

CHAPTER 12

**The Social Construction of the Canadian Cowboy:
Calgary Exhibitions and Stampede Posters,
1952–1972***

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The cowboy as we know him exists on three interrelated levels: the historical, the fictional, and the mythological. In many instances these levels are so inter-related that determining where the historical figure ends and the fictional character begins is difficult, if not impossible. Canadian analysts face another complication: at all three levels, the cowboy is primarily an American invention, in terms of the historical American frontier experience as well as the special role of the “frontier” in the American imagination.¹ At both levels, the Canadian experience has been markedly different;² yet, every July Calgary stages the world’s most extravagant celebration of the cowboy. That the cowboy, together with his world, should occupy the dominant place he does in the public iconography of Alberta in general and Calgary in particular might seem surprising.

In this paper, we examine selected visual representations of the cowboy, with a view to understanding the Canadian version of this popular stereotype.³ We take as our corpus the publicity messages (posters) produced for and circulated by the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede board during the period 1952 to 1972. Historians⁴ remind us that these were the golden years of the Stampede – the years of its greatest expansion. We focus on the artful organization of the iconographic and the linguistic practices employed in these texts, which we regard as popular cultural artifacts. Popular cultural texts like the texts we examine are relatively open⁵ of course, capable of being read in different ways by different people. We try to identify the elements that make up the sign systems asking us to visit the Calgary Stampede, together with the principles according to which these elements are linked, and to suggest the social uses they serve. To begin with, we outline the conceptual apparatus we use to study ephemeral cultural artifacts, and then we sketch the historical dialectic that shaped the discourses at work in the posters.

Theoretical Framework

The approach we have taken builds on the work of a variety of socio-semiotics theorists, including Roland Barthes, Stuart Hall, Michel Bakhtin, Pierre Bourdieu, and Michel de Certeau. It sees popular culture as a site of struggle, focusing on the popular tactics used to evade or subvert the forces of dominance.⁶ Analysts who take this approach argue that ordinary people use the resources the elites (who control the cultural industries) provide to produce popular culture. In contrast to the mass cultural model, which conceptualizes artifacts in terms of unified meaning, the popular cultural model conceptualizes cultural artifacts as polysemic, open to a variety of quite different, even

contradictory, readings. Some readings support the ideological meanings of cultural elites; others clearly oppose those meanings.⁷

Taking our cue from John Fiske, we treat Calgary Stampede posters as popular cultural artifacts. More precisely, we identify and explain the discursive practices according to which certain individuals are collectively defined via these publicity messages as “cowboys.” One could examine such related discursive sites as the Stampede Parade; the street events, including street dances and chuckwagon breakfasts; the layout of the Fairground; the infield (rodeo) events; the Indian Village; and other kinds of official publicity materials, including advertisements and souvenir programs, with this view in mind. To make our project manageable, we examine one kind of official publicity message – the poster – only, in large part because signification in this case is intentional. We take as our corpus twenty-two reproductions (slides) of the posters we obtained from the Glenbow Archives.

Our investigation moved through three stages. First, we examined the socio-cultural discourses by which “the cowboy” was constructed, with particular emphasis on the Wild West Show, which had given way to the rodeo by the end of the First World War. We outline our reflections on this cultural transformation in the following sections.

Second, we examined the posters circulated from 1908 to 1923, the period during which the idea of the Calgary Stampede took shape. The Calgary Exhibition got under way in 1886, justified in part as a means of creating social solidarity in a community divided along a number of lines, including ethnic and occupational.⁸ We focus on the years 1908, 1911, 1912, 1919, 1921, and 1923.

Why did we choose these dates? When he visited Calgary in 1908, Guy Weadick approached city officials with the proposition that, if they joined forces, they could stage a week-long tribute to the cowboy, thereby celebrate the role the cowboy played in opening up the West. With the help of four wealthy ranchers, who provided financial backing, Weadick staged the first Calgary Stampede in 1912. In 1919, he staged the Victory Stampede, to mark the official end of the First World War. Finally, in 1923, the Calgary Exhibition and the Calgary Stampede joined forces, thereby becoming an annual event, with Weadick as director. It might be argued that, in fact, the 1923 Exhibition and Stampede set the pattern for all the Stampedes that followed.⁹

Third, we “read” the posters that were circulated by the Calgary Exhibition during the period 1952 to 1972, the golden years of the Calgary Stampede.¹⁰ The years 1952, 1962, and 1972 are important because they mark jubilee celebrations. We have posters for every year except 1956, 1962, 1963, 1964, and 1969.

In terms of format, our corpus can be divided into three groups:

- (a) The posters for the years 1908–23 measure 20.50 x 27.00 inches. In many respects, the posters produced today resemble the posters the Calgary Exhibition board produced for those years.
- (b) The posters produced during the period 1952–65 measure 13.00 x 47.00 inches. What strikes us about these posters – they were stapled for example to telephone poles – is the very high word-to-image-ratio.
- (c) The posters produced during the period 1966–72 measure 22.50 x 34.25 inches. Our discussion is based on a close reading of each text.

Our data base consists of detailed descriptions of the elements that make up these messages, in terms of (i) the linguistic message, denotational and connotational, (ii) the literal image and (iii) the symbolic image. Barthes's seminal essay, "The Rhetoric of the Image" (1964), serves as our point of departure.

Background

The cowboy evolved from an unknown herder into a folk hero in a relatively short period of time. His status grew as he passed through the hands of frontier journalists, dime novelists, wild west promoters, novelists, and artists. In this regard, it is important to remember that virtually all of these early depictions were American, that then as now Canadians were consumers of American popular culture, and that the Canadian experience¹¹ of the frontier differed markedly from the American¹² suggesting a disjuncture between popular imagery and local experience.

American Context

The historical cowboy played an important role in the development of the American West. He enjoyed a relatively short heyday, ironically, from the late 1860s to the late 1880s.¹³ The cattle industry dates from the late 1860s, when entrepreneurs like Joseph G. McCoy realized that the longhorns which roamed southern Texas could be sold to Easterners for a profit.¹⁴ These resourceful people discovered that trailing herds of longhorns north was a cheap way of transporting the animals to market. During the 1870s and the 1880s, millions of animals were driven north, to territories such as Montana, Wyoming, and the Dakotas. American hunters slaughtered millions of bison

during this period, opening up these ranges to grazing and thereby forcing the Plains Indians to abandon their traditional way of life.

Cattlemen made huge profits during the period of westward expansion.¹⁵ Along the way, they established the cattle industry going, thereby creating jobs for 40,000 cowboys and keeping a million workers in the East and Midwest busy processing meat products. As William Savage, Jr., and Jack Weston have described him, the historical cowboy was a hired man, a rugged individual without capital in the employ of an enterprising individual with capital. A few, such as Charles Goodnight and Shanghai Pierce, succeeded in becoming cattlemen themselves.¹⁶

For the most part, the average American cowboy lived a lonely life. An itinerant labourer who worked long hours, he took on whatever task happened to be important at the moment. He might pitch hay, hunt stray animals, clear brush, and break wild horses, but he devoted most of his time and effort to looking after cattle as they grazed on the range. He earned his reputation for strength, endurance, and ingenuity on those long, gruelling cattle drives we have seen portrayed in so many Westerns.

In the early years, cowboys rounded up cattle twice a year and herded them into a central place, to brand calves and to select older cattle and sometimes young bulls not needed for breeding to go to market. The roundup marked that period when a rancher determined how many cattle he actually owned. It was also an important social event, as cowboys visited old friends, challenging one another to tests of skill in such activities as bronco riding, steer wrestling, and calf roping. To be sure, a certain amount of rivalry would surround these contests. On northern ranges, such as in Montana and Wyoming, roundups attracted as many as 300 cowboys.

