Philips, Deborah. "Constructing the Frontier: The Western." *Fairground Attractions: A Genealogy of the Pleasure Ground*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012. 209–232. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781849666718.ch-010>>.

Downloaded from Bloomsbury Collections, www.bloomsburycollections.com, 26 April 2023, 14:06 UTC.

Copyright © Deborah Philips 2012. You may share this work for non-commercial purposes only, provided you give attribution to the copyright holder and the publisher, and provide a link to the Creative Commons licence.

Constructing the Frontier

The Western

The Western is the most quintessentially American of genres, the one set of narratives at the carnival site that is indigenously American. While other narratives of adventure, such the jungle explorer and the archaeologist in Egypt, largely belong to European imperial histories, the Western is entirely the story of American conquest. Inevitably, it figures particularly large at the Disney parks, where it is unique as the only genre that takes up two of the Disney ‘lands’: ‘Frontierland’ and ‘Main Street, USA’. As Louis Marin (1984: 247) has pointed out, Main Street and Frontierland are in close proximity and structured together at Disney parks as two elements of the Western narrative. While Main Street’s rationale and architecture can be understood as the ‘town’ of the Hollywood Western *mise en scène*, Frontierland represents an imagined ‘wilderness’ (see Kitses 1969: 11–12). A celebration of the American West extends well beyond American carnival; Americana has long signified modernity and excitement in commercial pleasure sites across Europe, ‘Americanness’ often connoted simply by the presence of the stars and stripes and of red white and blue rosettes.

Associated with Americana is a long-established set of metonymic icons that have come to signify the Western genre. The cowboy hat, the feathered headdress, the runaway mine train and the saloon bar are in themselves signifiers of the carnivalesque, and are present in every theme park in the world. The Danish Legoland theme park embodies all these signifiers of the Western genre in its corporate description of its ‘Western’ space, Legoredo Town¹:

The ‘Wild West’ has always set the imagination aglow. Cowboys. Red Indians. Horses. Gold-diggers. ... They’re all here. ... right in LEGOREDO® Town, the playground of all ages in the LEGOLAND park. ... At LEGOLDMINE® small adventurers pan gold nuggets from the river’s sand. (Legoland Guide: 8)

This guidebook description recycles all the narratives and iconography of the American West that are to be found in the contemporary fairground. An entire theme park in Cornwall, ‘Spirit of the West’, is dedicated to the myths of the American West and offers live-action versions of the Lego attractions: panning for gold; a mining camp and a frontier town, populated by ‘authentic dressed characters’; sheriffs, saloon bar girls; cowboys; and North American

Figure 10.1 'Shooting a flume' in the Sierra Nevada, *Harper's Weekly*, 2 June 1877

Indians. Images of these figures and locations were among the widely circulated representations of the American West that reached across Europe and America through news stories, book and journal illustrations and heroic paintings of the conquest of the Western frontier and of the Native American peoples.

The constructions of the American cowboy and Indian,² now conventionalised in the Western genre, have a long history, which extends back to both American and European romanticisations of the American peoples and landscapes.

The European public would have been fascinated by, but familiar with, the popular spectacle of the Native American Indian from the late eighteenth century. Traces of a combination of fear and fascination survive into contemporary representations of the American Indian, as Edward Buscombe explains: 'The view of Indians that was laid down at the time the (Western) genre was formed is still embedded deep within its structure' (Buscombe 2006: 30). A romantic construct of the 'noble savage' saw a celebration of the 'natural' and authentic Native American not only in poetry and painting but also in displays of Indian people at exhibitions across Britain, Europe and later America. In 1762, London taverns and pleasure gardens hosted an exhibition of three 'Cherokee' Indian chiefs. Their display was a public sensation – celebrated in popular songs, cartoons³ and entertainments. There was some public and official unease at the commercial display of American citizens, and in 1765, a law was passed by the House of Lords 'to prevent any free Indian ... from being carried by Sea from any of his Majestie's Colonies in America, without a proper License for that purpose' (quoted in Altick 1978: 47). Nonetheless, as the Hottentot Venus would later demonstrate, there were any number of 'free' citizens who were willing to be displayed for a fee; the popular success of the Cherokee spectacle ensured a series of similar displays.⁴

The image of the Indian became an established feature of British popular culture; in 1794 *The Cherokee* was the title of a comic opera produced at the Drury Lane Theatre Royal in London, and one of many theatrical pieces concerned with the figure of the Indian. By 1818, the 'Indian' and the American West as images and concepts were cemented into contemporary European popular culture, as indicated in this Leeds poster:

WILD INDIAN
SAVAGES

From the Borders of Lake Eerie,
In the Western Wilds of North-America, who arrived at Liverpool in the Brig
Sally, on the 31st Day of January, 1818;

THE CHIEF & SIX WARRIORS

Of the Seneca Nation, will continue to exhibit their interesting Performances ...
The Performances will consist of a Faithful and Correct Representation of their
Native Manners and Customs.

For Particulars see Hand-Bills. (Contemporary broadsheet, reprinted in Foreman
1943: 121)

The group agreed to 'exhibit their interesting Performances' for one year; the troupe travelled across England from Liverpool, and were on show at London's Drury Lane and then in Europe, beginning from Paris (a trajectory that Buffalo Bill's show would later follow).

The image of the 'savage' warrior was one version of the Native American Indian to cross into Europe, apparently confirmed by the lurid story of the murder of Jane McCrea, the American fiancée of a soldier loyal to the British crown, who was purportedly 'scalped' by Indians. The image of Jane McCrea offered a potent symbol of the innocent white (and female) victim preyed upon by 'savages' in the American wilderness for both English and American publics. Jane McCrea's fate was embodied in John Vanderlyn's 1802 painting 'The Murder of Jane McCrea', a representation that was to be repeatedly reproduced and adapted in engravings and illustrations.⁵ The perceived threatening eroticism of Native American men was also suggested in 'captivity narratives' of European and American women abducted to live in Indian communities, some purportedly written by the women themselves; these stories regularly appeared in the form of chapbooks and pamphlets (see Buscombe 2006: 40–2).

A representation of the Indian as a threat to women, home and civilisation was long-lived; American World's Fairs and Buffalo Bill were later to be instrumental in mounting scenarios that featured the savage Native American attacking white settlers. The Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876 intentionally promoted this version of the Indian, as Rydell *et al.* have explained:

For the Centennial Exhibition, the Smithsonian, under the direction of its secretary, Joseph Henry, decided to focus its efforts on American Indian exhibits that would represent the Indians as primitive or savage counterpoints to forward-looking, so-called civilized white Americans. (Rydell *et al.* 2000: 21)

A long-standing counterpoint to such representations of native aggression appears in the figure of the noble 'Indian'. The 'noble savage' represented an ostensibly less offensive version of the Indian, but was not much less derogatory in its vision of the native untainted by civilisation.⁶ This configuration of the Indian was established as high art iconography in paintings by Benjamin West, whose painting of a mournful Indian in 'The Death of General Wolfe' (1770) became an iconic representation of the 'noble savage'; the painting was exhibited in America and in Britain. As a founding member of London's Royal Academy and as its second president after Joshua Reynolds, West's epic paintings were both embraced by the art establishment and familiar to a wide public through repeated reproductions. West produced reassuring versions of the white man's conquest of America, as in his 'William Penn's Treaty with the Indians, when he founded the Province of Pennsylvania in North America', first exhibited at the Royal Academy in London in 1772 (see Parry 1974: 37). Such images offered a comforting myth of the civilised white man engaging in non-violent negotiations with noble but nonetheless compliant Indians, and are referenced in the murals of Disney World's Liberty Square.

