

CHAPTER 7

**Riding Broncs and Taming Contradictions:  
Reflections on the Uses of the Cowboy in the  
Calgary Stampede**

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The Range Rider, c. 1913

## **I**ntroduction

Calgary is a booming city of just over a million people, its rapid growth and increasingly conspicuous wealth based primarily on its role as the head office centre for the Canadian oil and gas industry. For several weeks before, during, and after its annual Stampede, its downtown streets and suburban shopping malls are filled with images of ranch life, particularly representations of cowboys, as well as with a diverse assortment of urban workers, local revellers, and tourists dressed in cowboy garb as they go about their myriad activities. A thoughtful observer of this scene, particularly one with some appreciation not only of the tensions between rural nostalgia and urban reality, but also of the cowboy's significance in American popular culture, as well as some knowledge of key differences between Canada and the United States and of the degree to which Canadians define themselves as being different from Americans, might be forgiven for being bemused not only by the scene itself, but also by the way in which the apparent contradictions it embodies go largely unremarked upon by cultural analysts as well as local participants.

Building on my previous (collaborative) work on the history and cultural significance of the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede, this article explores the tensions inherent in a Canadian city and region using what is arguably an American cultural icon as its defining symbol.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, the article addresses the following interconnected questions: Who is the cowboy at the heart of Calgary's annual Stampede and its civic iconography, and what social uses does this figure serve? Like the work referred to above, the present study draws on the cultural studies tradition, as delineated by theorists such as Roland Barthes, Stuart Hall, Mikhail Bakhtin, Pierre Bourdieu, Michel de Certeau, and John Fiske, who view the institutions and artifacts of popular culture as sites of struggle over meaning in the context of power relations. However, it is more directly situated at the nexus of several other interconnected scholarly discourses: that of nation and nationalism as delineated by such theorists as Benedict Anderson; that of Canadian studies, with special attention to the considerable body of work on regionalism and Canadian identity; that of western American studies, with special attention to the history of ranching and rodeo and the historical, fictional, and mythological cowboy; and that of comparative Canadian/American history, as exemplified by the work of such scholars as Allan Smith, Sarah Carter, Robert Thacker, Carol Higham, and Elliott West. Thus situated, it attempts to explore directly

and in some depth the gap between imported and local culture that haunts Calgary's public iconography.

My point of departure is the framework for comparative American/Canadian studies provided by Elliott West in his insightful "Against the Grain: State-Making, Cultures, and Geography in the American West," the opening chapter in Carol Higham's and Robert Thacker's *One West, Two Myths*. As West explains, the north-south geographical patterns of North America, which suggest a natural division of the continent into three "nations" (which he calls Atlantis, Middle Earth, and Greater Montana), and its current division into three east-west nations (Canada, the United States, and Mexico) are clearly at odds, and nowhere more so than in the North American West. It is here that "the contradictions between landforms and nations seem the most glaring," making "the West the obvious place to look for anything to learn from the odd pattern of modern state-making."<sup>2</sup>

In further exploring this contradiction between geography and history/politics, West notes the longevity and persistence of an earlier congruence between these forces, evident in the cultural patterns of the continent's indigenous peoples. He asserts that "[I]f anyone wonders whether we should expect historical and geographical patterns to overlap in the first place, North America's long past gives an undeniable answer. For most of continental history by far, human activity seems mostly to have followed the broad lay of the land."<sup>3</sup> However, West's discussion also highlights the enormous power of the state-making processes that went against the grain of geography, calling it the "clearest lesson of this ancient north-south alignment." As he puts it, "[O]nce we look at the physical map of North America, the more familiar political map appears stunning. Boundaries that we take for granted today suddenly look arbitrary in the extreme ... Most arbitrary of all is the U.S.-Canadian boundary, surely one of the longest nonsensical borders on the planet."<sup>4</sup> Identifying the three major forces that created these nations as a capitalist economy driven by markets, a technological revolution in transportation and communication, and "the governmental apparatus of the states themselves,"<sup>5</sup> West highlights the paradoxical power of these underlying forces to construct different entities, while emphasizing that the same forces created each nation, and that in both the United States and Canada these forces were brought to bear most powerfully on the western region(s), given the wealth of resources these areas contained.

In thus drawing our attention to the fundamental dynamics of similarity and difference that have shaped the continent's peoples and their social and

cultural interaction, West reminds us that in failing to attend to and examine “the obvious,” we miss important avenues to insight:

When we recognize each theme and move them to the front of our attention, they suggest a structure for the study of the North American West. We can picture it as the intersection of influences and trends. One set of influences and traditions follows the ancient axis of north and south. These influences are rooted in geography and deep history ... Overrun in some ways by the making of two nations, they nonetheless persist. The other forces run along the more recent (but now centuries old) axis of east and west ... These are the influences that swept across the continent to create the political map we take for granted.<sup>6</sup>

West moves beyond his delineation of fundamental “themes” in continental history to suggest how they might provide a framework for studying various aspects of Western culture and society, arguing that

we might approach particular pieces of western history and life by sitting them on this grid of influences. We might ask in each case about the relative roles of the west-erly drive of state-making and the insistent inclinations of geography and cultural roots, looking also for differences inside these two broad patterns.”<sup>7</sup>

West thus provides a remarkably fruitful framework for exploring the questions at the heart of my project about the identity, meanings, and uses of the Calgary Stampede cowboy.<sup>8</sup> My analysis places the Stampede cowboy on the “grid of influences” West delineates and asks, only partly facetiously, if it is accurate to talk about this figure – either the historical cowboy, whose origins are in Spain, who appears, migrates, and evolves in nations throughout the Americas,<sup>9</sup> or the imagined cowboy, created and broadcast globally via a wide range of media, from the Wild West Show and dime novels of the nineteenth century to the plethora of movies in the twentieth and twenty-first – as a “national” figure at all, and most particularly as a “Canadian” figure, given the small space, both literally and mythologically, he occupies in Canada.<sup>10</sup>

In attempting to answer this question of who the Calgary Stampede cowboy is in terms of the countervailing forces of geography and politics, the

discussion that follows examines the east-west forces that bear on this figure. That is, I focus primarily on an aspect of the “state apparatus” that, while not strictly “governmental,” is arguably central to the state’s project of nation-building, namely the discourses that construct the “imagined community” of the nation.<sup>11</sup> I argue that these discourses largely construct the cowboy as being outside the imagined community of Canada. Then I turn my attention to the north-south forces of geography and culture that also bear on this figure, and in juxtaposing these criss-crossing perspectives, I highlight the regional discourse that claims the cowboy as its own, noting several of the major contradictions that this discourse must negotiate to do so in the Canadian context. I end by suggesting that these very contradictions, while rendering the cowboy (particularly the imagined figure, but to some degree even the historical/working cowboy as well) controversial if not inappropriate in the Canadian context, while simultaneously (and paradoxically) lending the figure its considerable power as a symbol of regional identity/resistance and as a powerful marketing tool.

