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The American Western in Canadian Literature

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THE AMERICAN WESTERN IN CANADIAN LITERATURE
by Joel Deshaye

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THE AMERICAN WESTERN IN CANADIAN LITERATURE

Joel Deshaye
The American Western in Canadian Literature
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Part of chapter 2, “Tom King’s John Wayne,” was first published in 2016 in a slightly different form in the journal Canadian Literature (no. 225), whose editors and peer reviewers offered insightful comments that contributed to its improvement.

Most of the later chapters were earlier presented in different form at the following conferences:

- “Distant Reading and the Range in the Genre of the Canadian Western.” Canadian Society for Digital Humanities Conference, University of British Columbia, 3 June 2019.
- “The Genre of the Quebec Western and Postmodern Regionalism in George Bowering’s Caprice.” Association for Canadian and Quebec Literatures Conference, University of Regina, 26 May 2018.
• “Ironies of the Western and the Public Domain in Jordan Abel’s *Un/inhabited* and *Injun*.” Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English Conference/Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, Ryerson University, 28 May 2017.


• “Mining the Western: Coal, Gold, and Masculinity in Gil Adamson’s *Outlander*, Patrick deWitt’s *The Sisters Brothers*, and Dayle Furlong’s *Saltwater Cowboys*.” Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association Conference, San Diego, 17 April 2017.

• “The Western Genre and Adventures for Boys in H. A. Cody’s *Rod of the Lone Patrol*.” Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English Conference, University of Calgary, 29 May 2016.

• “Transnational Outlaw-Lawman: Ralph Connor and His Border Crossings.” Trans 2016 Conference of the University of Toronto Comparative Literature program, 5 March 2016.


• “Tom King’s John Wayne: The American Western in Canadian Literature.” Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association Annual Conference, New Orleans, 1–4 April 2015.

The project in general was supported by an Insight Development Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada from 2017 to 2019, extended for revisions and spinoff projects into 2022. Kelley Bromley-Brits’s suggestions in helping me to shape the grant application were razor-sharp and highly productive.
In Saskatoon, Delvin Kanewiyakiho sparked my interest in contemporary Indigenous (specifically Cree) culture by explaining to me, shortly after the beginning of the millennium, that the West was still (and still is) in a state of “acute colonialism,” a realization that I had not yet admitted and acknowledged. Some of my oldest friends, Ted View, Clayton Boyer, and Dustin Kasun, expanded this horizon of knowledge in conversations about our families and their experiences.

In Montreal, Allan Hepburn at McGill suggested that I teach a course on the Western, partly because I was from the West. In one of the classes I taught there, Lana McCrea, Nicholas Cameron, and Zev Steinlauf were especially engaged and helped me to see the relevance of the Western to contemporary students and other interpreters of pop culture. Seeing the Coen brothers’ remake of *True Grit* (2010) with Benjamin S. W. Barootes led to many enlightening conversations about Westerns and medieval genres such as the epic and the romance (and on one occasion Disney’s *DuckTales*). And Ned Schantz’s insightful probes about genre, and his ideas about national monuments and landscapes in the West, were compelling as we visited the Westerns exhibit at the Museum of Fine Arts.

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