The story of Pocahontas was another conciliatory (and feminised) founding American myth, and she became a Disney heroine in 1995. Pocahontas' relocation to Britain in 1616 (one of the few identifiable facts of her story) meant that she became a legendary figure on both sides of the Atlantic. She was the subject of a musical play, *The Indian Princess; or, La Belle Sauvage*, first produced in America in 1808 and then in London; its success ensured a series of plays about her and other tales of American Indians.⁷ Aspects of Pocahontas' story, her face and figure were repeatedly represented; her conversion to Christianity was inevitably a particularly popular subject for nineteenth-century painting. John Gadsby Chapman's 1840 painting 'The Baptism of Pocahontas' was commissioned for the Capitol building in Washington and became the subject of a government pamphlet extolling the virtues of the Christian faith as a means of dealing with 'native' savagery.

Such a fascination with the 'native' was often apparently from the best motives. George Catlin was a painter of the American West who prided himself on his knowledge and understanding of the Indian. He was a collector of North American Indian artefacts and published *Hunting Scenes and Amusements of the North American Indians* in 1841 and *Notes of Eight Years' Travels amongst Forty-Eight Different Tribes of Indians in America* in 1848. Both titles were replete with numerous engravings, which were repeatedly reproduced and served to popularise an iconography for the Indian in a romantic Western landscape. Catlin was a self-promoter and a showman; his exhibition of artefacts and paintings also involved displays of Indian 'tribes'; these were forerunners of the Wild West Show, later to be rendered entirely carnivalesque by Buffalo Bill. Catlin was nonetheless a firm believer in the Native American Indian as 'noble savage'. His claim was that he was recording a vanishing civilisation and culture, in his words 'to rescue from oblivion their primitive looks and customs' (Catlin, quoted on the Smithsonian, American Art website). As part of this project, in 1854 he took his displays and Indians⁸ to London's Egyptian Hall, where he built a wigwam and, for three evenings a week, put on a performance of 'Tableaux Vivants Indiennes', advertised as 'Landscapes of the Indian Country, the Beautiful Prairie Scenes of the Upper Missouri, Views of Indian Villages, Indian Dances, Buffalo Hunts, Ball-plays &c &c' (see Foreman 1943: 194). The rent of the Egyptian Hall proved to cost more than the show could bring in, and so Catlin took his exhibition across England to Liverpool and Manchester. There he encountered Arthur Rankin, another showman touring with a group of 'Ojibbeway' Indians. Together they took Catlin's exhibition and Rankin's spectacle of performing Ojibbeways back to the Egyptian Hall, where it was an enormous success. Catlin went on to take his troupe to Paris, where they met King Louis Philippe and the King of Belgium.

Catlin's success established the travelling Indian show as a feature of European popular entertainment and led to many more such shows crossing the Atlantic to Britain and Europe, as Richard D. Altick puts it:

Catlin's charges proved to be the advance guard of a veritable invasion of savages, overlapping and then succeeding the influx of other American curiosities (General Tom Thumb, the monster-mile panoramas) that was the other chief exhibition phenomenon of the forties. (Altick 1978: 279)

If Catlin's concern for the traditions of the American Indians in effect popularised an image of the Native American as savage, his romanticisation of their culture was later to be personified in literature (and illustrations) in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Hiawatha*. In *The Song of Hiawatha*, Longfellow took it upon himself, as he expressed it in a journal, to write 'a poem on the Indians ... to weave together their beautiful traditions into a whole' (Longfellow, quoted in Hilen 1972: 406). Like Catlin, Longfellow claimed authenticity and scholarship for his account of the American Indian; he had researched Henry R. Schoolcraft's then four-volume *Information Respecting the History, Condition and Prospect of the Indian Tribes of the United States: Collected and Prepared under the Direction of the Bureau of Indian Affairs*, published by the authority of Congress, from 1851. *The Song of Hiawatha* was first published in 1855, but reached a much larger audience through staged readings, as Longfellow was to put it in a letter: "Hiawatha" rushes onward in readings, recitations and the like. ... Thirty thousand have been printed, and five more are going to press immediately' (Longfellow, letter, 4 April 1856, quoted in Hilen 1972: 534). The poem was set to music and presented at the Boston Theater; Edgar Allan Poe and Tennyson were admirers. Longfellow's most popular poem was copied, parodied, illustrated and taught to schoolchildren throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. The insistent pattern of the poem's rhyme scheme remains a signifier in sound for the approach of 'Indians', still used for the introduction of the American Indians in panoramas, pantomimes and children's games, in Hollywood films and in theme park rides.

Longfellow mythologised the Native American for the mid-nineteenth century; in *Hiawatha* he produced another version of the noble savage that fitted neatly with a contemporary taste for a picturesque American landscape. Such a vision of the authentic native, exempt from the ravages of white civilisation and commerce, belonged to a Romantic landscape. Nineteenth-century conventions for American landscape painters of the American West were framed by a European and Romantic sensibility and by a taste for the mountainous, as Buscombe explains:

[I]t was the Rocky Mountains which first captured the imagination both of painters trained in European traditions of high art and of those working in a more popular idiom. By the 1860s, mountains in general and the Rockies in particular had become established as what Western landscape was all about. (Buscombe 1995: 88)

Such images of American beauty spots were used to promote tourism and simultaneously presented an idealisation of the American landscape, an idealisation that owed much to the English William Gilpin's specifications for the picturesque. The picturesque had crossed from England to America through popular entertainments such as panoramas and dioramas and, by the mid-nineteenth century, had become a firmly established aesthetic in America. The English painter Thomas Cole was the first practitioner of the 'Hudson River School' and was responsible for developing a tradition of American landscape painting. Cole's illustrations for *The Last of the Mohicans* in 1826 self-consciously abided by all the conventions of the picturesque.