### **The Cowboy and Canadian Identity: Incompatible Imaginaries?**

To assert that the cowboy, despite his multiple origins and hemispheric presence, has a strong American connection – as a historical figure, but most particularly as an imagined one – is hardly to be controversial. In addition to being commonly assumed, this connection between the cowboy and American culture is also the subject of considerable scholarship.<sup>12</sup> Although the nature of that connection, just how it came about and what social uses it serves, is much debated, the idea that the figure of the cowboy embodies key aspects of the American ethos is widely accepted by analysts of American culture.<sup>13</sup> For example, historian Michael Allen argues that the figure of the cowboy emerged and the western genre persists in American popular culture because it taps “deep emotions in the American people,” since it tells the “epic story of...[their] crossing a continental frontier and taming its wild forces, planting and nurturing the seeds of American civilization.”<sup>14</sup> Further, Allen points to the connection many have made between the values embodied in the “cowboy’s code” and the traits that Frederick Jackson Turner famously identified as those nurtured on the American frontier: individualism, a democratic and egalitarian spirit, and ingenuity, to say nothing of physical bravery. Allen sees the figure of the cowboy as providing “a key to understanding American civilization.”<sup>15</sup>

Analysts of Canada and of Canadian identity, in contrast, have seldom made a connection between the cowboy (historical or imagined) and the Canadian ethos or national mythology. The subject of much discussion and considerable scholarly analysis, the nature of Canadian identity is widely agreed to have been shaped not only by such fundamental features as the nation's vast geography, its northern location, its dual colonial inheritance, and its diverse population, but also and in very large measure by its long, somewhat troubled, and asymmetrical relationship with the United States. Many Americans know very little about Canada and would likely be surprised to learn that the vague notion they may have about its inhabitants being more or less just like themselves is not widely shared by Canadians. Most Canadians, however, would be well aware of the differences between themselves and Americans; indeed, many would be inclined to emphasize and even exaggerate them. This was made very apparent in 2000 by the way in which many young Canadians in particular adopted the Molson's "I am Canadian" beer commercial, with its nose-thumbing rejection of American stereotypes and its simplistic rendering of the differences between the two countries (to say nothing of its manipulative commercial agenda), as a kind of national anthem.<sup>16</sup>

To understand this phenomenon, one must look at least in part to Canada's history, and how it differs from that of the United States. As S.M. Lipset puts it in his well known comparison of the two societies, "although these two peoples probably resemble each other more than any other two nations on earth," there are "consistent patterns of difference between them," which he attributes to the revolutionary origins of the United States on the one hand, and the counterrevolutionary origins of Canada on the other.<sup>17</sup> While the United States, with its successful revolution against Britain, is "organized around the ideology embodied in the Declaration of Independence, which proclaimed the validity of egalitarian and universalistic social relations,"<sup>18</sup> Canada was defined by its loyalty to Britain, and "Canadian identity...in a sense must justify its *raison d'être* by emphasizing the virtues of being separate from the United States."<sup>19</sup> Thus, while it would be inaccurate to suggest that all Canadians are profoundly anti-American, and indeed at least some analysts stress the moderate nature of Canadian anti-Americanism,<sup>20</sup> most would agree with Lipset that a combination of "Tory Conservatism and anti-Americanism" affected not only those regions of Canada originally settled by Loyalists fleeing the American revolution, but also the political culture of Canada more generally.<sup>21</sup> J.L. Granatstein makes the point most forcefully when he asserts that Canadians are the oldest anti-Americans in the world,

and that “Canadian anti-Americanism, just as much as the country’s French-English duality, has for two centuries been a central buttress of the national identity.”<sup>22</sup> He also points to the way in which a series of events, including perhaps most notably the War of 1812, added to this sentiment, and to what he calls “the Loyalist myth” in Canada, and with it a vein of potential anti-Americanism that lies beneath the surface of Canadian life, to be tapped at any point, or as he puts it, to be “exploited by business, political, or cultural groups for their own ends.”<sup>23</sup>

Clearly, in the context of this discussion of the uses to which Canadians in southern Alberta put what is arguably a quintessentially American cultural icon, it is important to appreciate the psychological and emotional implications of Canada’s counter-revolutionary past, and in particular the Canadian penchant for harbouring negative attitudes toward the United States. It is even more important to appreciate the nature of the differences between the two societies that reflect their origins as well as the evolution of the United States into a superpower on the global stage. Like Lipset (and several other analysts), John Conway makes the point that Canadian political culture is best understood as embodying the ideas of Burke rather than those of Rousseau and other architects of the Enlightenment, which shaped the American republic. As a result, “Americans cherish individualism and individuality above community. Canadians have exactly the reverse set of political priorities.”<sup>24</sup> Exploring the sources of difference in more depth, Conway rightly highlights America’s Puritan inheritance, with its emphasis on dissent and on an individual’s unmediated relationship with God, both of which “fostered an intense individualism, which lost none of its force as Puritanism became secularized during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,” eventually merging with social Darwinism to form the potent amalgam of “rugged individualism” that arguably defines the American ethos.<sup>25</sup>

Conway points to the American transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau, whose writings in the 1840s articulated a starkly individualistic perspective, to illustrate what he believes to be the key difference between the United States and Canada. Arguing that although Thoreau’s famous statement that “the only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right” was an expression of “fundamental belief [that] was to reverberate through American history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,” for Canadians, with their emphasis on allegiance and community, the individualism he expressed was almost unthinkable: “[T]here is no counterpart to Thoreau in Canadian history.”<sup>26</sup> Far from being arcane, this fact is, I believe, central to my discussion of the Canadian cowboy. Thoreau’s

world – the pastoral and effete landscape of Concord, Massachusetts – contrasts sharply with that of the American cowboy; nevertheless, when viewed as symbols, the two figures can be seen to merge as they turn away from the (feminized) world of community to “live deliberately” alone, or in the company of men, far away from the constraints of civilization.

Interestingly, while certainly not making this connection between Thoreau and the cowboy, Conway does connect Thoreau’s ideas with the development of the American West, which he contrasts with that of the Canadian West:

Thoreau’s musings on man and his place in society were written in the full flood of enthusiasm for the westward movement, before industrialism, the anarchic violence of the West, and the hazards of modern warfare could pose serious questions about unchallenged individualism. The Canadian frontier experience, when it came, was less hopeful, the extension of the frontier more difficult, less economically rewarding, than the American. Thus, Thoreau’s assertion of total freedom is simply incomprehensible to the average Canadian, whether his forbears be French, British, or of the newly arrived ethnic communities of this diverse country.<sup>27</sup>

Clearly, this description, cast as it is in the retrospective mode, underscores the possibility of change; that is, in light of a particular historical context, a national ethos and the political culture through which it is expressed can and do evolve. For example, Americans (as well as Canadians) have clearly become much more conscious of the environmental impact of unfettered exploitation than they were in the nineteenth century: witness the efforts on both sides of the border to protect endangered species and, more recently, to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the effort to stem climate change. In light of their nineteenth- and, particularly, twentieth-century experience with urban crime, Americans may not be quite as unanimously enamoured of their right (forged in the American Revolution) to bear arms as many Canadians might imagine;<sup>28</sup> nor is it as clear as many Canadians would like to believe that Americans are less law-abiding than Canadians and American society more violent.<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, Canadian society has changed considerably since Lipset penned “Revolution and Counterrevolution,” in ways too numerous and profound to describe here. One sees evidence of some of these changes in Neil Nevitte’s

*The Decline of Deference: Canadian Value Change in Cross-National Perspective*,<sup>30</sup> which reports in considerable detail on studies designed to measure changes in the attitudes of Canadians on a number of variables (for example, attitudes toward authority) related to political culture. Nevertheless, one can certainly find evidence that the differences in national ethos delineated by the analysts discussed here persist, along with a propensity among Canadians to define themselves against Americans, if not to be overtly anti-American.

