

Jill Hartman / from *SAINT AMPEDE, COWBOY  
POETRY AND THE GREATEST OUTDOOR  
SHOW ON EARTH*

*the city gleams in afternoon suns . . .  
the circus disappears down the road  
(elephants straining)  
— bpNichol*

one-man-band  
steal the show and tell

our buffalo bill:  
extinction

spaghetti-o  
western

alienation has nothing on  
the exquisite embarrassment teenagers invented

my own city my nation  
alien

I submit: Calgary is a hell of a place to be 14

Saint  
Ampede's  
undeniable  
Clydesdale plod  
salt water taffy  
tears of a  
rodeo clown

CPR rails against yankee invasion  
RCMP and Fort Calgary

I Love Alberta Beef  
a heck of a thing to love

I'm not cowed anymore  
I'm not mad at all

my city my own private spaghetti-o  
(Saint Ampede would like to give a quick linguistic  
lesson — it's "eye-talian")

one of Saint Ampede's recent miracles:  
no BSE for the month of July

Wonder Woman's got nothing on  
Cowboy Poetry's lasso

he's got this trick with a rope  
he'll dog-leg, he'll hog-tie, spit on his hand spit in your eye

there's a tear in my beer  
for my Wonder Woman Underoos

Cowboy Poetry's lariat and bolo  
chaps and 10 gallon uniform his every move

meanwhile I've got my Wonder Woman panties in a knot  
to dog-collar Cowboy Poetry

steal his pearlized snaps and  
dog-tag him for the feedlot

Cowboy Poetry wears a Saint Ampede buckle  
polishes it every night by candlelight

bow leg barrel ride  
legs buckle at the 8-second mark and bunny belts

I'm not saying Saint Ampede's Virgins aren't  
but he's got his pride

I mean like a lion does  
Saint Ampede's Princesses and Queen and the Young Canadians

and it's immaculate: every year Saint Ampede fathers  
Cowboy Poetry

and we all celebrate with breakfast  
flap that, Jack. Saint Ampede is all around us

the motherfucking King of Heaven  
the Patron Saint of Calgary

corndogs  
superdogs  
calf-roped in

for eight to eighty:  
Zipper and Sun-Rype apple juice or casino and Big Rock Beer.  
both end in puke

Calgarian July punctuated with Breakfasts from  
three to thirteen then  
thirty to death

the years between  
sowing wild oats  
other cities, festivals, carnivals

but we all come back to Saint Ampede's embrace  
and confess

Saint Ampede preserve us from self-righteous proselytizing  
but it really is the Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth and I  
really am a cowboy I really am