The economic boom that had fostered the development of ranching ended quite suddenly in the late 1880s, when bad weather (especially the blizzard of 1886–87), poor range management, and plummeting cattle prices put an end to the free-wheeling practices of earlier days.¹⁷ Most importantly, wave after wave of immigrants settled the plains, and thanks to the invention of barbed wire in 1873 a great many set themselves up as small farmers, eventually bringing an end to the open range.

Canadian Context

The heyday of free-range ranching in Canada was brief, extending from the early 1880s to the late 1890s, and ending somewhat dramatically with the disastrous winter of 1906–07.¹⁸ Whereas in the United States ranching dominated

a vast territory, in Canada it occupied a fairly small region, including the Columbia basin and the southern interior plateau of British Columbia; southwestern Alberta, around Fort Macleod and the Bow River Valley, near Calgary; and southwestern Saskatchewan, around Swift Current.¹⁹ On the one hand, the American and Canadian ranching frontiers were interconnected in a variety of ways; on the other, the Canadian ranching community stood apart,²⁰ as did the political cultures of the two countries.

A few very large ranches, owned by an eastern-Canadian and British elite, with strong ties to the Conservative government of the day, dominated Alberta's ranching industry. These ranches, and others established by British immigrants along the foothills in Alberta, became centres of a transplanted British Victorian lifestyle.²¹

The Canadian ranching frontier was not, however, exclusively British and eastern Canadian. American cowboys – and American foremen – had been present from the 1870s. As historian Terry Jordan points out in *North American Cattle-Ranching Frontiers, Origins, Diffusion, and Differentiation* (1990), most of the technology of ranching came from the American West, as well as from Mexico. Nevertheless, the development and overall tone of the Canadian ranching enterprise was in marked contrast to that of the American. Whereas the latter, marked by bitter and violent range wars, the Canadian ranching community was the product of government initiative and developed within a well established legal framework. The ethos of this community was deeply conservative.²²

The growth of Calgary was closely linked to the ranching industry and to the arrival of the railway in Alberta in 1883. As the main shipping point for livestock, Calgary became the capital of this conservative “Cattle Kingdom.” The Liberal government elected in 1896 developed immigration and land policies that paved the way for a massive influx of settlers to “the last best west,” North America's last agricultural frontier. While the ranching influence on southern Alberta in general and on Calgary in particular remained strong, and while several large ranches survived, by 1910 ranching was no longer “king.”²³

The Wild West Show and the Image of the American Cowboy

The development of the West marked the end of the era of free-range ranching, and nostalgia soon set in.²⁴ Many enterprising people took advantage of this mood, including William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody (1846–1917), who launched and dominated that genre of travelling entertainment called the

Wild West show. Via this medium, Cody “fixed” the romantic image of the cowboy.²⁵

Cody lived through nearly every major stage of westward expansion. He was born in a log cabin in Iowa, and with his family he moved in 1853 to Kansas, after which he travelled throughout the West, working at a variety of frontier jobs, including freight company messenger, pony express rider, scout for the Union Army, and buffalo hunter. Legend has it that he killed 4,280 buffalo in eight months, a feat which earned him the nickname “Buffalo Bill.” He also served as a scout (1868–72) for the 5th U.S. Cavalry. Russell (1970) claims that he took part in sixteen expeditions against the Native peoples. In 1872, Cody resigned his position to play the lead role in Ned Buntline’s melodrama, *Scouts of the Prairie*.

Ned Buntline, the pen name for Edward Z.C. Judson (1823–1886), was an adventurer who turned to writing in the 1860s. He made a fortune fictionalizing the exploits of Cody, beginning with *Buffalo Bill: The King of the Border Men* (1869). Buntline wrote more than 400 of these short, thrilling western stories, thereby creating the genre called the “dime novel,” which propagated the image of the cowboy as the rugged tamer of nature. These boisterous tales, which valorized democracy and individualism, were immensely popular during the period from 1860 to 1895. Another prolific writer, Colonel Prentiss Ingraham (1843–1904), also popularized the cowboy as a romantic figure. Ingraham wrote more than 600 dime novels, about 120 of them based on the exploits of Buffalo Bill, as well as several popular plays. He also wrote two plays for Cody, *The Knights of the Plains* and *Buffalo Bill at Bay*.²⁶

Ned Buntline persuaded Cody to play himself in *Scouts of the Prairie: And Red Deviltry As It Is* (1872), the first of two western melodramas he wrote expressly for him. This commercially successful venture laid the groundwork for the Wild West Show; however, Cody eventually broke with Buntline²⁷ and in 1875 formed the “Buffalo Bill Combination,” a travelling theatrical troupe, which included Wild Bill Hickock and Texas Jack Omohundro. In 1876, Cody produced and starred in *The Red Hand: or Buffalo Bill’s First Scalp for Custer*. This dramatized an incident at Warbonnet Creek, Nebraska, in which Cody is said to have avenged Custer’s defeat by shooting and scalping Yellow Hand, the Cheyenne leader. In this way, Cody the man blended with Cody the legend.

When the opportunity presented itself, Cody turned his attention to outdoor performances. In 1882, he was invited to stage a Fourth of July celebration for North Platte, Nebraska, an event which served as the model for his

travelling show. The celebration included a series of contests (we would call it a rodeo) that drew no fewer than 1,000 entrants. Clearly, he did not invent rodeo, since these contests had been held at roundups for a generation or so. His innovation was to package them as a road show.²⁸

Cody launched the Buffalo Bill Wild West in Omaha, Nebraska, in May of 1883, taking it on the road early in 1884. He set out to revive the events (and the images) of frontier life, insisting on authenticity in almost every detail. To this end he tried to recruit individuals who had taken part in the events he re-created. Any given version of the show included a portrayal of the Pony Express; the Buffalo Hunt; an attack on an emigrant train crossing the Plains; the capture of the Deadwood Mail Coach by “Indians”; an attack on a settler’s cabin; and the Battle of Little Big Horn, which was billed as an historically accurate depiction of Custer’s Last Fight, together with much trick riding and trick roping and sharp shooting. Annie Oakley appeared second in the program, right after the grand entrance. Cody appeared near the end, which afforded him a moment of dramatic emphasis for showing off his own shooting skills.

Cody’s show featured an all-star cast of western notables, including, in addition to Annie Oakley, such figures as Gabriel Dumont, the Métis leader; Dr. William F. Carver, the frontier dentist who became a marksman; and Major Frank North, the frontier scout. Sitting Bull, who in 1876 led the Sioux in the battle of Little Big Horn, toured with the Show during the 1885–1886 season, Toronto being one of the Canadian stops.²⁹

For no less than a decade (1887–1896), Cody’s Wild West show enjoyed immense popularity. For example, during the 1886 season, it stayed more than six weeks at a summer resort on Staten Island, New York. As well, Cody took his show to London, England, in 1887, to take part in the American Exhibition planned for Queen Victoria’s Jubilee. The show thrilled thousands of spectators, among them William E. Gladstone, who marvelled at its graphic depictions of frontier life. Cody staged a number of command performances, including one for Queen Victoria and another for Jubilee guests, such as the kings of Belgium, Denmark, and Saxony. This great success paved the way for two more tours of Europe (1889–92 and 1902–06) that included stops at London, Paris, Rome, and Berlin.