Given these underlying patterns of difference, then, it would seem clear that the “imagined national communities” that Canadians and Americans inhabit are also different from each other, if not in terms of the processes whereby they construct these communities, which may indeed be remarkably similar, then clearly in terms of the substance of what they share, that is, of their values and attitudes, and by extension, in terms of their heroes and villains, both real and imaginary. If one follows Benedict Anderson in defining a nation as “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign,”<sup>31</sup> one can imagine the limits of the Canadian national community in terms of the border with the United States, a border that is not only a political reality, defined by guards, the need for official documents and the like, but is also a psycho-cultural one that defines most things American as “other,” despite – or perhaps because of – the similarities between the two countries owing to their shared inheritance in particular of British institutions,<sup>32</sup> and to the longstanding and arguably escalating economic, social, and cultural influence of the United States on Canada.<sup>33</sup>

In light of this aspect of Canadian identity – that it is in large measure constructed around not being American – the cowboy at the heart of Calgary’s Stampede seems particularly out of place, given the prominent role this figure has played and continues to play as a symbol of American sensibility. Or, to put the matter in terms of Elliott West’s grid of influences, the east-west forces shaping the meaning of the cowboy have given this figure a well-recognized place of affection and esteem (and indeed of considerable mythic power) in the United States, broadcasting his image and his heroic exploits as an embodiment of individualism, self-reliance, courage, pragmatic justice, and patriotism not only throughout the American nation, but well beyond to such an extent that the “cowboy” is a globally recognized symbol of American culture and sensibility.<sup>34</sup> Or, as William W. Savage Jr. puts it,

The cowboy is the predominant figure in American mythology. More than the explorer, trapper, soldier, or homesteader, the cowboy represents America’s westering

experience to the popular mind, and his image is everywhere. Accounts of his activities, fictional and historical, comprise substantial portions of publishers' lists. His virtues – and lately his vices – have become standard fare in motion picture theaters and on television...and his mystique is evoked by advertising, popular music, and amateur and professional sports.<sup>35</sup>

Savage even concludes that “[I]t would...be difficult to imagine the contours of American culture, popular or otherwise, without the figure of the cowboy” and it would “be equally difficult to imagine a replacement for him.”<sup>36</sup>

In Canada, the forces of nation-building have made the cowboy clearly “other” because of his strong association with the American ethos, creating instead the figure of the Mountie: the very embodiment of the contrasting Canadian valuing of the collective, the distant source of social order, restraint over action. As literary scholar Dick Harrison puts it when comparing climactic scenes in two quintessential fictions of the American West and the Canadian West, Owen Wister’s *The Virginian* (1901) and Ralph Connor’s *Corporal Cameron* (1910), “[T]he Virginian draws the gun with which he will enforce the right, while in Connor’s scene, it is the man with the gun who backs down.”<sup>37</sup> Harrison argues that these patterns are deeply engrained in these two (national) genres of western fiction – that of the cowboy and that of the Mountie – and that while both genres serve to reaffirm the triumph of civilization over wilderness, representations of the Mountie

embodied most of what was distinctive about the early Canadian West. In particular, he represented that faith in an encompassing order which was vaguely conceived to be at once man-made, natural, and divinely sponsored...he represented the West as the Canadian people conceived it to be. However wild or rebellious the West might become, they preferred to see it as a haven of peace, order and good government, watched over by a colonial policeman in a red coat: solid, anti-revolutionary, visible proof that order would continue to be something which descended deductively from higher levels of government and society.<sup>38</sup>

The American cowboy hero, in contrast, resolves the conflict between civilization and wilderness/savagery by responding to the immediate

situation, “tilting the balance of power in favour of civilized law” through a violent act that is “almost surgical,” thereby reaffirming masculinity (and) individualism.”<sup>39</sup> Interestingly, if one sees fictional representation as a “site of struggle,” a space wherein versions of the drama of western settlement compete for the allegiance of their readers/viewers, then in this particular space of countervailing narratives, the American version has clearly been the winner, measured in terms of popularity, in Canada as well as elsewhere.<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, despite the proliferation and popularity of the imagined cowboy, the figure of the Mountie exerted and continues to exert considerable power in Canadian discourses of nation, as exemplified by the ceremonial uses to which the RCMP are put (including at the Calgary Stampede) and by the pride that many Canadians take in their police forces, and in the persistent predominance of iconic representations of the Mountie (both within and without Canada) as a symbol of the Canadian nation and sensibility. Indeed, the Mountie is the figure at the centre of the westward trek of the North-West Mounted Police in 1874. This is the group credited, both in historical narratives and in national mythology, with bringing British order to the West before the arrival of settlers and thereby literally creating the east-west axis of Canada and distinguishing its West from its supposedly chaotic counterpart in the United States.<sup>41</sup> Thus the Mountie looms sufficiently large in the discourses of Canadian nationhood to leave little or no room for the cowboy, trailing, as he does, so much American baggage.

Moreover, detailed histories of ranching in southern Alberta quite clearly stress the ways in which it was influenced by a distinctively British/Canadian institutional framework that set it apart from the American ranching frontier. The work of David H. Breen, which draws on that of his mentor, L.G. Thomas, develops this thesis most strongly, with Breen arguing in the mid-1970s (and thereby creating a “school” of historical interpretation) against Turnerian continentalist approaches to this history that see the dominant influences as environmental, thereby stressing the similarities between the American and Canadian experiences.<sup>42</sup> Emphasizing the importance in Canada of the police presence, the British social composition and institutional ties, the considerable state control, and the conservative nature of the ranching community of southern Alberta, Breen asserts that

the ranching frontier in the Canadian and American west can hardly be described as culturally homogeneous. Further, it is apparent that while there is a certain unity of time and physical environment as well as a common

economic enterprise, social and political patterns developed with marked differences on either side of the boundary. This dissimilar development, and the seemingly minor impact of the frontier environment on the Canadian side would seem . . . to be the consequence of two factors – the character of the in-coming population and the degree of the central government’s administrative control. And in the pervasive influence of the central authority, one sees a continuity in western Canadian development that flows through the earlier fur trade period to the closing years of western settlement.<sup>43</sup>

While more recent studies by American and Canadian scholars offer what is arguably a more balanced approach to the history of ranching in Canada, highlighting similarities as well as differences and acknowledging the importance of American as well as British influence, ranching historiography clearly points to the power of east-west (national) forces that have shaped this enterprise.<sup>44</sup> As Simon Evans points out in his detailed history of the Bar U Ranch, “[T]he Canadian government played an important role in the establishment and development of ranching in western Canada,” and an important early ranching venture, the North West Cattle Company, “was above all a Canadian enterprise.”<sup>45</sup> Similarly, Max Foran rightly reminds us that ranching practices in western Canada have been profoundly shaped by the region’s severe northern climate; consequently, ranching in this area “could never approximate its purer essence in the desolate, drier, and more southerly areas of the United States.”<sup>46</sup> Thus, even if one sees Breen’s interpretation (despite its obvious importance and value) as above all exemplifying the Canadian mentality described by Granatstein that insists upon not being American, there can be no doubt that ranching in southern Alberta was and is distinctive in ways that reflect the impact of powerful east-west forces.