The American West was thus claimed for the picturesque rather than for the sublime, a principle that was to shape the representation of American landscape from the mid-nineteenth century. The picturesque aesthetic was not confined to high art, but was widely seen as the correct way to view American scenery. *The Home Book of the Picturesque, or, American Scenery, Art and Literature, Etc*, published in 1852, was a 'presentation book'; designed (as the name implies) for domestic use, it was dedicated to 'illustrating the picturesque beauties of the American landscape' (*The Home Book of the Picturesque* 1852: 7). The volume of engraved images also included essays by Washington Irving, Fenimore Cooper and Susan Fenimore Cooper among others, all of which echo the language of Gilpin and replicate his regulations for the admiration of the picturesque. This was no short-lived fashion, and twenty years later, *Picturesque America* was published between 1872 and 1874 in monthly parts with full-page engravings, which could be framed and used as household decoration. Its full title stressed the picturesque qualities in the representation of American landscapes:

Picturesque America – A Delineation by Pen and Pencil of

THE MOUNTAINS, RIVERS, LAKES, FORESTS, WATERFALLS, SHORES, CANYONS, VALLEYS, CITIES AND OTHER PICTURESQUE FEATURES OF THE UNITED STATES. (Bryant 1872: title page)

William Cullen Bryant's essays and engravings of landscapes and cities across the continent were also issued in a two-volume edition and reprinted throughout the nineteenth century, its images becoming familiar to a wide audience in Britain and America. The volume was described as 'the most important book of landscape that has appeared in this country' (Linton 1882: 37). *Picturesque America* lists a sequence of attractions in terms that somewhat underplay the scale of the American landscape, but which would have been familiar to picturesque tourists in Europe:

[P]rimitive forests, in which the huge trunks of a past generation of trees lie mouldering in the shade of their aged descendants; mountains and valleys, gorges and rivers, and tracts of sea-coast, which the foot of the artist has never told; and glens murmuring with waterfalls which his ear has never heard. Thousands of charming nooks are waiting to yield their beauty. (Bryant 1872: v)

The 'primitive forests' and mountains, and the picturesque conventions that framed them, were also made familiar to audiences through dioramas and cycloramas of American monumental landscapes that toured across American cities. These tropes and conventions were to repeatedly appear in illustrations to the fiction of the American West.

Early nineteenth-century American illustrators were directly influenced by or unabashedly copied from English sources, or might well themselves be English. Without copyright protection, American publishers could simply cut blocks from British illustrators and reuse their work; this was cheaper than the commissioning of new work from American artists. Felix Octavious Carr Darley was seen as 'the first truly accomplished U.S. illustrator' (Wagner 2000: 14) and as an initiator of a new school of American illustration. Darley came to prominence as an illustrator of tales by Washington Irving, Edgar Allan Poe and especially those of Fenimore Cooper. Fenimore Cooper's hero, Natty Bumppo, was a white pioneer to match the noble savage, and he belonged to picturesque America.⁹ Natty Bumppo was a key figure in establishing an American mythology of the white settler in harmony with the landscape. He was illustrated by Darley (followed up by many imitators), garbed in a coonskin hat and leather breeches, an outfit that would become familiar to twentieth-century audiences, as worn by Davy Crockett. Various known through the series of novels as Pathfinder, Deerslayer and Hawkeye, Natty Bumppo's heroic titles continue to resonate in the naming of Western-inflected restaurants and souvenir shops and in the characters of film and television cowboys. This frontiersman character allowed for a slippage between the cultures of the Indians and the pioneer settlers; in his first appearance in *The Pioneers* in 1823, Natty Bumppo wears both a check shirt and 'moccasins, ornamented with porcupine quills after the manner of the Indians' (Cooper 1969: 553). Like the later explorer hero, Allan Quartermain, he is capable of moving between two worlds; he is, as Haywood puts it, 'a hybrid figure who polices the border between the civilized and the "savage", and whose *raison d'être* is the continuing conquest of the mythic American wilderness' (Haywood 2006: 174). Disney's Frontierland is styled as just such a border between the civilised and the 'savage'. The guidebook positions the visitor as a cowboy: 'Put on your Stetson and set out to conquer the Wild West! Cowboys, Indians, fur traders and gold miners mingle in this frontier town, a wild place full of adventures' (Walt Disney Company 2002).

The Leatherstocking Tales have been taken as the first Western pioneer fiction and as articulating 'the national experience of the easily imagined frontier' (Fussell 1965: 27). The romantic wilderness of Natty Bumppo's American West is, however, a mythological construction that owes much to European Romanticism and also to Sir Walter Scott. Fenimore Cooper's introductions to his novels, like Catlin and Longfellow before him, make much of his scholarship on Indian cultures and claim an intimate knowledge of the landscape and peoples. As the series progressed, Natty Bumppo and Fenimore

Cooper both withdrew into nostalgia, as Margaret Atwood has noted: 'In subsequent Leatherstocking books Natty was to grow younger and younger as he receded further and further into the pristine, unspoiled wilderness of an earlier time' (Atwood 2006: 60).

Fenimore Cooper's nostalgia and Natty Bumppo's straddling of two cultures proved an enormously successful 'consoling historical fiction' (Haywood 2006: 173). In 1824 a joke appeared in the *Atlantic Magazine* about Fenimore Cooper's numerous imitators, which neatly itemises the key elements of the frontier narrative: 'Imitations of Mr. Cooper's novels ... all these writers have thought that they might be equally successful, with the help of the backwoods, an Indian, a panther and a squatter' (quoted in Dekker and McWilliams 1973: 1). As a sure indication that Cooper had regularised the conventions of the frontier genre, the Leatherstocking tales were parodied by both Bret Harte and Mark Twain. Illustrations to their work were similarly copied, imitated and pirated. Darley's illustrations for a collected edition of Fenimore Cooper issued between 1859 and 1861 were so admired that they were issued as a separate edition without the text, to adorn the walls of American domestic interiors. An image of Natty Bumppo and his wilderness was embedded in the popular imagination, extending to those who had never read the novels.

Cheap serialisations (and pirated versions) of almost all Fenimore Cooper's fiction appeared in British and French periodicals. Fenimore Cooper was also brought to British and American audiences through theatre. *The Pilot* ran as a successful play in London in 1825, only a year after its publication as a novel. Fenimore Cooper's fiction was to be continually published and republished with new illustrations well into the twentieth century in America and Europe,¹⁰ his landscapes and characters considered a particularly appropriate subject for American artists. The success of Fenimore Cooper's novels promoted a European taste for American fiction, according to Altick: 'British interest in the American Indian had been stimulated by Cooper's novels, which were best sellers in pirated London editions' (Altick 1978: 275).

If Fenimore Cooper was the most visible literary chronicler of the American frontier, he was only one among many American writers popular with European readers. The Wild West and the Indian were not the only American narratives to enter into British popular culture either; 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' was the first private leisure site established at Blackpool. The exact dating of the site is unclear,¹¹ but the naming suggests that it must post-date Harriet Beecher Stowe's best-selling novel of 1852. Beecher Stowe had travelled to Britain in 1853 and subsequently toured in 1856 and 1859; these visits, with her anti-slavery agenda, were newsworthy stories in the popular press. The 'Uncle Tom's Cabin amusement resort' in Blackpool was decorated and themed with American memorabilia and offered customers shooting galleries along with drinking and dancing. America and the

West were by now familiar landscapes for British readers, as Louis James explains:

A good deal of American fiction was published in cheap periodicals. These were often published anonymously, and are only recognizable because they have American settings and assume an American reader. In 1847, however, it was claimed that the work of thirty-seven American authors had been published in *Lloyd's Miscellany*. ... Many full-length American novels also were published in cheap form. (James 1973: 154)