The show enjoyed its greatest season in 1893, the year of the Chicago World’s Fair, which honoured the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America, and boasted an attendance of 27.5 million. Cody added the Congress of Rough Riders of the World to his program, which featured expert marksmen and riders from America, England, France, Germany, and

Russia, who dazzled audiences with their military manoeuvres. Although the show was not officially part of the World's Fair, it was conspicuously located just outside the fair gates, and few visitors felt that they had "seen the sights" until they had also visited it Show.³⁰

Over the years, Cody varied his program very little. What, then, aroused all this enthusiasm? Millions of people in a dozen countries saw the show, which purported to portray actual events in a truthful, realistic way. Many events showcased riding and racing skills, but much of the show can be described as western pageant and spectacle. People flocked to see Buffalo Bill, the dime novel hero, come to life. His three-hour show neatly fits into the popular myth of the West, which evoked two images: the West as a hostile, barbaric land, and as a place of opportunity.³¹ Thanks in no small way to Cody, Europeans³² developed a great interest in the American west as a far-away land of romance and adventure.³³ Cody eventually suffered a series of setbacks, and in lost his show to creditors.

Throughout this period, many rival shows toured the United States and Europe, including Pawnee Bill's Wild West, Doc W.F. Carver's Wild America, and the Miller Brothers 101 Ranch Wild West Show; for a number of reasons, however, this form of outdoor entertainment barely survived its creator, who died in 1917. Most of the shows in operation at the turn of the century quietly faded from notice before or during the First World War. The major exception was the Miller Brothers 101 Ranch Wild West Show, which seemed to get bigger and better.³⁴ In many respects, the events that made the Wild West show unique as entertainment continued as "rodeo," a form of entertainment that enjoyed great popularity after the war, thanks in large part to Guy Weadick.

Other Mediums

In addition to the Wild West Show (and the dime novel, which, as we have seen, was closely related to it), by the end of the nineteenth century, four new "western" mediums were consolidating a romantic image of the cowboy: the novel, motion pictures, pulp magazines, and western art. Zane Grey topped all writers of "western" novels in popularity. His sixty novels about cowboy life made the term western generic and the image of the rugged, individualistic cowboy central to American popular culture.³⁵

Frederic Remington and Owen Wister were also major popularizers of the romantic cowboy. Remington, best known for his action-filled paintings, drawings, and sculptures of cowboys and Indians, published his first picture

in *Harper's Weekly* in 1882³⁶ and later designed posters for Buffalo Bill's show. In 1893, Remington met Owen Wister, the writer. In Wister, he found an enthusiastic, able collaborator, and for a number of years they produced many articles and illustrations for *Harper's Weekly*. They tried to capture the cowboy as a passing institution before he vanished. They assembled some of these regional sketches as books, including *Red and White* (1895) and *Lin McLean* (1897). The latter anticipated Wister's celebrated novel about the West, *The Virginian* (1902). This fiction created the prototype western, a chronicle of the adventures of a handsome heroic figure, chivalrous and daring, who successfully woos the pretty woman.

Again, the Canadian experience differed from the American experience, in terms of history and myth. The historical Canadian experience differed from the American experience in part because the physical conditions of the ranching areas, including southern Alberta, worked against "pure" open-range ranching and in favour of a more "mixed" operation.³⁷ As well, the considerable official promotion of the Canadian West via government immigration pamphlets and Canadian popular fiction constructed a "civilized," orderly West that differed markedly from the fictional American West.³⁸

Although both fictional traditions "reaffirm the values of progress by re-enacting the triumph of civilized order over a savage wilderness,"³⁹ they did so in different ways. Whereas the American vision was inductive and individualistic, the Canadian was deductive and communal. Tales of the American west re-affirm the codes of behaviour that developed to suit the local situation and the rough and ready cowboy hero embodied these cultural values. He employs violent means to resolve the conflict between civilization and nature. Tales of the Canadian west celebrate the Mountie who, rather than making the law on the spot, serves as an instrument of law, which like the whole system of order he maintains, together with the code of values he lives by, is created elsewhere. His strength lies in his acceptance of an authority emanating from a remote centre of empire. Rather than employing violent means to resolve conflict, he rejects violence. We see this pattern in the work of such writers as Ralph Connor (Charles Gordon), author of such works as *Sky Pilot* (1899), *Patrol of the Sun Dance Trail* (1910), and *The Major* (1917), and William Lacey Amy, author of the Blue Pete stories, which appeared from 1922 to 1954.⁴⁰

Initially, at any rate, the fictional world of a Wild West, which showcased the cowboy, played only a small part in the work of popular English-Canadian writers.⁴¹ By the turn of the century, however, the cowboy had become one of the most romantic figures⁴² in American history,⁴³ and his influence was felt across the 49th parallel. The newest medium, moving pictures, perfected and

disseminated the image, as no medium before it could. From the time the first plotted western movie appeared in 1901 to the high point of the Western in the late 1950s, literally hundreds of evocations of the romantic cowboy were projected to devoted movie, and later television, audiences.⁴⁴ Thus, we might say that, very likely, by 1952 many Canadians and most Americans who might think about Western life in general and the cowboy in particular would have trouble differentiating American myth from local reality.

The Birth of the Calgary Stampede

As we said above, the Wild West show gave way to the rodeo, which enjoyed great popularity after the First World War, thanks in large measure to Guy Weadick (1885–1953), the tall, ruggedly handsome impresario who should be viewed as the missing link between these forms of entertainment.

Weadick grew up in Rochester, New York, a thriving commercial and cultural centre. Still in his teens, he moved west. Hoping to become a cowboy, he travelled the western territories of the United States and Canada, finding employment as a cowpuncher wherever he could.⁴⁵ He worked on his roping and riding skills, with a view to exchanging an arduous life on the range for a more glamorous one on stage. Barely twenty, he won, in 1905, a spot on the Miller Brothers 101 Ranch Wild West Show, which featured a variety of up-and-coming personalities, including Tom Mix, the future star of low-budget westerns; Bill Pickett, the inventor of a sensational rodeo act called bulldogging (a forerunner of steer wrestling); and Lucille Mulhall, the world's lady steer roping champion. Weadick travelled with this important Wild West show for about twenty years, primarily as trick roper.

What set Weadick apart was his driving ambition to stage annually the greatest frontier days celebration and championship cowboy contest the world had ever seen.⁴⁶ During his travels, he had realized that, indeed, the time was ripe to pay tribute to the people who had opened up the West. It struck him that staging cowboy contests as an international competition – a rodeo – with huge cash prizes, would ensure that the very best talent would take part in this celebration. He was convinced that a spectacle of the kind he had in mind would make Buffalo Bill's Wild West extravaganza look like a side show. He had the plan, but not the place.

Weadick happened to visit Calgary in July of 1905 during the Industrial Exhibition. He performed rope tricks and provided commentary for Bill Pickett, the black cowboy who dazzled crowds with his dangerous steer-wrestling act. During this visit, he realized that Calgary was just the place: it served as the centre of the ranching industry of western Canada; no less than

six tribes of Plains Indians lived nearby; and it exuded a hustling, bustling, progressive spirit.⁴⁷

Weadick proposed his plan on his next visit, in July of 1908, when as trick ropers he and his wife, Flores LaDue, performed at the Dominion Exhibition as part of the Miller Brothers 101 Ranch show. He spent some time with H.C. McMullen, livestock agent for the Canadian Pacific Railway, advancing his plan to bring together all the champion bronco busters, steer ropers, calf ropers, trick and fancy ropers, both male and female, from all parts of Canada and the United States, to compete for prize money totalling \$50,000 in gold. He planned to call the show a “Stampede” in order to distinguish it from similar celebrations, including Frontier Days, Rodeos, and Round-ups.⁴⁸ City officials, however, argued that the day of the cowboy was a thing of the past; they claimed that, in fact, farming was more important to the area than ranching. The determined promoter argued that the taking over of rangelands by farmers was all the more reason to stage a show in honour of the passing era.