### **Riding “The Empty Quarter”: The Continental Cowboy**

Whether labelled as “The Empty Quarter,” “Greater Montana,” or simply the North American West, the non-coastal western area of North America arguably constitutes a generalized region based on shared geographical features, which in turn provide the basis for shared economic and cultural patterns.<sup>47</sup> Thus viewed, this region clearly runs counter to the east-west national boundaries that run across it, delineating three “counter-intuitive” nations.

As Elliott West points out, one can find longstanding cultural evidence of the existence of such a region in the language families of indigenous peoples across the continent; he notes that “[T]he fifth and sixth language families were in the mountains and arid highlands stretching southward from Canada into Mexico.”<sup>48</sup> While the area in question is vast and clearly contains a variety of distinctive sub-regions (Starr, as quoted in Evans, delineates five such regions “from Texas and New Mexico to Wyoming, Nebraska and Nevada with distinct ranching systems”<sup>49</sup>), it is nevertheless characterized by a degree of similarity in terms of its aridity and the nature of its land formations (to say nothing of the sparseness of its population). This similarity not only justifies seeing “the empty quarter” as a significant continental feature, but also provides the basis for particular economic and cultural practices, which, taken together, might be called the “western experience,” or “western lifestyle,” which in turn engenders a shared mindset, perhaps even “an imagined community” of “westerners.”

As to what might define such an imagined community, Molly Rozum’s discussion of a series of conferences sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation in 1942 is suggestive. The project brought together American and Canadian leaders (from North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota, Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado and Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba) to define “a plains sensibility” in North American terms. While nothing very concrete ever came from these deliberations, participants agreed that they felt a sense of unity based on a close connection to the environment, and in particular on a shared sense of space, and on occupying “a beleaguered status” within their respective nations.<sup>50</sup> Interestingly (and not surprisingly, given the similar histories of populist politics north and south of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel), Richard W. Slatta argues that one of the defining features of all the cowboy cultures that emerged in various places throughout the western hemisphere was that they developed in remote areas; that is,

wild livestock hunters were frontiersmen who lived and worked in regions of sparse population, in contact (and often in conflict) with indigenous societies, far from urban, civic authority, and possessing ample natural resources for near self-sufficiency.”<sup>51</sup>

Thus, one might argue that the western sensibility (whether or not it is specifically connected with the ranching enterprise) is one shaped by vast spaces and remoteness from centres of power, political and cultural; that as

such, it valorizes independence and self-sufficiency, and the kind of pragmatism that enables survival in an unforgiving environment. Further, it is one that stresses local loyalties and is suspicious of central authority. My own experience of living and travelling in various parts of the North American West for many years tells me that one finds this sensibility throughout the region, albeit within specific sub-regional contexts. For example, the image of the “maverick,” which Aritha van Herk has used recently to represent the mentality of Albertans, whom she characterizes in *Mavericks: An Incurable History of Alberta* as uncommonly independent and as incorrigible risk takers, is one that is very familiar to people from my home state of Nevada. Nevadans tend to regard themselves as the original mavericks, having gone against the national grain for nearly 150 years, not only in hell-roaring mining camps as Virginia City, Silver City, Tonopah, and many others, but also in such matters as being residents of the first state to legalize boxing, gambling, quick divorce, and quick marriage – all in the interests of economic survival – and the one that refused to institute a speed limit on state highways for as long as this stance was possible within the framework of federal legislation. Nor is this image of “maverick” attitudes and behaviour limited to people of the wide-open “Silver State,” however well deserved it is there; it is a label that would also readily be claimed by many people throughout the American West, who like to see themselves as tougher and infinitely more self-reliant than people from the East.<sup>52</sup>

Clearly, as Slatta has suggested, this mindset can be traced in part to the experiences of those involved in cattle raising and, later, the cattle industry that has been an economic mainstay of the western hinterland of North America from the nineteenth century to the present.<sup>53</sup> Those experiences of the historical/working cowboy generated a specific set of range skills, an accompanying set of attitudes and values, and even a characteristic mode of dress. In examining the similarities among cowboys in various parts of the North American West, Slatta draws on Edward Larocque Tinker, who saw sufficient similarities to refer to them as “brothers under the skin,” asserting that “[T]hey were all molded, North and South, by the same conditions the frontier and the cattle business imposed...and naturally developed the same characteristics of pride, daring, and fierce independence.”<sup>54</sup> While Slatta argues for an understanding of the historical cowboy that takes regional differences into account, he nevertheless stresses that cowboys constituted a group with “distinctive cultural values.”<sup>55</sup>

The nature of these values is distilled in what Michael Allen refers to as “the cowboy code,” which he describes as “a set of unwritten rules of behavior

that evolved among late-nineteenth-century Great Plains cowboys” that “was subscribed to almost universally by cowboy occupational folk groups,”<sup>56</sup> and which, interestingly enough, echoed the values F.J. Turner had delineated as characteristic of the American frontiersman. As Allen explains it,

Cowboys were democratic, practical, innovative, and courageous. They disliked intellectuals. Cowboys were individualistic, yet closely bound by the Code mores of their peers. These included an aversion to city life and “civilization,” fancy talk, and boasting. Many cowboys spoke only when necessary. They said what they wanted to say in slow, deliberate vernacular, with perhaps a dash of dry humour...A cowboy admired a good horse and took good care of it; he stood by fellow hands and his outfit at all costs. He showed hospitality to cowboys from other outfits and shared important trail information. He was deferential to women, showing an exaggerated courtesy toward “good women” although by and large he shunned the company of “good women” in favor of the prostitutes and bar girls he knew would not “tie him down” and end his wandering lifestyle.<sup>57</sup>

Importantly (and this is the central argument of his book), Allen argues that the rodeo cowboy has inherited the mantle of the historical/working cowboy, often through having an actual connection to ranching, but also through his genuine wrangling skills and through his espousal of the cowboy code.