While Fenimore Cooper offered a romantic image of the pioneer in the wilderness, Bret Harte's fiction dealt with the establishment of communities and commerce in the West. Both versions of the 'West' are represented in the theme park, Frontierland associated with the wild and Main Street with pre-industrial commerce. Harte had learned his trade as a writer by imitating successful authors, Fenimore Cooper among them, for the San Francisco newspaper *The Golden Era*. He was another New Yorker transplanted to California; a brief visit to mining camps earned him a reputation as an authentic voice of the Western Frontier. *The Luck of Roaring Camp* (1868), published in *Overland Monthly* (which Harte edited), and 'The Outcasts of Poker Flat' (1869) were immediate successes. Like Fenimore Cooper, Harte's fiction was not initially illustrated in America, but was later produced in popular illustrated versions: *Condensed Novels* (1871), *The Heathen Chinee* (1871) and *The Luck of Roaring Camp* (1872). These and later tales were published and illustrated in magazines such as *Harper's Weekly*, which reproduced engraved versions of paintings based on Harte's stories. *The Luck of Roaring Camp* embodied the kind of writing that Whitman was later to disparage in a remark in 1874: 'the scene often laid in the West, especially in California, where ruffians, rum-drinkers, and trulls only are depicted' (Whitman, quoted in Fussell 1965: 429). Harte's vision of the pioneer establishing a community in the wilderness was a recurrent subject for nineteenth-century painting and illustration. Scenes from *The Luck of Roaring Camp* were regular subjects for American artists, painted by Henry Bacon in 1880 and by W.L. Taylor, a popular illustrator for *The Ladies' Home Journal*. Both Fenimore Cooper and Harte's versions of the frontier were regular subjects for artists and for theatre, the most popular productions reproduced in the form of toy theatre sets. These established the standardised conventions for the Western in theatre, and the stock sets and characters of the genre would shape the conventions for the *mise en scène* of the early cinema Western. Versions of Fenimore Cooper and Harte's fiction were repeatedly filmed; *Leatherstocking* was a 1909 short film, *The Last of the Mohicans* was filmed in 1920 and *The Luck of Roaring Camp* went into three filmed versions between 1910 and 1917. John Ford filmed *The Outcasts of Poker Flat* in 1919, with much emphasis on the scenery, a point noted by contemporary critics (see Fenin and Everson 1973: 129).

The landscape and characters of the American West also became familiar to European audiences through news images of gold rushes. The 'gold mine'

became a long-standing signifier of the Western genre in the fairground; New York's Coney Island, a long way from the rugged landscapes of the West, nonetheless featured a 'Far West Mining Camp' from its beginning. The 1849 California Gold Rush was a major news story that was covered by *Harper's Weekly* and *The Illustrated London News*. News illustrations of mines and panhandlers became widely circulated images of the American West throughout Europe and America. The penetration of this iconography of the Gold Rush and the rapidity with which it became a set of popular images and stories are evident in the staging of the pantomime *Harlequin and the Wild Fiend of California, or the Demon of the Diggings* in London in 1849. *The Illustrated London News* sent a special reporter, J.D. Borthwick, to America for coverage of the Gold Rush. The magazine also dispatched a staff artist, R. Caton Woodville, to travel through the Western states and Canada to record the events around the Wounded Knee Massacre; Woodville also provided hunting scenes and images of cattle roundups for magazine readers. While purportedly illustrations for news stories, such images were inflected by the mythologies of Western fiction writers, as John Grafton puts it: 'Easterners viewed the life of Western mining camps and towns through a haze of sentimentality that originated in the writings of Bret Harte and others' (Grafton 1992: 24).

A range of nineteenth-century contemporary fairground attractions was directly derived from mining technologies, and these have survived into the theme park. In 1870, an abandoned railroad built for mines in Pennsylvania was converted into a roller-coaster attraction. Almost every theme park will now include a log flume in its Western-themed space; the log flume was originally developed as a device to transport the logs and lumberjacks necessary to shore up tunnels and mineshafts. The technology and the lumberjacks were depicted in a mountainous and forested landscape and used to illustrate news stories of the development of the West.¹² The guide to the German theme park Phantasialand is one of the few to acknowledge the historical origin of their log flume ride:

Canadian woodcutters have invented it – the wild water ride. In order to carry themselves and the logs from the Rocky Mountains down into the valleys as fast as possible – a terrific and adventurous business. The Mountain and Grand Canyon Railway climbs up to a height of 30 metres. (Phantasialand 1997: 16)

The Runaway Mine Train is another standard attraction of the theme park; the building of the railways and their penetration into the West were recurrent news and magazine stories (as were images of train crashes). The vintage train of the Disneyland Express and the Frontierland station at Disney parks are clearly modelled on nineteenth-century magazine illustrations of stations and railroads. The coming of the railroad was to become a regular trope in the Hollywood Western, a narrative that marked the 'civilising' of the Wild West.¹³ In 1862, the Pacific Railroad Act had authorised the Central Pacific

Railroad to build tracks from Sacramento and the Union Pacific company to build west from Omaha, Nebraska; the two lines were to meet in the first railway to cross America. Building began in 1863; when the two lines finally joined up on 10 May 1869 this major achievement was celebrated in a ceremony of mutual congratulation that was widely reported and illustrated. Joseph Becker, a staff artist for *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, was sent to make the rail trip across America in October 1869, and published several drawings based on his travels. The publisher Frank Leslie himself took a trainload of Easterners and artists on a cross-country tour on the transcontinental railway in 1878, a source of numerous illustrations for the paper. Images of the Chinese workers who built the railroad have resonances of illustrations to Harte's *The Heathen Chinees*.¹⁴ Harte's poem had been issued in an illustrated edition published in loose pages, suitable for framing, in 1870, and was again illustrated in 1871 by the noted illustrator S. Etyinge. Like Natty Bumppo, the 'Heathen Chinees' was a character familiar to those who had never read the original text. Railroad companies themselves commissioned painters and later photographers to produce promotional images of the attractions of the American West, which were also to be found in lantern slides for use in talks for potential tourists.

A familiarity with such images and a knowledge of the American railroads across Europe is evident from Jules Verne's 1872 novel *Around the World in Eighty Days*, which reproduces many of the tropes of the Western novel and magazine story. Although much of Phileas Fogg's journey is through the reaches of the British Empire, there is a significant chunk that is set in the United States. Fogg lands by steamer in San Francisco, from where he crosses through the West by train: 'Between Omaha and the Pacific the railroad crosses a country still inhabited by Indians and wild beasts' (Verne 1879: 102). Verne demonstrates a significant knowledge of the Pacific Railroad derived from press reports; his description of the train and of its route owes much to engraved illustrations of the building of the railway and its inauguration. The narrative too displays a thorough understanding of the images and conventions of the Western genre; Fogg's train is delayed by a herd of buffalos and is attacked by Native American Indians (as Passepartout, his servant, who is more attuned to popular culture, anticipates). These are scenarios later played out in Buffalo Bill's show, and would become standard tropes of the 'Wild West'.¹⁵

The railroads in effect had marked the beginning of the end for Fenimore Cooper's pioneer and for the wilderness of picturesque America; the moment of the wagon trains and of the American cowboy was in fact very short-lived. The cowboy was nonetheless to become a potent icon of American masculinity as cattle ranching developed into a major industry. Cattle drives and cattle markets were all news items, and were regularly accompanied by illustrations. In the early 1870s, *Harper's Weekly* artists Paul Frenzeny and Jules Tavernier accompanied a group of Texas ranchers and duly reported back with illustrations. The artist W.A. Rogers went West in 1879 on behalf

of *Harper's Weekly* to produce a series of illustrations of the cowboys and ranches of Colorado. Later, early photographs were reproduced in the form of engravings for magazine illustration; C.D. Kirkland of Wyoming was a pioneer photographer who took pictures of cowhands that were engraved for *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*. The conventions for the representation of the cowboy were by now so well established that they could be produced with little knowledge of the environment or person of the cowboy; W.M. Cary drew cattle rustlers on a Texas cattle range in 1874 and published a series of illustrations of the Texas cattle industry, although there is no record that he ever visited Texas (Grafton 1992: 124). It was *Harper's Weekly* that had first used the term 'cowboy'; previously cattlehands had been referred to as 'stock farmers' and 'stock-drivers'.

