that had a stronger Habsburg influence and are predominantly Catholic (Slovenia and Croatia from former Yugoslavia and Transylvania from our case study), to the detriment of those with a stronger Ottoman influence coupled with Muslim and Orthodoxy as the prevailing religions (the rest of Yugoslavia and Banat from our case study). As tempting as it is to extend this line of analysis, it would stray from the focus of the present study. Instead, future researchers will have to follow this pursuit.

The Final Curtain

Relying on a theoretical framework rooted in orientalism and, even more so, in “nesting orientalisms,” I have analyzed how the staged Other in the context of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show’s European tour of 1906 was represented in the press of the time in Banat and Transylvania. Subsequently, I also considered how the local ethno-confessional mosaic might relate to these representations via the press apparatus.

To begin with, the tendency to essentialize by isolating features of a group is evident in both cases of North Americans and Native Americans—features that seem not only unchanging (Bakić-Hayden 1995) but also intrinsic to the group, especially in contrast to other groups (Appadurai 1988). Nevertheless, the Wild West project harmoniously enclosed different gradations, going beyond the dichotomy of the “old” and the “new,” of the “primitive” and the “civilized.” The representational pair became intertwined in the imaginary.

On occasion, this further served as a reference point for the (re)positioning of local ethno-confessional groups in the press discourse of the time. So, the people of Banat and Transylvania, branded as “backward,” generally repositioned themselves as more “civilized” than the “primitive Indians” but not quite as “progressive” as North Americans, to which a singular response ensues regarding the German ethno-confessional group, which further exceeds the latter groups as being more “cultured.” When it comes to delimitation and identification with regard to national identity, it is the Romanian
group that becomes somewhat of an outlier, as such a topic is absent from the press discourse. But this silence speaks to the still dormant sense of national identity that would, however, soon awaken and lead to the unification of territories to form Romania in 1918.

All in all, I do not treat performed otherness as a cornerstone in this process but as a backdrop against which some socio-psychological mechanics can be better observed. But what is truly elegantly highlighted in this context is the fluidity of gradations in the construction of representations and their interplay with one another.

Territorial changes and the language barrier will always constitute difficulties in the context of this study. Moreover, it is a challenge to pull together all the threads of such an ethnically and culturally multilayered topic as the intersection of the Wild West project with Banat and Transylvania. Furthermore, the censorship of the press is a ghostly companion that is difficult to grasp. Nevertheless, it is a road worthy of retracing from different angles as it made quite an imprint on the spirit of those times and continues to be a haunting presence with reverberations felt today.

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**Online Content**