Calling him a “contemporary ancestor,” a paradoxical phrase whereby he attempts to capture the cultural significance of the rodeo cowboy, Allen sees this figure as “painstakingly preserving and honoring cowboy traditions,” which offers North Americans a chance to continue their communion with the mythical cowboy.<sup>58</sup> Allen’s argument is similar to that of Jack Weston, who asserts that the power of the cowboy myth lies in North Americans’ deep longing for a lost Eden. Straddling as he does the gap between nature and civilization, the imagined cowboy can satisfy their longing for the lost pre-industrial world, while at the same time allowing them to embrace the present: the imagined cowboy enables a kind of romantic escapism that “avoid(s) romantic primitivism while recognizing the injuries of progress.”<sup>59</sup> For Allen, the rodeo cowboy “acts out the taming of the West ... When his job is done – when he has symbolically tamed the wild frontier to make way

for civilization – the rodeo cowboy hero has to ‘move on down the road’... not astride his horse, but in a pickup truck or aboard a jet airplane.”<sup>60</sup>

Thus one begins to see considerable continuity between the cowboy – both historical/working and imagined – at the centre of the Calgary Stampede and his counterparts south of the Canadian border. Wallace Stegner insists on this point in *Wolf Willow*, his reminiscence of growing up in the cowboy country of southern Saskatchewan, asserting that the cowboy’s “costume, the practices, the terminology, the state of mind, came into Canada ready-made, and nothing they encountered on the northern Plains enforced any real modifications.”<sup>61</sup> As Hugh Dempsey notes in his history of the Canadian cowboy, this figure “inherited much of the Spanish heritage from the American cowboy”; he had the same skills, being “deft with a rope, handy with a branding iron” and having “an intimate knowledge of cattle, horses and his surroundings.” His clothing was the same as that of his fellows across the border, and he even “spoke the same lingo, often with the same Texas drawl.”<sup>62</sup> Indeed, Dempsey points out that in the early days of Canadian ranching, most of the cowboys were Americans,<sup>63</sup> and they generally adhered to the cowboy code mentioned above, being “tough, hardy, and fiercely loyal.”<sup>64</sup> Nomadic by necessity if not by nature, many did not stay in Canada, some leaving because they found the general lack of saloons unpalatable.<sup>65</sup>

While Dempsey clearly points to the emergence of a somewhat distinctive cowboy culture in southern Alberta, and the willingness of most of these men “to live under Canadian laws and accept them,” he acknowledges the presence of horse thieves and cattle rustlers on the Canadian range.<sup>66</sup> Warren Elofson develops this theme in considerably more detail in *Cowboys, Gentlemen and Cattle Thieves*, thereby downplaying the sharp distinction Breen draws between the supposedly orderly Canadian West and the lawless American one, and points to the importance of north-south influences.<sup>67</sup> Noting the diverse origins of Canadian cowboys, who in addition to Americans included “Ontario farm-boys, English immigrants, and boys born on the western frontier” along with “Anglos, blacks, Mexicans, Indians, halfbreeds, and men from every social class,” Dempsey emphasizes that “their teachers and...role models were the cowboys who had learned their trade in Texas, Wyoming and other centers of America’s ranching West.”<sup>68</sup> Evans makes a similar point about the influence of the imagined cowboy, noting that “the Bar U had extraordinarily close ties to the ‘mythic west’ created by journalists, novelists, impresarios, and artists.” While Evans points to the “irony” in this particular ranch (which many regard as the “epitome” of a Canadian ranch) having so many noteworthy American connections, he nevertheless points out the very

real ties between the people at the Bar U and such American perpetrators of the cowboy myth as the artist Charlie Russell, the writer Owen Wister, and the outlaw Sundance Kid.<sup>69</sup>

Although considerably less scholarly than Dempsey's or Evans's studies, but perhaps in its own way no less authoritative, given his personal experience (and that of his father and grandfather before him) as a working cowboy in southern Alberta, Andy Russell's *The Canadian Cowboy* also stresses the north-south nature of cowboy culture as he knew it and as it was passed down to him. He describes the cowboy as "courageous and physically tough...and inordinately loyal to the brand he worked for" and "generally soft spoken," particularly in the presence of "decent women."<sup>70</sup> He points out that cowboys generally carried a gun "because of the nature of their work," but that "contrary to the popular belief generated first by writers city-born and -raised and then by Hollywood, very few cowboys ever carried more than one pistol for the simple reason that a gun and its...accoutrements were heavy."<sup>71</sup> Interestingly, in describing such historical figures as James Butler (Wild Bill) Hickok, Bat Masterson, and Wyatt Earp, Russell makes no mention of their American connections; rather he presents them as genuine figures of cowboy lore, albeit people whose real stories have been distorted by romanticized representations.<sup>72</sup> Such a presentation of (Canadian) cowboy culture by a popular writer like Russell arguably points to the existence of a cross-border western community, one that claims the cowboy code (and those who have in various ways exemplified it) as its own, regardless of national boundaries.

### **Conclusion: The Social Uses of the Stampede Cowboy**

To this point, I have offered some largely indirect answers to my initial question: Who is the cowboy at the heart of Calgary's annual Stampede and its civic (and regional) iconography? However, placing this figure on Elliott West's grid of influences provides some useful insights. Perhaps the most obvious of these is that the notion of a "Canadian cowboy" (historical and imagined, but perhaps particularly the latter) is one that is fraught with tension, if not contradiction. Viewed from the perspective offered by this countervailing framework, the cowboy has clearly grown out of north-south forces of geography, economics, and culture. Carried north on the waves created by the cattle industry that developed in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century from the trail drives initiated by entrepreneurs such as John Hackett,<sup>73</sup> Joseph G. McCoy, and Charles Goodnight<sup>74</sup> to move thousands of cattle north from Texas to the Great Plains railheads,<sup>75</sup> the

cowboy eventually appeared in those few areas in Canada – south-central and western British Columbia, southern Alberta (especially in the foothills of the Rockies), and southwestern Saskatchewan – that could support some form of ranching.

The first herd of cattle to be brought in this way to Canada likely arrived in British Columbia from Washington in 1860.<sup>76</sup> The first roundup in Alberta occurred in 1878 near Fort Macleod, and while it was an initiative of a group of Mounted Police who had decided to stay in the West and who saw an opportunity in the growing need for beef among the Indians (by then almost completely deprived of their mainstay by the slaughter of the great herds of buffalo that had roamed the western plains), this project was ultimately dependent on the presence and skill of American cowboys.<sup>77</sup> In short, the ranching industry, which provided the basis for the establishment of the Calgary Stampede first as a one-off celebration of the working cowboy in 1912 – a figure whose glory days were clearly numbered throughout “the empty quarter” in the wake of agrarian and urban settlement – and then as a yearly celebration of the continued economic power of the country’s largest ranching industry,<sup>78</sup> is clearly more the product of continental forces than of national ones, despite the undeniable influence of the latter. Moreover, if one looks at the countervailing forces at work on the historical cowboy, that is, at the discourses of Canadian nation-building, one might say that those discourses attempt to push him aside, if not to erase him completely as they reject all things “American.” Or, as a guide at the Bar U Ranch historical site told me confidently when I was visiting there a few years ago, “We didn’t have any cowboys here.”