His persistence paid off. Weadick returned to Calgary in March of 1912, at the invitation of McMullen, to formalize his plan for a frontier days celebration and cowboy championship contest. Addison Day, a southern Alberta rancher, offered to put up \$10,000 in cash and to supply his top horses for the show Weadick could come up with financial support in Calgary. The most influential cattlemen in the area – George Lane, A.E. Cross, Pat Burns, and A.J. McLean (the Big Four) – agreed to put up \$100,000 to stage this show, which was to be billed as a celebration of “The Last and Best Great West.”⁴⁹

Ever the promoter, Weadick personally invited champion cowboys and cowgirls from every cattle district in Canada, Mexico, and the United States to compete for \$20,000 in prizes.⁵⁰ According to plan, he organized the program of fifteen events to conform with “rodeo” style, with standard rules and regular prizes.

It can be argued that, when William F. Cody organized the Fourth of July celebration for North Platte in 1882, he created two forms of entertainment: the Wild West show and the rodeo. Indeed, the basic elements of both forms can be traced to the by-play of early roundups – roping, riding, and shooting – which were labelled “Cowboy Fun.”⁵¹ Cody treated these displays of skill as “exhibitions,” putting them in historical context, such as “Custer’s Last Fight.” Of course, his otherwise authentic performances conveyed as sub-text messages about taming the frontier.⁵² In stressing context and ritualizing the performance, then, Wild West impresarios might push these demonstrations in the direction of theatre.

A generation later, Weadick proposed to treat these demonstrations as contests,⁵³ whereby contestants paid to enter and profited only by winning. He too wanted to showcase the genuine frontier performance, and his genius was to turn these contests into international championships.⁵⁴ In minimizing the historical context, it might be argued, rodeo impresarios of Weadick's frame of mind might push these demonstrations of skill in the direction of sport.

Weadick launched his Stampede on Labour Day, 2 September 1912, with a massive parade. The population of Calgary was 61,450 at the time; about 75,000 people lined up to watch the procession.⁵⁵ He divided the parade into sections, so as to portray the history of the Canadian West: Native peoples, Old-Timers, Hudson's Bay Company Traders, veterans of the Riel Rebellion, original members of the North-West Mounted Police, pioneer settlers, labour union members and craftspeople, and competitors took part. Altogether, 3,000 people made up the procession, which extended over two miles. According to at least one report, it took one hour to pass any given point.⁵⁶

In terms of audience appeal, the show was a success. More than 40,000 people jammed into the Victoria Park fairgrounds on opening day. The Governor-General of Canada opened the show; he enjoyed himself so much that he stayed for the duration. We note that women played a key part in the contests.⁵⁷

The male prize-winners included Jim Massey, from Texas, who won the bareback bronc riding title; Otto Kline, from Montana, who won the cowboys' trick and fancy riding title; and Tex Macleod, from Texas, who won the fancy roping title. The female prize-winners included Fanny Sperry, from Montana, who won the cowgirls' saddle bronc riding title; Dolly Mullens, from New Mexico, who won the cowgirls' trick and fancy riding title; and Flores LaDue, who won the trick and fancy roping title.

The most dramatic moment occurred during the saddle bronc riding event. Only one Canadian cowboy made it to the final round, a Blood Indian named Tom Three Persons. He had drawn the dreaded Cyclone for the final ride of the Stampede. Cyclone had never been ridden; this notorious black horse had thrown more than one hundred riders in his career. He bucked, twisted, and turned, jarring his rider from one side of the saddle to another, but eventually he grew tired and surrendered. Tom Three Persons' prize may not have been huge by today's standards (he received \$1,000), but he became a legend, the only Canadian to win a world's championship at the first Stampede.⁵⁸

The outbreak of the First World War killed any possibility of immediately staging another Stampede in Calgary. At the close of the war, however, the Big Four invited Weadick to organize the Victory Stampede, which was held in August of 1919. Yakima Canutt, the leading stuntman for many B-Westerns, won the saddle bronc riding title. This rodeo was a success, earning a profit, but to the organizer's disappointment the backers expressed little enthusiasm for staging another.

Nevertheless, in the fall of 1922, E.L. Richardson, Manager of the Calgary Industrial Exhibition Co. Ltd., approached Weadick with the idea of staging the next Stampede as part of the annual agricultural show. Attendance at the Exhibition had been falling off, and, he argued, Weadick's championship cowboy contests would attract people.⁵⁹ This was the opportunity he had long wished for. He ensured that the 1923 Stampede was organized as a professional rodeo and to add another element of excitement he put the chuckwagon race on the program.⁶⁰ This event quickly became the hallmark of the Stampede. From 1923, this joint venture has been billed as "The Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth."

As producer and manager, Weadick spent six months in Calgary organizing the next program and six months travelling, cultivating rodeo and show business people, including Hollywood image makers. By way of publicity, for example, he persuaded Hoot Gibson, the leading cowboy movie star of the day, to make a feature western, *The Calgary Stampede* (1924), which spread the fame of the Stampede internationally.⁶¹ Weadick stayed on as manager until 1932, but after a disagreement with the Stampede Board over the budget he left the rodeo promotion business altogether. He refused to have anything to do with the Stampede until 1952, when he was invited to ride at the head of the parade.

This unpleasantness notwithstanding, what Weadick had created in the Calgary Stampede was a complex event, one that emerged out of and continues to draw on, an evolving synthesis of many imperatives: historical and mythological, American and Canadian, folk, and commercial. Like other analysts, we would argue that one way of making sense of the Calgary Stampede is to regard this celebration of the cowboy as a text, a site of struggle for control of the meanings of western Canadian history.⁶²

Messages and Meanings

So far, we have outlined briefly the historical dialectic that has produced the romantic figure we recognize as the cowboy. Staging a tribute to this individual, celebrating the role this individual played in opening up the

West, can never be easy. We have seen how “Buffalo Bill” Cody combined illusion with fact in order to give his “pictures” of frontier life the authenticity he thought they should have. We have seen how, twenty years later, Guy Weadick focused attention on the skills this individual utilized in earning his livelihood. Of course, the outcome of projects like these is a function of the local dynamics of time and place. What piques our interest is how this on-going dialectic has been played out in the publicity messages – the posters – the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Board circulated during the “golden age” of the Stampede. At a literal level, individual messages invite us to a huge frontier days celebration and cowboy championship competition. Most posters tell us that, in visiting Stampede Park, we will have the time of our lives. At a figurative level, however, they invite us to a communal celebration of our heritage, of “the triumph of civilized order over savage order.”⁶³ We will say more about this point in a moment.

The Posters: The Calgary Exhibition, 1908–23

Our close reading of the exhibition posters that were circulated during the period 1908 to 1923 reveals that two binary oppositions – one might call them two discourses of celebration – run through them: a nature/culture opposition and a past/future opposition. The discourse of the Exhibition was one of progress; the discourse of the Stampede was one of nostalgia. These logically should be at odds with one another. The 1908 poster, which features a rancher bringing his horse quite abruptly to a halt at a barbed-wire fence which crosses the road, erected, we infer, by a farmer, sets up this tension long before the discourse of nostalgia is officially introduced in the 1912 poster (see Fig. 1).

Moreover, the tension between the two discourses pervades the 1919 Dominion Exhibition poster (see Fig. 2), another site of conflict. Here, culture and the present dominate nature and the past by reason of the absence of the latter. In this regard, the neo-classical buildings Calgary and the race cars on the track instead of horses displace nature and the western past.