The promotion of the West as an attractive site for investment and for new settlers contributed to the mythologies of the cowboy and an imagined American frontier, which was by now becoming self-conscious. The artists Remington and Russell provided visual models for the idealised heroic cowboy, as Grafton explains:

[T]o the Eastern press, the exploits of the American cowboy when blowing off steam fed the myth that he was the personification of Western wilderness ... a theme later developed by Zogbaum, Remington, Charles M. Russell and many other Western artists. ... It is safe to say that when cowboys let off steam in this way they were often just living up to their press notices and their dime-novel image, of which by the 1880s they were well aware. (Grafton 1992: 130)

It is in their illustrations for illustrated news journals that Remington and Russell created the 'dime novel image' of the American cowboy. While their versions of the West were hailed at the time as authentic representations, these were already nostalgic images of an idealised past, as even their admiring biographer acknowledges: 'both worked at a time when much of what was regarded as the West was already gone and the rest vanishing rapidly' (Ketchum 1997: 4).

The American Charles Marion Russell began as an artist by producing herding scenes and cowboy camps as bar paintings for saloons in the West, images that contributed to the West's mythologising of itself. He was commissioned in 1891 by *Nature's Realm*, a natural history magazine published in New York, and became known as an animal painter. Exhibitions in New York, London and across America led to Russell becoming known as 'the most important living American illustrator of the West' (Ketchum 1997: 22). Russell made claims (as had Catlin and Fenimore Cooper before him) to a sensitivity and knowledge of American Indian culture; he asserted that he had spent a year with the 'Blood Tribe', learning their language and culture. Such knowledge is not readily evident in his most remembered images, which are largely of cowboys and horses. These paintings were regularly reproduced as a series of illustrations for *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* in 1889 and remain familiar heroic

depictions of the American cowboy. Russell was to directly contribute to the Western pulp genre with his pen and ink drawings for *Rawhide Rawlins Stories*, a series of folk tales of the American West attributed to a fictitious cowboy, which first appeared from 1921. Russell's images were also well known to Hollywood; he spent winters in California, where he socialised with Tom Mix and William S. Hart, the first stars of the Western genre in film. Both actors claimed historical accuracy for their sets and costumes, but their personas are directly shaped by Russell's cowboys.

While Russell did have some claims to representing the West from the front line and had worked as cowboy himself, Remington was hardly a cowboy figure, nor a Westerner. He lived and worked in New York City for most of his life and travelled the world as an illustrator; the son of an owner and publisher of several Northern newspapers, he was born into publishing. Remington established himself as an illustrator by working for Harper and Brothers, and soon did covers for *Harper's Weekly*, eventually becoming 'Special Correspondent', contributing regular illustrated articles on the Southwest. His first illustration for *Harper's Weekly* was of a group of cowboys, to accompany an article on cattle rustling in Arizona, although Remington had then never been to Arizona (see Grafton 1992: 132). He was then commissioned by *Harper's Weekly* to sketch the life and tribes of the Canadian Northwest, which ran as a weekly illustration. Remington's images were also reproduced in the form of postcards; he published illustrated articles for *Century* magazine and *Collier's Weekly*, and became known as a leading authority on the American bronco. Remington and Russell's cowboys regularly appeared on the front covers of illustrated journals throughout Britain and America. Remington's painting 'In from the Night Herd', which was first published as an engraving on the front cover of *Harper's Weekly* in 1886, exhibits many of the signifiers of the cowboy character, the landscape and the Western genre that would go on to inform the Hollywood Western and to establish the essential accoutrements of the cowboy in the carnival site. The water bottle, the cowboy hat, the kerchief and gun sling are all artefacts that can be purchased at outlets associated with the genre in the theme park.

Remington collaborated with the novelist Owen Wister, who has been claimed as responsible for the formula of the 'modern Western' (Cawelti 1984: 30). Remington illustrated his Western stories for *Harper's* and other publications, while Wister wrote the introduction for a collection of Remington's drawings in 1887. Wister's *The Virginian* had first appeared as a character in stories in *Harper's Weekly* and *Saturday Evening Post*, between 1893 and 1902. When these were incorporated into a novel in 1902, it became a best-seller. *The Virginian* was turned into a stage play in 1907 and filmed by Cecil B. De Mille in 1914; it was filmed again in 1925. With each new technological development in film, *The Virginian* was made again. The sound version appeared in 1929 with Gary Cooper, and a colour version appeared in 1946. The long-running television series *The Virginian*, which was shown in America from 1962 to

1971, and sold to Europe, was notable as the first Western series in colour television and the first to be broadcast in 90-minute instalments.

The new market in magazine and children's books in the late nineteenth century saw a proliferation of Western stories and of new illustrations for the 'classic' Western in America. Among the most admired illustrators were N.C. Wyeth and Frank E. Schoonover, who went on sketching trips to the American West. Wyeth provided colour illustrations for *The Last of the Mohicans* while Schoonover created hundreds of illustrations for magazines and illustrated over 200 classics and children's books, specialising in scenes of the American West and the Canadian Northwest. These landscapes also appeared on commercial calendars, 'such as those for the Dupont Company and the Provident Life Insurance Company' (Wagner 2000: 35), so ensuring that these frontier scenes appeared on walls in homes and offices across America.

The heroic cowboy and the Western frontier were also hauled into the cause of muscular Christianity. The *Boy's Own Paper* (which had featured Verne's fiction) regularly published tales of the American West in Britain, with titles such as 'A Frontier Story' and 'Adventures of a Boston Boy amongst Savages'. Algernon Blackwood's 'The Vanishing Redskins' was first published in the *Boy's Own Paper*, as was Ballantyne's 'Red Man's Revenge', a story of settlers, with 'details of the life of a Buffalo Hunter'. That most imperial of all the boy's own writers, G.A. Henty, also turned his attention to the American West with his novels *The Young Settlers* (1870) and *Redskin and Cowboy* (1892). With the exception of Ballantyne, who had worked for the Hudson's Bay Trading Company, these British writers based their Western fictions less on any direct knowledge of North America than on a familiarity with magazine stories and illustrations. In borrowing the intrepid settlers and the wilderness from Fenimore Cooper and Harte and the heroic cowboy figure from Remington, Russell and Wister, the stories and illustrations for cheaply available magazines and penny dreadfuls further conventionalised the cowboy, the Indian and the Western landscape for a European audience.