Such denials aside, cowboy iconography is a pervasive presence in Calgary and in southern Alberta, not only during Stampede week in July, but also throughout the year. This is amply evidenced by the stylized cowboy hat adopted as a logo by the City of Calgary, by Calgary’s White Hat ceremony in its various manifestations,<sup>79</sup> and by the ubiquitous promotional use of the cowboy image by the two major tourism agencies in the area, Travel Alberta and Tourism Calgary, to say nothing of the architecture of Calgary’s major stadium, the Pengrowth Saddledome.<sup>80</sup> In short, references to the cowboy clearly dominate the public representation of Calgary and the surrounding region, and indeed, define its – extremely valuable – global brand.<sup>81</sup>

A definitive answer to the question of whether these representations are inflected primarily toward the historical/working cowboy or toward the imagined figure awaits further research; in any case, answering such a question would be challenging if not impossible, since, as many analysts have

pointed out, separating these two figures has become increasingly difficult over the past century. What does seem certain is that at both levels – historical and imagined – the cowboy at the centre of all of this activity is primarily the product of continental forces, and in particular of American cultural dynamics. Whether one sees him simply as a legitimate manifestation of the considerable and longstanding presence of Americans and their descendants in (southern) Alberta, that “most American of provinces”; as an unwelcome and simplistic symbol foisted upon unwilling locals by the machinations of (American) capitalism; as a powerful and complex symbol that has been appropriated by Canadians who are quite adept at the art of riding on the coat-tails of Yankee cultural energy and ingenuity while all the while feigning various kinds of moral superiority; or as a combination of all of the above, there is no denying that this figure is dominant and powerful. Why should this be so? What social uses does this figure serve?

Of course at one level, answering this question is easy: the Stampede, embodying as it does the romance and excitement of the Old West, has been a cash cow for most of its existence, and it continues to draw thousands of tourists and millions of dollars to the city and the region. Moreover, the Stampede cowboy with all of his baggage has provided Calgary and environs with an easily reproduced and enormously powerful marketing tool, one that has global resonance. Less obvious is what becomes apparent when one places the figure of the cowboy on West’s “grid of influences”: that the very negotiations necessitated by the countervailing forces illuminated by such an analysis actually enhance the social/cultural utility of the cowboy in southern Alberta.

That is, the cowboy image is useful as a symbol of the region precisely because it is so profoundly American. The aura of illegitimacy this connection lends the cowboy is one of the figure’s most attractive aspects in the Canadian context, enabling Calgarians (and Albertans more generally) to draw on it to evoke their regional identity as the “mavericks” of confederation (as well as to justify a ten-day *carnivale*, replete with a variety of excesses, public and private). At the same time, they are able to draw on the east-west discourses of Canadian identity to attenuate the figure’s tantalizingly forbidden connection with the individualism, the wildness, the violence associated in the popular mind (and nowhere more so than in the Canadian popular mind) with America’s western frontier. Thus, this negotiation across countervailing forces enables Calgarians to at once have and eat their cake in the figure of the “Canadian cowboy.” The social construction of this figure seems to have begun quite early on, with Calgary’s booster press remarking in 1884

that unlike his unruly American counterparts, “the genuine Alberta cowboy is a gentleman.” Or, as historian L.G. Thomas insisted many years later, while this figure might look like an American, he has an English spirit.<sup>82</sup>

I would suggest that the spirit of the Calgary Stampede cowboy is likely more complex than Thomas allows, and further, that this figure works in the service of the equally complex and paradoxical dynamics of regionalism. As Frank Davey has pointed out, regionalism is a multifaceted and contradictory phenomenon. Able to foster both diversity and homogenization, it is “a strategy” that “operates within a large interplay of power relations,” one of several available “discourses of dissent,”<sup>83</sup> a discourse that can resist “meanings generated by others in a nation state.”<sup>84</sup> At the same time, a regional sensibility is potentially advantageous to the nation state, as, for example, when a particular regional myth provides a rationale for the national government to avoid taking responsibility for economic problems in the region, or to downplay the region’s growing economic clout. Davey also points to the crucial role that regionalism can play in nurturing the symbolic resources and techniques of commodification so essential to “cultural competition and survival” within the context of global capitalism.<sup>85</sup>

At this point it seems clear that the cowboy serves as just such a symbolic resource, a tool of resistance for Calgarians, Albertans, and perhaps even for western Canadians more generally, that works to hide, if not to tame, the contradictions between being a hinterland and a homeland, between asserting a distinctive regional identity and claiming wholehearted membership within the national community. American enough to be exciting, the iconic Stampede cowboy beckons to visitors from across the country and around the world who have been steeped in the romance of the mythic (“American”) West. While he connotes a maverick identity (one that can be as easily adopted by a newly arrived denizen of Calgary’s oil patch as by a fifth-generation Albertan from ranching country), his promoters can assure those who need to hear it that Alberta’s West is thoroughly Canadian.

## Notes

1. Robert M. Seiler and Tamara P. Seiler, "The Social Construction of the Canadian Cowboy: Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Posters, 1952–72," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 33, no. 3 (Autumn 1998): 51–82; Seiler and Seiler, "Ceremonial Rhetoric and Civic Identity: The Case of the White Hat," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 29–49; Seiler and Seiler, "Managing Contradictory Visions of the West: The Great Richardson-Weadick Experiment," in *Challenging Frontiers: The Canadian West*, ed. Lorry Felske and Beverly Rasporich (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004), 155–80. See also Robert M. Seiler, "M.B. (Doc) Marcell: Official Photographer of the First Calgary Stampede," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 33, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 219–39. As in these other works, my theoretical perspective draws on such works as Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963); Herbert Blumer, "Society as Symbolic Interaction," *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 78–79; Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Pierre Bourdieu, "Social Space and Symbolic Power," *Sociological Theory* 7 (Spring 1989): 14–25; John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (Boston: Unwin-Heyman, 1989); Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 14–25; and Raymond Breton, "Intergroup Competition in the Symbolic Construction of Canadian Society," in *Race and Ethnic Relations*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Peter S. Li (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 1999), 291–310.
2. Elliott West, "Against the Grain: State-Making, Cultures, and Geography in the American West," in *One West, Two Myths: A Comparative Reader*, ed. Carol Higham and Robert Thacker (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004), 2.
3. *Ibid.*, 3.
4. *Ibid.*, 6.
5. *Ibid.*, 7.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, 9.
8. My inspiration for this approach, one that takes into account the north-south influences on cultural institutions and practices in Canada, also comes from other sources, most notably Joel Garreau's fascinating *The Nine Nations of North America* (New York: Avon Books, 1981). Garreau sees North America in terms of nine (north-south) regions, and quite compellingly labels the non-coastal western region of the continent "The Empty Quarter." More recent analyses have also documented the degree to which social and cultural

differences between Canada and the United States are considerably less pronounced than the discourses of Canadian nationalism would suggest. See Jeffrey G. Reitz and Raymond Breton, *The Illusion of Difference: Realities of Ethnicity in Canada and the United States* (Toronto: CD Howe Institute, 1994). I have made a similar argument regarding approaches to diversity in both countries in Tamara Palmer Seiler, "Melting Pot and Mosaic: Images and Realities," in *Canada and the United States: Differences that Count*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. David M. Thomas (Peterborough ON: Broadview Press, 2000), 97–120. See also Jeffrey Simpson, *Star Spangled Canadians: Canadians Living the American Dream* (Toronto: Harper-Collins, 2000). Michael Adams, *Fire and Ice: The United States, Canada and the Myth of Converging Values* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2004) offers an interesting counterpoint to Simpson's line of argument.