Overall, however, we found that, rather than contradicting one another, these discourses reinforce one another. We detected this reading in the 1911 poster, which features a cowboy lassoing a bi-plane, thereby bridging the gap between the wild west and the future, i.e., technology. We also read this meaning in the 1912 poster, where (it seems) the cowboy aligns himself with the Big Four in dominating both nature and Native peoples, thereby concealing the tension between legitimate and illegitimate occupation of the land, as well as the tension between town and country.

The harmonizing of these seemingly opposite discourses appears in the later posters. Three interrelated rhetorical strategies seem to bring about this effect; namely, the impression of harmony: (a) the presentation of the cowboy as tamer of nature; (b) the legitimation of the European presence, as signified by a variety of figures, especially the cowboy on the North American frontier; and (c) the commodification or packaging of history, especially the cowboy.

We see that, from the 1912 poster onwards, the cowboy has been juxtaposed with technology, as in: taming or civilizing nature. The posters for 1919 and 1921, for example, feature biplanes (and in 1919 race cars) signifying the latest technology. The 1921 poster features parimutuel betting via the jockey on his fine horse.

The most striking evocation of the idea of taming nature is the image of the cowboy astride the bucking bronco. With only one exception, in the 1960 poster, the cowboy wins the man/animal contest. The 1971 poster, which depicts the Wild Horse race, tells the story of masculine dominance over nature in particularly graphic details.

The Calgary Exhibition and Stampede, 1952-72

The cowboy appears as one of several figures who together legitimate the European presence in and dominance over the North American frontier. Images of marching bands, members of the royal family, Mounted Policemen, flags: all suggest the power of the state. The 1953 poster (see Fig. 3), which features a sea of spectators dressed as cowboys watching an aggressive, action-packed chuckwagon race, speaks of dominance and legitimacy. One might detect some ambiguity in the image of the cowboy vis-à-vis these symbols of state and authority. We might well ask: Is the cowboy their emissary, even their hired hand, or does he stand apart from or in fact above these figures of authority, by virtue of his skills? Do these special qualities align him in a curious way with the “natural” and hence with the Indian?

One important site for the Native/cowboy opposition is the 1959 poster (see Fig. 4), which offers us a view of the Indian village. The juxtaposition of the passive and confined Indian village with the activity and the freedom depicted in the rest of the poster strongly suggests that the Native peoples have lost the struggle to control and to define the West. Clearly, the cowboy wins this contest.

By and large, the posters that were circulated during the period from 1952 to 1966 indicate that conflicting discourses are harmonized via the

commodification of past and present experience. We read this in the juxtaposition of events that celebrate technology and events that celebrate the frontier. In the 1959 poster, for example, elements from both discourses are packaged via spokes of a wheel, an image that stands for both past and present. The wheel is central to the chuckwagon, not to mention the automobile or the airplane.

The 1971 poster (see Fig. 9) illustrates this statement via the image of the chuckwagon, apparently thundering into town, perhaps bringing important goods from the East (culture) to the West (nature). We also see in this figure the movement of centre-to-margin that might be said to have defined the Canadian frontier experience.

We notice how this image has been packaged to erase the distinction we might make between authentic and artificial experience. Are we watching a film or are we really living a genuine frontier experience? The dichotomy between authentic and artificial, clearly a subset of the nature/culture tension, becomes increasingly important over the period we study.

As noted above, the 1953 poster packages nature, together with the cowboy and the “Indian.” The poster for 1960 (see Fig. 5) packages Hollywood cowboys Roy Rogers and Dale Evans along with rodeo (working?) cowboys. Rex Allen, the singing cowboy, whose fancy, fringed shirt symbolizes that his battles with nature are all staged, occupies the centre position on the poster for 1961 (see Fig. 6). Circus stars and rodeo cowboys share the spotlight in the poster for 1965 (see Fig. 7). By 1970 (see Fig. 8), rodeo cowboy and circus performer have merged in the figure of the working cowboy on his bucking bronco flying across a pink sky alight with fireworks. The frontier and Hollywood have become indistinguishable.

This decontextualization brings to mind the question Northrop Frye asked about Canada, “Where is here?” Has this process of harmonization been at work in these discourses in a way that has removed all “authentic” traces of region or nation? Our reading suggests that, at one level, this appears to be true. Such signifiers as the images of the promoters (or in later years the names of the Stampede officials), the details of ladies’ and children’s events, disappear from the later posters. Images of the Queen, the Mounties, crowns, the Maple Leaf, pictures of Banff: these are gradually replaced by the dominant, single image of the generic cowboy. Even the 1972 poster (see Fig. 10), which appears to evoke authentic regional history, features a picture of the Pendleton, Oregon, marching band. We might be viewing a pseudo event, if not an identity crisis. Interestingly enough, the strategy used to evoke the Stampede experience during this period (1952 to 1972) is to present a view

of the chuckwagon races, together with crowded grandstand, both images of community and joint effort. We would argue that, at some level, what is being asserted here is that elusive “Canadian sensibility,” its reputed valorization of communal over individualistic values. Again and again in the posters of the 1950s, order and boundaries are evoked, via images and design features which assert the Canadian counter-revolutionary valuing of “peace, order, and good government” over the unfettered “pursuit of happiness.” Thus, vis-à-vis the posters for this period, the answer to Frye’s question could be: Canada.

Now and then, we find evidence for an oppositional reading of the cowboy as subversive figure. For example, one can read the cowboy as the “little guy” who makes do with what is available.”⁶⁴ His mastery is hard won, as the 1960 poster tells us, with its image of a cowboy suspended in the air, thrown by a Brahma bull. The recurring images of the cowboy demonstrating his skill and daring, both as an individual rider and as a member of a team, evoke the democratic ideal of meritocracy, and construct the frontier as a space where the “plucky” are essential, a kind of frontier elite who deserve our respect for their down-to-earth accomplishments.

Overview

As we have pointed out, two binary oppositions run through the discourse of celebration employed in the Stampede posters: (a) the nature/culture opposition and (b) the past/future opposition. In many respects, this distinction is artificial, and we hasten to add that any given message can be inflected in both directions.

When we talk about messages that have been inflected in the direction of the nature/culture opposition, we mean those socially produced ways of thinking and talking about that project commonly known as “winning the West” or “subduing the frontier,” so prominent in the Wild West show. The values of one way of life are celebrated at the expense of another. In some instances, the signifiers include representations of the vast prairies/the open range we associate with the early days of ranching, landscapes which may or may not feature Native people, i.e., as a part of the “nature” depicted, or say the rugged Rocky Mountains of southern Alberta. We read these landscapes as hostile or friendly or timeless, depending upon the context in which they are placed.

Often, these signifiers suggest that the European settlement of the West was inevitable and desirable and that the cowboy played a key role in this

process, of the forward march of civilization. On the one hand, such signifiers as “fencing” suggest the order of the British Empire. On the other, such signifiers as the “open range” suggest the early days of ranching in the United States. We see, in these images, two versions of the ideal state of nature.

This brings us to “culture,” the key element in this binary opposition. In the earlier messages, those circulated between 1908 and 1923, the signifiers include aeroplanes, airships, and automobiles, which provide us with examples of the wonders of modern civilization. In the later messages, 1952 to 1972, the signifiers include photos of such figures as Roy Rogers and Dale Evans, the latest Hollywood icons. We also see conflicting versions of progress, in terms of the buildings represented in the background; for example, Romanesque buildings on the one hand and Hudson’s Bay Company Trading Post on the other.