It was the showman Buffalo Bill who did most to commodify the American idea of the West and who took it across Europe. William Frederick Cody, known as Buffalo Bill, brought together all the narratives and iconographies of the Wild West in his Rodeo Shows. Cody really had been a hunter of buffalos and of Indians, a rifleman who found that more money could be made from the display of horsemanship and gun slinging. He first devised a 'prairie pageant' show and exhibition for Nebraska in 1883. The 'Wild West' show was taken to London in 1887 to appear in the American Exhibition at Earls Court. A fairground in the Western Gardens of the site held a switchback railway and a helter-skelter, and so confirmed an association of the carnival with the Western. In the tradition of eighteenth-century displays of Native American Indians, Cody hired one hundred Indians (released on licence from the American government, none of whom had left their reservations before) to enact a display

of 'Indian life on the plains'. In the tradition of the captivity narratives, however, the Indians were structured into the show's narrative as savage and threatening; the most spectacular act featured an Indian attack on a white settlers' homestead and a display of 'ancient wagons and their burden of families and household goods ... attacked by a tribe of redskins' (contemporary news report, quoted in Glanfield 2003: 15).

The Buffalo Bill troupe was housed in an encampment, with the Indians accommodated in tepees and the cowboys and cowgirls (the cast included the sharpshooters Annie Oakley and Lillian Smith) in log cabins. The show contained 'assorted cowboys, cattle herders and ... prairie riders with 170 bronco horses, Indian ponies and fearsome "buckers" ... buffaloes, wild Texas steers, mules, elk, deer, a dozen "prairie schooner" wagons and ... the famous Deadwood stagecoach' (Glanfield 2003: 12–13). The show was played out on a painted set that featured the very familiar landscapes of the Western plains and Rocky Mountains. Buffalo Bill's 'Wild West' thus combined the displays of horsemanship and gun slinging of Remington and Russell and elements of the picturesque wilderness. That the show contained all the elements that were by now intrinsic to the Western genre is confirmed in a popular song of the time:

We hear that the cowboys are wonders
And do what rough riders dare,
So wherever the 'pitch' is in London
Its wild horses will drag us there
O fancy the scene of excitement!
O fancy five acres of thrill.
The cowboys and Injuns and horses,
And the far-famed Buffalo Bill!
(‘The Referee’ 1887, quoted in Glanfield 2003: 6)

The Wild West Show was attended by the Prince and Princess of Wales with their children and entourage before it was opened to the public, and they were suitably impressed. They were followed by Gladstone, then Prime Minister, and assorted Crown Heads of Europe (see Glanfield 2003: 19). A command performance was patronised by Queen Victoria (significant as this was her first public appearance since Albert's death); later, in 1891, she requested a command performance at Windsor. This royal imprimatur made Buffalo Bill and his show a *cause célèbre*; *The Illustrated London News* carried a two-page illustrated article, and the show went on to tour Birmingham, Manchester, the racecourse at Salford (where it played for five months) and Hull, all to sell-out audiences, before departing for New York. Buffalo Bill's Wild West Circus appeared at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1889; it returned to Earls Court in 1892 after a tour across Europe, and then went on to the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893. A later show, 'Congress of Rough Riders of the World',

came to Olympia Kensington in 1903, the last spectacle to be staged there. Buffalo Bill's show was not alone, his success ensuring a number of imitators and followers. Another Wild West Show was run by Gordon W. Lillie, known as Pawnee Bill. In 1894 a troupe of thirty-five Indians were brought from South Dakota to be shown at the Antwerp Exposition. A British version led by 'Texas' Bill Shufflebottom toured fairgrounds until his death in 1916.

Buffalo Bill and his troupe lived on beyond the live shows, embodied as toys, as souvenir cardboard stand-up figures and as a set of prints for toy theatres (Speaight 1946: 14). The legacy of Buffalo Bill remains in the 'Spirit of the West', an American-themed site in Cornwall which owes much to the circus rings and horse riding skills of the rodeo shows. 'Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show' is staged nightly at a dinner show in Disneyland Paris (sponsored by American Express), offering attractions not far removed from those of the original: 'Cavalcades, bison hunts and stagecoach hold-ups follow one after the other in this amazing show!' (Disneyland Resort Park Map 2004).

The success of Buffalo Bill's spectacular shows and the proximity of his international triumph to the development of early cinema ensured that the Wild West would be a central genre in film. Cowboy tricks and acts familiar from rodeo shows were early subjects for short films, and Indians from Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show were subjects for the Edison Company's peep-show kinetoscopes. The excitement of the new technology of cinema had a carnivalesque aspect that fitted with the circus of the rodeo show. Early cinemas in America would regularly show travelling acts and 'moving pictures' together; the 'Wild West' was a regular feature of both. The Western was among the earliest of the genres to make an appearance in narrative cinema. Early Hollywood Westerns made much of the landscaping of the genre, harking back to the mountains of *Picturesque America*. According to Buscombe,

The first recognizably Western films to be shot in a recognizably western landscape did not appear until 1907, when the Selig Company ventured to Colorado. The company went out of its way to publicize the magnificent scenic effects of its productions. ... So successful were the resulting films that many of the established film companies such as Biograph, Edison, Lubin, Vitagraph and Kalem attempted to exploit the popularity of the emergent genre by producing their own Westerns back east. (Buscombe 1995: 87)

By 1910, 20 per cent of American pictures were Westerns. William S. Hart, who had appeared in a 1907 production of Owen Wister's *The Virginian*, was, with Tom Mix, among the first Western cowboy stars; the 1914 *The Bargain* was his first feature film in what would become a string of Westerns. Hart established the studio 'Hartsville', with open-air stages to house sets of ranches and towns, in a bid to make 'authentic' Westerns. With these films he established many of the cinematic conventions for the Western film genre. The settings for the Hartsville Western were stock scenarios that had already

been fixed in news stories and magazine and book illustration: the frontier town, the homestead, the cattle train (all vulnerable to Indian attack). As Buscombe acknowledges (and demonstrates in his studies of the genre), the film Western was making use of already very familiar characters and settings: 'The cinema inherited and already predetermined set of ideas and images ... the generic forms of the Western were fixed from the outset' (Buscombe 2006: 19).