9. See Richard W. Slatta, *Cowboys of the Americas* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), especially Chapter 1, "Introduction," and Chapter 2, "From Wild-Cattle Hunters to Cowboys," 1–27.
10. The following sources (among many others) discuss the role of various media in constructing and purveying the cowboy image and the particular resonance of this figure in the national mythology of the United States: Michael Allen, *Rodeo Cowboys in the North American Imagination* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1998); John Cawelti, "Reflections on the Western Since 1970," in *Gender, Language and Myth: Essays on Popular Narrative*, ed. Glenwood Irons (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 83–102; Kathryn C. Esselman, "From Camelot to Monument Valley: Dramatic Origins of the Western Film," in *Focus on the Western*, ed. Jack Nachbar (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1974), 9–18; William H. Forbis, *The Cowboys* (Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1973); Marcus Klein, "The Westerner: Origins of the Myth," in *Gender, Language and Myth: Essays on Popular Narrative*, ed. Glenwood Irons (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 65–82; John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett, *The Myth of the American Superhero* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002); Jack Weston, *The Real American Cowboy* (New York: New Amsterdam, 1995).
11. In his well-known book, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), Benedict Anderson famously defines the nation as "an imagined political community" that is both limited and sovereign. As he explains, the nation "is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.... Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.... The nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them...has finite, if elastic

boundaries, beyond which lie other nations.... It is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm.... Finally, it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (pp. 5–7).

12. See, for example, Jack Weston, *The Real American Cowboy*. See also William W. Savage Jr.'s introduction to *Cowboy Life: Reconstructing an American Myth* (Niwot: University of Colorado Press, 1993), 3–16. Also relevant are: Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992); Philip R. Loy, *Westerns and American Culture, 1930–1955* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2001); Lawrence and Jewett, *The Myth of the American Superhero*, especially Chapter 3, "Buffalo Bill: Staging World Redemption," 49–64, and Chapter 5, "John Wayne and Friends Redeem the Village," 89–105.
13. Various fault lines in this debate are clearly apparent in John Cawelti's "Reflections on the Western Since 1970" (1992), in which he refers to the "Turnerian and post-Turnerian schools," the "myth symbol" school, and the new structuralists. Michael Allen offers a more recent discussion of this debate in *Rodeo Cowboys in the North American Imagination* (1998) and, like Cawelti, calls for a productive synthesis of these various approaches. Jane Tompkins, in "West of Everything," in *Gender, Language and Myth*, 103–23, offers a fascinating feminist interpretation of the cultural significance of the cowboy and the Western. Rather than seeing the popularity of this figure and genre as primarily reflecting a deep nostalgia for a lost pre-industrial world, Tompkins sees it as a reaction to the dominance in the nineteenth century of a feminine perspective in literature and the emerging feminist challenge to male hegemony during the period. She argues quite convincingly that the Western posits a masculine, secular world, with its concentration on death and its disavowal of the Christian worldview and the domestic world. In so doing, it offers a masculine retreat from the feminized world of domesticity and Christianity and valorizes a materialist world and physical force as the ultimate realities.
14. Allen, *Rodeo Cowboys*, 203.
15. Ibid.
16. Robert M. Seiler, "Selling Patriotism/Selling Beer: The Case of the I AM CANADIAN Commercial," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 32 (Spring 2002): 45–66.
17. S.M. Lipset, "Revolution and Counterrevolution: The United States and Canada," in *A Passion for Identity: An Introduction to Canadian Studies*, ed. Eli Mandel and David Taras (Toronto: Methuen, 1987), 81.

18. Ibid., 75.
19. Ibid., 81.
20. J.L. Granatstein, *Yankee Go Home? Canadians and Anti-Americanism* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1996), 8.
21. Lipset, "Revolution and Counterrevolution," 74.
22. Granatstein, *Yankee Go Home?* Granatstein defines Canadian anti-Americanism as "a distaste for and fear of American military, political, cultural and economic activities that, while widespread in the population, is usually benign unless and until it is exploited by business, political, or cultural groups for their own ends. Added to this is a snippet – and sometimes more – of envy at the greatness, wealth, and power of the Republic and its citizens, and a dash of discomfort at the excesses that mar American life" (p. 4).
23. One sees evidence of this exploitation of latent anti-Americanism on a daily basis in Canada, particularly since 9/11, and most particularly since the American invasion of Iraq. An article by well-known pollster Michael Adams in the context of the disintegration of Paul Martin's Liberal government and Martin's apparent attempt to garner support by "capitalizing on Anti-American sentiment" illustrates the point. Entitled "Bash Thy Neighbor," it appeared (under the heading of "Canada-U.S. Relations") in the *Globe and Mail* on October 19, 2005. Adams asserts that "The last time Canadians so disliked a U.S. President, the Americans were shooting at us" (p. A19). Interestingly, in reporting on Canadian attitudes toward Canada-U.S. relations, thereby highlighting that while Yankee-bashing is a crowd pleaser in Canada, "70 percent (of Canadians) want the government to try to get along," the article illustrates the ambivalence Granatstein refers to in his analysis of anti-Americanism, as implied by his interrogative title.
24. John Conway, "An Adapted Organic Tradition," *Daedalus: Special Issue: In Search of Canada* 117, no. 4 (Fall 1988): 382. Of course Conway is not the first to make this conservative argument. Famously, George Grant evokes Canada's conservative lineage in his *Lament for a Nation: the Defeat of Canadian Nationalism* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965).
25. Conway, "Adapted Organic Tradition," 382.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., 383.
28. Leslie A. Pal, "Between the Sights: Gun Control in Canada and the United States," in *Canada and the United States: Differences that Count*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. David M. Thomas (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2000), 68–96.
29. Edward Grabb and James Curtis, *Regions Apart: The Four Societies of Canada and the United States* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2005), 129–30.
30. Neil Nevitte, *The Decline of Deference: Canadian Value Change in Cross-National Perspective* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1996).

31. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.
32. Grabb and Curtis, *Regions Apart*, 157.
33. David Taras, "Surviving the Wave: Canadian Identity in the Era of Digital Globalization," in *A Passion for Identity: Canadian Studies in the 21st Century*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., eds. David Taras and Beverly Rasporich (Scarborough, ON: Nelson, 2001), 185–200.
34. Michael Allen, *Rodeo Cowboys*, 62; Loy, *Westerns and American Culture*, 83; Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 38; Lawrence and Jewett, *Myth of the American Superhero*, 49–64, 89–105.
35. Savage, *Cowboy Life*, 3.
36. *Ibid.*, 5.
37. Dick Harrison, *Unnamed Country: The Struggle for a Canadian Prairie Fiction* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1977), 78. See also Harrison's edited collection, *Best Mounted Police Stories* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996).
38. Harrison, *Unnamed Country*, 158.
39. *Ibid.*, 162.
40. *Ibid.*, 163.
41. R.C. Macleod, *The North-West Mounted Police and Law Enforcement, 1873–1905* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976).
42. See David H. Breen, "The Turner Thesis and the Canadian West: A Closer Look at the Ranching Frontier," in *Essays in Western History*, ed. Lewis H. Thomas (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1976), 147–56. Breen later produced a book on this topic, *The Canadian Prairie West and the Ranching Frontier, 1874–1924* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983).
43. *Ibid.*, 155.
44. In addition to Jordan, *North American Cattle-Ranching Frontiers*; and Slatta, *Cowboys of the Americas*, see also Warren Elofson, *Cowboys, Gentlemen and Cattle Thieves* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000); Simon Evans, *The Bar U: Canadian Ranching History* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004); and Maxwell Foran, *Trails and Trials: Markets and Land Use in the Alberta Beef Industry, 1881–1948* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2003).
45. Evans, *Bar U*, 300.
46. Foran, "Constancy and Change: Ranching in Western Canada," in *Challenging Frontiers: The Canadian West*, ed. Lorry Felske and Beverly Rasporich (Calgary, University of Calgary Press, 2004), 312.
47. See Garreau, *Nine Nations*; West, "Against the Grain"; Allen, *Rodeo Cowboys*.
48. West, "Against the Grain," 3.
49. Paul F. Starr, *Let the Cowboy Ride: Cattle Ranching in the American West* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), as quoted in Evans, *Bar U*, xvii.

50. Molly P. Rozum, “‘The Spark that Jumped the Gap’: North America’s Northern Plains and the Experience of Place,” in *One West, Two Myths*, eds. Carol Higham and Robert Thacker, 137–38.
51. Slatta, *Cowboys of the Americas*, 16.
52. Of course the degree to which this “maverick” mythology accords with the facts of western development is debatable; indeed, one might well argue that on both sides of the border, the myth works in part to hide reality. For example, as Donald Worster points out in “Two Faces West: The Development Myth in Canada and the United States,” in *One West, Two Myths*, given the aridity of much of the American West, it was necessary for the federal government to contribute mightily to the irrigation and other infrastructure projects required for development; indeed, “the West of fact rather than romance, became the domain of the Bureau of Reclamation and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) more than of Wyatt Earp or Billy the Kid” (pp. 33–34). This was and is nowhere more true than in my own “maverick” state of Nevada, where the BLM is the major landholder, and federal control has enabled such projects as the testing of atomic bombs. Similarly, as Todd Babiak points out in “Mavericks? If Only,” in a recent issue of *Alberta Views*, there is perhaps more than a bit of sleight of hand in labelling the residents of the essentially one-party province of Alberta as “mavericks.”
53. Weston, *Real American Cowboy*, 3–8; Foran, “Constancy and Change,” 311–12.
54. In *Cowboys of the Americas*, 5, Slatta cites Edward Larocque Tinker, “The Centaurs of the Americas,” in *Centaurs of Many Lands* (London: J.A. Allen, 1964), 50–51.
55. Slatta, *Cowboys of the Americas*, 6.
56. Allen, *Rodeo Cowboys*, 29.
57. *Ibid.*, 29–30.
58. *Ibid.*, 211.
59. Weston, *Real American Cowboy*, 210.
60. Allen, *Rodeo Cowboys*, 211.
61. Wallace Stegner, *Wolf Willow: A History, a Story, and a Memoir of the Last Plains Frontier* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1962), 135–36.
62. Hugh A. Dempsey, *The Golden Age of the Canadian Cowboy: An Illustrated History* (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1995), 1.
63. *Ibid.*, 11.
64. *Ibid.*, 1.
65. *Ibid.*, 19.
66. *Ibid.*, 2.
67. Warren Elofson, *Cowboys, Gentlemen and Cattle Thieves* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2000).

68. Dempsey, *Golden Age*, 20.
69. Evans, *Bar U*, 301.
70. Andy Russell, *The Canadian Cowboy: Stories of Cows, Cowboys and Cayuses* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993), 40.
71. *Ibid.*, 40, 41.
72. *Ibid.*, 41, 42.
73. *Ibid.*, 21–25.
74. Weston, *Real American Cowboy*, 35–69.
75. Slatta, *Cowboys of the Americas*, 78–82.
76. Russell, *Canadian Cowboy*, 87.
77. Dempsey, *Golden Age*, 12–23.
78. Foran, “Constancy and Change,” 312.
79. Robert M. Seiler and Tamara P. Seiler, “Ceremonial Rhetoric and Civic Identity: The Case of the White Hat,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 29–49.
80. Donald Den, “The Cowboy and the Business: Travel and Tourism in Southern Alberta” (honours thesis, Faculty of Communication and Culture, University of Calgary, 2007).
81. Although the degree to which the cowboy and the Western genre are on the wane as powerful cultural symbols (and products) is debatable, a number of analysts, artists, and others have pointed to a decline in their popularity. For example, in “Reflections on the Western Since 1970,” John Cawelti points to a marked decline, which he attributes in large measure to changes in the West itself, and in the public perception of the region. As he puts it, “[T]he west is becoming just like everywhere else.... The geographic frontier is closed and is rapidly receding into the past,” to be replaced by “two new landscapes” with similar mythic power – the city and outer space” (p. 92). Cawelti also points to a changing mindset (what one might call the postmodern sensibility) that has emerged since the 1970s, one that reflects “new and conflicting attitudes toward violence, sexism and racism,” which has made it difficult for filmmakers, for example, to take the Western genre seriously. One sees this sensibility in such recent Western films as Ang Lee’s *Brokeback Mountain* (2005), with its focus on a homosexual relationship between two contemporary cowboys, and in Wim Wenders’ *Don’t Come Knocking* (2005), which Wenders describes as “a deconstruction... of the myth of the West... [whose] stories... have been obsolete [and] the iconic American cowboy figure has vanished.” (Wenders is quoted in James Adams, “How the West was Spun,” *Globe and Mail*, 27 April 2006, R3.). Nevertheless, in *Rodeo Cowboy*, Michael Allen points to the longevity and continued resonance of the Western mythology and the cowboy figure, particularly as embodied in the rodeo cowboy, “a contemporary ancestor,” whose popularity stems from his character traits. As he puts it,

this “hero is ubiquitous because he is consummately American, embodying Turnerian traits and complete loyalty to [the] Cowboy Code and to his fellow cowboys” (pp. 211–12). What all this means for the future of the Calgary Stampede is moot, of course, but I would suggest that cowboy/Western iconography is sufficiently powerful (and malleable) to remain useful to the region for many years to come.

82. L.G. Thomas, in Slatta, *Cowboys of the Americas*, 51. With regard to the importance of boosterism as a feature of western Canadian development, see Alan Artibise, “Boosterism and the Development of Prairie Cities, 1871–1913,” in *The Prairie West*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., eds. R. Douglas Francis and Howard Palmer (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1999), 515–43.
83. Frank Davey, “Towards the Ends of Regionalism,” in *A Sense of Place: Re-evaluating Regionalism in Canadian and American Writing*, ed. Christian Riegel, Herb Wyile, et al. (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1998), 7.
84. *Ibid.*, 4.
85. *Ibid.*, 14.