When we refer to discourses that have been inflected in the direction of the past/future opposition, we mean those socially produced ways of conceptualizing the history of Alberta, with a view to valorizing/celebrating one particular period or defining moment. It might be argued that the discourse of celebration ritualizes two periods only: (a) the distant past, the period when the Native peoples made the region their home, and (b) the recent past and the present, the period when Europeans settled the region.⁶⁵

More tensions are at work here; but, the history of Alberta is more complex than this simple formulation. Whilst it is de-emphasized in the discourse we studied, this complexity becomes apparent now and then, especially in the earlier posters, which clearly celebrate progress/technology. The first period was complex in its own right: it extended over many centuries and two quite distinct Native groups, the Plains and the Woodlands Indians, lived here. This complexity is never represented. The second period, encompassed by the term “European settlement,” is likewise more complex than might appear at first glance. Since the seventeenth century, a series of intruders, such as fur traders, buffalo hunters, North-West Mounted Police, ranchers (predominantly British), and agricultural settlers successively and in different, often mutually incompatible ways, altered the lives of the Aboriginal people who lived in the region. These groups inaugurated technological changes that intensified the displacement of Native peoples and that formed brief, defining moments in the social, economic, and cultural history of Alberta. This was hardly a smooth or seamless evolution. The interests of fur traders differed from those of settlers, whether ranchers or farmers, whose interests also differed, just as the interests of both differed from those of international oil companies. Thus, the shift from one economic hegemony to another was to some degree tension laden.

As well, these economic shifts were accompanied by tension-producing demographic shifts; during the period from 1896 to 1914, Canada, especially the West, absorbed the biggest wave of immigrants it has ever received, either before or since, and they were the most ethnically diverse group of people the country had ever absorbed. Alberta was a major destination for immigrants from all parts of Europe and the United States, and the region became a site of struggle over the nature of the society and the culture that would emerge in “the last best West.”

The ranching enterprise itself could be seen as a site of struggle between British-oriented and American-oriented social values and cultural assumptions, both of which might be expressed via images of communal celebration; for example, the Queen or the Mountie on the one hand, and the American cowboy on the other. Thus, interpreting and representing the past and looking to the future at the level of communal mythology that celebrates social and cultural achievement via appropriate imagery was a matter of on-going negotiation, both in the years in which the Calgary Stampede was founded (1908–23), and during the years we call its golden era (1952–72), both periods of rapid social change.

Surprisingly, the sets of opposition inscribed in the posters we studied do not come across as being irreconcilable, as one might think. We would argue that the commodification of all these elements, especially the packaging of the cowboy, brings about an illusion of compatibility among the messages. More precisely, this effect is produced by the dissociation of message from its context, a rhetorical strategy quite obvious in the later posters.

Of course, what goes unsaid in these posters is just as important as what is said. First, we notice that women play a very small part in the publicity messages we studied. By contrast, women played a key role in the Wild West Show: they are featured in the Buffalo Bill posters of the 1880s as fancy riders and trick ropers, if not expert marksmen. Annie Oakley is a case in point. Similarly, as we have noted above, in the early days of the Calgary Stampede, women took part in a variety of contests, such as bucking horse riding, wild steer roping, relay race, trick and fancy riding.⁶⁶ Bertha Blanchett, Flores LaDue, Lucille Mulhall, and Goldie St. Clair made names for themselves as champions in these events. By 1952, however, the venues for female competitors had been reduced to barrel racing only. In this regard, then, one is tempted to ask the following question: Where in this (western Canadian) landscape are the women? We might answer: This Wild West has been re-constructed as masculine, virile, in large part via the image of the cowboy.

Second, we notice that Native peoples have been portrayed in ways legitimating Euro-Canadian dominance. The exception is the 1918 poster, which offers us a satirical view of life on the foothills of southern Alberta. We see, against a view of the mountains, a big Native person and a small, child-like cowboy standing in front of a huge tipi; the former is painting a message by the entrance that reads: *AWAY ALL WEK. GON BEEG FAIR*. In this case, we get the impression that nature (the Indian and the land) can co-exist with civilization (the cowboy and industrial technology, indicated elsewhere on the poster). The posters invite us to see the Native peoples before they disappear all together, thereby reinforcing the belief, which was widely held from the mid-nineteenth century to virtually the mid-twentieth century, that Native peoples were disappearing.⁶⁷ We develop this notion further when we talk about specific posters.

Again and again, words and images evoke subsets of the binary oppositions we mentioned above, such as progress/nostalgia: man/animal, individual/community, Native/white, real/artificial, and centre/margin. We could not help but notice the ambiguity of the relationship between these mutually exclusive discourses. We could see that, ironically, they are inextricably linked.

Some analysts, interestingly enough, explain the enormous and growing popularity of the cowboy hero over the course of the twentieth century in terms of this opposition. Weston, for example, argues that “[The] only force strong enough to explain such a powerful appetite for the Western is a profound sense of deprivation and loss by the American people and a mass longing for a better world,”⁶⁸ a loss engendered by the industrialization of America during the late nineteenth century.

The situation in Canada also generated nostalgia, apparent in the songs written by cowboys,⁶⁹ as well as, perhaps most obviously, in Weadick’s desire to celebrate the cowboy just as his world was being transformed by the forces of agrarian and urban settlement. We try to throw some light on the role nostalgia plays in the construction of the cowboy via the posters we examine.

Conclusion

The discursive practices that have been employed in the posters we studied bear a strong resemblance to the practices employed by socio-political institutions generally. We see in the harmonization of the discourses of progress and nostalgia via the process of commodification new representations of the master discourse of Euro-centric patriarchal capitalism, which valorize

two impulses: to look forward and to look back in the interest of progress, thereby legitimating the European dominance of the North American continent. Along the way, these signs of the historical and the mythical American and Canadian Wests in large part have been emptied of specific meanings, thereby allowing Canadian viewers to insert their own mythic meanings.

Moreover, a paradox lies at the heart of nostalgia, in the sense that nostalgia involves a fantasy that never materializes, one that maintains itself as it were by not being fulfilled. No one can say that the fantasy of reviving the Wild West is an idle dream. Every July, it presses toward indirect fulfilment via the art of spectacle. We detect sufficient ambiguity in our data to suggest a more polysemous discourse than we had anticipated, one in which ordinary people (to paraphrase Fiske) may indeed valorize the dominant discourse, but at the same time insert meanings that subvert it as well. The Calgary Stampede posters we examined are indeed sites of a complex struggle over the meaning of western Canadian experience, and the image of the cowboy that evolves via these popular cultural artifacts is as central to this struggle as it is ambiguous.



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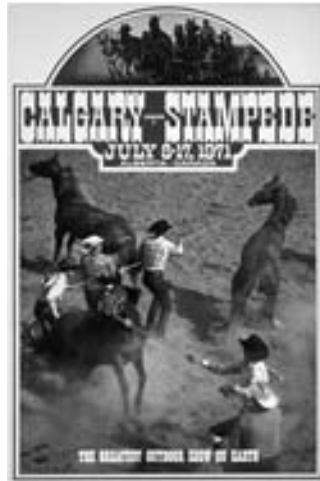
6



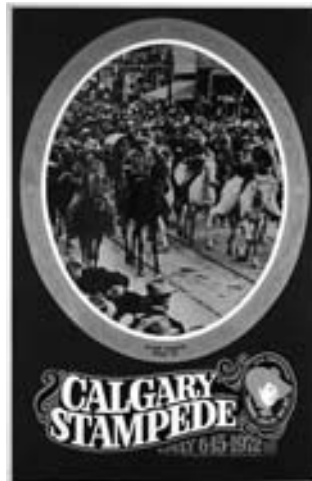
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Notes

We presented a shorter version of this paper at the Boundaries Conference, held at the University of Edinburgh on 4 May 1996, and the conference on the “Canadian Cowboy: New Perspectives on Ranching History,” held at the Glenbow Museum on 28 September 1997. We wish to thank the archivists at the Glenbow Archives and at the Calgary Stampede Board for their help in accessing primary materials, and our colleagues at the university, Donald B. Smith, Max Foran, and Douglas Francis, for their encouragement and helpful criticism.

1. Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 48–49; David H. Breen, *The Canadian Prairie West and the Ranching Frontier, 1874–1924* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983); Gaile McGregor, *The Wacousta Syndrome: Explorations in the Canadian Landscape* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).
2. High H. Dempsey, *The Golden Age of the Canadian Cowboy: An Illustrated History* (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1995), 1–3.
3. The range of themes and stereotypes presented in western pageants in the United States and Canada was diverse. See Marilyn Burgess, “Canadian ‘Range Wars’”: Struggles over Indian Cowboys,” *Canadian Journal of Communication* 18 (1993): 352. Two central and interrelated images in these pageants were those of the cowboy and the “Indian.” If the cowboy came across as “winner,” the Indian came across as “loser,” although he might be depicted either as the “noble savage” loser or the “ignoble savage” loser. As many analysts have pointed out, Euro-North American writers, artists, and other cultural workers have persistently depicted Native peoples as either the noble or ignoble “Other” and used the images they created either to bolster or to critique their own cultural practices. To paraphrase Francis, Europeans have tended to imagine the Indian rather than to know Native people, to project onto Native people all the fears and hopes they have for the New World, to define themselves in relation to the Other in the form of the Indian. Francis goes on to show how this was effected through a number of cultural forms, including the Wild West Show that was “primarily an allegory depicting the ultimate triumph of civilized values of the anarchy of the wilderness... [which] ended with the cowboys putting the Indians to rout.” See Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992), 8, 94.
4. James H. Gray, *A Brand of its Own: The 100 Year History of the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1985), 131–44.

5. Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding," in *Culture, Media, and Language*, ed. S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe, and P. Willis (London: Hutchinson, 1980), 128-39; and "Notes on deconstructing 'The Popular,'" in *People's History and Socialist Theory*, ed. E. Samuel (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 227-40; John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*, (Boston: Unwin Heyman, 1989); Wayne Mellinger, "Postcards from the Edge of the Color Line: Images of African Americans in Popular Culture, 1893-1917," *Symbolic Interactionism* 15, no. 4 (1992), 413-33.
6. Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*.
7. Hall identifies three reading strategies: (a) "dominant readings" are employed by readers who accept the dominant ideology; (b) "negotiated readings" are employed by readers who accept the dominant ideology but who modify it to suit their social position; and (c) "oppositional readings" are employed by readers whose social position is in opposition to the dominant ideology. See Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding."
8. Gray, *Brand of Its Own*, 9, 10.
9. Gray, *Brand of Its Own*, 62.
10. Significantly, following the discovery of oil at Leduc in 1947, Calgary grew dramatically, becoming the oil capital of Canada. This meant, among other things, that a great many Americans immigrated to Calgary during this period, a fact that had an impact on the growth of the Stampede. As Gray puts it, this "immigrant army...came in the main from the south and southwest of the United States and hence were thoroughly familiar with rodeo as an entertainment medium....Not only was there immediate immersion of all concerned in the Stampede week ethos," but also they brought with them the culture and technology of "the outdoor barbecue," which became a central feature of Stampede celebrations. See Gray, *Brand of Its Own*, 136-37.
11. To paraphrase McGregor, for example, the frontier did not play a positive role in the Canadian experience, the reason being rooted in the essential difference between a "western" frontier and a "northern" frontier. A western frontier, depending on one's perspective, is the limit of knowledge or the limit of control, and as such denotes a temporary and arbitrary boundary that may not only be transcended but actually redefined by human effort. A northern frontier, in contrast, denotes the limits of endurance; while the western frontier is simply a culturally defined interface, the northern frontier is an existential one. In this discussion, McGregor builds, in part, on Northrop Frye's notion of Canadian literature reflecting a "garrison mentality" and on Margaret Atwood's emphasis on survival as its central theme. See Gaile McGregor, *The Wacousta Syndrome: Explorations in the Canadian Landscape* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 282-83.

12. J.M.S. Careless, "Frontierism, Metropolitanism, and Canadian History," *Canadian Historical Review* 35 (March 1954), 1–21; Donald Creighton, *The Empire of the St. Lawrence* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1956); McGregor, *The Wacousta Syndrome*.
13. Traditional wisdom has it that, in Alberta, the ranching boom began around 1880 and peaked sometime between 1885 and 1895. Of course, the ranching frontiers – Canadian as well as American – are much more complex than we can possibly indicate in our brief discussion. The recent commentaries of Slatta and Jordan challenge the idea that the historical cowboy enjoyed a very short heyday. These scholars see not so much a collapse of the cattle industry as its contraction, whereby the Texas style of ranching gave way to a much more competitive style of operation. The beef industry survived, but its relative importance to the total economy declined. Cowboys still tend cattle on horseback and ranching culture remains part of the local scene. See Richard W. Slatta, *Cowboys of the Americas* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990); Terry G. Jordan, *North American Cattle-Ranching Frontiers: Origins, Diffusion, and Differentiation* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1993).
14. Don Russell, *The Wild West: Or a History of the Wild West Shows* (Fort Worth, TX: Amon Carter Museum, 1970), 8.
15. Weston argues convincingly that a bitter class war developed between cowboys attempting to better themselves by becoming homesteaders – generally operators of small ranching or mixed-farming operations – and powerful, large-scale ranchers attempting to maintain their hegemony. The range struggles of the eighties and early nineties were between rich and poor, a war of the classes, cattlemen against blackballed cowboys with greasy-sack shoestring ranches. They involved fence cutting and sheep slaughter but were not fence and sheep wars in themselves. The corporations, having money, fenced first, and often fenced public land; cowboy ranchers cut the fences when they intruded on their ranges. The cattle companies hated sheep as competitors for free grass and sometimes ordered their cowboy employees to drive them off or destroy them; but cowboy settlers often became sheepmen themselves. The popular notion that cowboys hated sheep and sheepmen, like so much of the western myths, reflects the wishes and interests of cattlemen. See Jack Weston, *The Real American Cowboy* (New York: New Amsterdam, 1985), 108.
16. Russell, *Wild West*, 6; Weston, *Real American Cowboy*, 35–69.
17. William H. Forbis, *The Cowboys* (Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1973), 17.
18. Dempsey, *Golden Age*, 1.
19. Slatta, *Cowboys*, 60–61; Dempsey, *Golden Age*, 1–20.