The French showman and film-maker Georges Méliès, who had been influenced by the showmanship and spectacle of the rodeo shows, attempted to capitalise on the popularity and success of the genre. Gaston Méliès (Georges' brother) turned to America to establish a film business, inevitably choosing Western themes for his early films. In 1908, he set up a production company in Chicago, making cowboy films, and turned out a reel a week for the Edison Trust. By 1911, the Méliès' productions were advertised under the title 'American Wild West', and adopted the trademark of a horse's head. According to Gaston's son,

These cowboy films sold like hot cakes, and made a lot of money for us. It was excellent business, we regularly sold between fifty and sixty copies. Each film cost 900 to 1000 dollars, never a penny more. We produced a reel and a half every week. (Quoted in Robinson 1993: 49)

The 'West' was now such an established cultural idea that it could be commandeered for both high and popular culture and could be claimed for European versions of America and by America as a home-grown art form. The word was enough to connote a landscape and a genre, as the title of Puccini's opera *La Fanciulla del West* suggests. *The Girl of the Golden West*, set in a Californian mining camp, was first performed in Italian in New York in 1910, as the first world premiere at the Metropolitan Opera House.¹⁶ The choreographer Agnes de Mille staged *Rodeo* for the Ballet Russes de Monte Carlo in 1942, in an attempt to use the Western as a basis for a distinctively American dance form. She went on to develop this American choreography in *Oklahoma*, which was staged in 1943 and filmed in 1955. The spectacle of the Western was to be attached to that other inherently American form, the musical, in theatre and in film throughout the 1940s. Among the most successful was *Annie Get Your Gun*, first seen on Broadway in 1946, a romance based (loosely) on the life of Annie Oakley of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. With a book by Herbert and Dorothy Fields and music by Irving Berlin, and starring Ethel Merman as Annie, it was one of the top three hit musicals of the 1940s and was filmed in 1950 (with Betty Hutton). *Calamity Jane* in 1953 cast Doris Day as another real-life cowgirl heroine and gave her a romance with Wild Bill Hickok (although there is little evidence that this ever happened).

The formula of the cowboy, the Indian and the frontier landscape of the Western film continued to appear in popular fiction. Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill Hickok were among the many part mythological, part historical characters

found in Western novelettes. The Western was a key genre for the cheap novels that came to be known as 'dime novels' because of their original 10 cent cover price. Frank Gruber, who contributed more than a few titles to the pulp Western in the 1930s and 1940s, itemises some of the many Western imprints: Dime Western, Ace Western, Western Trails and Thrilling Western among them. These tales were produced as weekly and as monthly titles and as cheap 'novelettes'; Gruber describes being commissioned to write Westerns of 10,000 words at \$85 a title.¹⁷ Many of the dime novel writers would go on to develop Western television series, such as *Tales of West Fargo* and *The Texan*. These cheaply produced Westerns found success across the Atlantic; novels with Western settings and versions of their illustrations and characters were imitated and pirated by British publishers as 'single issue stories with attractive bright covers' (James and Smith 1998: xiii). In his essay on 'Boys' Weeklies' (1939) George Orwell points to the Wild West as a favourite subject: 'The Wild West still leads, at any rate as a setting.' He refers to 'the long series of "Yank Mags" (*Fight Stories*, *Action Stories*, *Western Short Stories*, etc.) which are imported shop-soiled from America and sold at twopence halfpenny or threepence' (Orwell 1961a: 88). Orwell notes that the genre's nostalgia for the lawless frontier had survived into the twentieth century: 'The Wild West Story, ... with its cattle rustlers, lynch-law and other paraphernalia belonging to the eighties, is a curiously archaic thing' (Orwell 1961a: 109). The Western might have appeared archaic to the English Orwell, but it was by now firmly established as the genre of American popular culture for Americans and for Europeans. As Buscombe puts it, 'American producers had found a type of film they could call their own, a truly national genre which proved a continuing hit with the public and for which foreign imports could not substitute' (Buscombe 1995: 88).

The dime novel characterised the Western as a genre of cheap and popular thrills, its plots and characters by now entirely standardised. These conventions, and the dime novel writers, moved smoothly into cinema, to shape what came to be known as the 'classic' Western. The 1930s was the period of the cowboy B movie. Among the many series produced as second features for cinema programmes was RKO's, using their star Tom Keene; the first was *Renegades of the West* in 1932. The poster displays Keene wearing a cowboy hat and lariat on a rearing black horse, in an image that directly references Remington. The Western was the standard product for Republic Studios, who developed series with Gene Autry and Roy Rogers. Founded in 1935, Republic films, according to Phil Hardy, 'brought to a fine art many of the stock convention shots of the series Western – the running insert, the general use of camera trucks to intensify chases and the like' (Hardy 1983: xv). Among these stock conventions was the use of the American landscape. An abiding image of the Western, which reappears in various guises in theme park sites (as Big Thunder Mountain in the Disney parks), is Monument Valley.

This, according to Buscombe, is the responsibility of John Ford (still among the most respected of the genre's directors):

Monument Valley was placed on the cultural map by John Ford, who first went there in 1938 to make *Stagecoach* and subsequently shot seven more Westerns there. Over a period of about ten or fifteen years that one location became almost exclusively identified with Ford's films. ... Monument Valley has now come to signify Ford, Ford has come to be synonymous with the Western, the Western signifies Hollywood cinema, and Hollywood stands for America. (Buscombe 1995: 92–3)

The spectacular (and picturesque) locations of the Western were significant for American cinema in the 1950s; responding to the challenge of television, Hollywood turned to its 'national genre'. The Western provided both panoramic vistas and a proven popular form that could work on both the silver and the small screen. This was the heyday of the American Western as a genre in fiction, film and television, as Cawelti describes:

Expressed in terms of numbers of book titles published, Westerns constituted 10.76% of the works of fiction published in 1958 and 1.76% of all books published. In 1959 eight of the top ten shows on television, as measured by Nielsen ratings, were Westerns and thirty of the prime-time shows were horse operas. At least 54 Western feature films were made in 1956. (Cawelti 1984: 30)

The late 1950s was the period in which the Western was attached to the musical. It was also the era of big-screen, panoramic Westerns that made use of new film technologies such as Cinerama and Cinemascope. There were few major Hollywood figures who did not turn their hands to the Western; the Viennese Otto Preminger directed Marilyn Monroe in *River of No Return* in 1954. Set roughly at the period of the Gold Rush, the opening sequence could be a landscape from *Picturesque America*, and features Robert Mitchum as a settler who displays the values of Leatherstocking and the shooting skills of Buffalo Bill.

By the 1960s, the cinema Western was clearly not an exclusively American form (in fact it had never been so; Méliès was only one of many European filmmakers to emulate the genre in silent cinema). The iconic big-screen Western *The Magnificent Seven* was a version of Kurosawa's 1952 *Seven Samurai* and heralded the Italian 'spaghetti' Western. Spaghetti and Japanese versions of the Western only served to confirm the American myth of the wild frontier, and reproduced the images and characters familiar from dime novels and from Hollywood. Sergio Leone made a sequence of films with Clint Eastwood as another version of the strong, silent cowboy. A key film in confirming the Hollywood mythology of the heroic cowboy and the 'winning of the West' is the 1962 *How the West Was Won*, filmed in Cinerama and advertised as 'the biggest, most exciting outdoor adventure story ever filmed ... the story of

America's westward expansion from the 1830s to the 1880s as experienced by three generations of a pioneer family'. The cast featured many stars who had already made their names in Western films, including John Wayne and Walter Brennan, and others, such as Lee J. Cobb, who would go on to feature in television series such as *The Virginian*. The film reconfigures the central moments of American frontier history as established through news stories and illustrations in the popular press. A promotional leaflet concentrates the narrative into key scenes, all of which were reported events in nineteenth-century illustrated magazines:

How the West Was Won opens with the movement of Steelers down the Erie Canal to the sprawling Ohio River Valley frontier, then moves in succession through the California Gold Rush, the Civil War in the West, the building of the first trans-continental railroad and, finally, the triumph of law and order over the outlawry that plagued the great Southwest. (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Inc. 1962)

Disney's Frontierland, with its emphasis on gold mining, had a precedent in the California Knott's Berry Farm in Southern California, which claims to be the first American theme park. Berry Farm's promotional leaflet reproduces the precarious balance between myth and history that characterises the Western genre:

Established on the site of a berry farm, the Depression saw the farm extend to selling pies, jams and fried chicken. In 1940 the proprietor began to import abandoned buildings, and set up what was advertised as an – 'authentic Old West Ghost Town' ... with REAL buildings transported from mining towns throughout the West ... this boisterous mining camp as it was in the early 1880s. (Knott's Berry Farm advertising leaflet, quoted in Cross and Walton 2005: 210)

The 'Old West Ghost Town' makes an appearance in the Gothic Haunted Mansions of the Disneyland parks. Frontierland reproduces the iconography of newspaper and magazine coverage of the American West; the 'Legends of the Wild West' attraction recycles all the stock figures of Gold Rush journalism – the outlaw, the lawman and the frontiersman.

As the genre of America, it was inevitable that the Western should figure large for Disney. Early Mickey Mouse films showed Mickey as a quintessentially American mouse, who makes use of all the mythologies of the American West; he appears as a pioneer in the 1928 *Steamboat Willie* and as a cowboy in *The Cactus Kid*, 1930. Frontierland was directly linked to the Westerns that Disney was producing for Disneyland Television, which included the screen appearance of Davy Crockett. It was with Davy Crockett that Disney firmly established his own styling of the Western genre. Davy Crockett, like Leatherstocking, Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill Hickok, was a character who had some basis in fact but whose history was surrounded by popular myths. He had appeared in several fictional 'biographies' and romances, as a character in melodramas and in early Western films; he was already an entrenched figure

in American popular culture by the time Disney came to make him the iconic frontiersman for the twentieth century. Davy Crockett was significant in being the first human character to feature on Disney television and in providing the structure for the narratives and landscaping of Frontierland. Davy Crockett originated as a three-part television series to launch the Disneyland Television show, first aired in 1954 as 'Davy Crockett – Indian Fighter'. The three 1954 episodes were edited together as a feature-length film for cinema distribution, *Davy Crockett, King of the Wild Frontier* (1955). The poster features Crockett in coonskin hat and moccasins, very reminiscent of images of Leatherstocking, while his bearing owes something to the cowboys of Remington and Russell. Both film and television series were huge popular successes and launched two cultural phenomena: the theme song (still remembered by those brought up in the 1950s and 1960s) and the coonskin hat. 'The Ballad of Davy Crockett' was written in 1954, and by 1955 there were over 200 different recorded versions, while the hat became a national craze in Europe and America.

The *mise en scène* for the Davy Crockett shows would go on to shape the Disneyland use of the Western genre in Frontierland, literally so, in that the film sets provided the basis for its landscaping. Frontierland offers an image of the American West that derives from the ghost town of Berry Farm, and was entirely modelled on movies. The Frontierland saloon was commissioned to look like the saloon in the film *Calamity Jane* and designed by the same set designer. Big Thunder Mountain directly references John Ford's use of Monument Valley. Disney's Frontierland established the pattern for the American West in theme parks across the world, and with it Frontierland's celebration of the pioneer spirit and the conquest of the Indians. As Marin describes,

Frontierland is the representation of scenes of the final conquest of the West. Here narratives of how the West was won illustrate the ever-increasing American appropriation of land and resources. The frontier has no limit: it is itself transgression. ... It is quite amazing that most of the stories in Frontierland involve rides of conquest or exploitation. ... These all involve penetration into and victory over the lands of the first inhabitants, the Indians. (Marin 1984: 250)

In fact, it is not at all amazing that the stories and images of Frontierland are of the 'final conquest of the West' because its styling and narratives are drawn from a long history of images and tales of brave pioneers and threatening Indians. Frontierland recycles all the metonymic signifiers of the Western as genre that date from the nineteenth century: the plainsman of Fenimore Cooper, the speculators of Bret Harte, the heroic cowboys of Remington and Russell, the noble savage of the human zoos of the World's Fairs. The settings of the mountains and the Gold Rush camps were found in illustrated news magazines before they became the stock motifs of the dime novel and Western movie. Frontierland conforms to the narrative of exploration and conquest over alien territories that is common to all the Disney 'lands', but here it has an added

resonance because it is the American genre, and an American foundational myth.

The motifs of the 'Wild West' at Disneyland Paris entered into a French culture that was already imbued with the cinematic signifiers of the Western – *Cahiers du Cinéma* had championed the Western throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The architecture and landscaping of Frontierland for Europe were therefore designed to deliberately emphasise iconic images from classic American Westerns. A Disney imagineer explains that the Frontierland design for Paris was calculatedly inflected through cinema:

We noticed the intrigue that the American Southwest had for the French and for other Europeans; the Grand Canyon or Monument Valley, the images that have become familiar through John Wayne westerns are symbolic for Europeans of the entire American West, even if we feel that in reality these regions are as varied and diverse as Europe is diverse. (Tony Baxter, quoted in Lainsbury 2000: 59)

What is absent from the Disneylands of Paris, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Tokyo is Liberty Square, where American patriotism is celebrated in the shape of a 'Liberty Tree', surrounded by red, white and blue rosettes and the Stars and Stripes. The animatronic Hall of Presidents is decorated with monumental paintings of pioneers and the Western frontier. Liberty Square embodies Cawelti's understanding of the imagined Wild West:

... the idea that the frontier experience was the true source of American democracy. The popular imagination in the nineteenth century had already revelled in the fantasy of the Wild West with its lawlessness and violent individualism. This fantasy made the frontier into the true source of violence in America, conveniently averting the public gaze from one of the most important causes of American violence – racism – and its true locus – the cities. (Cawelti 1984: 3)

That frontier experience as 'the true source of American democracy' is written into the geography of Frontierland at Disney World, sited as it is next to Liberty Square, so that the visitor returns to Liberty Square after the experience of the Wild West. There is no clear boundary between the two sites.

In his account of his travels across Death Valley, Jean Baudrillard notes that it is impossible to experience the landscapes of the American West except through the prism of the Western movie:

It is useless to seek to strip the desert of its cinematic essence in order to restore its original essence; those features are thoroughly superimposed upon it and will not go away. The cinema has absorbed everything – Indians, mesas, canyons, skies. (Baudrillard 1988: 69)

Those metonymic icons of the Western genre were already 'thoroughly superimposed' on the cinema, and have a long history, which predates film. The cinematic signs of the cowboy, the Indian and the Western landscape were already circulating in the European and American popular imagination

Figure 10.2 Fantastische Reise (Fantastic Journey), Prater Park, Vienna

through fiction and magazine stories, through engravings and illustrations from *Picturesque America*, through Buffalo Bill to the covers of the dime novel. The signifiers of the Wild West have been distributed again through the stock landscapes of the Western movie, and then through the theme park to become an integral genre of the carnival site that continues to promote an 'essence' of America.