20. David H. Breen, "The Turner Thesis and the Canadian West: A Closer look at the Ranching Frontier," in *Essays on Western History*, ed. Lewis H. Thomas (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1976), 153; Simon M. Evans, *Prince Charming Goes West: The Story of the E.P. Ranch* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1994), 43, 44; S.M. Lipset, *Continental Divide: The Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada* (London: Routledge, 1990).
21. Sheilagh Jameson, "The Social Elite of the Ranch Community and Calgary," in *Frontier Calgary: Town, City, and Region, 1875-1914*, ed. Anthony W. Rasporich and Henry C. Klassen (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1975), 56-70; Breen, "The Turner Thesis"; Howard Palmer and Tamara Palmer, "The Alberta Experience," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 17, no. 3 (Fall 1982): 20-34; Howard Palmer, *Alberta: A New History* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1990).
22. Breen, "The Turner Thesis," 153.
23. Palmer and Palmer, "The Alberta Experience."
24. Bruce Patterson and Mary McGuire, *The Wild West* (Banff, AB: Altitude Publishing, 1993).
25. Russell, *Wild West*, 12-13; Slatta, *Cowboys*, 146-47.
26. Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950).
27. Russell, *Wild West*, 16.
28. *Ibid.*, 9.
29. Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992).
30. Russell, *Wild West*, 43.
31. Sarah J. Blackstone, *Buckskins, Bullets, and Business: A History of Buffalo Bill's Wild West* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).
32. It is instructive to note that, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, both in North America and in Europe, Native peoples were also popular on the entertainment/lecture circuit. Two Canadian-born Native peoples who became lecturers/entertainers illustrate the point. An Ojibway, George Copway (1818-69) travelled widely in North America and Europe after the publication (1847) of his autobiography, the first book written in English by a Native person from Canada. The well-known E. Pauline Johnson (1861-1913), a poet who performed on stage in Native costume, was also part of this tradition of "Indian" as stage performer. A number of Native peoples also participated in Wild West shows, for the most part playing the part of the "aggressive and bloodthirsty attacker of wagons." See Daniel Francis, *Imaginary Indian*, 94.
33. Russell, *Wild West*, 46-47, 70-71.

34. Ibid., 9.
35. Slatta, *Cowboys*, 204–07.
36. Russell, *Wild West*, 12–13.
37. Warren Elofson, “Not Just a Cowboy: The Practice of Ranching in Southern Alberta, 1881–1914,” in *Canadian Papers in Rural History* (Ganonoque, ON: Langdale Press, 1996), 205–16.
38. D.J. Hall, “Clifford Sifton: Immigration and Settlement Policy, 1896–1905,” in *The Settlement of the West*, ed. Howard Palmer (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1977), 60–85.
39. Dick Harrison, *Unnamed Country: The Struggle for a Canadian Prairie Fiction* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1977), 157.
40. Ibid., 79.
41. A number of British writers helped construct the image of the Canadian West as “wild and woolly,” such as R.M. Ballantyne, H. Jeffs, and Lady Agnes Macdonald, whose work appeared not only in books, but also in periodicals, including *The Boys Own Paper*, *Murray’s Magazine*, and *Wide World Magazine*. See R.G. Moyles and Doug Owsram, *Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities: British Views of Canada, 1880–1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988) 6, 7; and Doug Owsram, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856–1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).
42. For a fascinating discussion of the cowboy as romantic hero, see R. McGillis, “Westerling of the Spirit: Wordsworth out West,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 18 (1984): 85–95. McGillis refers to the idea of cowboy as Arthurian hero, which is developed by Esselman. We should also point out that Kimmel argues that the dynamics of American masculinity are manifest in the cowboy, America’s contribution to the world’s storehouse of cultural heroes.
43. Buck Rainey, “The ‘Reel’ Cowboy,” in Harris and Rainey, *Unnamed Country*, 18.
44. Weston, *Real American Cowboy*, 210.
45. Donna Livingstone, *The Cowboy Spirit: Guy Weadick and the Calgary Stampede* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 1996), 3.
46. Ibid., 31.
47. Fred Kennedy, *The Calgary Stampede Story* (Calgary: Commonwealth Press, 1952), 13.
48. Kennedy, *Calgary Stampede*, 11; Guy Weadick, “Origin of the Calgary Stampede,” *Alberta Historical Review* 14, no. 4 (1966): 21; Livingstone, *Cowboy Spirit*, 37.
49. The important role played by “boosterism” and its relation to ideology is discussed by a number of historians of the settlement and development of

the West. Friesen notes that the “success” in terms of growth of particular communities over others owed much to these “committed entrepreneurs.” He also points out that “It is important to look beneath the boosters’ rhetoric to the political and social implications of their message” and that, if we do, we see that booster rhetoric decried the complaints of “knockers,” those who “commented publicly” on flaws in the boosters’ plans. In a booster atmosphere, class-based debates – that is, serious differences of interest on the spending of public funds and serious differences in perceptions of community needs – were not welcomed. The greatest victory of the boosters was not the creation of their metropolis but the creation of an ethos of community solidarity that transcended class, income, and occupation. See Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 283–84.

50. Gray, *Brand of Its Own*, 37.
51. Russell, *Wild West*, 2.
52. Blackstone, *Buckskins, Bullets*.
53. In ritualizing these performances, different impresarios might push them in different directions, e.g., theatre or sport. What we notice vis-à-vis the latter (rodeo) is the professionalization of the skills by which individuals can be constructed as cowboys. In the early days of (professional) rodeo, contestants paid their own entry fees and took care of their own transportation and health care. Rules were not standardized, nor were prizes for events. In 1929 a group of cowboys formed the Rodeo Association of America in order to make sense of the chaos. They made no real progress until 1936, when a group of cowboys in Boston formed the Cowboy Turtles Association, which became the Rodeo Cowboy Association in 1945. They created a championship award system that year, which recognized the following “standard” events: saddle-bronc riding, bareback riding, Brahma bull riding, steer wrestling, and calf roping. More than 500 rodeos a year abide by R.C.A. rules. See Russell, *Wild West*, 105–08.
54. Art Belanger, *Chuckwagon Racing: Calgary Stampede’s Half Mile of Hell* (Surrey, BC: Heritage House Publishing, 1983).
55. Kennedy, *Calgary Stampede*, 25.
56. Belanger, *Chuckwagon Racing*, 69.
57. Livingstone, *Cowboy Spirit*, 24, 49–50.
58. Burgess provides valuable insight into the problematic of the imaginative space occupied by the Native cowboy. See Burgess, “Canadian ‘Range Wars’: Struggles over Indian Cowboys.”
59. Belanger, *Chuckwagon Racing*.
60. The chuckwagon races originate in Canada and they represent the only distinctive Canadian contribution to the rodeo.

61. Gray, *Brand of Its Own*, 79.
62. Literary analysts, including Harrison and MacLaren, have argued that our views of the nature/meaning of western experience have been “constructed” by narrative and art. Historians of western Canada, including Francis, Owram, Palmer, Stiles, and Swyripa, have examined how images of the west/western experience have been “constructed” over time. Cultural analysts, drawing on larger frameworks, such as those developed by Edward Said, author of *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), and Homi K. Bhabba, author of *Nation and Narration* (1990), have tried to make sense of western tourist spots and western festivals in terms of the ways they have evolved. For example, Shields “reads” the Banff area as a site that has been named and packaged in a way that provides the “colonial mindset” with “continual repetition of the colonizing act,” thereby providing satisfying (and defining) references to European landscape and mythology. Burgess “reads” the entire “discursive and performative apparatus of the Calgary Stampede” as a similar re-enactment of the colonizing moment, a complex “story of origins” that combines several historical stages. In particular, this apparatus combines pre-contact Native history and the history of European settlement in a way that valorizes the European conquest of nature and Native peoples. Burgess, however, argues further that, in its complexity, the Calgary Stampede constitutes a potentially transformative site, one where “narratives of identity and essentialist categories of racial difference” can be “de-stabilized.” See R. Douglas Francis, *Images of the West: Changing Perception of the Prairies, 1690–1960* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1989).
63. Harrison, *Unnamed Country*.
64. Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*, 32–34.
65. Burgess, “Canadian ‘Range Wars.’”
66. Kennedy, *Calgary Stampede*, 29–33; Gray, *Brand of Its Own*, 37–40.
67. Penny Petrone, *Native Literature in Canada: From the Oral Tradition to the Present* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1990), 43–47, 78–84; Francis, *Imaginary Indian*.
68. Weston, *Real American Cowboy*, 210.
69. Dempsey, *Golden Age*, 150, 151.

